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Performing citizenship: tensions in the creation of the citizen image on stage and screen

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PERFORMING CITIZENSHIP:
TENSIONS IN THE CREATION OF THE CITIZEN IMAGE
ON STAGE AND SCREEN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

In

The Department of Theatre

by
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ABSTRACT

What does it mean to be a “citizen” of the United States? In the simplest of terms, citizenship is a limited position of identity, relegated to a narrow definition of legal and geographical position for an individual. But to be a “citizen” in America means far more than that – it becomes an accepted image of our collective identity which seeks an historical and political supremacy that allows America, and its citizens, to claim ideological status *over* anyone who is *not* a part of that nationalistic frame. The citizen has, for us, become a set of understood rights and privileges, inexorably connected to a further set of duties and responsibilities that we must perform in *exchange* for those rights.

This study seeks to examine the ways in which theatre has contributed to the creation of, reinforcement of, and subversion of a dominant ideological view of Americans citizens. The evolution of our concept of citizenship is explored, from its origins in Greek philosophy to twentieth-century expansions of who *is* and who *is not* considered to be a citizen. Theatrical movements and productions from differing eras are examined to reveal how each of these reacted to their historical contexts in presenting the image of the citizen on stage and screen, and how our understanding of who we are, as Americans, becomes so engrained in all aspects of society that even theatrical attempts to challenge or subvert this ideology become entangled in calls for the very same rights and privileges. Ultimately, this work challenges theatre to eradicate our stubborn and subconscious adherence to what we perceive as our fundamental rights, and to create images of the citizen which are more holistic in relationship to the world around us.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION (CONCEPTUALIZATIONS)

“I am a Citizen of the United States of America.”

This simple statement declares a position of identity, signifying a claim by one human being to an accepted, legally constructed status that endows certain rights and responsibilities, while also linking that individual to a collective whole which acts as identifier for the individual. It is a statement that signifies a legal meaning, the codified membership of one person within the parameters of one specific nation (the United States); it unifies the individual into a collective whole with other individuals within that same nation; and, it declares to those who are *not* members of that nation that they are different, or *other* to the citizen. The central problem with the declaration above is that its claim rests on two assumptions: first, that when a nation such as the United States establishes a legal codification for the requirements, rights and privileges of its citizens, it collectively identifies and codifies the individual position within the nation-state; and, secondly, that the individuals within the larger legalistic claim share a common understanding as to what that position signifies. “Citizenship” is, if taken as simplistically as the statement would indicate, a *limited* position of identity – the actual legal standing of the citizen as the subject of this claim narrowly defines itself to a location of birth, an oath of allegiance, or even more specifically to a set of words on a document that separate the American from the non-American. The *meaning* of that claim is left unclear, along with the “rights” and “responsibilities” that are assumed to emerge from this status.

This dissertation asks two specific questions: what is the nature of the American concept of collective identity within the nomenclature of the word “citizen,” and how is that concept created, reified and ultimately subverted or validated through theatrical performance? To answer these questions, this investigation specifically focuses on the idea of the “American Citizen” as it

has been constructed and culturally reinforced in American history up to and including the start of the twenty-first century. The answers are not simplistic in nature, rather they find that the imaged template (our view) of the “citizen” is a complex shifting of differing and contested demands that are linked to the imperatives of historical moments of national identity, images that struggle against themselves for a place in an accepted hierarchy of understanding. Most importantly, in answering these questions this work shall seek to establish the potential for a shift in American consciousness, from this nationalistic model to a “holistic” or more universal concept of citizenship. It is therefore important, in this chapter, to establish the theoretical basis for understanding the citizen not just as a simple legal definition, but as a complex layer of ideological assumptions. The theoretical groundwork set forth at the outset of this work establishes the framework on which I will tie the historical and textual explorations in the succeeding chapters.

Why is this discussion crucial to us as Americans entering this new century? Even as this dissertation has been written we have seen the widening rift between those who claim “citizenship” in the United States and the rest of the world, the *others* who fall outside of this designation. Detentions of so-called “foreign hostiles” who are held by the U.S. government under the claim that “they have no rights as U.S. citizens” (Gonzales 2005), regardless of their place of birth or previous legal status, signifies a clear ideological interpretation of the “citizen.” The ideological need of the moment (to “defend” the security of the U.S. against terrorism) expands the citizen beyond simplistic legal definitions into a reactionary standard of who is and who is not American. The all-too common use of terms such as “us” and “them” affirms the ideological acceptance of a view of the American as superior to otherness. Such a citizen status ignores the tensions and complications even within our own national history as to who is

included in the frame of citizenship and how their rights, privileges and responsibilities have been accepted and understood. Indeed, it is the *image* of the citizen that this work investigates. Theatre (which acts as the reflector and creator of image) as an art form serves both as a reinforcing agent for the dominant ideological image as well as a primary site of potential change from the purely nationalistic and “inherent” model to a more holistic interpretation of the citizen.

At the start of any such exploration, one must look at the nature of the word *citizen* and its semiotic positioning – a set of meanings which are not as inherently simplistic as those who claim citizenship would assume. Tensions arise in understanding the multiplicity of meanings that occur when any single word (such as “citizen”) is used to represent some greater collective meaning. Culturally, the evolution of citizenship is different for each individual nationalistic entity throughout the world. If citizenship is indeed a legalistic concept of membership in a nationalistic whole, then the constructs of that legal interpretation are necessarily divergent from one code of laws to another. These distinctions, therefore, rely upon the cultural identities that create them. In *Citizenship and Identity*, Engin Isin and Patricia Wood claim that citizenship can be categorized as “*both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual’s membership in a polity” (4). Thus, from the outset, the word “citizen” presents us with a challenge in definition, indicating a fluid and often confusing multiplicity of images which makes the understanding of what it is to be a citizen elusive. Indeed, the essential work of this dissertation examines how these hazy and shifting templates of citizen imagery are formed, contested and reformed throughout various historical moments that the nation has experienced.

While the combination of legalistic *membership* with *rights* and *duties* will be examined more closely in the pages to come, the one striking point to note here is the use of the word

“polity” by Isin and Wood. The word ties the conceptualization of the citizen to its Western roots in classical Greece. In *The Republic*, Plato identifies the concept of “polis” (from which we derive our modern notion of *polity*) as an economic structure, noting that men are “not born self-sufficient” (Comford 54) and that they are tied together in collections of societies that are both “natural and advantageous to all the individuals” (54). Belonging to a collective national identity thus offers individuals security from the need to be self-sufficient so that actions, wants, and desires become the responsibility of the “polis” rather than that of the individual.

The belief that we belong to an “American Polity” that mirrors the historical development of government (tracing its origins to Greece) confirms our acceptance of the citizen as an *evolutionary product* – a culmination of Western philosophical thought and practice concerning the nature of collectivism. In simpler terms, Americans want and need to believe that our positions as citizens carry with them the precedents of historical “truth.” Americans often seek “factual” constructions of collective wholeness that supersede any of the very real differences that cause friction between the desires and needs of the individuals within our society, and even more so in setting ourselves as superior to the “otherness” of those who exist outside the nation state that is the United States. Such an outlook actively traces the historical evolution of the citizen through Western history, beginning with its Greek philosophical origin, and various agents of the national “polity” (government, institutions and individuals) use this evolution as an instrument of justification for later Western conceptualizations of the citizen, treating it as both inherent and correct.

The primary problem explored here lies in the limits evident within the classical Western model. The “polity” discussed above sets the stage for these limitations by placing all discourse into a restricted path from the outset – duties, responsibilities and rights are tied together and

accepted as foundational for all further illuminations on the concept of the “citizen.” These limitations are then set and bounded by the cultural nationalities from which they emerge, creating the image of the individual “citizen” as one whom must conform to the greater collective whole, to perform the duties ascribed within the frame of “citizenship” in order to partake of the benefits of that status. For those of us who place ourselves within the frame that comprises the “American Citizen,” these limitations have been further defined and constructed by various democratic philosophical movements, from the writings of John Locke to the intentions of the drafters of the United States Constitution. More concisely, Americans believe that as citizens we hold a highly evolved, even perfected, status as the result of a linear progression of democratic thought that originated in early Greece and proceeds to modern times. The “citizen” thus emerges as a concept that moves beyond a mere legalistic notion of national residency and state membership into an ideological image that seeks to contest and subordinate any challenges to its supremacy.

A dominant ideological frame of citizenship thus emerges that creates for Americans an identity which exhibits the following attributes: 1.) That citizenship in the United States is derived from Natural law, and therefore is “given” by God; 2.) That we are governed only because we give our consent to be so governed; 3.) That we all have the right (even if we choose not to use it) to have our voice heard and effectively represented in government; 4.) That being a citizen guarantees the protection of each of us, individually and collectively, from “outside” harm; 5.) That as a *quid-pro-quo* for protection we must perform our *duty* to support the institutions of that government in the face of any challenge; and, most importantly, 6.) That because of these basic tenants, we hold the moral high ground as the most evolved citizens on the

planet, and as such have the right to a superior claim of privilege over those who are not citizens of the United States.

Certainly every individual who is legalistically categorized as an American citizen does not necessarily ascribe to these ideological positions. Each individual brings his or her own desires and needs to the argument at hand, yet these individualistic claims are aggressively challenged by the collective's need for a unifying image of identity that binds together the nation at varying historical moments. The simplicity of accepting one's position as citizen as a transactional situation under the exchange of rights and privileges associated with these particular "pillars" of the nationalistic citizen model, allows for the collective to battle "threats" to the national state (whether from external or perceived internal sources). In this way, "citizenship" becomes an instrument, or some might even say a "weapon," for the state to promote and enhance an ideological frame of identity that serves the state's interests at any given moment of historical necessity. The problematic nature of this point of view rests squarely on its need to assimilate individuality within the national as a whole. More importantly, the need exists to *justify* this same ideology as being in some way inherent or universal in order to subordinate its own citizens and even those who exist legally outside of the nation state.

Narrowing the scope of this project to the frame of Western thought and specifically to an American construction of the citizen allows us to recognize the above codifiers of citizenship in a very focused way – and to recognize that these transactional rights, privileges, and responsibilities are assumed to be "inherent" (unalienable), contradicting the fact that many other cultures have not adhered to a collective identity in the same way. Victor Turner, whose writings are commonly cited in the anthropological examination of tribal and communal social structures, identifies the liminal nature of "citizens" (or, in a more general frame, "members") of many non-

Western cultures as existing in a constant state of flux (Turner 1). In such societies, especially tribal cultures, Turner's concept of "communitas" replaces the Western ideological view of the *polis* and polity as it has developed from Greek philosophical origins. While Turner never explicitly engages the term "citizen" in his work, he instead centralizes collective identity on mere membership within a larger group, relocating the *idea* of the citizen away from a transactional nationalistic model to a more immediate sociological relationship of the individual to those around him or her in such organizational structures as the "family" or "tribe."

Jill Dolan invokes Turner's view in "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative'" when she notes that his concept allows for "a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities" (473), an experience that differs from the complex layering of national identity found in Western societies like America. In such cultures, responsibility to the others of a tribe or society are found not as the result of a transaction with their society as a state but in the more Levinasian view of "otherness." Both within and without the communal construct, actions in support of the collective develop more out of contingent necessity rather than from social understanding of and acceptance of any inherent or unalienable rights. As such these actions and the identities they create are constantly shifting in Turner's liminal state from moment to moment, day to day, within each family, each tribe.

This dissertation issues a call for a more universal, holistic understanding of the "citizen," one that looks for images of humankind more akin to the interactions of cultures mentioned above. Theatre can serve as a primary site in exploring the imaging of the citizen in its various contexts, from acting as a reifying agent for the ideological assumptions discussed above, to acting as a site for slippages or ruptures that stretch and modify the conditions of citizen status,

to inviting the outright disruption and reformation of our understanding of collective identity.

Jerzy Grotowski states it best in “The Theatre’s New Testament”:

If we really wish to delve deeply into the logic of our mind and behavior and reach their hidden layers . . . then the whole system of signs built into the performance must appeal to our experience, to the reality which has surprised and shaped us, to this language of gestures, mumblings, sounds and intonations picked up on the street [and elsewhere] – in short, all human behavior which has made an impression on us. This implies that every performance is like looking at oneself in a mirror, at our ideas and traditions, and not merely the description of what men of past ages thought and felt. (995)

Grotowski clarifies how theatre acts as the perfect frame for activist change – as a constant reflection of images of the present, the “now,” which reveal (like the mirror) the constantly shifting amalgamations of identity that have been constructed, dismantled, reinforced, or rebuilt over the centuries. Who and what a citizen is, therefore, becomes not only an ideological or political entity; rather, it enlarges (for the purposes of this discussion) to include additional images on top of the initial nationalistic and legal coding of the citizen, images that become recognizable and tangible to individuals within America who see the citizen represented every day on both stage and screen.

While the potential for this shift in philosophical point of view exists, such a challenge to the American citizen has yet to penetrate the national imagination. Because of a distinctly American belief in the natural order of collective identity, it is almost impossible for individuals, or rather subjects as Kristeva denotes them, to distance themselves from the language of the citizen concept – rather, to see themselves as individually distinct from the collective. The very word, therefore, holds a powerful semiotic meaning that includes an almost *a priori* status in the

mindset of the modern American citizen, emerging as a foundation on which our beliefs are then layered and complicated.¹

If, then, the meaning of “citizen” is one that holds such a prominent place in the American mindset, then it has effectively achieved what Todd May refers to as a “contingent reality” of the post-structural realm. Regardless of our awareness of the linguistic and historical construction of the concept, it is still difficult to move beyond this most basic of assumptions concerning both the social and political arenas. As Keith Faulks notes in *Citizenship*:

For defenders of national identity, citizenship can only be a meaningful status if connected to the idea of the nation . . . nationality matters because people *believe* that it matters. Any theory of citizenship must therefore recognise [sic] this fact, since it is nationality, defined as a shared history, political culture and a common sense of destiny, that provides us with a sense of obligation to our fellow citizens. (35-36)

We *need* to accept ourselves as individuals who are part of a greater whole. Even if the meaning of the word can be debated, we accept as fact that one *must be* a citizen in some form, tied to a nation state both legally and culturally. For Americans, the simple word “citizen” must also be connected to the nationalistic differential “of the United States,” a secondary identifier which further affirms an *a priori* understanding of meaning – the “natural” rights of democratic freedom which will be explored later in this chapter.

Proceeding from this assumed need for identification as a citizen, one may more objectively look at the differences between how cultures, primarily in the Western historical tradition, interpret this underlying assumption and craft the citizen within their own individual codes of societal normality and law. While often ignored, there are distinct, divergent views on

¹ How this is achieved has been the subject of much work in the field of political science known as “socialization.” This field asserts that all political behavior is learned through a process of cultural socialization that creates underlying meaning for children through the institutions of family, community, education and religion. For more on this note the work of Barbara A. Bardes and Robert W. Oldendick in *Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind* 71-96.

the most basic positioning of the individual (subject) between the modern American concept and its Greek origins in Plato, and even further differences between these views and the intermediate applications of citizen law in Europe from Rome to the British Empire. Noelle McAfee notes in her introduction to *Habermas, Kristeva, and Citizenship*:

. . . the democratic Greeks' views about politics and subjectivity were diametrically opposed to the moderns' views. For the Greeks, the self is "fleshed out" by the city – that is, the polis brings about a richer subjectivity – and politics is a collective search for the good life. For the moderns of the liberal tradition, selves are substances of sorts that, if they wish, might [or might not] enter into politics, and politics is the struggle between these atomistic selves for control over resources. (6)

In other words, whereas the Greeks viewed the citizen as *product* of the city-state, we in America view the nation (the United States) as product of the individual components, or "citizens," that make up its population. This point of view is reflected time and again in speeches and declarations of pundits, scholars and politicians in the American political sphere, most notably in John Kennedy's famous 1961 Inaugural line, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

The "Holistic Citizen" is a concept that challenges and expands the nationalistic model, asking for a Levinasian ethical response from any citizen of the human race toward all *others*, regardless of legal borders and national sovereignty. In discussing this idea of responsibility, Emanuel Levinas seeks to "trace the infinite which shines as the face of the other [and which] shows the ambiguous feature of somebody before whom (or to whom) and for whom I am responsible" (Waldenfels 78). The central focus of this view of citizenship rests first and foremost in a "world call" for responsibility to the other, rather than defining oneself as opposite or distinct from that otherness.

Both Habermas and Kristeva have struggled to identify this “Holistic Citizen,” and much scholarly work has been undertaken recently to explore this possibility. This concept, however, remains in the theoretical sphere and has yet to actively engage the American mindset when one identifies his- or herself as an American Citizen. The disconnect between theory and active engagement with these questions has often been relegated to the political restatement of the dominant ideological view, that a citizen “belongs” to the nation, providing sacrifice only in deference to the nation’s needs and in the earlier stated *quid-pro-quo* of duty in exchange for the image of rights. The essential difference between the dominant, traditionally accepted view of the citizen and the holistic concept is that the former functions almost exclusively as a transactional model, while the latter views both the concepts of sacrifice (duties and responsibilities) and rights as separate and non-exchangeable. With that in mind, we can begin to explore and deconstruct the rather elusive elements of citizen imagery that have erupted at various historical moments, where the term “citizen” has functioned as an instrument of assimilation, of subordination, and of ideological superiority.

This dissertation will also seek to explain how theatre and its various forms serve as site of engagement for both the nationalistic model and the Holistic Citizen and how the existence of theatre as an art form reflective of culture allows it to serve a dialectical function of both presenting the conventional position of the citizen in American culture and in subverting it at the same time. Indeed, it will be one of the principal arguments of this work that theatre can only serve as an agency of subversion precisely because it has first reinforced the traditional constructs of the citizen.²

² While it is commonly accepted in post-structural thought that all behavior is “learned” or constructed behavior, it is important to note here that this concept of theatre as agency relies heavily on the assumption that a culture’s art forms act first as a “mirror” to that culture, and only then can seek to

Ultimately, the aims of this dissertation are to connect the threads of these basic questions under the umbrella of theatrical production. These examinations will show that theatre allows for a dialogue that can project forward from its existing culture imagine new understandings of what it is to be a citizen. Historically, these understandings will be revealed through the exploration of the shifts in constructing gender, race and culture on stage and screen, and how these produced images help affect change in the cultural mindset of Americans. It is also an aim to show that, while tensions and shifts still occur within the nationalistic model of citizenship, theatre also serves as a site of agency which can bridge this traditional construct, seeking to find ground in the more universal or holistic point of view.

The Holistic Citizen and Theoretical Models

The legalistic interpretation of the “citizen” as it developed in Western thought, culminating in the mindset of current American culture, does indeed encounter limitations which confine the individual to a narrow existence within the collective whole in which he/she exists. This nationalistic view relies heavily on the idea that citizenship is “granted” under some form of providence within the structures of a nation-state, and that this position guarantees certain “rights” to each individual citizen under that protective umbrella. There is a sense that each citizen has a “duty” required of this position. In return, this responsibility acts as a demand by the citizen for protection by the government, or rather the power structure in place over the collective identity of all its citizens. In counterpoint to this perspective, however, critical thinking has recently turned its focus in both theoretical literature and discourse to the question of whether there can be a greater, more universal view of the citizen, the *holistic* citizen who exists not just under the banner of nationalistic identity but also in what Habermas and Kristeva term

stretch or change the fundamental assumptions of the culture. In this way, this concept is analogous to Lacan’s “mirror stage” in individual development, but placed instead into a macro-societal point of view.

“the public sphere” (McAfee 82-84, 161-162). Habermas especially distinguishes the public sphere from the nationalistic model when he says that the former “is not so much a physical place as it is an occurrence: any time two or more individuals come together to discuss matters of politics the public sphere takes place” (83).

In more simplistic terms, Habermas seeks to press our concept of the citizen past the legal notion into a realm which recognizes its relationship to “the generalized other.”³ The major focus of this shift, which attempts to tear down the constructed borders of national identity, moves the spotlight of thought from the “rights” of the Lockian model to a more Levinasian view of “responsibility” for “others.” One of the central problems in any discourse about alterity is that any placement of an individual or individuals within one collective identity finds them in opposition to the wants, needs and desires of others. Often, post-structuralist thought (working from Lyotard’s concept of the *Differend*) leads us to a nihilistic position, where it is impossible to engage in exchange outside of violence. Levinas, however, sought to bridge this gap in his writings through refocusing the definitions of violence away from the “relative” (Llewelyn 144), or retributational mode to a term that is “written” through the exchange between the *face* of one individual, the face of the *other* and that which passes between them. As Levinas writes:

. . . whether this is a logical or an ethical impossibility, one is tempted to answer that as regards the morsel of bread it is ethically but not logically impossible for me not to give it, to pass it on the other side, whereas it is logically impossible for me not to address my word to him or her. Is not even withholding my word, keeping silent, an acknowledgement of his or her appearing as a face? However, that acknowledgement does not circumvent violence. It is a condition of writing violence. Is there always violence therefore? If violence means falling short of my responsibility to the other, then the answer to this question must be ‘Yes.’ Not necessarily the violence of declared war, but the violence of declared peace, of saying to my neighbor ‘Shalom’ when by doing so the rights of a third party are infringed. (144)

³ For more information on this concept in relationship to Kristeva and Habermas see Crossley, 43-44.

The American mindset jealously guards its “constitutional rights” guaranteed through American citizenship, and as such holds these rights as superior to American responsibility to the rest of the world. “Violence,” under this model, cannot help but take the form of retributive difference, and “justice” is found in the rights of one collective group to take for its needs and wants from another. If one undertakes an understanding of a more holistic approach, then one must necessarily jettison the individual’s demands for these rights as paramount to one’s existence as a citizen of the United States. This is a dangerous and terrifying thought for most Americans. Because of this fear, Americans “choose” to reify, to maintain their conceptualization of the nationalistic mode of thinking about their place as citizens because it provides for them the aura of security within that framework. As Crossley notes,

[T]here is something necessary about citizenship . . . at least at the normative level; the sociological fact of our ‘mutual interference’ forces upon us the necessity to form social relations with other individuals, communities and societies. Isolation and separatism are not options for social animals, particularly when they live in complex divisions of labour [sic]. There is a choice to be made, however, between relations of domination and relations of citizenship (qua mutual recognition). We may choose the former and there are many examples where we have but there is nothing inevitable about this. If we choose citizenship, however, then we must confront the implications of its contingency; that is, the fact that one is made, not born, a citizen, and the fact that the culture of citizenship needs to be constantly nourished within the lifeworld and the public sphere. (45)

The “need” that Crossley speaks of is, in effect, the need for the rights and security promised within the nation-state contract, reified and supported by the “natural rights” of Locke.

For some theorists, however, there remains the desire to look beyond these parameters to the greater whole of human culture. This desire emerges from observations over countless ages of violence in the name of nationality and the protection of one culture’s rights over those of another set in opposition to it. Race, culture, gender and many other mitigating factors have been used as benchmarks of separation between collective units. The holistic approach to the citizen

seeks, therefore, to bridge these chasms of difference and to connect humanity in a more ethical whole. This is not an easy endeavor, as Isin and Wood note: “to make gender, ethnicity, ‘race,’ region, language or any other identity irrelevant is problematic” (13). Humans utilize difference as definition for their own identity, and the removal of these “signposts” of collective understanding threatens to make self-awareness much more difficult when the collective umbrella is removed.

The holistic citizen does not exist as a contingent reality in the present, rather it is a position of *potential* for human understanding which reflects current critical thinking. In the introduction to *Culture & Citizenship*, Nick Stevenson notes that the many theories of “social democracy and liberalism . . . also need to address the emerging cultural dimension of citizenship” (4). This cultural dimension Stevenson speaks of encompasses that which we have not addressed previously in this discussion: the *relationship* of not only individuals to their collective identity but to the collective identities of other groups and cultures. Habermas (and McAfee writing about his work) seeks to clarify this difference through semiotic assignment: the traditional nationalistic model is identified as a “system” of citizenship while the greater whole is identified as the “lifeworld” (McAfee 85). The “lifeworld” represents the collective thread of human relations, not just amongst the citizens of one nation in opposition to another (or others), but as interrelated members of *one* society, albeit fractured into thousands of subaltern realities based on any number of classifications, from the aforementioned race, gender or otherness.

To realize the concept of the holistic citizen in the actual lives of individuals who claim themselves as citizens of one country or another (and very much so for those who claim themselves as American citizens) then the very idea of this more universal view must move from the theoretical realm of study to the practical realm of “application.” Even from those of us who

claim a scholarly pursuit of the ideals of the holistic citizen, there must be the acknowledgement that we ourselves are still handcuffed to the preconceptions of our own reified thought processes as citizens of a nation-state: French theorists (who are many) naturally approach their work as citizens of one nation, with its own post-imperial lessons, duties, and rights; American theorists often place themselves in opposition to their European counterparts, many times sub-consciously identifying their “differences” with these theorists based upon the lack of understanding in democratic idealism which Americans (even theorists) tend to take for granted. As a result, even the scholarly mind struggles to break away from the paradigms of nationalistic thinking and the need for legal membership in one collective identity.

This problem marks the beginning of recent discourse in the area of cultural citizenship and the search for the holistic citizen. As we have seen, both Habermas and Kristeva have been instrumental in providing theoretical approaches to citizenship that act as a starting point for this critical discourse, yet both fall short of reaching a model of potential holism for the citizen for diverging reasons. Habermas does not take his concept of the “public sphere” far enough, refusing to deconstruct the systems of collective unity outright. Instead he leaves them in their contingent places and seeks to qualify their relationships and bridge the gaps between them *as groups*, not necessarily between the *individuals* who make up those groups. Habermas still returns to a pre-conditional state of the individual in relation to collective identity which supercedes the individual-to-individual dynamic (McAfee 54-55). McAfee, Isin & Wood, Faulks and others writing recently on this subject tend to favor Kristeva’s approach to subjectivity (based on its construction in language) over Habermas, but even here they find difficulty in the broadening of the holistic concept due to the very fact that Kristeva’s own deconstruction is mired in the linguistic parameters of nation-state thinking (15).

An innovation in this thinking, however, occurred in the 1990's in the work of Chantal Mouffe, especially in two articles "Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community" and "Democratic Politics Today," both in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*. Mouffe seeks to reconstruct the nomenclature of "democratic" to restore it to a notion of the "radical," "an articulating principle that affects the different subject positions of the social agent, while allowing for a plurality of specific allegiances and for the respect of individual liberty" (Mouffe "Democratic Citizenship" 235). Thus, for Mouffe, the concept of citizenship acts as a "social agent"⁴ which is not seen as "a unitary subject but as the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions, constructed within specific discourses and always precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those subject positions" (237).

Mouffe's innovation, therefore, rests in her identifying citizenship as something far more fragile in its ties to the nation-state. We assume that we are human beings bound to citizenship as part of our own individual identities. But, as with Kristeva and Habermas before, current theorists in this area also break with Mouffe as well – Isin and Wood challenge her "conflation of citizenship with identity" (12), while McAfee finds fault with her position, writing as a feminist which places all of her discourse in the narrow confines of an "essentialist notion of women's subjectivity" (McAfee 118). Once again the search for a concrete definition of the "citizen" creates a subaltern dialectic of one group or collective identity as oppositional to all "others." The conundrum that faces theorists in approaching this concept is thus laid bare: any approach which tries to first *identify* collective identity in a nation-state, or even in a collective grouping of individuals as Mouffe discusses them, creates what Isin and Wood term "Global Diasporas:"

⁴ See Isin and Wood on Mouffe, 12-13.

Modern citizenship originates with territory, with birth and/or residence in a particular nation-state. Before modern nation-states, citizens were members of a multiplicity of intersecting and overlapping polities ranging from guilds to leagues. There was no such idea as today's United Nations Charter assertion that 'everyone has the right to a nationality.' In modernity, everyone must belong to a state, with all the positive and negative connotations such a condition implies. The origins of the nation-state were necessarily accompanied by 'founding fathers,' who identified the political membership and determined the first terms of citizenship. However, the same processes of imperialism and mercantile capitalism that established the nation-state in the first place set into motion another phenomenon that would challenge such foundations. Historic levels of immigration, particularly from non-Western to Western countries, introduced difference into the tidy homogeneous identities that underwrote early modern citizenship. (50)

The very nature of the nationalistic model seeks to reify its *own position* as sacrosanct while at the same time creating the conditions that call for the holistic citizen.

Secondarily, however, Isin and Wood also indicate another interesting idea in the above passage, one that connects to and builds on Mouffe's suppositions: the tying of citizenship to the nation state is at best a tenuous "suturing" of reality, one which despite its accepted normativity is in reality extremely debatable. While the "multiplicity" spoken of still maintains a need for collective groupings, these "overlapping" units of membership that existed in ages previous to the development of the nation-state concept demonstrate the *potential* for difference in understanding one's place as a citizen. Could not then a position exist which removes all need for legalistic definition and shifts the defining characteristics away from "membership" and guaranteed rights to the image of individuals as connected holistic beings whose main identification comes instead from their responsibilities toward others?

The hope for a positioning of the citizen within the holistic frame is one that can be attacked as pure idealism, or as an unachievable dream. But any imagining begins from this position, and the desire to envision the "holistic citizen" is made essential by the very problems and ethical issues that arise from the existence of the nationalistic point of view. Indeed, it is

even possible to stretch the imagination to see forward to a notion of “citizenship” that is removed not only from the nation-state but from the physical body as well if the parameters for such move completely to the realm of ethical responsibility. In this way, the citizen is brought more in line with the Levinasian concept of the “face.”⁵ Here, Levinas calls for an individual to consistently identify oneself in relation to the other(s), and in this way assume a *responsibility toward that “other”* (Levinas *Ethics* 100). Once re-envisioned under the holistic model, the age-old restrictions of body, gender, race, etc. are erased as the “citizen” becomes defined as one “face” in relation to all others in a site of responsibility and sacrifice.⁶

Ultimately, the envisioning of a holistic citizen is both a product of and an answer to the limitations of understanding that accompany the traditionally accepted and constantly reified position of the “American” citizen within the narrow definitions of membership in the nation-state of the United States. One of the most pressing problems arises here from a misuse of the very concept of “universality.” The American mindset believes its nationalistic citizenship to already be holistic and universal. Rather, our concept of the rights and privileges accorded under the legal membership in such an evolved democracy *should be* the same for all humankind. Because of this misconception, American citizens do indeed claim a position of superiority in opposition to all others who are not citizens. Like the Roman and British Empires of earlier Western development, the American citizen and American culture in general thus fall into the realm of imperial colonialism, attempting to enforce their concepts of citizenship on other

⁵ While the concept of the “face” carries with it multiple understandings, the underlying concept which applies here is how any individual presents themselves to others as a “face” of otherness to that other. Levinas *Ethics*, 99-102.

⁶ See also Levinas *Existence*, 91 and Bataille, 128 for more on the concept of responsibility in relation to sacrifice.

cultures. The more holistic view expressed in this introduction is thus further nullified in the mind of the average American citizen because of this.

Theatre as Active Site for the Engagement of the Citizen

The active performance of discourse through the agency of theatre connects the tissues between these disparate readings of the “citizen.” Art in general acts as both a mirror and as an activating agent for cultural self-awareness. Theatre as a specific art form undertakes these operations because it not only reflects a given culture through its textual recreation of meaning but also through the positioning of individuals (belonging to and reflecting culture in their own identities) in space on the stage or screen.⁷ According to one school of thought, theatrical performance is born out of ritualized action, wherein mimetic creation or recreation of events is given meaning through their production by performers to an audience. An audience’s understanding of that meaning is thus constructed out of *both* the intentions of the performed (and performers) and through the cultural semiotic connections the audience as a whole and as individuals make to the performance. For example, a theatrical performance of *Inherit the Wind* would, if performed in any American city would connect the audience to the concepts of individual rights previously discussed under the nationalistic model of the citizen, using the forms of “law” and “education” as semiotic signposts that these audiences would automatically understand. If, however, this play were to be performed in the exact same manner for a Japanese audience, regardless of the translation, the ability of the play to communicate the same meanings

⁷ Much has been made of the distinctiveness of theatre as separate from film and television as art forms. ‘Purists’ resist any linking of the recorded, retransmitted forms to the umbrella of “theatre.” Indeed, in “Modern Theatre Does Not Take (a) Place,” Kristeva notes that she believes “theatre” and “cinema” to be separate, but that one day cinema “will eliminate theatre, if not become more definitively integrated into it” (Kristeva “Modern Theatre” 280). The assumption of this dissertation is that film and television are already an integrated part of the theatrical whole, since both film and television developed out of theatrical tradition and all three share the goals of *mimesis* as their essential function, as well as much in the way of identical artistry. The division between the live performance and the recorded is thus minimalized.

and understanding would be negated by the differences in cultural conceptualization between American and Japanese audiences.

The Western concept of theatre's function is dual: to serve as an instrument of education and as an instrument of leisure. The origination of this dual-form construct lies in Aristotle's *Poetics*. While most of his work is logistical in its nature, dealing with what Aristotle observed as elemental in the construction of good poetry, the *Poetics* turns to intentionality when it discusses the idea of "thought." Here, Aristotle points out: "Under 'thought' fall all the effects that have to be deliberately and consciously achieved through the use of speech. Elements of this endeavor are (1) proof and refutation and (2) the simulation of feelings such as pity, fear, anger and the like" (Aristotle 52). The first concept, "proof and refutation," is the progenitor of theatre as education, being a concept which indicates the dialectical nature of theatrical discourse and its effects on the "thought" of the audience. The second, essentialized as "catharsis," prefigures *leisure* (which Aristotle deals with in relation to music) in that it places the focus of intention on the feelings of the audience, moving thought to the reactive realm. Aristotle makes this distinction in Western tradition even clearer through the categorization of theatre into tragedy and comedy. The first is given preeminence and placed firmly in the arena of the "proof/refutation" approach, with the cathartic aspect remaining important yet still subjugated to the first intention.

The Western tradition would continue to struggle with the balance between these dual intentions for the next two millennia. Is theatre primarily for the artistic education of its culture or for the enjoyment of its audience? While this question is rightly the more detailed subject of a dissertation in its own right, for the purposes of this project, it should be assumed that the primary condition of theatre (at least in the Western sense of the word) is to accomplish both of

these purposes at the same time. More importantly, theatre *uses* both intentions to act as agency in cultural reflection and change. The continual application of the cathartic, leisurely intention allows for theatre to remain a site of interest to audiences, irrespective of their desire to be engaged in “thought” during the process. Meanwhile, deeper meaning can be expressed and represented to an audience through the dramatic production. Even critics who question theatre as a viable art form acknowledge this ability in the Western theatre. Kristeva notes:

Nevertheless, when a significance in play – interplay – does manage to come to light through an irresistible scopic drive (i.e., to see, to act, to know), it currently undergoes two fates: either it does without language (*la language*), and, like the double of Artaud’s theatre, implements color, sound, and gesture – painting, dance, music in the syncretic work of the silent theatre; or, it speaks a discourse of verisimilitude, made up of stereotypes and edged with debility, as Beckett and Ionesco knowingly did, as any self-respecting director hints as doing with a malice that aims at putting the text in quotes so that it thus becomes a reported discourse, a quotation from an outdated code, feeble, just good enough to make some communal sign, but debased. (“Modern Theatre” 279)

Despite her obvious disdain for the cathartic side of theatre (“just good enough to make some communal sign”), Kristeva recognizes that theatre still holds the potential for discourse, although her own beliefs envision this possibility only when text is removed and the meaning is relayed on the more basic visual level. Such an operation debases text as completely irrelevant, an unfortunate failing in post-structuralism when trapped in Lyotardian language games. However it succeeds in reinforcing the Western concept of the dualistic nature of theatre in which engagement (“education”) and cathartic entertainment do not act as an effective agency in and of themselves.

This function of agency is directly tied to the dualistic structure of theatre in the first place. Reification of the accepted “norms” of citizenship occurs through both processes of the theatre. Cathartically, American citizens are reinforced in their self-images on two levels: 1.) the

purging of emotional response through theatre creates a site that allows the American citizen to feel “safe” in the context of the “real” world, transferring anxiety and fear to the mimetic world of stage and screen; and, 2.) theatre can act as a cathartic control over its audiences (and thus the majority of citizens) by reinforcing which emotional responses *should be made* within the context of a nation-state identity.

The production of theatre signifies more than just one ideological position concerning the image of the citizen; rather, it engages a complex stratification of differing desires and needs within the nation state - a layering which reveals tensions in American theatre between a dominant position of the nationalistic model (transactional and separating in its view) and less recognizable desires exhibited by individuals who claim citizenship in the United States. In some way these tensions are at constant play at any time an image of the citizen appears physically onstage or screen in the *production* of theatre, because that very production rests in a discourse of “text” (of the play, film, actor’s body, etc.) that is read from a desired point-of-view of the audience and its members as citizens. As John Rouse notes:

. . . post-modern practice also reveals a broader understanding of [intertextuality], in which it designates a text’s “participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture.”⁸ In this sense, all the signifying systems used by theatre and drama are always already a part of other cultural texts. The codes of these other texts help condition the writing of either dramatic or performance text, just as their meanings pass into the texture of the new text’s significations. (154-155)

In simpler language Rouse is claiming that theatre acts as both the creator of image and as the enforcer of image. As creator of image, theatre acts to offer alternative positions and signification of the meaning of a “citizen,” while always battling with the existing dominant texts that serve to restate and foundationalize the more commonly accepted views of the citizen.

⁸ Rouse quotes from Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs, Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, 103.

Theatre therefore constantly refers back to the ideas of inherency of rights and the transacted responsibilities and duties of the citizen.

The Aristotelian idea of “proof” and “refutation” and its theatre-as-education evolution likewise serves a reifying function. Existing power structures and accepted codes of legal, moral and communal behavior can be placed in a dialectical position so that those ideas that challenge the overall accepted collective identity can be “refuted,” or rather diminished even on the subconscious level. Through the mere act of utilizing recognizable semiotic signposts to connect with its audience, a theatrical performance reifies that meaning in the audience’s mindset. For instance, when any film depicts a presidential election, regardless of what twists in dramatic tension are built into the film, the mere event of the presidential election as a process which is *supposed* to represent the rights and ideals of American democracy to its citizens is reinforced in a visual ritualistic way. Secondly, the act of viewing theatre conveys the Western nationalistic notion of the citizen because it borrows from its Greek origins the idea that “freedom of speech” is being strengthened through the participation of the polis in the arts.

I explore Aristotle in connection to theatre here for two reasons: one, modernistic Western thought desires to see its constitutional and historical rights, as we shall see in Chapter 2, as the evolutionary product of philosophical thought which has reached a summit, an epoch of achievement in individual rights that is reinforced by the weight of its historical precedents (especially in the lineage of Greece); and, two, because an Aristotelian connection exists between the nature of the performed (text) and the audience. Marvin Carlson writes of this connection in *Theories of the Theatre*:

Aristotle constructed “the first extremely powerful poetic-political system for intimidation of the spectator, for elimination of the ‘bad’ or illegal tendencies of the audience.”⁹ The two divisions imposed on the earliest theatre support

⁹ Carlson quotes here from Augusto Boal, *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, xiv.

this system: the first, dividing actors and public, converts the latter into spectators, unable to influence the course of action; the second divides the protagonists, representing the aristocrats, from the chorus, representing the people. The spectators are encouraged to feel empathy . . . to recognize . . . their own anti-social urges . . . [and] are led to reject those urges. This is the basic function of catharsis, the purging of antisocial elements. (475)

The Aristotelian model stands as an archaic view of theatre, therefore, which continues to influence our acceptance of how contemporary theatre works to employ cultural normativity as a dominant discourse with its audience. To resist the dominant image of the citizen on stage and screen is to position oneself as “anti-social,” and thus dangerous to the stability of the nation. This train of thought evokes both reason for and excuse for adherence to a simplistic nationalistic model of the citizen as presented in theatre, and stands in opposition to the idea of theatre as an activist site (Brecht, Grotowski) which exists to challenge political and economic structures of the nation state and any hierarchies that inhabit that state. Theatre in the U.S. becomes a schizophrenic apparatus for image creation, constantly striving to resist dominant political ideologies while at the same time continually reinforcing them as well.

Given these conditions, how then does theatre act as agency for subversion in its engagement with the idea of the citizen that can separate itself from the constant reinforcing of America’s dominant ideological view? If one accepts that theatre acts as a mirror to the existing belief systems of its given culture, then one must also accept that it acts as a mirror to the tensions that exist within that culture. The Levinasian “Face” is revealed, whether we like it or not, in whatever way it is being presented to the “generalized otherness” of the rest of the world. For the American citizen this “face” becomes the image of superiority. Like a mirror, the reflection of culture shows the flaws of that “face” as well, and while preconditioned acceptance of one’s position as a citizen allows the audience to view themselves through the lens of theatre only in respect to that nationalistic frame, it does act (if only subconsciously) to show the

potential for change in perspective concerning systems of beliefs – in this case concerning the concepts surrounding citizenship. Theatre, therefore, acts as an agency that moves *ahead* of the culture it reflects, revealing potential cultural change, and, since theatre remains a mimetic endeavor, the re-imagining of the very conditions and situations accepted as “normal” by that culture.

Does this employment of theatre as an agency of re-imagination bridge the gap between the accepted nationalistic model of the citizen and the holistic point of view? Yes, it does – but on a limited basis. For the most part, however, theatre has instead served as a somewhat lesser agent of change within the existing structures of the nationalistic concept of citizenship, allowing for shifts in application of that model (extension of rights in respect to gender, race, etc.) without reflecting monumental change towards the holistic concept. Theatre is thus a *slow* agency of subversion, needing to first reify images of citizenship within existing accept constructs *before* moving ahead to a site of potential radical change. In exploring theatre in direct relation to the two hundred plus years of history of the United States, I will therefore attempt to show how this process has taken place – first, by examining the reification process of the traditional, nationalistic model, then by investigating theatre as a site which has produced change *within* that codified model of American citizenship, and then finally by looking at how theatre has attempted to indeed move far enough ahead in its re-imagining of the citizen to show the potential shift to a holistic model of the citizen.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this investigation will connect the concept of “citizenship” to its performance and creation through theatre. It is important to note that this dissertation does not attempt to explicate *all* theatrical production, even within a specific period

of time, as indicative of the tensions and shifts being examined herein. Rather, the purpose is to build the exploration of the citizen in three specific stages: 1.) to examine the theoretical and pre-American historical evolution of the dominant ideological view of the citizen, as occurs in Chapters 1 and 2; 2.) to visit flashpoints, or moments of contestation, during the last two centuries of American drama (flashpoints of selected productions and texts that will be explored in Chapters 2, 3 and 4); and, 3.) to look for a larger potential rupture in the citizen image in Chapter 5, which will stand as the central and most important chapter in attempting to offer new views of a universal, or “holistic,” citizen.

Building on the theoretical models discussed in Chapters 1, each succeeding chapter shall delineate, through close readings of both performed and written texts, how theatre first acts as reifying agent. Next, I shall investigate how theatre acts as a subversive site, promoting change within the overall nationalistic model without threatening the core foundations of the model itself. Finally, I intend to show how theatre holds the potential (both realized and unrealized) to move our thinking beyond the limitations and restrictions of the nationalistic model into the frame of the “Holistic Citizen.” These close readings will be applied to the historical contexts and moments to which they are connected, thus engaging the historical contingencies that seek certain necessary definitions of the citizen at those moments in time.

The methodology will also examine the tensions that emerge between a dominant ideological positioning of the citizen and those moments in text (both written and performed) in which a challenge is made, either intentionally or unintentionally, against the limitations to citizenship that have occurred in the performance of these images. This work shall also seek to place the readings of these texts in dialogue with a variety of theoretical models that have influenced theatre both as a site a dominant ideological reading of the citizen (the nationalistic

model) and as a site of contestation of the definition of citizenship. The major chapters will therefore be organized to first examine the tensions that have existed and continue to exist in American theatre, but it is important to note that these historical explorations are in service to the ultimate goal of this work: the call for an elimination of foundational citizen imagery on stage and screen, a call that is to be explored specifically in Chapter 5.

In pursuing this methodology, this dissertation will look predominantly at images seen on stage and screen and written in the dramatic texts of American theatre. Owing much of its origins to the Western tradition of drama that progresses from Greece forward, and owing especially to the philosophically “democratic” images of English drama that preceded it, the American theatre and its subordinate media forms have sought both intentionally and unintentionally to create an image of the American Citizen that is identifiably separate and distinct from the otherness that is those who are not citizens of the United States. It is through the exploration of these images - how they react and engage the concepts of duty, rights and responsibilities - that this work shall argue for the ultimate need to move to the Holistic Citizen and away from the limitations and restrictions of the nationalistic mode.

Organization of Chapters

Chapter 2, titled “The Evolution of the American Citizen and Early American Theatre as Reifying Agent,” will first identify the evolution of the concepts of the nationalistic model of the citizen in Western thought, and how this view has become so engrained in the American mindset. The second section will show how theatre and its subordinate forms have acted in support of American notions of citizenship. Many of these assumptions are, as has been noted, accepted as “reality” when they may more accurately be portrayed as “contingent” within the constructed framework of American culture. Two major areas must be looked at within this

section: theatre as a socializing agent (borrowing again from the field of socialization within political science) and subsequently how theatre emerges as a site of contingent reality, ultimately becoming an institutionalized power structure within overall American society.¹⁰ In the development of this model, we shall explore how this point of view assumes a dominant ideological position.

Moving into closer readings of theatrical texts, the next section, “Theatre as Reifying Agent in Colonial and Post-Colonial Theatre in the eighteenth century in America,” will turn more specifically to textual readings of theatrical performance during the first century and a half of American history. Beginning with the distinctions between the British colonial point of view and early American drama (*Battle of Bunker Hill*, *The Contrast*, etc.) this section will look at the emergence of the “Yankee” character as archetype for the American citizen and how the “rights” of the nationalistic model are represented in these pieces. Subsequently, Chapter 2 will explore more specifically the tensions between the development of natural rights and the duties and responsibilities in “war plays” and other post-colonial drama. Moving forward, the changes in citizenship perspective and representation will be examined through the development of melodrama.

Chapter 3 will concentrate on how the twentieth century further defined the now-reified image of the citizen on stage, and how the advent of film and television helped to socialize further the accepted foundations of these concepts in the minds of all Americans. The first section will look at how form in theatre works in the creation of new space for the broadening of citizen signifiers through the images created, and how these tensions play off against the foundational trends of Realism as a dominant theatrical structure in this century. The second section of Chapter 3 will focus on the growing representation of the “American Dream” in

¹⁰ This section will owe much to both the work of Richard Rorty and Michel Foucault.

theatre during the first half of the twentieth century. While most people, upon hearing the term “American Dream,” flash immediately to Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, this section will more closely look at how theatre first developed the capitalistic notions of this “dream” in plays leading up to and including the 1950’s, a development which Miller ultimately was intending to subvert with *Salesman*. Lee’s *Inherit the Wind*, for example, as well as the parlor-room comedies of Moss and Hart are among the theatrical productions that will be looked to for their roles as reifying works concerning the Lockian “rights” of man that lie behind the so-called “American Dream.” The goal of this chapter will be to examine how the definition of the citizen becomes conflated with a notion of an “American” character.

Chapter 4, titled “Physicality and Culture: Inscribing the Citizen on the Body,” will explore American theatrical production as a subversive site, concentrating on issues of ethnicity (race) and gender as exemplifiers of cultural *otherness* within the bounds of the United States. Chapter 4 will thus examine how theatre views the image of the “generalized other” (according to Kristeva). The question of “inclusion” within a dominant ideological frame versus a more radicalized challenge to the nationalistic model will also be undertaken, especially in placing the works of “mainstream” authors such as August Wilson into dialogue with such “subversive” theatrical works like Baraka’s *The Dutchman* and the plays of Suzi-Lori Parks.

Chapter 5 is the culmination of this examination, shifting from an historical analysis to the task of questioning how theatre imagines the potential of the holistic citizen through its ability to look ahead beyond current conditions, to a future in which the nationalistic citizen may be re-imaged without the conditional pillars of the American citizen as outlined earlier in this introduction. This chapter will subsequently explore a second level of the holistic citizen where even the human body may be removed from the equation of citizen status. In this particular

instance, the realm of “science fiction” (the very name of which implies how unrealistic the modern mindset views this potential) becomes the site where theatre, film and television turn to images of the holistic citizen as it *may be* constructed with the possibilities of the human “face” existing not just in relation to itself, but to the non-human (alien, robotic) “face” as well.

The Conclusion will restate the problems of citizenship as performed by theatre and reaffirm the purpose of the work herein to call for ultimate change in the way we theatrically produce images of citizens on stage and screen. This dissertation asks its readers to at least step away from our own preconceived notions and to see more directly the potential for holistic citizenship. The challenge of imaging the citizen responds to the historical moments of the past, present, and future, seeking to find in the holistic citizen a concept which theatre can present as an option to the dangers of ideological positioning and adherence to imaginary “inherency” of a national model.

Importance of This Investigation

The importance of the discussion of citizenship at the present time is obvious when one looks at reactions of American citizens in response to the events of September 11, 2001 as well as to the subsequent wars being fought by America in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in multiple locations as part of the more generalized “War on Terror.” Time and again, the question of whether a citizen is abrogating his or her “rights” when he or she dares to question the authority of the U.S. government to wage these wars has come into play in the recent years and months. The case of Jose Padilla, an American citizen (by legal standing) charged as a potential terrorist and held without access to the legal rights assumed for a citizen, highlights the essential limitations of the dominant ideological position concerning the citizen. In the end, one is only a citizen if our government says so, and the government as an institution has the power to deny our

so-called unalienable rights in the face of what it deems to be the security of the collective whole. To challenge our current position as “bulwark” of democratic idealism is to be a “traitor,” or rather one who is violating the *quid-pro-quo* of the nationalistic model which ties the rights of citizenship to the defense of that nation-state’s security.

Indeed, much debate has been made of the willingness of American citizens to give up some of their rights under the auspices of national security. Thus America stands at a crossroads where we may be seeing a shift *backwards* rather than forwards, returning us to the concept of “divine rights” (as we shall explore at the outset of Chapter 2). We have also seen a rising tide challenging “Hollywood” (which stands in as a synonym for theatrical arts as a whole) for its “liberalism” and “un-patriotic” biases. Therefore, instead of theatrical production undertaking the risks involved in promoting holistic or subversive images of the “citizen,” artists are finding themselves under increased pressure to utilize their art form only as agency for the reification of traditional views of this subject. Given these present conditions, a study such as this is paramount at this time in keeping open many of the questions about how we view ourselves as citizens in the face of the “generalized other” that represents the rest of the world.

In the end, the only way to escape the cycle of violence that we are witnessing in the world today is to move beyond our limited understanding of our collective identities as oppositional: difference must be removed as the defining condition of “citizenship” that places ourselves as American as *other*, and indeed superior, to all other national and cultural identities. We cannot overcome these differences without a new approach, a new frame through which to look at our positions not as “citizens” of the United States but as Holistic Citizens of mankind. It is my hope that this dissertation may serve as a call to theatrical artists to seek the potentials outlined in the coming chapters and to use this art form as a starting point for this shift in

imaging the citizen outside of the dominant ideological positioning that creates the nationalized “American” as an “elite” both in reference to other Americans and to non-Americans (others) around the world. This is a call that mirrors the place of theatre as envisioned by Dolan in “Utopian Performative:”

Audiences are compelled to gather with others, to see people perform live, hoping, perhaps, for moments of transformation that might let them reconsider and change the world outside the theatre... Perhaps part of the desire to attend theatre and performance is to reach for something better, for new ideas about how to be and how to be with each other. I believe that theatre and performance can articulate a common future, one that’s more just and equitable, one in which we can all participate more equally, with more chances to live fully and contribute to the making of culture. (455)

Only through the continued theatrical representation of a more liminal and ethical view of the citizen can we approach an acceptance by our audiences of the necessity for striving for such a position in the first place. We must therefore deconstruct the “citizen” in these pages, stripping away the hazy layers of contextual image that are employed to create the citizen as an instrument of ideology and reposition our own understanding of what it means to be part of a collective identity.

CHAPTER 2

THE EVOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN CITIZEN AND THEATRE AS REIFYING AGENT IN EARLY AMERICAN DRAMA

Engaging the citizen as a theatrically produced image requires us to explore how that image becomes a site for constant struggle. In essence, what I explore here is the contest between ideas and ideologies, where the understanding of our collective identity has been created, challenged, and re-created throughout the history of our country. This contest, however, does not begin with the founding of one nation, but instead originates in political philosophy dating back to Greece. The concept of the “citizen” is, therefore, a construct of history, which at different times shifted and reacted to the moment at hand, reflecting the needs and desires of both individuals and groups at various points of time. As I begin this exploration of the historical tensions of the theatrically imaged citizen, it is my intention that this evolution of ideological position will reiterate the basic problem of assumed inherency of the rights and privileges as discussed in Chapter 1, and that as this work culminates it will seek to show a way to more fully rupture or explode the citizen as an accepted image in theatre.

Americans tend to operate (not universally but as a majority) under an attitude that accepts our status as citizens, an attitude that presumes the transactional relationship outlined in Chapter 1 – a *quid-pro-quo* of “freedoms” and “unalienable” rights (life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness), granted in exchange for duty to the nation. Furthermore, we assume these rights to be inherent, “divinely” endowed upon ourselves as reward for the legalistic codification of citizenship in the United States. We do not simply accredit our position to a mere legal notion of residency within an organization structure of a nation, but instead expand that understanding with multiple beliefs as to exactly what that position means. The concept of the citizen becomes, for us, an amalgamation of images that assumes these “unalienable” rights and duties and also

enlarges them to include other characteristics, such as strength, masculinity, pride and even religiosity.

How did we come to accept these definitions of the duties, rights and privileges associated with our status as Americans? More importantly, how did we come to accept the limitations to our collective identity that, as we have already seen, tend to oppress any real hope for exchange with and ethical responsibility towards those who are not American citizens? The first section of this chapter seeks to answer these questions by identifying the accepted, linear evolution of what led to these beliefs. Following upon this, we shall explore more directly and specifically how the American drama has served to reinforce these concepts during the initial century of American theatrical history.

The Development of the American Citizen

The concept of citizenship holds a dominant position in the socio-political context of America at the start of the twenty-first century. Within the dominant current view of citizenship lies an assumption which is inherently problematic: American citizens hold a collective sense of supremacy in relation to the rest of the world, a world which is viewed as *other* and therefore somehow less than American. We presume that we have achieved the pinnacle of evolutionary development in “democracy,” a system that grants “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” In researching scholarly views on citizenship and its understanding in American culture, I have identified a trend which affirms and supports this superior point of view. Much recent academic work has focused not on the underlying meaning of the citizen but rather on the necessity of *teaching* (pedagogically) the concept of the “Democratic Citizen” as an essential part of our national educational mandate – to promote the inherent nature of the transactional model as not

only acceptable *within* American education, but as a valued concept to be taught *to others* (non-Americans) as well.

In a 2003 symposium on the “Citizen” presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago, one particular paper, “We the People . . . Project Citizen,” focused on the civic education of Taiwanese middle school children. From the start, the project removed the legalistic position of the American citizen from the frame of the argument, yet the inherent understanding of the dominance of this model was upheld for the spread of this ideological position. The author Show-Mann Liou states:

Preparation of democratic citizens is the unshirkable responsibility of the public school; the civic mission has long been acknowledged as a priority by the public and academic community. The Committee of Ten in 1892 and the report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in 1918 affirmed citizenship as one of the cardinal principles of education. Likewise, the Cortina report of 1945 asserted that the purpose of schools is to cultivate in the largest number of future citizens an appreciation for both the responsibilities of, and the benefits derived from, liberal democracy. (4)

Liou assumes the transactional nationalistic model as an ultimate goal here, even in the education of non-Americans (Taiwanese). Liou’s essay continues by arguing that liberal democratic ideals of the American model of citizenship hold a “preeminence” of position clearly as the evolutionary product of the struggle for national identity in Western governmental structures (10-11). That Liou quotes educational models of civic teaching from 1892, 1918, and 1945 indicates an uncritical acceptance of these claims’ foundational nature, and indeed the author reinforces this stance by quoting from the Reagan era’s *A Nation At Risk* report (1983), emphasizing citizenship education as essential to the maintenance of the nation state that is the United States.

Countering the assumptions seen in Liou’s work is Homi Bhabha, who writes in *Nation to Narration*:

What I want to emphasize in that large and liminal image of the nation with which I began is a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it. It is an ambivalence that emerges from the growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the ‘origins’ of nation as a sign of the ‘modernity’ of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality. (i.)

The concept is, as he puts it, a continually shifting one (liminal), arguing against the sort of linear modernism that prevails in the dominant ideological model. However, citizenship remains an imaged concept which begs one to either accept a dominant structure of transaction or to resist it because of a collective need to believe in itself as “foundationally” correct. Bhaba asks us to reject this appeal to a linear, evolutionary acceptance of our governmental and societal structures and to see them as continually shifting constructs.

Americans find it easier to accept the limitations and ideological restrictions of the more dominant view of citizenship, for it allows us to believe that being a citizen of the United States offers us the most *complete* form of citizenship. Yet at the same time, *otherness* (in the form of non-legalistic Americanism status) demands an acceptance of the model of our democracy as presumptively superior to all other forms of national identity. Ascribing to this ideological stance creates a feeling of power and dominance, one that transfers to the individual an understanding of American citizenship in an institutionalized form (the educational imperative), engendering separatism and elitism amongst those lucky enough to be born or “naturalized”¹ as U.S. citizens. Foucault summarizes this acceptance of inherent “truth” in a lecture from 1980:

This notion of the government of men by truth . . . Elaborating this notion means displacing things a little in relation to the now overworn and tired theme of power-knowledge . . . If you like, there are in general two successive displacements: then, from the notion of dominant ideology to that of power-knowledge and now, a second displacement from the notion of knowledge-power to the notion of government by the truth . . . (January 9, 1980)

¹ The very term for the adoption of legal citizen standing, “naturalization,” implies an inherent “truth” in nature to the rights and privileges of U.S. citizen status.

The “power of knowledge” lies in the assumption of the historical Western philosophical tract tradition that truth is “knowledge.” The accumulated history of democratic ideals from Greece to Locke now grant citizens power through continued reiteration of their acceptance as “foundational.” This assumption is transposed from philosophical thought to power accorded the government through the “truth” of its inherent representation of those ideals. Subsequently, “knowledge” reinforces itself as a dominant ideology, through the nation’s social and political institutions, onto U.S. citizens as they are taught what their place is within the collective national state. In the simplest terms, we accept “democracy” and “citizenship” as inherently good and evolutionarily superior because we believe these ideals to be the product of centuries of intellectual knowledge.

This presumptive stance assumes that all members of the broader world should somehow be jealous or desirous of U.S. citizenship – a presumption echoed time and again since Sept. 11, 2001 by those who claim that all hatred of the United States must be based upon the construct that “they hate us for our freedom.” This statement does not represent a singular stance articulated by the present administration (although the quote has certainly been made by President Bush on numerous occasions), but is reinforced as a dominant conviction through institutions that repeat the phrase over and over (i.e. through the media, schools and civic organizations). The rest of the world is thus classified as *other* to our status as American Citizens. “Citizen” therefore signifies the difference between “us” and “them,” evoking the unspoken, unwritten reality of how we view being American citizens.

For Americans, the greatest danger to our self-awareness of both individual and collective identity arises from the possibility that our system of government, and thus its model of citizenship, may not be the “end-all-beat-all” of democratic evolution. To challenge this

notion of privilege would undermine and ultimately destroy the justification for our economic and military dominance of other nationalities. It would also call into question the security that Americans believe to be their innate “freedom,” a security that is in no way mirrored by the realities of the world today. As Daniel Hellinger and Dennis Judd write in *The Democratic Façade*, American Democracy is at its best a “representational republic,” and at its worst a “collective of elites” (2). Americans do not have the right to vote directly for the Presidency, but instead are nominally represented through their Congressional delegates, a representation which has become so heavily weighted towards special interest groups, PACS and lobbyists (or rather anyone who can purchase influence) that true democracy simply does not exist in modern America.

The self-convinced belief in the “citizen” status of America, however, continues to be strong – perhaps because we as Americans are unwilling to relinquish this collective identity, or perhaps because the *image* of democracy continues to be performed in daily rituals, from elections, to the votes of congress, to the saying of the pledge of allegiance in schoolrooms across the land. *Equality* is perhaps the most important aspect of this image of democracy, an ideal which traces its roots to Thomas Hobbes’ Sixteenth Century works:

Nature hath made men so equall [sic], in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there bee found one man sometimes manifestly stronger inbody, or of quicker in mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himselfe any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. (Hobbes 63)²

“Equality” is a right granted to the American Citizen, exclusive of all “others” who cannot claim the same position. An individual, in this ideological frame, only truly becomes a “citizen” when

² Reprinted in Faulks, *Citizenship*, 22-23.

his or her own equality is *claimed*. In all too many instances, the legal position of being an American citizen is used to support that claim of equality.

How, then, did we come to this singularly privileged perspective of what it means to be an American Citizen? Bhabha states “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (i.) The *image* we see of ourselves as citizens becomes far more vivid and concrete than any original legal definition; it feeds upon itself, changing, growing, or shrinking according to the contingent circumstances of the historical moment. As already discussed, the most common conception of U.S. citizens rests in the confidence that our positions as such are the result of an evolutionary process, one that finds its origins in Greek classicism. Greece is often cited as the “cradle of democracy,” a term which serves to support the idea of a linear, evolutionary process. This embryonic development of “democracy” then carries through (at least in the well-taught and consistently reified lessons of American civics and history classes) to Rome, then to the composition of the Magna Carta and legal establishment of citizen rights, and finally into the Western revolutions of the eighteenth century (America and France) that created the modern democratic model.

Needless to say, much of the rest of the world is very consciously left out of this linear, “direct” path to modern democracy. Exclusion of “otherness” from the Western frame thus calls on Americans to exercise their “responsibilities” in spreading democracy (specifically our concept of such) to those of who “do not have it.” This missionary zeal is evident in the constant barrage of media pundits and political justifications calling for a “democratization” of Iraq and the Middle East, is constantly reinforced by the unswerving opinion of the “average” American Citizen that he or she must be the model of ultimate success in the development of democracy.

Before “democracy” became synonymous with “representative government” and the “right of consent” it was supposedly established as a *direct* form of government by the citizens of the Greek city-state of Athens. In the words of J.A.O. Larsen in *Representative Government in Greek and Roman History*, Athens secured direct governance “by the use of primary assemblies in which all adult, active, male citizens had the right to take part” (2). Immediately, one major aspect in this perception of democracy draws notice: all *male* citizens, which in the context of Athens not only excluded women in the polis of the city-state but also slaves as well. In other words, fully two-thirds of the *residents* (a word that retains exclusivity from citizenship) of the Athenian city-state were not considered part of the body politic. The very “cradle of democracy,” as it were, thus established citizenship as something that could be stratified, or legalistically limited to a narrow definition of membership, a collective understanding of who were determined to be citizens and more importantly those who *were not*.

It is somewhat of a misconception that these Greek origins engendered our concept of the “democratic citizen.” Indeed, even the philosophical arguments of that earlier era struggled with the rights and duties of its “citizens.” Plato’s *Republic* reads as an elitist text, calling for rule through an intellectual and philosophical superiority that emerges from the activities of the citizen-represented polis. Plato’s call for “philosopher-rulers” evidences his validation of intellectual superiority, where only after a lifetime of *study* and commitment to civic life could citizens be allowed to hold positions of power at the *head* of these primary assemblies (Comford 102-118). Even at this stage “representation” was a concept that took hold in the context of “democracy,” where, as Larsen notes, even those male qualified citizens were limited by location and the pressing needs of every-day life from fully participating in their own polis (4-5).

Larsen, however, oversimplifies matters, assuming in his 1955 work that these are the *only* reasons for the lack of full democratic participation. Once again, we encounter here a modernist, linear viewing of the Athenian form of citizenship. Plato's desire for intellectual and philosophical elitism calls for the wishes and needs of the polis to be represented through those most "capable" of representing those interests. The authority of this polis should be protected by what he terms "guardians" (Comford 102), or in other words a military force. What this adds up to is a Foucauldian power model – and the establishment of power in the "democracy" of Athens reveals itself as merely another exercise of those who held the power reinforcing their own position – "... it is obvious that you don't discard something you thought yourself in the same way as you discard what others have thought" (Foucault, January 9, 1980). The memory of this form of governance, however, transcends the details of its actual existence: the image of citizens of Athens sitting about a great amphitheatre "debating" the great issues of the day remains entrenched in modern minds.

The advent of Rome as the principal power in the Mediterranean saw the transference of earlier Greek conceptions of citizenship to its incarnation as a "Republic," and then to the era of Empire. Indeed, we owe much to the Roman model of "citizenship" in clarifying how modern America has really developed its concept of the citizen, more than to Athenian "democracy." The initial genesis of the modern American conceptualization of the "citizen" can be found in the Roman Republic's notion of membership in a national (not just city) collective. The notion of being a "citizen" begins to adapt the legal understanding that would become engrained in the modern American vision of this status. The first important legal convention of "citizenship" was the Roman introduction of the *census* as a means of counting the numbers of individuals whom the Republic and later the Empire would claim as members of its collective state.

Beginning with its codification in the Twelve Tables in 450 B.C. (Nicolet 49), the Roman census would emerge as a documented instrument to grant status through the mere act of *counting* its citizens. The census broadened the Greek idea of the polis, creating in its place a *civitas* (2-3) of divergent members. The census sought to count all residents, awarding them citizen status though retaining hierarchical control by sub-dividing and categorizing the strata of citizenship, from the fully activated members at the top (which would remain indigenous Roman males), to lesser integrated layers (women, land-owners, merchants and higher classes of conquered lands), and finally to the lower residents of lands under Roman control (foreign labor classes and slaves at the bottom). This stratification of the concept of citizen would become a constant in all forms of citizenship until (at least in principle) the twentieth century, remaining intact even after modern American attempts to at least verbally erase such distinctions.

The Roman form of government also innovated a more codified use of “representative” democracy in creating the “Senate,” abolishing the Greek concepts of direct representation and primary assembly in favor of an elected few who would represent the wishes and needs of the masses. As Nicolet writes:

Rome always presented itself to the outside world in the threefold, indissoluble guise of the ‘magistrates, Senate and Roman people.’ The oligarchy revered, or professed to revere, the body of citizens whose agent and representative it claimed to be. The generals commanded citizen armies, not passive mercenaries. The magistrates held office in theory by the ‘goodwill of the people (*populi beneficium*)’ even if in practice they owed their position to family origin . . . (1-2)

The Roman model, therefore, sets the precedent of the image of representative democratic citizenship as more important than the actual processes of government, another precedent that would survive into the present.

Regardless of the realities of privilege in the governance of Rome, the people (principally of the city of Rome itself) would maintain and continually reinforce their own collective self-

images as citizens of Rome throughout the years of the Republic and through the centuries of the Empire to follow. Even at the height of Roman imperial power, Caesars would never abolish the Roman Senate because of its centrality in maintaining the vision of popular rule it created. The Senate would continue to wield power even under the dictatorial order of Imperial Rome. Rome could claim its form of governance and citizenship as the pinnacle of political organization at that particular time, and could therefore enforce its right to spread that rule to all *others* – as a “master race, destined to Romanize the world” (Nicolet 2). The British Empire would later assert this same philosophy with its policy of “make the world England,” and America would shortly follow with its aim of global democratization.

Ultimately, the classical worlds of Greece and Rome would collectively contribute to the most important concept in the development of Western citizenship – the “right of protection” that these forms of government would promise. The idea that citizenship would grant certain rights to its members, most importantly in the form of military and economic protection from those outside the sphere of its own membership,³ was a crucial one: from the emergence of this idea through the many centuries of Roman rule it would become a foundationally accepted “reality” of *all* definitions of the citizen, from the legalistic national parameters to more broadly based, philosophical ideals. The development of the right of protection is best described in the 100 B.C.

Roman law that detailed military protection of Roman merchants from piracy:

Let the Consul send letters to all peoples who are friends and allies of the Roman people, ordering them to ensure that Roman citizens . . . may ply their business without danger in all the cities and islands of the East and may also sail the seas in perfect safety. (“Law of Delphi,” *JoRS* 195-220)

³ There is again a discrepancy between what the modern concept or view of democratic ideals as they originated in Greece and in the actual application of Greek “democracy.” Isin and Wood indicate that although the modern view contains certain assumptions of “rights,” including those of protection and defense, the Greek concept did not indicate such protection as a “right,” but as a function of “the individual’s political existence [being] drawn from political association” (6).

The “citizen” thus understands that it is the place of the government to “protect” them from insecurity potentially visited upon them from those outside the collective – a concept absolutely reinforced in American outrage and anger at 9/11 - outrage that an attack could happen “on our own soil.” Indeed, the actual numbers of those who died, while horrific, pale in comparison to the numbers killed around the world annually from conflict and violence – the direct assault on the privileged understanding of “protected citizenship” in the United States creates a greater outrage to this incident than to much more horrific acts of violence that do not involve American citizens, such as the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge or the holocausts of civil war as they rage in central Africa.

It would be all too easy to claim that after the fall of Rome little happened in the development of the citizen until the writing of the Magna Carta, with its profound influence on English law, in 1215. This of course is inaccurate, for two major developments did indeed emerge from the centuries commonly referred to as the “dark ages.” One is the growth and influence of Christianity, which would assume a primacy in Europe as encompassing as Roman dominance before it. The church continually contested with secular rulers for actual power for the next 1000 years. Indeed, the spread of the concept of “divine right” would not only serve to reify nobility, and more specifically monarchies throughout Europe, but would serve as an instrument of control *over* those monarchies by the Christian church. Out of these tensions would emerge the commonly accepted notions of “created rights,” or rather endowments on humanity by God the creator. Almost all philosophers who took on the concepts of citizenship would, following on this, attempt to link the “unalienable” rights of citizens to some form of divine intention. Rousseau, John Locke, even the drafters of the Declaration of Independence owe much of their philosophical positioning to the Christian concept of “divinity.”

The second major development during this time period came from the disintegration of Rome, which would leave Europe divided into Feudal realms and fiefdoms, each dominating (or rather wielding power over) individual domains. The fracturing of lands into such feudal realms would create a more clear-cut prerequisite for future citizenship: the ownership of land and property. The status of “nobility” emerged from this feudal organization, and of course the term “landed gentry” as well, indicating those who owned property. While the mere ownership of property would not in and of itself equate with citizenship, it would continue the economic stratification of the concept for many centuries to come. Habermas addresses this stratification in his conceptual work on the citizen. MaCafee, interpreting Habermas, identifies what he calls “the Myth of Substance” (51), asserting that the existence of individual/subject identities is revealed through the complex textuality of substance, evidenced by *material substance* (51-52). Given this view of subjective identity, the “substantive” citizen must somehow *show* this substance, and from the Dark Ages emerges the idea that land and ownership are the clearest paths to achieving “substance” as a prerequisite of citizenship.

The rise of “class distinctions” offers merely another way of defining citizen stratification. While modern America would at least nominally reject class as prerequisite to citizenship, an unspoken truth of American idealism still projects the aim of achieving such property-based status as acquisition proves central to what we consider the promise of American citizenship; the oft-cited “American Dream” almost always begins with the *ownership* of house, car, etc. Indeed, the acceptance of this ideal was readily visible in the period just after the Civil War, when freed slaves were not guaranteed voting rights (practically speaking), nor fully granted the same “rights” as whites in the country of the time. Instead they were promised “40 acres and a mule,” as if the bestowing of property on freed slaves was somehow all that was

needed to ensure their citizenship in the United States. Out of the feudal conventions of the dark ages, therefore, came the evolution of the citizen as an economic position critical to measuring one individual against another.

The Norman conquest of England and the ascension of the Plantagenets to the throne brought the beginnings of legal representation of citizens in courts, an innovation that would reshape the concept of “justice.” By the time King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta in 1215, erosion of the monarchy’s absolute right to meet out judgment had already begun to occur – Henry had previously established the idea of royal courts based at the shire level (Musson 38-39), and his creation of these courts outlasted his reign. The impact of the Magna Carta was enormous in England and in Europe: the very idea that individuals might sit in judgment of their own peers, represented by legal advocates and maintaining legal *precedent* as a guiding force, all served to re-order (albeit slowly) the thinking of individual subjects as unequal to nobility. Again, the Church would play a major role in this as well, seeking to hold royalty to the same “moral laws” as its subjects as a tool of power for the church that would nonetheless eventually act as an instrument of empowerment in the eventual elevation of the individual in enlightenment philosophy of John Locke.⁴

It is impossible to discuss the maturation of the Western, and thus American, concept of the citizen without referencing the work of Locke. While Rousseau’s “Social Contract” is often cited as a source for American democratic ideals, Locke’s concept of “governance by consent” carries more influence in shaping our understanding of what it means to be an American citizen. First, in the writing of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, and later in the writings of John Dewey (who attempts to clarify and broaden American collective identity at the start of the twentieth century), Locke’s two most basic concepts hold

⁴ See “The Idea of Citizenship” in Faulks, *Citizenship*, 3-28.

absolute sway: 1.) that the rights of citizenship are granted as a process of Natural law (transference of “divine” right from the monarchy to the individual); and, 2.) that no government that does not have the consent of its member-citizens can be considered legitimate or effective (Josephson 1). According to Locke, “Men establish political societies and governments to redress the defects of the state of nature,” or rather the failings of individuals to achieve their Natural rights, and so therefore “over time they learn that the monarchic form only brings new evils, and so they establish distinct civil legislative authorities” (205).

Locke’s most basic premise, then, assumes a progressive evolution in the concept of the citizen, establishing a “natural” state for individuals that cannot fail to be achieved *as long as it is achieved collectively*. In other words, rights may be natural and guaranteed for the individual, but they can only be realized when that individual is a *part* of the greater collective whole – a citizen. This preordained or natural state of citizen-rights informs the very basis of the Declaration of Independence (the “inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”). With the various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revolutions, including that which occurred in America, monarchies were exchanged for the practice of “democracy.” The basic *legal* and nationalistic framework was erected for the modern understanding of the citizen in the American mindset, along with rights, duties and privileges ascribed to it (as outlined in the Introduction to this dissertation). The needs of the United States would, however, call for a much more transitional and complex image of this citizen over the ensuing course of its history in order to meet the contingent needs of the nation at various moments in time. The image of the citizen thus becomes a continually contested site of definition, always battling between the desire for an all-encompassing understanding the collective status that is “citizenship” and the political and social demands of these historical moments.

The Socialization of the American Citizen

The intersections between performance studies and the socio-political sphere offer a crucial understanding of the American notion of citizen-status as evolutionary and supreme, especially within an already established area of political science known as “socialization.” As Bardes and Oldendick note in *Public Opinion*, this theory explains how “citizens” become aware of their own political identities *within the existing body politic*, or “polis,” an awareness that is formed through the institutionalized social structures of family, church, school, etc. American society is a complex mix of power structures in the classic Foucauldian mode,⁵ and as such they serve themselves in reinforcing a concept of citizenship that supports those same underlying power matrixes. As Bardes and Oldendick note:

To the surprise of the first researchers who studied the political attitudes of children, kindergarten students were able to identify major political figures such as the current and past president and to express, in many cases, an identification with a political party. (73)

If young children can express identity awareness on this complex a level at such a young age, then awareness of the more basic self-identity of their own positions as “citizens” must be, in some measure, achieved.

Theatre, or more generally the “performative,” utilizes socialization heavily in imaging the citizen. When one extrapolates the concept of the ritualized, “twice performed” of Richard Schechner (*Between Theatre and Anthropology* 2-4), the origins of the awareness discussed above become evident in the rituals of “citizenship” that Americans perform and witness being performed from the earliest ages of childhood. The simple act of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance each morning in school is, by itself, simply an act of memorization of a string of words – yet the importance, the meaning of this act is socialized upon the children enacting this

⁵ As reflects Foucault’s theories on “Institutionalization.” Foucault 77-78.

ritual as a “duty.” Socialization, then, forms and reinforces the foundations of duties and responsibilities and impresses them on the psyche of the young “citizen.” Ritual and ceremony, which are performative in their own right, are amplified by images of these same ceremonies in the theatrical arts. Education, then, becomes a tool, or “sorter mechanism” in Bardes and Oldendick’s model (80-83), that takes publicly created and reified images and imitates or instills them in the children under instruction:

American school systems consciously adopt rituals and practices designed to instill patriotism and loyalty in children. Besides the Pledge of Allegiance and the learning of American history, schools provide avenues for participation through elected student councils . . . what might be happening in the elementary grades is a setting up of an idealized view of the citizen, one who is nonpartisan and whose individual vote makes a difference. (78)

“Loyalty” is a key word here, inexorably linking the duties and responsibilities associated with citizenship to the transactional nature of the individual’s place within the nation state. In order to expect the “freedoms” associated with American democracy, society teaches the typical child that his or her “duty” must first be performed, a *quid-pro-quo* arrangement that inherently limits that “freedom” to within the confines of expected behavior. Words such as “indivisible,” when recited over and over again, serve to instill the impression of collective wholeness that the term “citizen” seeks to imply.

Education, in its most basic sense, reinforces image. When one is taught the “image” of the idealized citizen then one’s acceptance of its foundational status becomes assured. Americans thus believe they are “free” because they are told they are so, and images of “freedom” perform continual support for this idea. True “freedom” does not exist in any form, of course. An American is NOT free to declare his- or herself “free” from the “duties” of paying taxes, nor is the American citizen “free” to seek “justice” for a crime by carrying out their own form of capital punishment on an accused offender. Americans are not “free” to simply take that which

they deem they need from another. We accept these limitations as part of the assumed “security” provided under the umbrella of “American Democracy,” a security which assumes a “natural right” of our position under that umbrella. Ultimately, the “image” of what it is to *be* a citizen, to exist within the term and to identify one’s self as a part of the greater whole known as America, exists in effect as a contingent reality. Todd May postulates in *Reconsidering Difference* that the constructed image of reality, regardless of the true instability of its foundations, *becomes* reality for the instance or moment that the image exists for individuals who hold to it (113-115).

“Citizenship,” as an educational or institutional term, therefore, presents itself only as a contingent ideal, not a foundational one. The duties and rights that are assumed under the traditional Western model are only “inalienable” because we, as a society, a culture, and a collection of institutions (from government to church to school) decree so, but that act of accreditation actually grants them the position they seem to hold for us. If, then, this acceptance becomes reality, then the images we create on stage and screen are driven by this understanding of the foundations of duty, rights and privileges that are thereby accorded. Despite the fact that theatre can act as a site for subversion and change, one must recognize that, at least, initially it serves rather the opposite function: the reification of image that supports the accepted “reality” of the nationalistic model of citizenship for the average American. Theatre, when one looks principally at the stage and later screen images of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, acted as a mirror for the contingent beliefs of citizens of the United States. Theatre thus served to reproduce the image *even when attempting to subvert or stretch* the status beyond any particular set of cultural or societal limitations (within gender or ethnic frames, for instance).

I turn now to examine the texts and performances of the American theatrical tradition that reflect the reification of the limited, nationalistic view of the “citizen,” and subsequently to

explore the tensions that arise as the more complex image of the citizen evolves in an ideological response to certain historical moments of American history. The earliest inceptions of what we term “American” theatre were in themselves reflective of other cultures – specifically the Western European modes of comedy and tragedy (or high drama). Indeed, American drama has often been referred to as the “stepchild of American literary culture” (Richardson ix.), reflecting both the classical subordination of *performed* texts to the written, literary form and the position of American drama as a movement seeking to find its own identity, its own collective sense as separate from its European predecessors. The early efforts of the American theatre struggle to claim the same distinct position of privilege as the overall concept of “citizenship.” As Susan Harris Smith notes in *American Drama*:

[William] Dunlop suggested that a more ‘severe and manly character, induced by our republican institutions,’ would better serve as an image of a ‘self-governed’ country ‘which is destined to look back to the annals of long past ages for a record that ever a slave or master polluted her soil.’⁶ A champion of the German drama, Dunlap nonetheless ranked Shakespeare above all other playwrights, and in his own career as playwright mainly produced sentimental comedies and numerous revisions of English plays with new titles. Dunlap’s call for heroic ‘manliness’ anticipates the recurring and continued concern for a ‘verile’ drama and for playwriting as a ‘masculine’ enterprise that runs through the history of American drama. (76-77)

This “masculine” ideal appeals, in this early period, directly to the “characters” of American drama, asking them to conform to the “enlightened man,” endowed with the attributes of natural rights and privileges that accord with the Lockian philosophy espoused under the framework of the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The battle of literary equality reflects the cultural contestations America at this time. America needed to see itself as an evolutionary step in social and political existence beyond the monarchies of Western Europe and, as such, created images that idealized the political

⁶ Quoted in Smith from Mott, 136,162.

organizations of the new nation. Because these organizations (the executive, the legislative, and the judicial) were intended to represent the Lockian ideals of common-man rule, the images of theatre are shaped to reflect these concepts accordingly.

In the literary world there has often been a blatant disregard, even disdain, for “American Drama” as a category worthy of exploration and canonization in anthologies. Much of this blame falls upon an “elitist attitude” on the part of literary critics in the U.S. during the first 150 years of its history (Smith 45). It is possible to posit, however, that much of this disdain lies in the perception of “theatre” as too “popular” a form of entertainment, as are most films and television shows today. This “popular” appeal places the performed text in a category oppositional to canonized written texts. The connections sought between audience and the performed, that which makes them “popular,” evoke forms and images that reinforce precisely what American audiences want to see on stage, and thus mirror their own self-identified standing in the world. As American audiences developed their sense of “citizenship,” then, they looked for the reflections of both the expected duties and rights of that citizenship on the stage and screen, along with reflections of the privileges and promises of that status as well.

In the next section, we shall see how these concepts exhibited themselves in three distinct elements of early American drama: 1.) the development of the Yankee character and the absolute reification of the nationalistic model in the plays of both the colonial and post-colonial period of the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century; 2.) the use of “war plays” to define separation and distinctiveness from the European and specifically British cultural heritage; and, 3.) the use of “frontier myth” and especially the “native” plays of *Metamora* fame to further elucidate an “American” character. All three elements helped construct the early image of the American citizen onstage.

Reification in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Period (Proto-American Heroes, The Yankee Character and the Evolved Citizen)

In the colonial period of the 1700's, much of American society frowned upon theatrical art, a disdain exhibited through the importation of puritan aesthetics and through simple desires to limit the "corruptive decadence" of theatre artists in communities (Richardson 12-13). Indeed, theatre was somewhat relegated initially to a cultural/literary arena within the academic circle, regarded as "college exercises and dialogues" (4-5). Even within this limited realm, however, one can find the seeds of citizen-based ideology. *The Paxton Boys* (Anonymous 1764) was a seven-scene farce that attempts to show the "true" events of a "near invasion of Philadelphia by frontiersmen demanding governmental aid in their ongoing conflicts with Native Americans" (12). What is interesting about this "play" (which must be considered dramatic literature rather than theatre due to its lack of staged production) is that it establishes a proto-positioning of the "American frontiersman" as potential citizen, for the pivotal plot twist resides in the revolutionary Paxton Boys being pawns for Presbyterians who wished to overthrow the Quaker government (13). The play Christianizes and categorizes Native Americans along side the Quakers. The image presented here establishes the more conservative "European" religion as oppositional to the more free-spirited and "democratic" religious structures of the Presbyterian Protestants, who stand in for the freedom-seeking revolutionaries yet to come at the end of the century. These Presbyterians thus serve as the prototype for the American Citizen.

This play and others that were widely read in Philadelphia and Boston during this time reveal the seeds of political power in drama at a time when the very idea of a "national identity" for Americans existed politically only in its embryonic stage. Richardson notes that the "citizens" of these cities found in these satires the vehicle by which they could separate themselves from both the Native Americans and their European masters - a separation that pre-

positions collective citizenship that emerged with American independence following the Revolutionary War (13-14). This concept of “separation” points us toward a central tension in this discussion: during colonial times it is hard to differentiate between disparate nationalities as residents of the American colonies. As Morgan Tyler states in *A History of American Literature*:

Before the year 1765, we find in this country, not one American people, but many American peoples . . . in 1765, on the assembling in New York of the first continental congress, the delegates from the several colonies, like ambassadors from remote nations, could at first only stare at one another as utter strangers in face, in character, even in name. (522)⁷

Gallagher expands on this idea, noting that the aforementioned literary drama sought to identify the individual “American’s” distinctiveness from the European forbearers (the distinctiveness from Native Americans is often assumed as “natural”). Gallagher points to one such dramatic text, *On the Rising Glory of America* (recited at Nassau Hall, the College of New Jersey, September 25, 1771) as a play that glorified America as “a refuge from oppression, as the ground for glorious battles, as superior to South America (which represented “otherness” despite sharing a colonial heritage) commercially, scientifically, and as a future paradise” (Gallagher 25). The protagonists in this and other plays are *men*⁸ who strive to identify themselves as “independent” from the monarchies of Europe, revealing themselves as “patriots” of the American colonies. These proto-American heroes as imaged in the theatrical tradition of the time are shown as “[employing with] growing ease . . . phrases such as ‘our country,’ ‘my country,’ ‘these patriots,’ and ‘those men whose crimes,’ [marking] a further stage in the development of the foreigner” (27). The identification of Europeans in general and especially the British soldiers of these plays

⁷ Reprinted in Gallagher, *The Foreigner in Early American Drama*, 15.

⁸ The distinct separation of Gender at this point in American drama is, of course, not isolated, having been inherited from the Western linear tradition that even under a Lockian mode of democratic thought separated women as “naturally” inferior to men and so outside even the most fundamental changes or challenges to hierarchical structures as epitomized by the Revolutionary War.

as “enemies” further clarifies the separation of identity necessary to establish “Americanism” as a collective position of its own.

Heroism, and indeed patriotism, is represented directly as “fighting for one’s freedom,” culminating in the military victory of the American Colonies over the British in the Revolutionary War. Gallagher also notes that “[the] early republicans also reminded themselves that they had fought their battles, won them, and were launched upon the greatest venture in self-government since the fifth century B.C.” (32). This point of view establishes for the American concept of citizenship two important connections: one, that the “enlightened” emergence of the common man “ruling himself” was indeed the highest form of governmental evolution; and, two, that “patriotism” belonged only to those citizens “willing to stand up for it.” In this second idea we find an image which still holds a dominant ideological position today, as can be seen in a recent Newsweek article by Jonathan Alter entitled “Packaging Patriotism.” The central image of the “patriot” in the wake of 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is presented firmly along the lines of those who call themselves “patriots” (leading from the images provided by the Bush administration and its surrogates) and those who openly and with no reservation *stand* with the President and his decisions. The “patriot” is thus set against those who question, as if the questioning of military action is indeed “unpatriotic” and a violation of one’s duties as a citizen (Alter 52-54).

The first and most important play of the post-colonial era of theatre for the creation of the American citizen was, of course, Royall Tyler’s 1787 *The Contrast*. Produced nearly forty times from 1787 to 1804 by the Old American Company in New York (Meserve 1), Tyler himself later added the subtitle “The American Son of Liberty” The play created the image of the citizen, or more specifically the “Yankee” Jonathan as an “inheritor” of the Lockian “natural” rights,

embodied in the democratic philosophy of the time and in the creation of the United States.

Meserve notes that the play's popularity emerged essentially due to the fact that "*The Contrast* . . . satisfied the demands of theatergoers in 1787: exultant nationalism, a Yankee character, a strong moral, and the broad satire that American audiences had enjoyed for more than a century" (1). The "strong moral" mentioned here had a specific target: that the ideals of the American spirit and democratic ideology claimed superior status to the "frivolous" and corrupted endeavors of the European aristocracy.

Tyler constructed his characters to thus reinforce these "truths," and to warn his audiences of the dangers of remaining tied to old traditions, rather than regarding themselves as distinct from their European cousins. American theatrical history chiefly notes Tyler's play for its concrete creation of the "Yankee" character, Jonathan, a template which will grow and evolve in numerous adaptations by other early American playwrights. Jonathan, as Tyler creates him, is un-abashedly distinct from the "sophistication of Europe that he derides as still holding too much sway in American culture, especially among the well-to-do of the larger American cities such as New York and Philadelphia. In Act III of the play, for instance, the character of Jenny begs for Jonathan to "sit" (referencing again the distinction of American patriots as those who "stand" versus the "gentile" hypocrisy of European otherness) and discuss his beliefs:

JENNY: Mr. Jonathan, won't you please to sit down. Mr. Jessamy tells me
you wanted to have some conversation wit me.

(Having brought forward two chairs, they sit.)

JONATHAN: Ma'am!

JENNY: Sir!

JONATHAN: Ma'am!

JENNY: Pray, how do you like the city, Sir?

JONATHAN: Ma'am!

JENNY: I say, Sir, how do you like New York?

JONATHAN: Ma'am!

JENNY: (*aside*) The stupid creature! but I must pass some little time with him, if it is only to endeavour to learn, whether it was his master that made such an abrupt entrance into our house, and my young mistress's heart this morning. (*Aloud*) As you don't seem to like to talk, Mr. Jonathan – do you sing? (29)

Jonathan does indeed like to sing, and proceeds to perform “Yankee Doodle,” the song which defines his character type. “Yankee Doodle” lyrically exhibits the patriotism of those fighting in the Revolution and includes the phrases “It took a horn of powder/It made a noise like father's gun/Only a nation louder” (30). Two things emerge from this particular scene, the first being the utter resolve of Jonathan to avoid engaging in the idle pleasantries of the aristocratic European characters. His repetition of “Ma'am!” is a clarion call of disdain and individualism together. The sung statement “a nation louder” calls forth an image of the American as bolder, more inventive, and more passionate in his ideals than his European forefathers. The second emergent characteristic lies specifically in this last point, for the half-educated Jonathan does not enter “discourse” in the traditional sense, but chooses instead to evoke emotional patriotism through singing. Jonathan's vocalization clearly evokes a catharsis here, not one tied to the “laws and norms” of educated society, and as such reinforces the “freedoms” assumed as naturally given to the American character.

Other characters create images of the citizen in *The Contrast* as well. Colonel Manly, formerly a member of the Continental Army, also serves as a template for the “exultant patriotism” and subsequently the American citizen. Richardson notes that, in Manly, Tyler creates a character who “is the first in a long series of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

embodiments of idealized American manhood whose central concern, both on and off the battlefield, is their nation's moral and political health" (48). At first glance, then, Manly (whose central position in the romantic entanglements of the play put him into an oppositional tug-of-war with the more traditional European Dimple) would appear to be, as Richardson also notes, the "moral center of the play" (49). Manly, however, also serves as a warning. Tyler depicts this character as a bit too infatuated with the pomposity and hypocrisy of the "sophisticated" elites – in other words, he is a hero and a patriot but one that runs the risk of diminishing all his hard-fought status by returning to the customs and traditions of the bankrupt European class system. Yet, Manly still retains one component of the emerging template of the ideal American citizen: duty and responsibility. During his major speech at the beginning of Act III, Scene 2, Manly states the following:

The kings of Greece devoted their lives to the service of their country, and her senators knew no other superiority over their fellow-citizens than a glorious preeminence in danger and virtue. They exhibited to the world a noble spectacle: a number of independent states united by a similarity of language, sentiment, manners, common interest, and common consent, in one grand mutual league of protection. And, thus united, long might they have continued the cherishers of arts and sciences, the protectors of the oppressed, the scourge of tyrants, and the safe asylum of liberty: But when foreign gold, and still more pernicious, foreign luxury, had crept among them, they sapped the vitals of their virtue. (Tyler 31)

There is of course a fallacy inherent in this imagery, for the speech places in the American mindset an idealized version of Greek history which is far from accurate,⁹ yet the illusion serves as a call to other American citizens to perform their duty within the democratic idealism of the new United States. Manly is "heroic" because he has served his country, fought for his country,

⁹ Indeed, the "unity" described by the character Manly in association with the Greek city states is a myth – only Athens of all the city states embarked on a "democratic" experiment, and that experiment was brief in its actual power. In all city states and even Athens for most of the high years of Greek civilization government was dictatorial in nature, and the only "unity" that evolved came from a common desire to conquer and pillage resources of other Mediterranean cultures, leading to militaristic endeavors which no city-state could accomplish alone.

and most importantly *sacrificed* for his country – he becomes the epitome of the “duty and responsibility,” accepting a *quid-pro-quo*, transactional model of the democratic collective. Some individuality must be surrendered if one wishes to partake of the “rights, freedoms, and privileges” of citizen status. Ironically, Manly does not seem to *desire* these rights and privileges. That desire is rather reflected in the Yankee character of Jonathan.

When one considers this dynamic it is interesting that the two essential sides of the American citizen are reified but presented separately at this time – one character representing the duties and responsibilities and one the rights and freedoms. This split characterization offers an intriguing look at the tensions between the conflicting needs of the citizen as constructed onstage at this time, a glimpse which indicates that the “ideal” of the Lockian/American Citizen was not as obvious to the more complex national identities of the colonial and post-colonial world. Indeed, as we have already seen, the idea of “Americans” as a single people cannot readily be identified or categorized. In the Continental Congresses, for example, some representatives (such as the majority of the Pennsylvania delegation) still affirmed their allegiance to the British crown and only sought to redress grievances within that frame of British citizenship. During the Revolutionary War, residents of various states would support both sides in the conflict, even when the outcome eventually rendered them “citizens” of the new United States. Thus, *The Contrast* was actually very effective in navigating these tangles of cross-allegiances by *not* completely epitomizing the American citizen in one character, but instead in dividing these principles among these two major characters.

To this point, we have looked only at the textual characterizations presented in Tyler’s *The Contrast*. Of course, with any theatrical production one must also look at the *performances* that accompanied these constructions, and at the individual actors that created these

performances. For *The Contrast*, the actor associated with the creation of the “Yankee” character was Thomas Wignell (1753-1803). Wignell originated the role of Jonathan in the original 1787 production at the John Street Theatre (Hodge 2), Richardson notes that Wignell’s vocabulary and physicality were “distinctly American” (51-52), indicating a growing visual impression of the American citizen as distinct in appearance and presence as well as philosophy on the stage. Wignell presented a robust masculinity, which contrasted (hence the title) his image with the shorter, more portly images of British aristocracy. His speech also evoked a more straightforward, simplistic sensibility – creating the image of Americans as “plain spoken” and “direct,” as opposed to the Oxford elocutionary of the European character. According to Dunlop, “Wignell . . . never pandered to the audience for laughs . . . [emerging] in the play, in contrast to Jessamy, in an appealing light” (Hodge 2).

Arthur Hobson Quinn’s 1923 multi-volume work, *History of the American Theatre* confirms the importance of the actual physical performance of Wignell. Quinn of course does not delve into the issues that a modern analysis might, accepting on face value the morals and sentiments of patriotism exhibited in the play. He focuses instead on the box office success of the original Wignell performance as well as a 1917 popular revival. In his analysis, he relegates the script to mere “parlor room” humor, and indicates that it is “the character portrayal, and above all it is the way in which it meets the test of drama, namely, that it shall act better than it reads” (70). Quinn’s statement, written nearly a century and a half after the original production, highlights the importance of the visual image of the Yankee as an American citizen, reflected on the stage even when audiences were unaware of the philosophical underpinnings behind the creation of such a character.

Despite the dual-assignment of citizen traits in *The Contrast*, the Yankee character becomes does indeed represent a template of patriotism and thus citizenship. What had been initially a framing of the free-spirited rights and privileges of the American character would come to be copied and imitated, eventually including the other side of the equation as well – duty and responsibility. Francis Hodge writes about this popular adoption of the Yankee or Jonathan character in *Yankee Theatre: The Image of America on the Stage, 1825-1850*:

Once the possibilities of the Yankee on the stage were recognized, the move forward was immediate and bustling. It cracked the English-actor tradition by making it possible for young Americans to find a place on the stage in a new form of comedy which Englishmen simply could not act. Once these actors had won a foothold, their popularity had the force of prescribing the inclusion of the Yankee character in nearly all native plays, melodramas as well as comedies. (1)

In these later plays this character would continue to evolve, aided again by noted performers' individual contributions to the Yankee image: James K. Hackett in *New Hay at the Old Market* (1826), and *John Bull at Home, or Jonathan in England* (1828); George Handel "Yankee" Hill in numerous plays in the 1820's and 1830's; Danforth Marble in *Sam Patch; or, The Daring Yankee* (1836) (Hodge 5). These actors and many more began extending the characteristics of the original Jonathan character, imbuing him with more of a sense of responsibility and patriotic duty as well.

The Yankee character was not the only development in citizen imagery on stage in the early post-colonial era. Two other popular post-colonial genres also established imagery which reinforced the Lockian concepts of "democratic citizenship" as well as the separation of Americans from Europeans. The first of these were the Revolutionary War plays, which glorified the military heroics and patriotism of American revolutionaries during the conflict to establish the new nation. Also being produced were the very popular "noble savage" plays that presented

Native Americans in relationship to the new country. This particular genre was epitomized best by Edwin Forrest's famous turn in the lead of *Metamora*. The difference between these two genres can be found in their reifying functions. While the Revolutionary War plays upheld and reinforced the images of the duties, rights and responsibilities that become engrained in the American self-image, the Noble Savage plays offered a clear path by which Americans could separate themselves from the *otherness* of Native Americans,¹⁰ and, by extension, from Europe as well.

One of the more famous battles of the Revolutionary war was, of course, the Battle of Bunker Hill. The significance of this particular battle informed the central setting of not one but two important plays from the colonial and post-colonial period. The first was Hugh Brackenridge's 1776 *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, written during the early stages of the war, and which intended to serve as a call to arms for American patriotism and revolution. The characterizations of this play were extremely nationalistic in their construction, seeking to identify with utmost clarity the English as "foreigners." As Gallagher notes, "[the] British officers in this play not only offer their troops plunder, land, and titles if they win, but hide during the battle . . ." (38). The American patriots, on the other hand, are framed clearly as warriors for a cause, soldiers who struggled for "liberty." The dialogue of the play reflects these lofty aspirations:

GARDINER: But since we combat in the cause of God
I draw my sword, nor shall the sheath again,
Receive the shining blade, till on the heights,
Of CHARLES-TOWN and BUNKER'S pleasant HILL,

¹⁰ Which of course were not even termed "Native" at the time, but rather by the generalized and mistaken "Indian," a term which originated in Christopher Columbus's infamous blunder in assuming he had crossed the ocean around the world to India.

It drinks the blood of many a warrior slain.
(Brackenridge *Bunkers-Hill*)¹¹

Even here, the Lockian concept of “divine rights” transfers from the traditional aristocratic, European vision to the “common man” ideals that become bedrock components in the nationalistic view of citizenship.

The thrust of this wartime drama helped establish the American patriot as distinct from the British soldiers, who fought for “the preservation of their reputation in the world” (Richardson 36). Americans were fighting for something greater, something “endowed” upon them by a higher power, for a higher purpose. The character of General Warren epitomizes this endowment when, with his last dying breath, he calls out to his men, “Be now abjur’d, never yield to the right/ The grand deposit of all-giving Heaven/ To man’s free nature, that he rule himself” (Brackenridge *Bunkers-Hill*).¹² The “rights” of self-determination are set thusly at the core of the Revolutionary ideal, with the outcome predicted by the “rightness” of the action under the auspices of a Divine hand. This envisioning of the collective American status as an inherent position granted to the new nation as a whole and to its citizens individually is absolutely critical to later acceptance in the American mindset of an *a priori* status of the “individual, free citizen.” Gallagher concurs in this assessment of the importance of Brackenridge’s play:

. . . in America, the natural benefits of inhabiting those selfsame mountain tops and valleys where Burgoyne would have driven the rebels, inculcates in the Sons of Liberty a love for the cause of freedom and an inspiration to accomplish heroic deeds. (39)

More specifically, both Gallagher and Quinn discuss the importance of “ridicule” in Brackenridge’s play, citing the “ineptitude of the British officers” (41) as a powerful tool for the

¹¹ Reprinted in Gallagher, 38.

¹² Reprinted in Richardson, 36.

self-imaging of Americans, as superior in both skill and righteous action when compared to the intentions of the British.

The American characters were therefore created on the wartime stage as “heroes,” a term which, while existing prior to the development of the American citizen, was thus changed to reflect the rights and duties framed under that designation. Heroism in this context stood for the aforementioned call to “stand” and fight for one’s nation, with the understanding that the rights and privileges promised by the new nation applied only if one was willing to fulfill those same heroic duties. The very fact that the modern analyses of this play (whether by Meserve, Quinn, Gallagher or Richardson) always refer to the “patriots” by the capitalized “Sons of Liberty” places Americans in a superior position to those who did not join in the revolution against British control. To be a “hero” no longer represented simply the sacrifice of one’s own good for the good of others, a nebulous distinction, but rather the sacrifice for the *ideals and rights of the collective whole of one’s specific nation*.

Twenty years or so after Brackenridge wrote his version of *Bunkers-Hill*, John Daly Burk would also turn to this early battle as impetus for his stage play *Bunker-Hill, or, The Death of General Warren* (1797). The differences between these two dramatic renditions could not be more striking, not only because one was written during and one after the war, but in the clarity of their idealizations of the American citizen. Burk was highly critical, both in his drama and in his personal statements, of the “fictionalized histories of [the United States’] inception” (Richardson 55). In other words, Burk was wary of creating an *image* of the nationalistic hero, fearing that such representations were all too often envisioned in the same manner as British loyalty was portrayed before the revolution. Burk was even arrested in 1798 under the Alien and Sedition act for being “subversive” in his publications. Much of this perception of Burk came from the fact

that he was not a “native American,”¹³ having been born in Ireland (Vaughn 54). The irony here is that Burk was just as patriotic and interested in the rights granted under the new nationalistic frame of citizenship as other playwrights, but his focus was indeed on the rights rather than the duties and responsibilities. This is revelatory in that it shows the open antagonisms and growing pains that existed during the Presidency of John Adams and the fears of a centralized government that might diminish the promised rights of the Revolution.

The character of General Warren in Burk’s play, then, was portrayed not as solely the heroic and patriotic warrior that he was in Brackenridge’s version, but instead is constructed as almost a “fanatic . . . a bully and a blackguard . . .” (57). Warren does sacrifice; he “stands” and fights for his new nation, but Burk saw him as a surrogate for Adams and other Federalists who sought to identify citizenship more concretely under the side of the American citizenship picture where sacrifice is far more important than freedoms and rights to follow. In this way, Burk can be viewed as a secessionist because he saw these duties and responsibilities as subordinate to freedom of speech and individual rights, indeed only as necessary building blocks for the “true” Lockian rights of the new American nation. In many ways, Burk’s drama and the criticism of it at the time corresponds to modern complaints by President Bush and his minions that open questioning of America’s actions in the war on terrorism constitutes “un-patriotic” heresy. Burk saw his work as unerringly patriotic because of how he viewed the “inalienable rights” promised in the Declaration of Independence. But he also conveyed the complexities between the acceptance of these rights and the expectations of individual subordination to the needs and desires of the nation. Because of this, his play was initially poorly received, playing for only three nights in its initial run (Richardson 55).

¹³ Which at the time is somewhat ludicrous in that many of the new “citizens” of the U.S. were born in Europe.

The struggles to attain the balance between the two sides of American citizenship examined here were never resolved with the military success of the Revolutionary War. Immediately following the birth of the new nation, two political factions emerged in conflict over the course of the infant government. The Federalists, led by Adams and James Madison among others, argued for a strong centralized state – with power being constituted in the hands of those representing the best interests of its citizens as a collective whole. In opposition to this point of view were the Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson, whose vision of their new nation emphasized individual rights and prioritized the privileges of the individual within the new collective whole. Burk as a dramatist clearly sided with the Jeffersonians (indeed, he formed a close collaboration with Adams’ and Alexander Hamilton’s arch-rival Aaron Burr). *Bunker-Hill* illustrates the Lockian philosophy so important to the Democratic-Republicans and served as a warning to those willing to surrender their hard-fought freedoms to the infant government of the United States in the name of security.

Despite its warnings, however, Burk’s *Bunker-Hill* retained the *a priori* assumptions of Lockian “natural rights.” The play did not seek the dismissal of duty and responsibility, nor indeed of sacrifice, but instead argued that these were important in service of the rights they provided. Burk’s play, despite its initial problematic reception, would go on later to find great success on the stage and in historical anthologies of the era. Much of this success is attributable to the staging of the battle, a theatricality that tended to overwhelm the issues discussed behind the text. Burk purposefully made his *Bunker-Hill* a show of spectacle in order to please audiences. A letter to John Hodgkinson at the John Street Theatre described how this play was to be performed on stage in Boston at the turn of the nineteenth century:

The English marched in two divisions from one extremity of the stage, where they ranged after coming in from the wings; when they come to the

foot of the hill, the American fire – the English fire – six or seven of your men should be taught to fall – the fire should be frequent for some minutes. The English retire to the front of the stage – second time of English advance from the wing near the hill – firing commences – they are again beaten back – windows on the stage should be open to let the smoke out. Again the English make the attack and mount the hill. After a brisk fire the Americans leave works and meet them. Here is room for effect, if the scuffle be nicely managed. Sometimes the English fall back, sometimes the Americans – two or three of the Englishmen rolling down the hill . . . When the curtain rises in the fifth [act], the appearance of the whole is good – Charlestown on fire, the breastwork of wood, the Americans appearing over the works and muzzles of their guns, the English and American music, the attack of the hill, the falling of the English troops, Warren’s half descending the hill, and animating the Americans, the smoke and confusion, altogether produce an effect scarce credible. (Vaughn 57-58)

The very images of “heroism” and “patriotism” that were therefore seen on stage stood as counterpoint to the questions of what that patriotism meant. *Why*, and *for what*, these “heroes” fought was forgotten in the moment that they were presented as *fighting* – so that the overall theatrical effect, while intended to promote the ideals of Locke and the natural rights being assumed, were again visually subjugated to the spectacle of sacrifice, reinforcing the very duties and responsibilities that Burk sought to bring into debate.

Also of note in comparing the two versions of *Bunker-Hill* is how the playwriting *form* of these early dramatic works revealed structural adherence to an older European mindset. Both Brackenridge and Burk opted to utilize a neo-Shakespearean prose in order to construct the dialogue and scenes of their plays. This is clear evidence of the split personalities that even those writing about early concepts of citizenship experienced. The use of high English prose in plays about the American ideals reinforced this disparity by placing the form of theatre as inherently linked to the social and political ideology of the European mind, rather than adopting the language and structures of the insurgents (as the Yankee character Jonathan did in *The Contrast*). Here again, it is evident that, even for those who saw themselves as separate and distinct as

American citizens, there was difficulty in completely changing the processes of organized thought that supported the images being created. The ideals of the drama of this era sought to move ahead of the actual form of production.

If Burk's *Bunker-Hill* opened the possibility of questioning the duties and responsibilities of the American citizen, then William Dunlop's *Andre* (1798) more completely explored ways in which the two sides of the now-accepted image of the citizen balanced one another for the collective new nation. The story of a young major who is to be executed for his role in the traitorous actions of Benedict Arnold during the war, *Andre* muddled the clear-cut images of heroism and patriotism expressed in Brackenridge's play by giving its protagonist voice to a character that was indeed performing the attributes of duty and responsibility, but in service *against* the revolution. *Andre*, however, does not exhibit the transparent and uninformed reasoning of Burgoyne in *Bunkers-Hill*. The character *Andre*'s devotion to duty and honor were, despite his "traitorous" status, based in the same understanding of sacrifice for one's nation that the American heroes were supposedly presented. Dunlop's intention in framing his play in this way was to reveal to the young American audience "the excesses of narrow-minded jingoism and aristocratic solipsism toward a more 'reasonable' accommodation on which the nation might function" (Richardson 56).

Dunlop was thus hoping to inoculate the newly "endowed" citizens of the United States with a vision of their status that did not rely solely on the created image of the patriotic "hero" template. He instead sought to show that these virtues did not define what made the American citizen different or distinct from the European or English identity. *Andre* as a character accepts the outcome of his actions because he sees how they have been divorced from the "correct" philosophical approach - which is to be tied with the new nation (Gallagher 91). Dunlop is

saying here that noble sacrifice, the duty and responsibility of the soldier to his nation, is meaningless unless it is in support of a Lockian view of natural rights. In other words, the state alone was not the mechanism that Dunlop viewed as providing these freedoms (and as such is not to be sacrificed for unless it exists only to support them), but rather he saw the government as a tool by which the inherent human condition could be *protected*. In opposition to Andre, Dunlop created the character of Bland, who is fiercely patriotic and fits exactly the template of a “Son of Liberty.” But Dunlop’s construction of Bland was of such a “radical stripe” (Richardson 57) that his actions in the play sought to establish a new aristocracy of republican patriots. While Bland speaks often of “freedom’s shining light,” the character would be happy with a military and governmental structure that could swiftly sweep away opposition. As Richardson notes about Bland, “His uncontrolled passions deftly suggest what Dunlop most feared... that unrestrained, unreflective emotion, while glorious in the Revolution, now threatened to undermine the existence of a peaceful nation” (57).

Ultimately, Dunlop’s play sought to bridge the contentious rancor that was dividing those who supported the strong, centralized government of the Federalists and the Jeffersonians. Dunlop’s drama portrayed them as untenable without both being performed at once. *Andre*, then, was an early call for the *quid-pro-quo* that is assumed by the modern American citizen: that duty and responsibility must be demonstrated by each individual, but that rights and freedoms are *guaranteed* once these responsibilities to the state are performed. Andre’s fatal flaw is thus revealed – his actions in support of the ubiquitous traitor Arnold conformed to all the necessary requirements of the new American “hero,” with the exception that he was fighting against the cause of freedom. Indeed, initial audiences felt so connected with the unabashed sacrifices of the character of Andre that Dunlop was forced to change parts of his play to more clearly establish

this very distinction (Gallagher 36). Andre might be noble, in the final play, but he is still foreign in regards to the natural rights of those who stood against Britain and for the new American nation. Bland, on the other hand, may have been flawed and dangerous, but nonetheless he still fought for what was “inarguably right.”

In the end, the overall theatrical effect of these and other “war plays” helped to solidify the self-image of Americans as “other” to the European identity from which they rebelled. “Otherness” is important in accepting status here because, in essence, the citizens of the young United States had to justify the violent revolution they had just undertaken. The American Revolution was indeed a military coup (the removal of one form of government and its replacement with another), a form of change that resulted in the ultimate removal of rights and freedoms from some individuals: death. To deny any human being their life is in direct contradiction to the very ideals of John Locke, but for the Americans fighting this war it was “self-evident” that in order to achieve these rights they first had to fight for them. To enjoy freedom, one must stand up for it in the first place. The myriad of other post-colonial “war plays” that followed on both the representations of the Battle of Bunker Hill and on Dunlop’s work continued to expand the ideal of “fighting for one’s rights.”

One such significant play is James Workman’s 1803 *Liberty in Louisiana*, which transferred the “otherness” of the British from its predecessors to the Spanish foreign identity (Spain also having been a colonial power). The American collective self-image had, in only a few years, solidified to the point where “the foreigner [was] seen by American eyes... judged to be different by American standards... [and] commence[d] to become interesting because of his differentiating traits” (Gallagher 36). Americans could, with this play, accept their uniqueness of character and so portray foreign otherness in interesting and sympathetic representations because

their very otherness was now enough to keep them removed as a potential threat to the American concept of endowed citizenship. In *Liberty in Louisiana*, for example, the antagonist is a Spanish judge in New Orleans, who is “villainous not merely because he opposes America, but because he takes bribes, metes out lefthanded justice, and tries to carry off his young and beautiful ward” (36). Yet the Judge is shown on stage as amusing and likeable despite these villainous characteristics, reinforcing that his villainy is somehow “natural” because he is NOT an American; and so in some ways is endearing as a reminder of the poor, corrupted identities that belonged to the old world.

Again, these images of the citizen reflect the historical moments of their occurrences. The Yankee character responded specifically to the need by Americans to see individual characteristics in their citizenship as distinct from their European forefathers. The war plays entrenched the citizen more firmly in the wake of the revolution as individuals who had to “give back” to their country. Through both of these constructs we see the historical necessity of imaging the citizen through the lens of “rights” and “duties,” thus addressing the needs of a relatively young American political structure.

Moving from the “war plays” of the turn of the century, American drama began to find another form that would help to create its own identity as separate and distinct from Europe. The popular “frontier myth” plays (also referred to as “Indian Plays”) utilized the stories of Native American struggles against the English during the previous century to illustrate the metaphor of otherness and oppression that was disseminated from Europe. For American audiences, however, the details and cultural understandings of these Native Americans were unimportant, only that, as presented on stage, these plays offered a metaphorical connection that allowed the average American citizen to see *themselves* in the guise of the oppressed native cultures.

The most famous of these plays was John Augustus Stone's 1828 *Metamora*, made even more successful by the singular performance of the actor associated with it, Edwin Forrest. *Metamora*, which was written by Stone specifically to submit to Forrest's contest for "new American plays" (Meserve 48), was based on the legend of King Philip (Metacom) of the Wampanoags, who led a war against the English colonial authority in the mid-1600's. In this case, the character of Metamora, while native in cultural origin, was created on stage by Forrest (a white American) as the prototype of the "superior individual" (Richardson 89), a character who embodied the Lockian natural rights and was willing to fight for them. Forrest's physical characterization was more recognizable as "American" than native, with buckskins and only a little face paint and headband to identify him as "native". More importantly, Forrest's *Metamora* "stands" for the "freedom" of his people against the evils and oppression of the British, a direct parallel to the Revolutionary War that granted America its "freedoms." *Metamora*, and indeed his entire culture, were ultimately doomed to extinction, a story construct which also served to reify American collective self-image. The "natural rights" that *Metamora* and his people strove for were, to the American eye, not yet guaranteed because these cultures had not embraced fully the democratic idealism of the colonials. Underneath this, of course, was also an understanding in the mindset of the American audiences that the natives, while noble in their own struggle, were not *really* a race worthy of the rights that Americans later claimed for themselves. Forrest himself served as the bridge – for he was indeed a white American taking on the mantle of the struggle of *Metamora*, while still remaining distinctly American in doing so.

Stone wrote Forrest's *Metamora* as a romantic mixture of character traits that combined the sacrifices of the American citizen with the savagery and barbarism ascribed to these native cultures. As Richardson notes:

These dramas insisted upon translating local individuals and events into universal characters and situations whose particulars are essentially irrelevant. *Metamora* is remarkable at the beginning of the play not because his origins in an alien culture allow the audience to see him and itself more clearly by recognizing the essential differences between the two ways of life, but because his existence suggests that honesty, courage and loyalty were indigenous to America even before the advent of the English colonies. (91)

Indeed, the “honesty, courage and loyalty” spoken of here are intrinsic to the duties and responsibilities seen as foundational to the American view of democratic enlightenment. Many critics who witnessed Forrest performing in this play noted that his character was only “marginally” native, belonging more as an interchangeable universal template of heroism which could have easily been swapped with the tragically lost “superior individuals of Greece or Rome” (89). Stone minimizes the fact that white colonials were responsible for the elimination of Native American cultures. He ascribed a “divine” right of these Americans to triumph over ALL alien cultures, whether they were European or native¹⁴ in origin. Stone, and Forrest in his portrayal, “[refused] to extend his qualities to other Native Americans . . . [suggesting] that he [was] atypical of his culture” (91).

Given this characterization, the “land” that is being fought for in the play (which in the end constitutes “America”) takes on a “Biblical” meaning of a “promised land” (91). Indeed, according to Meserve, *Metamora* was “recognized by some as the ‘first Indian Christian martyr’” (48). This in many ways was the true beginning of a more capitalistic addendum to the two sided construct of American citizenship already in play: that among the “rights” guaranteed under American citizenship was endowed ownership of the land itself. In some respect this idea was usurped by the new American mindset, which adapted the long tradition of aristocratic land ownership that permeated Europe back to the middle ages. Yet it was assumed to be different

¹⁴ It is interesting to note that even in the modern analyses of this play, the Native American culture of the Wampanoags and Narragansetts are termed “alien” even though they exist on the continent prior to the arrival of the colonials.

because the ownership of this land (or at least the potential of it) was endowed on every common man, every citizen of the new country. This concept became so entrenched in the American mindset that even though the last time a battle was fought on actual American soil was the civil war, the phrase “fighting to protect our great land” is used in almost every military action undertaken by the United States. The “land,” then, and its ownership, thus became another “inalienable” right.

Forrest’s *Metamora* emerged as a metaphorical bridge between the culture being portrayed and the assumptions of the American audiences in the early nineteenth century. *Metamora* fought for his land with the same assumption of its inherent ownership, a western view that was placed by Stone and Forrest onto his native character. When *Metamora* spoke, he passionately claimed the right to fight (or “stand”) for what belonged to him and his people:

When the strangers came from afar off, they were like a little tree;
but now they are grown up and their spreading branches threaten to keep
the light from you. They ate of your corn and drank of your cup,¹⁵ and
now they lift up their arms against you. Oh my people, the race of the red man¹⁶
has fallen away like the trees of the forest before the axes of the palefaces. The
fair places of his father’s triumphs hear no more the sound of his footsteps.
He moves in the region his proud fathers bequeathed him, not like a lord of the
soil, but like a wretch who comes for plunder and prey. (68)

Metamora was attempting to convince his own culture of the natural rights he (as an individual character) assumed. The plot of the play progresses in such a way as to show how his failure at spreading these views to his surrounding culture was one of the major reasons for the eventual extinction of that culture. Again, Stone absolved the American audience of any responsibility in the ethnic cleansing of Native American culture by situating the failure to accept these inherent,

¹⁵ Note the very direct Biblical analogies apparent in this speech.

¹⁶ Another very distinct example of the white colonial point of view foisted onto the Native American character – the term “red” was only used by white Europeans and colonial Americans to describe Native American physicality.

inalienable rights squarely on the “reality” that these races were incapable of truly understanding or accepting them.

The “frontier myths” allowed American audiences to accomplish two things: the usurpation of oppressed otherness from the European powers and the abolition of guilt for their own part in the oppression of Native American cultures. The second part of this proposition is important because the first (and indeed the very core of American self-recognition as “citizens”) could not be claimed as a set of divinely endowed “natural rights” *unless* these early American citizens were absolved of any oppressive acts of their own. In this way, American citizenship becomes a double-edged sword, demanding rights and privileges for its own collective self-image while denying them to those that fall outside the frame of that collective identity. The modern acceptance of privileged position in the world continued to allow American expansionism during the remainder of the nineteenth century – the very term “Manifest Destiny” coined by President James Monroe called directly on Americans to recognize the divinely endowed status of the citizen as “superior” to the non-citizen, and thus to justify continued oppression of non-Americans.

Theatrical Reinforcement Towards the End of the Nineteenth Century

As theatrical production continued to spread during the nineteenth century, the images born of these early plays would become dominant on the American stage, serving to continually reify “American” identity under the rubric of the *quid-pro-quo* discussed already. The conflagration of natural rights with duty and responsibility would continue to strengthen, both during and after the American Civil War – a war that was fought in the name of the first part of the equation (natural rights) but more specifically to enforce the expectations of the latter (duty and responsibility to the nation). The template of the Yankee character would evolve to reinforce

the constructed image of American individualism, especially in such descendent forms as the Bowery B'hoys character Mose in Benjamin A. Baker's 1848 *Glance at New York* and its associated Bowery B'hoys plays. Augustin Daly would also attempt to examine the complexities of combining rights and responsibilities begun by Dunlop in *Andre* with his 1867 work *Under the Gaslight*, which addressed the issues of citizenship in the wake of the Civil War, "poverty in the cities, the system of justice, the treatment of . . . Veterans . . ." (Meserve 245). Both Baker's and Daly's use of the melodramatic form represented a standard structural practice in American drama for the remainder of the century.

Perhaps the most illuminating way in which the initial concepts American citizenship are reinforced on the middle and late nineteenth-century stage was the production of the very popular "Tom" plays. Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* proved a literary success that, "in relatively short order . . . [became] entrenched in the American theatre repertoire" (Richardson 103). The most famous adaptation of the Stowe novel to the stage was George L. Aiken's version by the same title, published within a year of the initial novel's release. The "Tom" plays, referred to more commonly as part of larger genre known as "slavery plays," sought to seek, in light of pre-Civil War northern ideology, the expansion of the American citizen construct to include those individuals enslaved in southern states. Like the "frontier plays" before them, these plays fulfilled a secondary function in absolving audiences from the responsibility of the American system in the complicity of slave-trade that created the situation in the first place. Instead, the southern states and plantation owners are constructed as having "violated" the natural rights promised under the origins of the United States.

The very idea that certain residents (for slaves could be classified as such even without the rights and privileges of American citizenship) of the United States could be awarded citizen

status within the framework of the Lockian nationalistic model merely reinforced an attitude of inherent value within the American mindset. The resistance shown by southerners to the inclusion of slaves as citizens allowed for their own separation as “other” from the idealized image of American collective identity, a separation which violently emerges nearly ten years later with the secession of these states from the young nation and the war that followed. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which by itself represented just another melodramatic work, served also as a “social force, a force whose power resided not only in the usual appeals of melodramatic action but also in its ability to redefine slaves as “human beings who were entitled to the dignity accorded other members of the American society” (Meserve 103). Lockian natural rights, as understood in the American psyche by this time, were accorded to Americans because their humanity was “self-evident.” Aiken’s play sought therefore not to challenge these assumptions because of the previous exclusion of American slaves from the picture, but instead attempted to justify those assumptions by removing that exclusion within the existing framework.

By the end of the nineteenth century, these images were so common on the American stage that for an audience not to see them could be highly detrimental to the success of any theatrical production. All of the most popular plays, from the 1850’s onward, utilized not just the melodramatic structure to reinforce stability of image, but maintained the templates of duties and responsibilities in conjunction with their anticipated natural rights and freedoms. Even when using the imagery of slavery, plays such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Dion Boucicault’s *The Octoroon* (1859) concentrated not so much on the image of the slave who actually escapes to freedom (George Harris in Aiken’s drama), but instead utilized the slave characters who remain slaves, ending their persecution only in the forms of their deaths – Zoe in Boucicault’s play, Uncle Tom in Aiken (132). The image constructed here heightened the ideal that, while freedom

is indeed a natural right promised under the banner of American citizenship, there was still the expectation that duty and responsibility, which the slaves were still bound by even in their oppressed state, must be accomplished *before* those rights could be justifiably won.

Later in the century, other melodramas would continue this citizen construction – especially drawing on the idea of “land” as important to the endowed and evolved citizen’s status. “Manifest Destiny,” which was linked to the natural rights of the American nation and its citizens, was reinforced especially in two major plays of the latter half of the century: Charles H. Hoyt’s *A Trip to Chinatown* in 1891 and Denman Thompson’s *The Old Homestead* (1886). Both of these plays constructed the settlers of the American west as “earning” the land they inhabited, having sacrificed and fought (against both elements and “foreign” influence) for the land. It is endowed as “belonging” to them. Other popular theatrical forms of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century included the Buffalo Bill shows, which reinforced the image of “fighting for freedom” as both romantic and absolutely necessary, as well as reenactments on stage of many of the legendary outlaws of the Wild West.

In his newly released book *Performing the American Frontier, 1870-1906*, Roger A. Hall states that the staged reenactments of these “outlaw dramas” (especially a slew of plays dealing with Jesse James) sought to portray the outlaws as “modern Robin Hoods, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor while operating with courtesy, refinement, and honor” (130). Their function is seen on stage not as “criminal,” but as patriotic in protecting the “rights” of the underprivileged of the west and by “sacrificing” their own status to protect others.

Ultimately, the socializing effect of nineteenth-century American drama served to instill a foundation of acceptance of the most basic tenets of the American citizen under the Lockian nationalistic model firmly in the minds of the Americans who viewed this theatre. The

ideological “battle” in the nineteenth century is “won” by images of the citizen that are firmly grounded in the transactional model: individuals receive their rights in exchange for their duty to country. Despite the fact that the connection between rights and duties is indeed a contingent construction of the creators of the United States and their philosophical predecessors, most Americans by the end of this era firmly believed in their positions both as servants to their government in times of need and as receivers of guaranteed rights and freedoms because of that service. As we continue our historical examination, we will see in the twentieth century continued attempts to subvert the emerging ideological position of the citizen, attempts that will encounter their own failures at rupturing the transactional model. The potential for the more fully realized dismantling of the accepted view of the citizen will be explored in Chapter 5, after a thorough exploration of twentieth century flashpoints, and subsequently how the body comes into play in citizen imaging in Chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 3

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: AMERICAN CHARACTER BECOMES “CITIZEN” AND SUBVERSION WITHIN THEATRE

The theatre of the nineteenth century helped create and reinforce the codified image of the American Citizen as a position of both rights and duties. The establishment of the citizen during this period reflected the historical movements that expanded the nation as a collective entity, as well as defining the struggles for self-identification that occurred after the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the opening of the American west. For the first half of American history, then, the theatrical images of the citizen contributed to the building of the transactional model of the legal position of the citizen. During the twentieth century, theatrical imaging more closely followed America’s emergence into world affairs and its asserted claim of dominance over others. At the same time, the citizen reacted to the complexities of this global emergence as tensions emerged in the *quid-pro-quo* of the nationalistic model. Both within and without the borders of America, an increasing number of individuals and groups sought to challenge the assumed inherency of “democratic citizenship,” as outlined in Chapter 2. Theatre reflected this, striving for ways in which the transactional model could be enlarged and, ultimately, exploded to remove the exclusion of “others” from its frame. While theatre in the twentieth century never fully realized this goal, it did become a more contested site for multiple interpretations of the citizen, continually applying pressure to dominant ideological views. The drama of the twentieth century also opens a path towards moments of theatre that will be explored in the final chapter of this work, moments which ultimately might obliterate the transactional model witnessed herein.

Beneath the expansions undertaken during the century, however, was another evolution in how Americans viewed citizenship: the conflation of an ethical or moral component that, in

the end, fought against all attempts to challenge the transactional model. Theatre in the twentieth century differed from the nineteenth century in that it sought to apply this moral component, an evaluation of the “good” citizen versus the “bad,” to the dramas presented, ultimately conflating the legal position of citizenship with the “character” of individuals. In attempting to resist the presence of a dominant ideology concerning the citizen (its rights and duties), plays that were meant to be subversive often called upon at least one of the traditional pillars as support of this resistance. True “explosion” of the frame of citizenship thus never occurred, as theatre continued to seek some form of inherency in its dramatic imagery. In this Chapter I will examine a number of selected plays and films, not as a complete representation of all theatre during the twentieth century, but as examples of moments on the stage where theatre did indeed attempt subversion.

At the outset of the twentieth century, America began its emergence from a developing nation, complete with its own internal struggles for identity (the Civil War, for instance), and took upon itself an increasingly dominant position in world affairs beginning with its participation in World War I (1914-1918). In his 1928 book, *America's Part*, Henry J. Reilly advances the idea that the central “heroism” of General Pershing (commander of American forces in what was then referred to as “The Great War”) rested in his “absolute determination” to keep American citizens as unified members of American-only Army units (9-10), a concept that is taken for granted as we view our military today but was very much contested by the then “world powers” of England and France who sought to simply utilize American manpower as integrated parts of European Allied forces under the authority of those nations (10). Even during this earlier historical writing on the place of the American citizen within the world of the twentieth century, American “character” becomes categorized as different to, other from, even the European citizenry who were fighting the same war, the same enemy.

Theatre and film mirrored the emerging view of the American “character.” Howard Hawks’ 1941 film *Sergeant York* gave us the image of young American at first defiant of “traditional” American character in his reckless and morally corrupt youth, who subsequently discovered “faith” (not just in Christianity but in his country as well), and finally had to decide between his religious conviction and his duty to his nation. While focused on events of World War I, the film was produced during World War II and served as a reification of the dominant view of a transactional citizen. Ultimately, the eponymous York became the most lethal soldier in the American army (at least in the film’s view) as he “realized” his duties and obligations as citizen to country were inherently required by the same fundamental religious beliefs of his faith.¹ In *American Cinema/ American Culture*, John Belton writes:

The logic that underscores the [film] is that of a reluctant warrior, who hates war but fights nonetheless; in this way, the American war film . . . is underlined with an antiwar sentiment that justifies our apparent about-face from isolationism to interventionism. (175)

On the surface, the “character” of York seems to evoke the same transactional quest for citizenship evidenced in our study of the nineteenth century, yet Hawk’s film added more components to this construct. Spirituality and masculinity emerged as signposts of York’s discovered citizen status. When York turned to the Bible for justification of his choices, his “character” discovered “righteousness” in killing “others” for the “betterment” of the nation. Thus, as an “American,” York was granted authority to act over the rights and privileges of those outside his own collective, over the Germans he kills. The “character” of York theatrically represented the view of a dominant frame for what the citizen should be. The “character” of York, in the broadest sense rather than as a theatrical role, was provided as a model to be

¹ The moment in the film in which the character of Sergeant York has this epiphany of understanding comes when he finds a reference in the Bible – “Give unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, give unto God what is God’s.” This phrase very succinctly mirrors the idea of transactionality that is being promoted, and serves to reinforce the “divine” nature of both a citizen’s rights and his/her duties and obligations.

emulated by the collective American audiences viewing this particular film. More importantly this particular image elevated the position of the American citizen as one that should be promoted as superior to, and desired by, those who are not Americans (through the intervention that Belton mentions).

The tensions and struggles that emerged between the dominant ideology as it appeared in theatrical image and the questioning (or subversion) of that position create a view of the citizen, one that constantly shifted over the course of the century. The ideological underpinnings of the transactional model wanted to claim an inherency of superiority for America as it emerged onto the world stage, yet at the same time this model contended with constantly changing demands placed upon it both from within and from without the nation. In the textual examples explored, we shall see how the ideological model adapted to the historical imperatives of the moment as faced by the collective identity of the United States. Movements in the form of theatre (especially through the emergence of realism) also played into this highly complex establishment of an American “character” as signifier for a position which both relied on its nationalistic coding while at the same time attempting to claim a larger image which expands the understood rights of that citizen.

The Creation of a Dominant American “Character” and Resistance in Twentieth Century Theatrical Images

The emergence of the United States as a major power during the First World War and its rise to superpower status following the second served to cement the general acceptance of the signatures of “character” as a de facto part of the conditions of citizenship. Cultural identity was thus layered on top of historical legal standing, as created in the previous century, and became far more liquid in its understanding by the collective whole. Indeed, the friction between the conflated ideals of an American holding a definable and recognizable “character” and the vast

experiences of individuals within the larger collective group elicited more convoluted images of the citizen. Theatre, like the nation itself, struggled to navigate the shift from merely a national identity (legalistic) to a relational one with those of other nations and those seeking further inclusion in the frame within America. Ultimately, the problem offered in these images erupted as a desire to resist or challenge the duties and responsibilities of the transactional nationalistic model, while attempting at the same time to uphold and claim the rights of that same model.

Certainly the dominant ideological view of the citizen and its character were challenged during the early part of the century, especially in the years between the two World Wars. The impact of the Great Depression on American citizens cannot be ignored, and offers a glimpse at the struggle for dominance of ideology and how theatre attempted to resist its emergence in the American mindset. The collapse of the economy that occurred following the Stock Market crash of 1929 immediately challenged the acceptance of the American political model as an evolutionary and, as the depression stripped millions of Americans of their secured position within the nation, allowed for theatrical images that questioned the underlying validity of the transactional citizen. The political ideology and view of citizenship was most assuredly tied to the economics of capitalism as inherently emblematic of democratic idealism. The cracks that form during this period in American collective acceptance of capitalism created fissures in the acceptance of the rights, privileges and duties of citizenship. Theatre also questioned just how inherent (or “divinely” given) those rights and duties are in the first place.

One play in particular from this period sheds light on this area of tension: Clifford Odets’ 1935 *Waiting for Lefty*. As a theatrical moment, Odets’ play challenged the asserted irrefutability of democratic idealism as it bound itself to a capitalistic image. The images of Americans as viewed on stage at this time, and with overtly leftist plays such as *Lefty*, sought to envision the

citizen of the United States not as an individual construct of rights, but rather as a member of a collective. Furthermore, that collective was imaged as holding rights and privileges under the traditional Lockian view of the common man, while not necessarily demanding the same transactional *quid-pro-quo* of exchange between state and citizens that was accepted prior to the Great Depression.

Clifford Odets' play *Waiting for Lefty* was first performed by the Group Theatre at the Old Civic Repertory Theatre on January 5, 1935, and was written "in response to the New Theatre League's call for plays that could be performed at any meeting place or union hall" (Papa 57). The play was intended very specifically to be a call for radicalized resistance to the worker's place in an American hierarchy – or rather to resist the image of the individual citizen as guaranteed rights and privileges as long as he performs his duties in his place under the economic structures of capitalist industrialism. Lee Papa writes in "We gotta make up our minds: *Waiting For Lefty*, Worker's Theatre Performance and Audience Identification":

Clearly, *Waiting for Lefty* was written to achieve a specific effect on its audience, drawing upon its spectators' common experiences and frustrations to engage them in a theatrical community from which, presumably, societal change could be enacted outside the theatre. By expressing the need for community among workers, Odets attempted to affect as large an audience as possible and to drive them toward some kind of collective action. The play dramatizes Odets' belief in that undefinable American entity called "the People" (59).

Papa argues that the play incited active resistance to the economic structures of America at this time, and furthermore that true "equality" of citizenship could not be achieved under capitalism unless citizens came together in a "unified, pan-class community" (59).

To Odets, the promise of unalienable rights had, at the time he wrote *Lefty*, evaporated in the midst of the national economic collapse. The "committee" of characters in the play, which struggled for communal action, and at the end of the show called for a declarative "Strike!"

against the powers that be, are an imaging of the citizen not specifically as calling for their own individual rights, but rather seeking a place in American society in which those rights are won through unity of collective purpose. The very beginning of the show instills consistent images of the American capitalist system as “corrupt” and “belligerent” towards the common man (67), and Odets sought to show how a continual focus on individuality within a national citizen construct could only lead to this form of individualized oppression. His stated goal (64-65) was to transfer this activism from stage to audience, making the theatrical image an agent of transformation in and of itself:

The play finally achieves a “transformational” reality in its last moments, when [the character] Agate comes forward to talk. The audience was inducted at the beginning of the play and, through each scene, has been educated in worker ideology. The audience has become, by the end, an integral part of the performance itself. At the end of the play it is called to action as a community. (67)

The image of the collective, socialist view of citizenship is performed for, and then asked to be performed by, the audience that is viewing the play.

There remains, however, a very basic tension between the radical call in *Waiting for Lefty* and its own intentions, for underneath the play’s challenge to traditional citizenship is an underlying appeal to the inherency of natural rights for the common man. According to Wendy Smith in *Real Life Drama: The Group Theatre and America 1931-1940*, Odets believed that “all non-empowered people, middle and working class, were bound by a belief in the American Dream; that in the United States one should be given the opportunity to better oneself; and that the Depression-era state of class crisis would not allow the American Dream to come to fruition for the vast masses of citizens” (191). The play thus acts as a Marxist commentary on the faults of the traditional image of citizen, yet it yearns for inclusion in a rather elusive concept of American idealism that only manages to seek new ground through class collectivism:

In the bourgeois theatre context, Odets calls for action, yet he gives nothing specific against which the audience should act. He brings the audience members to a moment of community but leaves them to weather the shifting tides of the Great Depression without any guidance except a vague call to general action. In taking this a step further, Weales believes that the final cry of “STRIKE” is actually a kind of Aristotelian catharsis that substitutes for direct action and makes it “unnecessary.”² (Papa 70)

Odets’ play wanted to find a communal citizen identity that was rebellious towards the economic conditions of capitalism, while still holding to the inherent rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that were consistently enmeshed in the very same economic structures. If Smith is right, that Odets believed in and desired that his collective working class should have a chance at the “American Dream,” how then could the play ask for a rejection of bourgeois, individualized economic improvement and opportunity, which will become a major foundation of the image of that “Dream?”

Ultimately, *Waiting for Lefty* resisted the image of the nineteenth-century construction of the citizen. The play rejected the individual “hero” of the early war plays, as well as the individual who stands for his “land” or property. The socialistic model of communal citizenship presented here challenged the economic basis of collective identity at a time when capitalism was, in effect, a very real abject failure for many citizens (in the most basic legalistic sense) of the United States. Odets’ play and other socialist-minded theatrical images of the time (including Mark Blitzstein’s well-known 1936 *The Cradle Will Rock*) sought to incite and enhance friction against capitalism, while stubbornly endorsing a Lockian view of rights for the common man. When the economic despair eventually lifted the threat to the reestablishment of the dominant ideological view of the citizen was erased. Thereafter the common conflation of legal, moral and cultural image of the citizen as an individual transactionally tied to the nation reasserted itself

² Papa is quoting here from Gerald Weales, *Clifford Odets: Playwright* (49).

with vigor.³ Most recent attempts to stage these Depression-era plays meet at best with an assertion of this form of theatre as “archaic” or “as a museum piece.” A review of one recent production of *Lefty* in early 2005 elicited this response:

Yes, Odets' pamphleteering script contains glaring anachronisms. A collection of sketches that peel off and feed into an explosive cab drivers' union meeting, this is theater-as-megaphone. With no apology, it expresses the rage Odets, his peers and many others felt about the corruption and inequity of the American capitalistic system in the 1930s, and their desperate determination to revolt against it. (Berson, Jan. 2005)

In other words, the resistance to an individualized cultural image of the American citizen projected here as a momentary response to the time of the Great Depression – a temporary and ultimately disposable resistance in the face of the historical moments and challenges that emerged following the Great Depression.

This particular moment in American theatrical history revealed the battle between contested ideological views of the citizen. Institutions, individuals, and subaltern groups used these differing views as weapons to make a claim for their own desires and needs. The government and industry sought to promote the ideological frame found in the five pillars of citizenship and to tie them to capitalism as also being evolutionarily superior. The “workers” likewise appealed to the transactional pillars, but sought to tie them to a socialistic model of economics. In both cases, the intentions of these disparate groups sought to expand and elaborate the image of the citizen beyond mere legal standing, and even further beyond the transactional ideals of the nineteenth century into a view which incorporated *economic* status as a signifier for the citizen’s “character.”

³ Historically the individualized citizen is elevated again for many of the same reasons as it had been at the outset of theatrical representation – the idea of “citizen” as shaped by war in service to one’s country. It is no coincidence that Tom Brokaw’s recent best-seller “The Greatest Generation” focuses on individual sacrifice by soldiers during World War II – this echoes the “Sergeant York” template of individual heroism as cultural and character identifier of the citizen.

At this point I wish to note a theatrical battle for ideological dominance that was also in play at the outset of the twentieth century: the rise and acceptance of the theatrical form of realism on the American stage and later screen. Bruce McConachie asserts that the theatre of the 1800's was principally focused on the form of melodrama (ix.), a form that most often provided a simplistic template of behavioral codes for the cultural character of the American citizen. Archetypal images of "good" and "evil," "right" and "wrong," "just" and "unjust" predominated the stage, establishing a simplistic binary of cultural citizen representation to be modeled for the audiences that viewed the plays of this era. Yet even within this theatrical form, tensions arose that portended the next century's shift towards the concept of "realism:"

Several of the early consequences of economic expansion – increased wealth, greater mobility, and problems of social cohesion, among them – created situations of agonizing ambiguity for many upper-class Americans in the 1820's. Although the urban elite often expressed pride in its accomplishments and the expectation that the future would reveal the moral worth of its success, many of these same merchants, preachers, and writers feared that the perceived solidity of the past was gone forever and that the future held moral decline or even chaos. How, they asked, could so much wealth not lead us to luxury and corruption? What would become of our sacred ties to the land if Americas continued to abandon the patrimony of their forebears to speculate on new property in the West? If everyone pursued his or her own selfish interests, how could the public good be preserved and the national republic of virtue remain untainted? (McConachie 30-31)

Theatrical images as they progressed sought to answer these questions by placing them in absolutist dichotomies of archetypal representation, or rather to simplify them into easily modeled representations of the American character as "good" and to reinforce the supposed inherent aspects of this position at all times. Yet, the complexities that McConachie discusses here beg for a more multidimensional image of the "cultural" citizen. The advent of "realism" allowed for a new form to address the "character" of the citizen, while at the same time reinforcing the claim of natural rights.

The core of the realist aesthetic claimed to reveal viscerally the “truth” about human nature. As Richardson notes, “the play’s central idea – its intellectual content – had to underpin all the other elements” (158). What this means is that there can indeed be an understanding of the human condition that is both factual and palpable. Rather, “mankind” can be essentialized according to an underlying set of “natural laws” which govern interaction and behavior, and as such can be “realistically” reproduced in the dramatic sense. In this way, “realism,” as a movement, is to theatre what the philosophy of Locke was to the theory of democratic governance. As a form of theatre it stitches together the mental connections of the audiences viewing this form with the understood *a priori* beliefs in a natural order of existence, beliefs which support and confirm the American citizen’s understanding of his or her place as recipient of “common-man divine rights.”⁴

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the basic elements of realistic drama began to make their way from Europe in general and Russia in particular into the dramaturgy and production of American theatre. James A. Herne especially sought to move the theatre away from the popular form of melodrama to this new aesthetic. Herne himself stated a dramaturgical philosophy which echoes the inherent nationalistic understanding of the citizen:

⁴ While the religious implications of this claim remain outside the parameters that have heretofore been discussed, it is important to pause and recognize just how engrained the sense that American citizenship is indeed connected to religious identity in the twentieth century. Many Americans I have spoken to in the wake of 9/11 have indicated their belief and understanding that the United States was founded as a “Christian” nation, and this point of view, while not universal, is reflected in the reactions of the majority of American citizens to attempts to further separate religion from public institutions. The 2003 Alabama state Supreme Court controversy involving placement of the 10 commandments on federal grounds and the ongoing debate over the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance indicate a citizenry that is wary of giving up their connective beliefs that the United States is somehow “endowed” by a divine being, as if removing these symbols would sever the very rights they enjoy. In this way, “citizenship” is thus made not only conditional to the *quid-pro-quo*s being discussed in this work in terms of the nation state, but are also granted in the minds of many citizens in America as a *quid-pro-quo* in exchange for the belief and worship of “God,” especially the Judeo-Christian concept of such. This concept will be further discussed as this chapter progresses.

[Herne] contended that the nature of the realist aesthetic might not generate “beautiful” art, but in its truthful portrait of representative reality it found an alternative which earlier art had overlooked. If its objects were not beautiful in a conventionally aesthetic sense, they did present “the latent beauty of the so-called commonplaces of life . . . [dignify] labor and [reveal] the divinity of common man. (Richardson 159)

The structural foundations of the nationalistic model thus became intertwined with this “new” artistic. In the simplest of terms, theatre sought to reflect “reality” on stage and later screen and thus assumed an underlying belief and adherence to a set “reality” to begin with. Earlier scholarship reflected this attitude as well, such as Quinn’s 1927 *History of the American Drama*, in which the author authoritatively stated that realism does not “of course” engage any “new themes” (207), rather it achieved only a new method of approach to revealing them. To Quinn, who analyzes how domestic drama developed under realism (especially in the patterns of marriage and family interaction portrayed on stage), the basic nature of human condition is seen as an irrefutable state – “notwithstanding all the assaults upon marriage, for example, the institution will probably continue and if two people love each other and have children it will probably be happy” (208).

The success of realism allowed the audience to accept certain natural “truths” about human character, “truths” that can be replayed time and again through the form, allowing the American citizen could nod and say “of course, that only makes sense” when presented with darker outcomes on the stage. The effects of alcoholism in Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, for instance, were not intended by O’Neill as a moral lesson on sobriety; instead they are instantly transferable to an American ideal that “wasting” one’s life exploits the freedoms of citizenship while ignoring the duties and responsibilities expected therein. Even in theatrical moments where the absolutely intended goal of the piece was to resist a dominant view of “reality,” the form of realism came into play as the accepted way of uncovering “truth” in the

human and, more specifically, the American experience. Returning to Odets' *Waiting for Lefty*, the author at times sought to mix agit-prop and theatricalism into his play, yet he continually shifted back to realism as the basis for the activist play:

. . . one sees Odets' belief that his use of realism has a transformative potential beyond prior models of the genre; the entirety of the realistic scenes generates a remarkable effect. But the realism serves another purpose in audience identification. As Miller points out,⁵ Broadway audiences would have been used to realism (430) so, as a method for tapping into the cultural consciousness of his hoped for audience, Odets tempers the agit-prop with the scenes of realism. (Papa 64)

That the form of realism became a dominant genre in the twentieth century is hard to debate. In *The Making of the American Theatre*, Howard Taubman notes that, by the middle of the century, realism had become a powerful instrument in conveying the complexity of the American "character" onstage:

The best of [the new American playwrights] expressed the change of climate in the American theatre. Their realism was not merely the kind that lavished loving attention on the detail of a room or a street or on technical magic like storms or fires; it did not seek to imitate or outdo nature but to choose minutiae of reality that shed light on character and emotions. Characters tended to be recognizably human, not sugared or soured in accord with mechanical, old-fashioned notions of the theatre of what human beings are like. Facile divisions into heroes and villains were cast aside for subtler distinctions. (166)

John Gassner likewise notes realism's emergence in the early part of the century, stating that realism became a political tool for groups like the Provincetown Players (16-17). Despite the continued popular success of non-realist forms, such as the American musical theatre, Brechtian theatre, absurdism, and expressionism, the essential basis of realism as "foundational" to the

⁵ Quoted within from Jim Miller, "Workers' Theatre and the 'War of Position' in the 1930's" in *Modern Drama* 39 (1996): 421-35.

theatre remained generally accepted within the first several decades of the 1900's.⁶ Indeed, realism became so entrenched on the American stage that when the theatrical mediums of film and television emerged they, too, accepted “realistic” acting as essential to what makes “good” theatre.

A two-fold view emerged in American drama: firstly, that the American stage should reflect the natural condition of the common man; and, secondly, that theatre should also be aggressive in challenging society at the same time. On the surface, these two intentions would seem to be contradictory. In recognizing, through the realist form, a “natural” state or set of conditions for mankind, theatre would seem to support the societal absolutes that the second intention would want to criticize. And yet, in the belief that theatre serves as a site for activism, the actual production of drama reinforced the natural rights and characteristics of the citizen. It is easy for a dramatist to announce a challenge to accepted beliefs and societal structures, when in fact the dramatic material, by adhering in form to a singularly accepted style (realism), would reconfirm the underlying foundations of that very society. In this case, the accepted privilege of the legal status of being an American is again reinforced and strengthened.

Even when dramatists sincerely intended societal change, they were not actually seeking to redefine the rights and duties of the citizen in a profound or revolutionary sense. Instead they

⁶ I pause here to provide a personal anecdote to support this assertion. While recently directing Steven Dietz's *Dracula* at the University of Wisconsin-Manitowoc, I purposefully chose to stage the play as a melodrama, asking my student actors to forget everything about motivation, objective and all the rest of classical Stanislavski-based realism in approaching the play. When the show was reviewed by a colleague from another UW college, his written evaluation criticized my production because “the acting showed no signs of the fundamentals of acting – objective/obstacle or grounded motivation in true emotion.” Indeed, the critique went on to define the theatre being presented as “over-acted.” When I responded that this was by choice, to follow presentational styles of earlier eras in a melodramatic format, the response came “regardless of choice, the *basic fundamentals of acting must always be present and evident.*” Even in 2005, the assumption that Stanislavski-based realism is foundational to all theatre still exists and is constantly advocated as assuredly as possible as inherent to the production of theatre. It is in this acceptance of any sort of inherency just because a form is dominant that I chose to mirror the growth of the dominant ideological image of the citizen with the form of realism as it also becomes supreme in this past century.

sought *inclusion* within this model for those individuals or groups who could not yet claim full citizenship; or, at the very least, expansion of the categories of “character” which helped define the citizen. Rachel Crothers’ *A Man’s World* (1915) would, on the surface, seem to challenge the patriarchal structures of American citizenship and the rights accorded to men. Yet underneath there is no sense in the play of a basic “incorrectness” in the fundamental understanding of democratic freedoms; there is merely a desire to broaden the frame to include women as equals *within* this model.

The female character of Frank, who bears a male moniker, is seeking inclusion in the male-dominated world of writing. But Frank is willing to accept the duties and responsibilities of that world. Crothers’ use of the realist form highlights how the emblems of “character” that emerged in the previous century begin to intertwine with the citizen: Frank seeks a masculinity, a “male” strength of character that has evolved from the nineteenth-century drama; she seeks an independence, the ability to achieve whatever she wishes; and, finally, she aspires to be *known* for her achievements – for of all the “characteristics” of American citizenship that emerge *recognition* of one’s achievements (fame) becomes synonymous with the idea of *happiness* (or the pursuit thereof).

Having discussed realism as a mechanism for reinforcing the image of the citizen on stage and screen, we shift now to the historical context of this time and turn to another aspect of the citizen “character” that emerged during the middle of the century; that is, the reinforcement of religious and divine (or, more topically, “moral”) attributes for the cultural image of who is and who is not categorized successfully as an American. The historical context for this era is the United States’ entry into World War II, the conflict that followed, and the nation’s emergence as a “super-power” in the post-war world that followed. The question of “character” that comes to

the fore in terms of citizenship image now seeks to separate and elevate the individual citizen of the United States from and above the non-citizen – the understood and accepted “reality” of natural supremacy forged in victory over Japan and Germany and reified as oppositional to the “godless” Soviet Union. Religious faith thus becomes another layer in the character of the American citizen, bounded again as a transaction of that citizenship: to receive one’s “natural” rights (that are inherent but must be claimed) an American citizen must consistently perform his/her duties as an act of faith not just in the governmental institutions of the nation-state but in the underlying divine that exists behind the state.

Under this construct, the “divine” basis for inherent rights and duties need not be a personified, specifically Christian deity; yet, at the same time, there must be an appeal to the “divine” as basis for citizenship. Julie Adam cites Maxwell Anderson’s 1939 *Key Largo* in terms of the “need to transcend the defeatism he dramatized in his early plays and [address] . . . directly to the modern crisis of faith and to the need to break out of the impasse” (50). In this play the character of Victor finds new strength on the battlefield, not through a traditional appeal to “God,” but by instead calling on his inner strength, or rather a “new spirituality” (51), that comes from his own realization that in order to remain “a man” he must stand up and be counted. Like spirituality, “masculinity” also comes into play with Victor. Physical strength alone does not accord “masculinity”, but this image is found more concretely in the will to fight that is evidenced in Victor’s decision to stay. Vincent contrasts starkly with the second major character, King McCloud, who deserts the war and thus suffers a “spiritual death” (51).

In this play we see the same identifiers that were present in the previous century of the “American citizen:” the acceptance that the character’s position requires him to “stand” for his rights, his desires and the needs of his country out of no other reasoning beyond the mere fact

that “that is what a man does.” We also see, however, the more complex attempts to evolve the citizen beyond the initial claim, invoking the citizen as one who must *exhibit* spirituality or masculinity as well as simply accepting the underlying pillars of citizen status. Indeed, when one explores the physical dimensions of these two characters separately from this argument, McCloud seems the stronger, yet his decision to flee in the face of war signifies his failure to accept his duties as a “citizen” of his nation. The legalistic notion of “duty” to country does not correspond necessarily to the exhibited “character” of the citizen.

Of course, one could argue that the character of Victor is subversive because he does indeed reject “God” as a personalized provider of strength, but this subversion remains bound within the strictures of accepted “reality” – whether or not Victor recognizes “God” is irrelevant as he has accepted his place in regard to the duties he must perform to attain the rights and freedoms of man his nation has promised him. Even to the faithless Victor, therefore, there remains faith – faith in the inherent truths of his status as both man and citizen. It is because his acceptance of this position emerges from his identification with a certain “character,” or set of characteristics, that Victor found his way to his own self-awareness as “citizen.” The state Victor served was not necessarily “divine,” but the rights and privileges that stood behind it were.

The “Right” to Think

As the twentieth century progressed, a further tension arose in the conflicting formation of the citizen: the struggle between an individual’s right to actively disagree with a point of view or ideology that is prevalent in society and the need to call upon the rights “guaranteed” through citizenship in that society. As America emerged from the Second World War, the country entered a period where open challenge to the accepted “normativity” of Americanism and patriotism became increasingly dangerous (at least in the government’s view) to the stability and

security of the nation state. In his article “The Americanism of the American Theatre,” Barnard Hewitt states that theatre of this period reflects the fact that “[t]he struggle for individual liberty is far from over” (13), and that institutions (government, business, etc.) which seek to subordinate individuals to their needs still create “bogeymen with which to scare Western voters in national elections” (13-14). The monolithic “evil” the world had witnessed in the horrors of World War II gave way to the fears of the Cold War, and in this period “safety” and “security” from the new “evil” of communism re-created the citizen again as a weapon of separation, of distinction from those not exhibiting the features of the capitalistic, masculine, and Christian model American citizen.

Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee’s 1955 *Inherit the Wind* entered the fray as a work which, while invoking a legal case from earlier in the century, made a profound statement on the status of individual critical thought during the Cold War and the McCarthy era. As with earlier societal contestations of the citizen “character” in Odets and the leftist plays of the depression era, Lawrence and Lee sought to shift the pillars of democratic citizenship away from the materialistic structures of the nation. Instead of economics as crux for their conflation of the citizen image, the right to *think* becomes central to the American “character.” While the “right” to freedom of speech, and indeed to freedom of thought, had always been a part of the American discourse, *Inherit* crystallized the discussion around how this “right” became a part of the “character” of the citizen.

In *Inherit the Wind*, the “battlefield” moves away from war in the literal sense, and instead focuses on the fight between creationism and evolution. Based on the famous “Scopes Monkey Trial” of the early part of the century, the play gives its audience an image of a man, Bertram Cates, as an “American Hero” who “stood” up for his teaching of evolution in a small

southern town, “Heavenly” Hillsboro.⁷ As with *Key Largo* there is apparent subversion in the challenge to religious faith that lies at the philosophical argument of *Inherit the Wind*, but this subversion also reinforced citizen idealism, despite its assumed assault on religion. The characterization of Cates as “Hero” emerged from his steadfast will to stand up for his beliefs, thus claiming his “inalienable rights,” while at the same time performing his “duties” to the state – only here his duties are found in his responsibility to “educate” the young of the nation.

The dramatic fulcrum of *Inherit the Wind* is the confrontation between two “titanic” figures. Each supposedly represented conflicting views of what constitutes the “rights” of individuals within the greater American whole. In the actual Scopes trial, former Presidential candidate and orator William Jennings Bryan (famous of course for his “Cross of Gold” speech) was tapped to prosecute Scopes for violation of Tennessee state law prohibiting the teaching of Darwin’s theory of evolution in its schools. Scopes had not specifically taught this theory, and indeed was kept off the stand by Clarence Darrow (characterized as Henry Drummond in the play) because of his lack of real knowledge “beyond the rudiments” of the idea (Iannone 30). Scopes’ defense was funded in large part by the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, whose writer H.L. Mencken was the basis for the character of E. K. Hornbeck. In actuality, Scopes had used Hunter’s *Civic Biology* as a text, one which did include a single paragraph on the theory of evolution, but still became the heart of the prosecution’s charge against him (29).

⁷ Creationist advocates have often attacked this play as being “historically inaccurate,” a charge which can be applied readily to almost any historical drama. Much of this criticism centers on the fact that in the actual case Scopes was a substitute teacher, not a full-time science instructor in Dayton Tennessee. This fact is cited to ostensibly “prove” that Scopes was part of a “conspiracy” by the “northern liberals,” planted in order to begin the very commotion and controversy that ensued. It is important to remember that Lawrence and Lee, as dramatists, did not claim their play to be a “historical reenactment;” none of the characters are given factual names – it is, as is important to this discussion, a representation of the images that event created in society.

Inherit the Wind focused more on the rights of the character of Cates than the actual trial, and represented his place in the middle of the legal fury as more heroic and idealistic than actual transcripts of the trial indicated (31). Within the play, both Cates and Drummond served as co-protagonists. Cates was the “citizen” who asserted his rights and Drummond stood as the advocate for this necessity. In this way, the characterizations were similar to other theatrical works of the time, as Adam notes, “The protagonist’s quest for a comprehensive vision of the world may be a synthesizing process which may have an integrating function and a liberating effect, as it does for Quentin in [Miller’s] *After the Fall* and for Tom in [William’s] *The Glass Menagerie*” (89). Cates’ quest was to bring “enlightenment” to the young of Hillsboro, a direct reflection of the Lockian view of enlightened democratic idealism.⁸ Cates’ positioning as “hero,” and thus as “citizen,” is established in the very first scene of the play, when his fiancée Rachel visits him in the jail. When she confronts him on why he has put himself in this position (a clear image that he has made a *choice*, distinct and intentional), he answers swiftly:

CATES: You know why I did it. I had the book in my hand, Hunter’s *Civic Biology*. I opened it up, and read my sophomore science class Chapter 17, Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. All it says is that man wasn’t just stuck here like a geranium in a flower pot; that living comes from a *long* miracle, it didn’t just happen in seven days.

RACHEL: There’s a law against it.

CATES: I know that.⁹

⁸ Carol Iannone in “The Truth About *Inherit the Wind*” from *First Things*, February 1997 writes that “There is finally something shallow about the highminded social realism in much twentieth-century American drama, with its progressive and open-ended vision of life. Lawrence and Lee’s skillful and often riveting collaboration in *Inherit the Wind* is no exception” (28). This would seem to be a recognition of the structural trap that dramatic work intending subversion finds itself in – challenging certain foundational beliefs (such as strict Biblical interpretations as in this play) while in the end only serving to reify the absolute codification both legally and in culture of the a priori understandings of both the American “character” and “citizen.”

⁹ Actual trial records indicate that Scopes was not fully aware of this law, and only briefly mentioned Darwin as part of his class (Iannone 32).

RACHEL: Everybody says what you did is bad.

CATES: It isn't as simple as that. Good or bad, black or white, night or day.
Do you know, at the top of the world the twilight is six months long?

RACHEL: But we don't live at the top of the world. We live in Hillsboro,
and when the sun goes down, it's dark. And why do you have to
make it different? (Lawrence and Lee 7-8)

Cates' character is thus endowed immediately with the "characteristics" of the American citizen: brashness (willing to take a chance), masculinity (willing to stand up for his beliefs), and devotion to what he assumes as his "duty" to educate the uneducated. The society does not, however, want him to "think," to openly challenge an idea born of religion and accepted as sacrosanct by the community and culture surrounding him. The plot of the play unfolds as a battle to acknowledge his rights as a citizen to do just that.

Religion inhabits a very specific category within the structure of the play – for it is not merely Christianity that is represented, but the most absolute fundamentalist point of view of the faith which is questioned. As Hornbeck declared upon his arrival in the opening scene: "Ahhhh, Hillsboro – Heavenly Hillsboro, the buckle on the Bible Belt" (13). The play intended, therefore, not to tear down "faith" in divinity (as this is particularly necessary for the reinforcement of the "rights" of the citizen being argued), but instead acted as an agent of affirmation in this divinity *because* it attacks the absolutism of Matthew Harrison Brady and his legions of supporters. At the end of the play, after Cates has been found guilty but fined only the insignificant sum of \$100, Brady dies while trying to deliver a final speech on his righteous beliefs. Surprisingly, Drummond is deeply affected by this and spars with Hornbeck:

HORNBECK: You know what he was: a Barnum-bunkum Bible-beating
bastard!

DRUMMOND: You smart-aleck! You have no right to spit on his religion than you have a right to spit on *my* religion! Or my lack of it!

HORNBECK: Well, what do you know! Henry Drummond for the defense! Even of his enemies!

DRUMMOND: (*Low, moved*) There was much greatness in this man.

And, later in the scene:

DRUMMOND: “He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind; and the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart.”

HORNBECK: We’re growing an odd crop of agnostics this year!

And, finally:

DRUMMOND: A giant once lived in that body. (*Quietly*) Butt Matt Brady got lost. Because he was looking for God too high up and too far away.

HORNBECK: You hypocrite! You fraud! You’re more religious than *he* was! Excuse me, gentlemen, I must get me to a typewriter and hammer out the story of an atheist who believes in God! (113-114)

Hornbeck’s startling accusation at the end of this exchange underlines an image accepted as foundational within the play, and returns us to the very first component of American citizenship as outlined at the very beginning of this dissertation – that citizenship in the United States is derived from Natural Law, and therefore is “given” by God. Drummond, supposedly an agnostic, is presented throughout the play as opposing religion. Yet at this defining moment he is revealed to be operating under these very religious assumptions when evaluating the lives of both Cates and Brady. Iannone claims in her critical work on the play that “in the Scopes Trial [Darrow] defended the individual mind and freedom of thought.

According to Iannone, Darrow’s questions to Scopes’ students – “Did it hurt you any?” “Do you ‘still believe in church although you were told all life comes from a single cell?” – were simply disingenuous (30-31). Whether this assertion holds true or not is inconsequential because

it has no bearing on the image of Drummond that Lawrence and Lee sought to construct. The play takes Drummond's line of questioning, sometimes verbatim, but infused his character with an intentional sympathy for the opposing beliefs of the younger witnesses who cross his path during the courtroom scenes. He did not, in the frame of this drama, attack God, or a basic belief in salvation and afterlife. Instead he only challenged the strictest literalism of Christian theology.

If, as we have seen, Drummond's protagonist upholds the first tenant of citizenship, then both he and Cates also serve to uphold the other four as well. The second, that we are only governed when we give our consent to be governed, is exemplified by the very establishment of the trial as the method for determining truth. In the law, and in the specific courtroom of *Inherit the Wind*, a Judge stands as the symbol of national law (despite the fact that it is a state justice – the *idea* of American law is represented). That judges in the American political system are either elected or appointed by other elected representatives situates their authority in the consent of the people they serve. We are “guaranteed” the right to trial by jury, a system intended to provide for the absolute “fairness” and “impartiality” of the common citizen over the whims and wishes of any governing agencies. In *Inherit* the jury is not only present, but a major scene shows the audience several of these being picked for the trial. Here again, an important fusing of “character” and citizenship occurs, as we see “honesty” presented as foundational to *both* Brady and Drummond:

MEEKER (the court bailiff): State your name and occupation.

SILLERS: George Sillers. I work at the feed store.

DAVENPORT (assisting Brady): Tell me, sir. Would you call yourself a religious man?

SILLERS: I guess I'm as religious as the next man.

BRADY: In Hillsboro, sir, that means a great deal...

And later in the scene:

BRADY: Mr. Sillers. Do you have any personal opinions with regard to the defendant that might prejudice you on his behalf?

SILLERS: Cates? I don't hardly know him. He bought some peat moss from me once, and paid his bill.

BRADY: Mr. Sillers impresses me as an honest, God-fearing man, I accept him.

And finally Drummond questions the potential juror:

DRUMMOND: Mr. Sillers, did you ever happen to bump into a fella named Charles Darwin?

SILLERS: Not till recent.

DRUMMOND: From what you've heard about this Darwin, do you think your wife would want to have him over for Sunday dinner?

BRADY: Your honor, my worthy opponent from Chicago is cluttering the issue with hypothetical questions –

DRUMMOND: I'm doing *your* job, Colonel.

DAVENPORT: The prosecution is perfectly able to handle its own arguments.

DRUMMOND: Look, I've established that Mr. Sillers isn't working very hard at religion. Now, for your sake, I want to make sure he isn't working at Evolution.

SILLERS: (Simply) I'm just working at the feed store.

DRUMMOND: This man's all right. (Lawrence and Lee 39-41)

The exchange represents a powerful example of how the honest consent of an individual citizen is prized in the resolution of dispute under the laws of the United States. When Brady tries to subsequently reopen the question of Sillers' ability to serve, the Judge strikes him down, declaring that he has already been found acceptable to both prosecution and defense.

The third pillar of the nationalistic model, that we all have the right (if we so choose) to have our voice heard, is also reified in the trial process – despite the wishes and desires of both Brady and the townspeople. Cates’ voice is heard through his co-protagonist advocate Drummond in the courtroom (the very “right” to legal representation is qualified here as part of this model), as well as through his own statements to Rachel and others during the course of the play. He is allowed, simply, to *defend* himself and his actions.¹⁰ Similarly, Drummond never seeks to stifle Brady’s right to speak, instead only asking the court that the formal procedures of the trial be concluded before Brady is allowed to give his final oration. Indeed, just before the Judge is about to pass sentence following the jury’s guilty verdict, Drummond reminds the Judge that it is customary to give even the convicted a chance to speak, which the Judge quickly accedes is indeed Cates’ right. Finally, and most vividly, while questioning Brady himself on the witness stand, Drummond lures the champion of creationism (as imaged in this particular piece of theatre) into the following:

BRADY: We must not abandon faith! Faith is the important thing!

DRUMMOND: Then why did God plague us with the power to think? Mr. Brady, why do you deny the *one* faculty which lifts man above all other creatures on the Earth; the power of his brain to reason. What other merit have we? The elephant is larger, the horse is stronger and swifter, the butterfly more beautiful, the mosquito more prolific, even the simple sponge is more durable! (*Wheeling on Brady*) Or does a *sponge* think?

BRADY: I don’t know. I’m a man, not a sponge.

DRUMMOND: Do you think a sponge thinks?

BRADY: If the Lord wishes a sponge to think, it thinks.

DRUMMOND: Does a man have the same privileges that a sponge does?

¹⁰ It is an historical irony that the trial did far more to spread the ideas of evolution than the actual incident of one school teacher instructing his class briefly on Darwin’s theory ever could have, a fact which is often lamented by modern creationist movements.

BRADY: Of course.

DRUMMOND: (*Roaring for the first time; stretching his arm toward CATES*)
This man wishes to be accorded the same privilege as a sponge! *He wishes to think!* (83-84)

Even here we see Drummond, the agnostic, refer to God's "gift" of freedom of thought and voice. The implied image is clear: the free expression of thought is at the base of consent, and to deny it is to shake the inalienable, God-given rights of Cates or any other American.

The final aspects of the nationalistic model of the citizen are also evident. The understood inherent "protection" from harm is seen in the absurdly small fine that is levied against Cates by the Judge at the conclusion of the trial. The accepted *quid-pro-quo* of in turn protecting our own system of government is imaged clearly in the very willingness of Cates and Drummond to use the courtroom as site for their opposition, rather than seeking radical revolt in overthrowing creationism. Finally, the idea that these inherencies make Americans superior to others emerges in the unstated theme that courses throughout the entire play – that *only in America* can this sort of legal debate take place, and *only in America* can an outcome which is legally oppositional to the idealism of a protagonist like Cates actually carry a larger, moral victory. The essence of Cates' "victory" lies not in his actual dismantling of any of the townspeople's beliefs in creationism. Instead, it is through the mere fact that Cates' contradictory beliefs are fought for, defended, and ultimately aired through the course of the trial, that the unique political and philosophical positioning the status of being an American citizen is assumed.

Inherit the Wind upheld the image of "divinity" as a foundational signifier of the citizen. Whereas Brady clearly emerged on stage as a befuddled, belligerent adherent to a religious intolerance that seeks to remove Cates' rights, the real-life Bryan was not so neatly categorized:

Bryan was not a biblical literalist. He volunteered to Darrow – it was not worried out of him, as the play suggests – that the “days” in the biblical account of creation were not twenty-four hour days; he cited Genesis 2:4, in which the word “generations” seems to be used as substitute for “days.” He did not insist that the “sun stood still” in Joshua 10:13, but explained that the Bible was using the language of the time. At the same time he did not yield in his belief in miracles and primacy of divine power. If his supporters felt disappointment over Bryan’s testimony – the play makes much of the crowd’s turning on him – it was not because he looked stupid as a defender of crude fundamentalism, but because he was *not* a defender of crude fundamentalism. (Iannone 31).

The play, however, glossed over this aspect – for it would confuse the images presented to layer such complexity onto the antagonist, lessening the “heroism” of the co-protagonists. Most “realistic” theatre of the twentieth century failed to truly subvert even when its apparent intention was to do just that. *Inherit the Wind*, in the end, did not seek to diminish divinity as source for the “natural rights” of the American citizen; quite the contrary, it served to reinforce them far more concretely than any religious advocates (either as characters in the play or in the culture at large) could have imagined.

The need, which is almost palpable, for individuals to seek firm ground to support their ability to function as part of the larger group wants for a framework on which to place these beliefs and understandings – “The exercise of the right to live and organize one’s life according to one’s own insights would become an unbearable burden if one had to start from zero, without being able to choose from a menu of available elements” (Gunsteren 35). The process by which an individual can identify a legal self-positioning of citizenship, *without* necessarily calling on the myriad of characteristics that become conflated with that position, is extremely tenuous and difficult to achieve. It is easier, on the whole, to simply accept foundational realism. In this way, theatre served as an “educator” for the collective public (84-85), instilling images that reinforced what had been taught by parents, schools and institutions.

Realism acted as an agency of both resistance and reinforcement throughout the drama of this period – not just with Lawrence and Lee’s *Inherit the Wind*. Such plays as Russ Munyon’s *12 Angry Men* (1955), William Inge’s *Picnic* (1953), and even Miller’s *The Crucible* (1955) stood as theatrical representations of the “character” of American citizens. These plays exhibited the negative results when the status of characterized citizenship failed to grant the understood rights and privileges that that position claims. Indeed, the eventual rejection within popular culture in America of McCarthyism during the period of the 1950’s can be ascribed not to a collective belief that Communism was not a threat to American society, but rather to the belief that the activities of HUAC were becoming themselves a greater threat to the accepted “freedoms” supposedly granted to individuals. Even when a play such as *The Crucible* openly assaulted the “political” representation of the nation, it continued to appeal to the “divine” rights of man as foundational to one’s understanding of citizenship and the “right” to “think” that is thus assumed.

The “American Dream” and the Citizen

The “right to think” represented one major component of the moral dimension that was added onto the “citizen” in the twentieth century. The application of “The American Dream” to the citizen stood as an even more dramatic conflation of this image for audiences. As we have already seen, *economics* had played an important part in the contestation of differing interpretations of the citizen in the early part of the century, and the post-war era of the 1950’s saw a reconnection to the idea of *success* as a significant qualifier of one’s status as a citizen. The image of success became tied to the “family,” through the creation of cultural codes such as having “a house with a white picket fence,” “a car,” and “2.5 kids.” Theatre saw the family as a resistive unit, and thought that, by exploring the condition of the family on stage, subversion

could be offered against the dominant institutions of the state by returning to the more “natural” environment of the family. The end result, however, was simply more reinforcement of the model of rights and responsibilities established under the transactional model of citizenship.

In his introduction to *Family, Drama, and American Dreams*, Tom Scanlon notes: “The American family experience seems to be a more extreme example, a purer case, so to speak, of the social forces at work in the western world” (3). Why? On the surface familial stresses and conditions would seem to be similar within any comparative western society, yet here we can posit that, in many ways, the American family is as affected by individual self-awareness as citizens as are any other institutions in America – “civic mindedness will hardly develop through individualistic people urging each other on” (Gunsteren 18). In other words, the awareness of one’s status as a citizen requires re-enforcement that begins at the familial level. In a nation whose model of citizenship requires the exchange of responsibility for rights, this places increasing burdens of citizen-socializing forces onto the family.

The essence of the “American Dream” is harmony, or rather the culmination of the inherent “rights” of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Thus, the promise of achieving the American Dream comes to find itself squarely owing to the accepted rights and privileges of the national citizen model. Shaped into this concept of harmony is the idea of *success* as a promise of citizenship. Success is counted within the American Dream on several levels: 1.) the achievement of financial security within the capitalist system; 2.) the achievement of possession of material goods; and, 3.) the achievement and security of a family to share this with and, more importantly, to pass it on to. Over the course of the twentieth century this basic construct has developed and shifted slightly, favoring financial and material aspects by the end of the century,

yet offering the promise that any citizen, if he or she “plays by the rules” – or rather follows the tenants of the citizen – can achieve this success in America.

Tom Scanlon locates much of the theatrical imaging of this Dream in the simplistic views of family life as created in the melodramas of the nineteenth century and the popular radio and television “soap” operas of the twentieth (63-65), but this positioning is fallacious in that it suggests that more complex domestic dramas, such as those of O’Neill, Williams and Miller did not introduce or reinforce similar calls for this Dream to their audiences:

What separates playwrights such as O’Neill, Miller and Williams from the products of our mass dreams of family life such as *Rip Van Winkle* and the soap opera is not the materials dealt with, or even the eloquence of language, so much as the relentless pursuit of contradictions which the popular culture imagines as compatible and harmonious. (78)

Scanlon assumes here that the dysfunctional visions that are presented by these dramatists are destructive to the underlying assumptions about the American Dream, but this is incorrect. When one begins to look at these dramas, we can begin to see that it is the failure to adhere to the codes of the citizen, especially within the frame of “character,” that the Dream falls apart. The actual *promise* of the Dream is upheld, not just here, but in theatrical images till the present day.

The works of Eugene O’Neill, for instance, appealed to the basic functions of the Dream, though O’Neill’s characters somehow lose their way. In *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), the basic setting showed the plight of the Cabot family amidst the endless stresses of farm life; “two wives have been worked to death, three sons hate their father, and the patriarch of the family, Ephraim Cabot, is so self-reliant as to be cut off from humanity” (92). Cabot was, however, slavishly devoted to his farm as his “home,” his reward for all his hard work and sacrifice – “In *Desire* it is hinted that possessing things and people is connected to nature” (94). To Scanlon, and perhaps even to O’Neill in his writing of the play, the Cabots represented an indictment of the sacrifice of

family in exchange for material pursuits, but in actuality what was at play here was a deeper image: Ephraim did not lose his “Dream” because the system produced inherent flaws, but because he expected the rights of this Dream without paying proper attention to his own duties and responsibilities *outside* of the mere process of working hard. His inward alienation removed him from collective responsibility, and the familial disintegration that the play reveals traces rather to a collapse of Ephraim’s character. Ephraim in *Desire* lacked the will, the masculinity to succeed both materially and with his family. While it is true that outside conditions (weather, death, etc.) had placed the hardships in front of Ephraim (much as can be seen in other O’Neill works with alcohol), his inability to stand up to these challenges caused the failure of his dream.

The family and the “American Dream” are far more vividly presented in what is often considered the quintessential “landmark” of the mid-twentieth-century American stage, Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (1948). “*Death of a Salesman* . . . [has] been acclaimed as [an artifact] of an ‘essential’ Americanness” (Smith 111). Much has been written on *Salesman* as an assault on the American Dream, with both authorial and critical claims to its representation of the subtle disintegration in the American family. In some regards *Salesman* does not really belong to the realm of realism in drama, owing more to expressionism as a form with its stylized setting and overlapping flashback construction. But even with these structural variations, the traditional presentation of this play has utilized acting techniques that are very much grounded in realism. As to the claim of subversion within the play, once again, we see a situating of Willy’s failure not as result of the foundational system he belongs to but because of distinct character flaws. Initially, we see Willy as representing greed and a need for self-importance:

WILLY: They should’ve had a law against apartment houses. Remember those two beautiful elm trees out there? When I and Biff hung the swing between them?

LINDA: Yeah, like being a million miles from the city.

WILLY: They should've arrested the builder for cutting those down. They massacred the neighborhood. More and more I think of those days, Linda. This time of year it was lilac and wisteria. And then the peonies would come out, and the daffodils. What fragrance in this room!

LINDA: Well, after all, people had to move somewhere.

WILLY: No, there's more people now.

LINDA: I don't think there's more people, I think...

WILLY: There's more people! That's what's ruining the country!
Population is getting out of control. The competition is maddening!
Smell the stink from that apartment house! (Miller 11)

Willy's anger emerges because *his* claim to the American dream, his right to it, has been threatened by the claims of other citizens. He has failed here because he has attempted to impose his supposed superiority, not against the otherness of non-citizens, but against those with whom he shares the collective identity. Willy sees himself as "the common man," but his pronouncements and actions, especially in his steadfast adherence to the idea that "he is known and liked," show that his distortion of the American Dream seeks a personal elevation above the rights and desires of his fellow common man.¹¹ Aurel Kolnai, in *Privilege and Liberty*, discusses this conundrum in terms very similar to Willy's character:

. . . Man comes to debase, denature and distort himself into a Common Man; in his pursuit of freedom misconceived as "human power unlimited by any supra-human agency, order or institution," he entangles himself into an ever-straitening web of self-enslavement; pridefully impatient of the union of Participation, he resorts to the conceptions and techniques of the union of Identity, which cannot but annihilate all freedom . . . (41)

Thus, Willy has essentially trapped himself in the failure of his life, in the disintegration of his family, because he has become so consumed with his own superiority that he fails to contribute

¹¹ Once again, the very terminology used here indicates a specific gender bias within the nationalistic model and the ideals of Locke that will be further explored in the next chapter.

to society (duty and responsibility) or to his family beyond what he perceives as needed for his own “name” to be known.

Willy is obsessed with money as well – the beginnings of what we can substantially attribute as the centerpiece of the American Dream in the latter half of the century. He obsesses on how much money he has made in the past (Miller 58-59), and his attention to his sons is focused only in their quest for “success.” When Uncle Charley offers him a job, Willy refuses out of the “pride of his identity,” indicating that indeed he cannot accept himself as a common man seeking success in supporting his family. Rather, he must be “Willy Loman,” a man above others. One of the ironies of the play lies in the fact that on the surface Willy has achieved much of the American Dream – ownership of property (the house is paid off just as he kills himself), family (wife, two kids), and has been moderately successful (at least in the past) at his job financially. But Willy dismisses this because he never achieved the level of economic prosperity to which he thinks he should have, as witnessed in this exchange:

WILLY: That’s funny. For a second there you reminded me of my brother Ben.

BEN: I only have a few minutes.

CHARLEY: You never heard from him again, heh? Since that time?

WILLY: Didn’t Linda tell you? Couple of weeks ago we got a letter from his wife in Africa. He died.

CHARLEY: That’s so.

BEN: So this is Brooklyn, eh?

CHARLEY: Maybe you’re in for some of his money?

WILLY: Naa, he had seven sons. There’s just one opportunity I had with that man...

BEN: I must make a train, William; there are several properties I'm looking at in Alaska.

WILLY: Sure, sure!... If I'd gone with him to Alaska that time... everything would've been totally different.

CHARLEY: Go on, you'd freeze to death up there.

WILLY: What are you talking about...?

BEN: Opportunity is tremendous in Alaska, William. Surprised you're not up there.

WILLY: Sure, tremendous.

CHARLEY: Heh?

WILLY: That was the only man I ever met who knew the answers.
(Miller 32)

Willy sees his brother Ben as the epitome of success – because he measured himself in comparison to Ben's achievements. Ben has made fortunes speculating in wild areas of the world. He has a large family, but any flaws that Ben or his own family might have are hidden to Willy (and the audience). Charley is also successful and has a son who is arguing a case before the Supreme Court, but Willy finds it easy to dismiss this “success” because, to award the American Dream to someone whom he sees so often, is unthinkable. Ben, on the other hand, remains secluded into memory – only the image of his “brilliance” is real to Willy. The last line of the above, Ben “knew the answers,” further indicates his failure of character in accepting responsibility for his own life.

Because of his unrealistic views on life, Willy is unable and unwilling to see his own shortcomings and to address them. Therefore, his character exhibits weakness (not strong of will), and instead of standing up for his responsibilities in order to achieve the rights of citizenship he hides behind illusions, falsifications of events with which he justifies his own

inadequacies. In terms of citizenship, Willy exhibits several rejections of the pillars of the nationalistic model. Willy never considers that what is owed to him in terms of business is connected to natural rights. Instead, he ascribes these rights as solely the result of his own “greatness” as a man. The divine grant of rights to Willy represents itself only after the point of his collapse as a citizen – when he decides to plant his garden during the middle of the night. “Travis Bogard accounts for [this appeal to nature] in the drama this way: ‘The American has always thought of himself as an Antaeus, deriving his strength from his contact with the earth . . . ’” (Smith 111). When the realization of his own personal character flaws crushes in upon him, he turns to a connective act that is meant to reassert his divine right as a citizen, as well as signifying his ownership of the land he tills. Willy, however, has already removed himself as an active citizen by his choices. The structure of the play only serves to reinforce this concept: instead of breaking the realism, the flashback sequences only serve to envision the Willy of the present as absent the status he once claimed for himself, and the play as a whole images Willy’s decline (and the decline of his family with him). *Salesman* thus shows how illusion is used to mask the absence of Willy’s citizen status because he continues to only see it in terms of either the past or even in what never was.

The inalienable right that most concerns Miller here is the “pursuit of happiness,” and many have incorrectly assumed that *Salesman* shows this pursuit as if it were tied to the rejection of capitalism and traditional citizen responsibility. The crux of this argument is the final outcome of the play:

Miller’s image of family struggle is much different in *Death of a Salesman* [than in the works of O’Neill]. There is an end to the Loman family, a clearing of obstacles to self-consciousness. Willy’s fate is the terrible cost of misunderstanding one’s relation to the outside world. Biff survives the family with knowledge that will help him live with himself. There is for Miller, as there was not for O’Neill, a way out of the family dilemma. The painful disintegration

of the family brings with it the possibility of a new freedom and sense of identity. (Scanlon 154)

Scanlon, however, misses again the deeper images presented. The play offers Biff as the escape from the corrupt nature of the American Dream, as if his decision to return to the west and work on a ranch rejects the entire system. He does not. Biff is merely reconnected to the idea of the “pursuit of happiness” as his right, and his character more clearly corresponds to other citizen “heroes” like Cates in *Inherit the Wind* because, 1.) he stands up for who he really is, facing his father and shattering the illusions of Willy and the rest of the family, and, 2.) he returns to the basic appeal of the “common man” ideal by reasserting his own voice and *choice* to pursue his own American Dream through the work he loves. The potential for that Dream is not, as Scanlon and others would assert, stripped from Biff – it merely returns to the starting position of a distant hope and possibility, still there for him as he strikes out on his own. The play positions Biff, therefore, already visually as the true successor from the Loman family to Uncle Ben’s success in the American Dream. His leaving for the nebulous “out west” evokes the same images as Ben’s departure for Alaska.

As the play closes, Willy kills himself. This final act removes him from citizen status and, of course, irreversibly removes the last shreds of character from that relationship. Like the deserting McCloud of Maxwell Anderson’s *Key Largo*, Willy essentially “deserts the battlefield” of life. Despite any intention to show this as an embrace of “freedom,” it instead images the complete loss of citizenship and abandonment of all rights and responsibilities that are associated with it. Linda is left alone to wonder why Willy has done this, despite her knowledge for some time that he might. Her repetition of the phrase “we’re free and clear . . . we’re free . . . we’re free . . . we’re free . . .” (Miller 101) does not absolve Willy of his actions, but rather refers to the ownership the family (now her and Happy) have over their home. This is the crux of her disbelief

at Willy's choice, for the status of ownership should be, in her mind, enough to satisfy a good part of both the American Dream and the citizen status to which it connects. Willy could not accept this simplistic definition of success.

Ultimately, *Death of a Salesman* does not challenge the American Dream itself, but the corruption of it by failure to adhere to the same *quid-pro-quo* that remains elemental to a more dominant ideological model of the citizen. When *Salesman* was first adapted to the medium of film, Miller was astonished to see that the studio releasing the picture attached a recruiting film for actual salesmen as a trailer at the beginning of the film. To him, this flew in the face of the assault on capitalism he believed he had intended. For Miller, his play was subversive, but at the time many people read it in the opposite direction – especially as this first film and the subsequent Dustin Hoffman version both eschewed the expressionistic set of the theatrical play for more realistic design. The images of reinforcement come across more succinctly in the film version because of this, and in the end the play serves not to weaken American's desire for their own "Dream" but to strengthen that desire (albeit with the codicil that one must remain "true" to both the character and the parameters of their position as citizen in order to achieve it).

The corruption of Willy's dream can finally be seen in one specific character flaw that outweighs all others, even his choice to kill himself:

BIFF: There'll be no pity for you, you hear it? No pity!

WILLY: You hear the spite!

BIFF: No, you're going to hear the truth, what you are and what I am!

LINDA: Stop it!!

WILLY: Spite!

HAPPY: You cut it now!

BIFF: The man don't know who we are! The man is gonna know! We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!

HAPPY: We always told the truth!

BIFF: You big blow, are you the assistant buyer? You're one of the two assistants to the assistant, aren't you?

HAPPY: Well, I'm practically....

BIFF: You're practically full of it, we all are! And I'm through with it.
(Miller 95-96)

Willy Loman, in the end, fails to exhibit honesty, and his dishonesty, not only to every individual he meets but to his family and to himself as well, ultimately disables his claim on citizenship. This critical flaw of character strips Willy of any "real" connection to his place in society as a citizen, and the image of the citizen further conflates to include the necessity of honest devotion to the institutions of society. *Death of a Salesman* creates for us an image of the citizen that compares analogously to the modern debate of "family values," wherein to be a "good" citizen requires even further transactional appeals not only between citizen and government, but also between citizen and family and citizen and society.

Cultural Connections – The "Good" Citizen

Each of the texts explored in this chapter sought to engage necessary "character" images of the citizen in response to what occurred in American history at those particular moments when the plays were produced. To a large extent, all of the plays intended to seek, through the layering of "characteristics," a definition of what it means to be a "good" citizen rather than merely a legal one. The constant shifts and segues between masculine ideals, spiritual calls, and economic representation indicate a desire by the "citizen" to exist as more than just an individual mechanism of culture and nation, but instead to represent an idealized template of *value* to the nation. The "citizen" remains hazy and elusive as a definable construct precisely because it seeks

to be iconographic of many conflicting levels of recognizable American traits. As an ideological tool, citizenship cries for a level of “truth” that cannot be fully imaged outside of the most basic legal definitions, yet the search for signifiers of this “truth” can only be constructed out of very contingent moments of historical necessity.

In its own way, theatre attempted to define characteristics of the “truth” about citizenship and to identify what constituted the “good” citizen by aligning itself with the growing emphasis on *sociology* as a science. Melvin J. Vincent, in a series of articles in *Journal of Applied Sociology* in the mid-1920’s, sought to apply the methodological applications of his field to those of the arts (Smith 164). In his 1932 article “The Influence of Drama upon Human Attitudes,” Vincent wrote that “attitude [could be equated] with that trend of conscious thought which has a tendency to lead one on to real activity, especially if the social situation seems to demand action” (142). Vincent wants to indicate, from a sociological perspective, his view that the drama of the time should serve as agent of activist change in the basic perceptions of Americans about their own positions in the world at large. And yet, Vincent himself seems trapped in the narrative of foundational rights and privileges inherent to the nationalistic model when he notes that (in somewhat contrast to his previous statement) “drama is important as an educational force . . . and ought to be considerably enhanced” as a source of “social control” (“Drama” 294).

In essence, Vincent and others in this particular field view inter-human relationships in society very much as Crothers and other realist writers did at the time: flawed social structures that needed correction *within* the frame of the promise of rights and freedoms supposedly guaranteed under the Constitution. In this way, while much drama in the coming decades would announce proudly an activist call for change, very little of this (at least until the 1960’s) would

challenge the underpinnings of the American citizen as a site of self-identity which carried with it a “natural” positioning as superior (in a modernist point of view) to all others.

The legal definition of this position conflates in the American mindset with the “character” of being American: the idea of “brashness,” of “masculine” strength and will, of imagination and seeking to achieve the impossible, all traits which were exhibited as growing and developing during the drama of the nineteenth century now become inter-changeable with the actual rights of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” as written in the Declaration of Independence. To be a “good” citizen no longer exists as a possibility merely by transactionally serving one’s country (as in time of war) but instead by continually adopting and performing the attitudes and actions of whatever ideologically determined view of “normativity” prevails in American society.

Theatre throughout the twentieth century attempted to reconcile its calls to societal change with a desire to reflect an image of “goodness” that could be applied to the American character. Julie Adam notes in *Versions of Heroism in Modern American Drama* that:

. . . measuring the modern against the ancient . . . the arguments put forth . . . are propelled by a perception – shared by Maxwell Anderson and Eugene O’Neill, and to some extent by Tennessee Williams, and even, at times, by Arthur Miller – of the loss of spiritual, and especially moral, dimension. . . the demise of the mythic and tragic vision is “the result of one of those enfeeblements of the human spirit” and is another indication of the “gradual weakening of man’s confidence in his ability to impose upon the phenomenon of life an interpretation acceptable to his desires. (16)¹²

Modern theatre struggles to essentialize a vision national identity as undeniably connected to the greater impact of the human condition because it seeks to enlarge the image, and therefore definition, of the citizen as an individual who must be able to claim his or her own position not just as a member of the nation state, but as a “good” and “productive” one as well.

¹² Adam here also cites within her work Joseph Wood Krutch, *The American Drama since 1918*, (119).

Likewise, the “divinity” of American citizen status is also reinforced sociologically through theatrical imaging, opposing the “non-divine,” or, in more specific terms, Communist ideology and its political incarnation as the Soviet Union. Spiritual values become another interchangeable part of the mosaic of the citizen, and to deny or separate oneself either literally or symbolically from the “divine” is to perform “bad” citizenship, a concept which returns to us time and again through such ideological arguments as whether “under God” belongs in the Pledge of Allegiance. Ultimately, the majority of theatrical images during the twentieth century turned to the simplicity of a dominant ideology precisely because it became too difficult, too convoluted to separate and understand the multiple levels of meanings that were being generated by the wide variety of demands on the citizen. It thus became safer for theatre, and for the citizens who viewed it, to accept the underlying transactional model of the citizen and to look instead at clarifying what made an individual a “good” citizen. Again, the potential for real change in how we view the “citizen” lies not in the past or the present, but in the future of theatre as it will be examined in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

PHYSICALITY AND CULTURE: INSCRIBING THE CITIZEN ON THE BODY

In her essay “An Equation for Black People Onstage” Suzan-Lori Parks asks: “can a white person be onstage and not be an oppressor” (*America Play and Other Works* 21)? Parks engages here the very crux of the dilemma of how theatrical imaging seeks to redefine who is and who is not a “citizen.” We have seen in the previous chapters that the citizen, as the product of a dominant hierarchy, is not simply a position of legal standing (through birth location or naturalization), but is instead a far more slippery image that incorporates components of “character:” the very ability to *claim* one’s status; economics (the capitalistic view of success and the American Dream); a masculine frame of recognition; and, perhaps most importantly, the assumption of divinity as source for accepted rights and privileges. As a dominant image, this complexity of image answers Parks’ question by indicating that the frame of the citizen, as constructed through nineteenth- and twentieth-century theatricality, does indeed create the “white male” American as the epitome of, and therefore the model of, the ideal national citizen of the United States. The tensions explored in this chapter reveal moments where “other” bodies, as presented on stage and screen, sought to find acceptance and inclusion in the transactional frame, desiring to explode their culturally inscribed limitations.

The coding of the body as it relates to citizenship is not necessarily an inherent status, but its acceptance as hierarchically separable (divided from a physical “normativity” of the citizen) occurs because the collective nationalistic state seeks a dominant image that it can proclaim as inherent. In this way the production of the citizen image is, over its historical course, a *choice* of both individuals and the American culture that surrounds them – in that Americans select those bodies which represent certain cultural codes: gender, ethnicity, etc. This choice is predicated on

a presumption of inherency by its continually reinforced justifications within the concepts of Lockian common-man divine right. The historical tensions and ruptures that arise over the two-hundred plus years of American history represented the battle between the desire of Americans to be able to claim inherency and the constant struggle to openly challenge the exclusivity of a dominant image that emerges from that call. The “body” as a signifier of citizen status remains important because it has been used, perhaps more than any other, as both a direct and an indirect tool in separating and evaluating the citizen from the non-citizen. The historical flashpoints that I examine in this chapter are the last major explications of production and text as they reveal how the dominant ideological frame of the citizen has remained intact over the centuries of American drama, despite both intentional and unintentional attempts at subversion. Following this, Chapter 5 will finally look at theatrical models of a “future,” or holistic citizen.

Indeed, the central questions posed about the inherent freedoms and responsibilities associated with this model of the American citizen did not, at the birth of the nation, include African-Americans (who at the time were classified as slaves at worst or second class citizens in the few “at best” examples) and women, an exclusionary status which prefigured the masculine character which becomes imbedded in understanding the position of citizen. During the twentieth century the problems of integrating both gender and ethnicity into the nationalistic model also called upon theatre as a site to enlarge the frame of citizenship to include more subaltern identities within the greater collective whole. Greater opportunity was offered to challenge the well-established legal and societal constructs of its citizenry. This chapter will utilize an examination of how the black ethnic body has been coded and performed as the primary example of how the dominant ideological image of white maleness served to exclude “otherness” from the frame of the citizen. The performance of the body also exacted an assimilation of difference from

the dominant image, and ultimately production of the black body theatrically offered resistance by reforming and re-encoding citizenship in different ways that began to strip away the presumptions of inherency. While the example centered upon here will be the ethnic coding of the black body, the ideas explored in this analysis are just as significant when applied to any separation by physically coded image, whether by “race” or by “gender,” and so could easily be applied to the ways in which the Hispanic body, the female body, or even the “elderly” body as it was produced through theatre.

As a matter of course, any examination of the body, when applied to theatre, immediately calls for challenge to the norms of idealized physicality, as Jill Dolan notes in her exploration of *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (84-85) when dealing specifically with the ideas and images of gender. To accept one specific image of a body as “real” or “normal” assumes an evolutionary view of one race, or one gender, as historically superior to another. This “reality” of difference ties to what Habermas terms as “self-positioning” of the individual in society (McAfee 29), further connecting the individual with collective self-awareness as member of a larger group (or nation).

White maleness, as a dominant image of “normality,” becomes accepted as inherently superior to other physical encodings because the historical parameters of citizenship *begin* with this representation of the body as central to what it is to “be” a citizen. The legal exclusion of other bodies (black, female) from the nationalistic frame at the founding of our government and societal institutions thus set the stage (both literally and metaphorically) for the greater cultural image of the American citizen character as both exclusive and exclusionary. The resultant movement of theatricality sought, therefore, an assimilation of “otherness” into the characteristics of the white male as citizen – or, in other words, the broadening of the frame to

allow legalistic recognition first, then adaptation of white maleness into subaltern physical images to allow for their inclusion as transactionally appropriate citizens of the United States. In the end, decades of images paraded across the theatrical mediums of America that served to reinforce these notions, and in doing so allow the all-too-easy acceptance of this dominant frame as “foundational.”

Theoretical deconstruction allows for the reading of the physical body as a text of both reinforcement and resistance to the dominant ideological image. The signage of one’s physical form relates to otherness and is critical to understanding the way in which this encoding has been used to separate the cultural citizen as different without regard to a legal position that might be identical. Carla L. Peterson writes the following in *Recovering the Black Female Body*:

When invoking the term “body,” we tend to think at first of its materiality – it’s composition as flesh and bone, its outline and contours, its outgrowth of nail and hair. But the body, as we well know, is never simply matter, for it is never divorced from perception and interpretation. As matter, the body is there to be seen and felt, and in the process it is subject to examination and speculation. Perception and interpretation come from different sources. Each of us has a sense of the body we inhabit; but others also look at our bodies and interpret them from their own particular standpoint – coincident with, different from, or supplemental to our own. Initiated from the outside, such perceptions are inevitably partial; nevertheless, we often incorporate them into our own sense of bodies. In addition, as we observe bodies (ours and others’), we need to acknowledge that we are never just looking at individual bodies; by comparison, we connect these to other bodies, placing them within groups – most especially those of gender, family, race, and nation – and endowing them with a group identity. These differing perspectives on the body – ours, others’, ours of others’, in relation to groups – may overlap, but, just as significantly, they may also diverge and conflict with one another. (ix.)

From this we can thus see that *physical definition* of identity is also very much in play in terms of codifying status in relationship to citizenship. The image of what physically defines an “American” has, for two centuries now, been a site of contestation between self-identified status and collective acceptance.

The connections of what we perceive as the physical image of the citizen is not, of course, relegated to the “otherness” of the black body alone. While this chapter will focus on the placement of black bodies onstage it is important to also pause to examine an example of this physical inscription on other bodies as well. Here I digress for but a moment into the sphere of personal experience, not of myself in the physical questioning of citizenship status but of a community in the town where I teach and even more specifically in the presence of several ethnic students at my University. The city of Manitowoc, Wisconsin (home to the two-year campus UW-Manitowoc where I teach) is one of the regions of the nation which was offered as a relocation site for the Hmong culture of southeast Asia following the aftermath of the Vietnam war . When I first arrived here I was made aware of the presence of the Hmong community, with references ranging from lukewarm acceptance to outright hostility. In this particular case, I was presented, almost immediately upon my arrival, with a clear example of the way in which “otherness” is inscribed upon the ethnic body in a way that separates and denies full status as citizen despite the legal positioning of these individuals.

The Hmong culture finds its primary origins in isolate mountain regions of Laos. The culture is originally agrarian and highly developed religiously in the practice of Shamanism, a spiritual acceptance which has been handed down over many centuries and until very recently was isolated from influence from the outside world. Like we have seen with the performed image of the American citizen, Hmong culture performed its own collective identity through the rituals of its Shamans. Dwight Conquergood has already written an excellent performative study of Hmong Shamanism in “Performance Theory, Hmong Shamans, and Culture Politics” (*Critical Theory and Performance* 41-64), Conquergood relates that following their people’s dislocation and diaspora from their original home to such sites as Thailand and the U.S., the Shamans of the

Hmong continued to perform their cultural identity, “[reconstituting] their displaced tradition of healing within this contested space of domination and struggle” (44). In other words, the performed nature of Shamanistic ritual was transplanted with the individuals of the culture wherever they relocated to. In this particular instance, we see Hmong relocation as a microcosm of larger ethnic groups condensed into a relatively specific time and narrowly contained movement of community from one area of the world to another.

The Hmong, therefore, have a collective identity and self-image contained within their tribal heritage. Those refugees that were transplanted to America have, however, found themselves grappling with their identities as U.S. citizens as well.¹ In the case of the Hmong I have taught this is doubly so because most of them are American-born rather than direct transplants – these students never knew their culture prior to dislocation. One of the “complaints” voiced by someone at my school about the Hmong was that, as a community, they were “too insulated, too much concerned only with themselves and their society”² I have heard it said that “they just don’t want to *fit in* with *normal* Americans.” These perceptions stem from the

¹ The unique circumstances of the Hmong refugees is of some note here: unlike other refugee situations (including the Cambodian boat-lift or various Cuban attempts to reach America) the Hmong were invited openly by the U.S. government as remuneration for their service to the U.S. military – the Hmong were recruited to fight an insurgent campaign from Laos into North Vietnam and in the aftermath of that war were hunted and persecuted for their actions. This is one of the few cases where U.S. policy formally sought to protect a specific ethnic group that it had used in such a way and provide them with new homes. As such, most Hmong who were relocated to Wisconsin or California were very quickly offered legal citizenship as part of their remuneration – thus as a group they never were forced to fight for legal status.

² While I do not wish to undervalue this particular set of quotes by not offering attribution to their sources, I also do not wish to undermine my relationships because of the rather narrow opinions of some colleagues at a school where I have just begun a career. As such, I am afraid this few paraphrased quotes must remain un-attributed and serve only to show the general feelings of even the supposedly intellectual in regards to the very physical presence of ethnic communities and indeed ethnic bodies in their presence. It is also important to note that this represents what I perceive to be a common set of feelings in the town, not a universal one – there are indeed a number of colleagues who embrace the Hmong students in our classes as no different from any other student in their desires to learn, as well as unique individuals in the sharing of their own cultural diversity.

Hmong community's desire to maintain their cultural heritage and spiritual belief systems while establishing themselves as American citizens. For the younger members, including those students in my classes, this has offered a double assault on their personal identities, as their citizenship has come under assault from two directions – from those “normal” (here read white European physicality) residents of the town and community, and also from their own elders who voice to their children that they are becoming “too Americanized”³ in their mannerisms, activities and most especially in the clothes they wore (the images of which assimilate both cultural stereotypes of “white” and “black” culture amongst these students). For these students a difficult choice was being forced upon them – distance themselves from their Hmong cultural identity in order to appear more “physically” American (in other words rewriting their bodies in the presence of others), or continue to have their “otherness” as Hmong inscribed upon them by the other students, teachers, co-workers and friends they interacted with on a daily basis.

For these Hmong students their ethnicity remains a specific marker of identity – they are without legal question American citizens. The physical image of this status, however, must be as it is now performed through the body. In rejecting the ways of their parents (including a distancing from Shamanism) they seek to re-inscribe themselves as “more” American, yet the physical coding of their bodies remains as Hmong no matter how they adapt American slang, clothing and mannerisms. I have paused to relate these observations because the tensions that the Hmong are currently facing in this particular struggle parallels the historical tensions that

³ This statement has been voiced by two different Hmong students – one in Fall 2004 Introduction to Theatre and one in Spring 2005 Introduction to Public Speaking. In both cases, these students were at first hesitant to talk at all in class, a situation they informed me privately was because they continuously felt disconnected from their fellow students by their ethnicity. The Intro to Theatre student however began to engage after reading Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horsemen* and identifying with the character of Olunde who leaves his tribe to travel to England to study medicine.

emerged for the black body as imaged as citizen, especially during the civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century.

The civil rights movement was, in essence, a struggle to persuade the collective whole to recognize and accept African American positioning as full citizens despite a collective resistance to this based solely upon the inscription of skin color that differed from previously accepted images. African Americans (whose bodies are, for nearly two centuries, coded as “black” and therefore oppositional and inferior to white) were *legally* granted “full” citizenship following the Civil War. However, another hundred years would pass before the nation as a collective whole really began to come to terms⁴ with the *cultural* and characteristic exclusivity of physical difference from the “norm” of society. The battle for the desegregation of schools in the 1950’s highlighted the fact that legal coding of equality did not necessarily change the more complex view of a citizen’s rights, nor the image produced of this difference. According to Jamie Lewis’ work on the history of *Brown v. Topeka Board*, the laws allowing for segregated schools were seen as non-contradictory to “freedom and equality” under the citizen rights assumed in the Constitution because, “the segregated-education law was permissive in that segregation was *not required*; local school districts could *choose* to segregate schools...” (58). I have highlighted the terms “not required” and “choose” in this quote because they are absolutely indicative of the difference between accepting the black body as legally a citizen while utilizing the template of characteristics and difference to culturally separate and subordinate the black body as “inferior”

⁴ If, indeed, the nation has – the fact that we are still debating race and ethnic relations in the year 2006 begs the question of just how easy it is to remove the assumed foundational view of ourselves as a white, Anglo-Saxon nation predominantly and the essential coding of ethnicity as “minority” in the United States.

to the white body.⁵ The black body is thus allowed the claim of purely legal standing in American society, but is excluded from what is imaged and perceived as a dominant “white” collective whole.

Taking the accepted dominant identifications of the citizen from the earlier discussions of this work, we see that the physical definition of what constituted a “citizen” of the United States was included and reinforced within the frame of such terms as masculinity (within the American Dream) and Euro-centric ethnicity. The body of the classically defined American citizen, therefore, desired to be white and male on the most basic of levels. Returning to an earlier play, Lawrence and Lee’s *Inherit the Wind*, the discussion of “natural rights” is continually referred to within the frame of masculinity even while ostensibly calling for greater openness; the lawyer Drummond thundered at the court, “This man wants the same rights as those of a sponge – he wants the right to think! (73)” – and yet, even as the image of a sponge was introduced, the common reference implied was a masculine right. The female body is not presented here as “desiring” or needing the same status – an accepted understanding of gender images of citizenship prevalent in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinking. Similarly, ethnicity was placed within a position of “otherness” to classical definition of national citizen through what Peterson classifies as the “institutionalization of black servitude and slavery in the United States,” where “the dominant culture endeavored to split the African body and spirit,” not only from the white collective identity, but also from each other within this subaltern group (x.).

Legalistic positioning, or rather the acceptance of an individual as citizen within United States law, is not necessarily therefore a true historical acceptance of citizen status if

⁵ According to Russell G. Moy the “divinity” of citizenship comes into play here as the Bible was used to justify both slavery and later segregation by defining “whiteness” as descendent from the “good” brother Abel and “otherness,” especially “blackness” as being descendent from the “evil” brother Cain in the Genesis story. (2-3)

differentiation is inscribed in any way upon the body from the *image* of a citizen. In writing about the Anita Hill controversy during the Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas, Lauren Berlant writes that there is “evidence that American citizenship has been profoundly organized around the distribution and coding of sensations” (“The Queen of America” 934), extrapolating the idea that equality in status as citizen relies, in truth, on the physical coding of the body in *its presence* before the collective whole. Whether this positioning of the citizen’s body is by ethnicity or gender is irrelevant to the overall understanding of its place other than in regards to the traditional white and masculine construct. The challenge that confronts theatrical imaging is not the same as a demand for inclusion under the transaction of rights and duties, but rather a call for completely reconstructing the culturally complex template of the citizen through the ways in which it is inscribed on differently coded bodies.

Foucault addresses this coding of the body in terms of the power it possesses within a larger organizational order, especially in dealing with sexuality (gender) as a defining paradigm:

... the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, its stamina, its ability to dominate, or its capacity for being used. Through the themes of health, progeny, race, the future of the species, the vitality of the social body, power spoke *of* sexuality and *to* sexuality; the latter was not a mark or a symbol, it was an object and a target. (*History of Sexuality* 147)⁶

Chris Weedon notes that Foucault deals with bodies, not just in “how [they] have been perceived, given meaning and value, but with the ‘manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested’” (115). The concept of “power,” as always, remains in play in the work of Foucault, tied inexorably to one’s physical positioning within the larger organizational whole. Power cannot be exorcised unless the physical coding of the body allows for it to do so according to the images of what constitute the *proper* characteristics of the citizen.

⁶ Reprinted in Weedon, *Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory* 115.

If the coding of the body and the power it exerts is found relationally to its *presence* and therefore understanding before others, then wouldn't the mere act of placing divergent bodies before audiences necessarily promote slippage in acceptance of those same bodies as "citizens?" The answer is yes, for the body, as it is written upon by the American culture, has shown distinct signs of change in terms of differentiation and "otherness" over the past century, and theatre as an art form has served specifically as the site wherein much of the image-shifting of these inscriptions has occurred. As with the battle over "character" that was explored in Chapter 3, however, the call for resistance and re-inscription of the body was not successful in the larger scope because the moments of theatrical resistance again stubbornly adhered to one or more of the "pillars" of citizenship to make their claim.

Theatrical Positioning of "Blackness" in the Early Twentieth Century

The inscription at the base of the Statue of Liberty reads, "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses burning to breathe free" (World Almanac 577). The surface interpretation of this simple statement has long been taught to young Americans as idealizing the inherent concepts of "freedom" that have already been discussed in this work. Behind this, however, remains a more revealing truth in what this inscription says, or, more precisely, in what it *does not say*. There is no mention of race or ethnicity at all in the famous quote. Indeed, as the words state, the "masses" spoken of are not viewed as *different* in terms of physical coding – the differences enumerated deal with *struggle* (your "tired"), *economics* (your "poor"), and *political oppression*. It is not unreasonable to view these words, often cited as example of America's self-identified belief in Lockian natural rights, as exclusionary to ethnicity precisely because this

realm of physical coding was not discussed in the first place.⁷ On the contrary, ethnicity was ignored in context of citizenship, even in the advertising of that status to others.

As we have seen, theatrical presentation throughout much of the first two centuries of American history tended towards the same exclusionary pattern at best, and towards dehumanizing at worst. Representations of black bodies on stage during the eighteenth century were often relegated to white performers “putting on” the image of blackness through the application of black face makeup (the history and discussion of which is well covered in other scholarly work such as William J. Mahar’s *Behind the Burnt Corn Mask*). Even as late as the 1930’s, when theatre was claiming a position of activist cultural resistance and change, the representation of an entire ethnic group’s physical identity was being performed by the more dominant white performer. A clear example of this is the 1936 production of *How Long Brethren* by the Federal Dance Theatre, a subsidiary of the Federal Theatre Project. Susan Manning writes about this production in “Black Voices, White Bodies: The Performance of Race and Gender in *How Long Brethren*”⁸ In the production, the Federal Negro Chorus was used in providing *singers* for the event, but when *dancers* appeared onstage representing the black experience, these performers were *white*, once again donning black face to represent “blackness.” As Manning writes:

The casting of *How Long Brethren* raises complex questions regarding the performance of race and gender in the Federal Dance Theatre.... How is one to

⁷ This argument can be further witnessed in battles that took place over the inclusion of an anti-slavery article in the original Bill of Rights. The very fact that such an amendment was considered, then rejected by the convention because of southern states’ opposition reveals that the rights and privileges codified within the other articles were seen as separate from the issue of the “Negro” body (or slave) at the time.

⁸ While the title of Manning’s article does suggest ethnicity as the first priority of the analysis, the author is somewhat more concerned with the issue of gender in the framing of the article – the opening line is “Women standing by their men, supporting their men’s efforts to effect reform.” So, while Manning seems to want to use race as central to her argument she veers more towards a discussion of feminism versus 1930’s self-described leftist politics. Despite this, her work in this article remains very useful in this examination.

view its racialized division between black (male and female) singers and white (female) dancers? (26)

The intentions of the company, which sought to express the sufferings of blacks in America, were self-identified as political in nature. The majority of the dancers, “like the choreographer herself, were first-generation American Jews [who], as such could identify with the systematic racism experienced by African Americans” (26). There were fallacies in these intentions on two levels: one, that *physical* coding of difference from the white dominant culture was the same for Jews as for African Americans; and, two, that, even if one accepted this first part to be true, the use of black face in representing the African American body on stage was acceptable in recreating the actual black body. Of course, neither of these conditions was true, and the leftist activist politics of *How Long Brethren* (produced and conceived by Helen Tamiris) were subordinated to the actual reification of otherness placed on the black body by the production itself.

One suggested reason for the racially segregated performance groups in this particular production was the speculation that, as left-leaning politically as the company may have been, the Federal Dance Theatre itself operated under the construct of segregation itself. Yet, as Manning further writes,

... it seems that segregation was more de facto than de jure, for Charles Weidman’s company under Federal Theatre sponsorship included Add Bates, an African American dancer who... took on the role of the General in Weidman’s production of *Candide* presented on the same program as the premiere of *How Long Brethren*. (41)

So the use of white female dancers onstage in black face to represent the African American body was, at least in part, *choice* on the part of the Federal Dance Theatre. Indeed, Orson Welles, working under the same auspices, chose to represent the black body onstage by African Americans in *Macbeth*. It therefore can be asserted that the understanding of oppression or

subordination of status, as viewed in the politics of Tamiris's piece, failed to recognize how important the actual body was in challenging accepted views of physical representation of the American citizen. Tamiris and the company *assumed* their right to represent another ethnicity's body, and they assumed further that this could accurately represent the condition and status of those who actually were African American through this performance. In other words, Tamiris and her company assumed that a leftist *text* and the resistive intentions of their work would be enough to represent "blackness," when in actuality the physically performed representations only served to reinforce the separation, the otherness, of the black body.

The limitation of actual bodily representation before audiences served as a unique barrier to the awarding of full citizenship status – a barrier intended to protect the "rights" of those (principally white male) who wished to claim them for themselves. As Bell Hooks writes in *Outlaw Culture*, "I am consistently amazed at how difficult it is to cross boundaries in this white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal society" (5). While Hooks may be approaching this discussion from a severe, revolutionary stance, her words do serve to indicate just how strong the perception of these boundaries is to those attempting to seek their own images as citizens of this country. To see one's body "acted" by another, and especially by another with a completely different ethnic body, places a wall not just between the ethnic group represented and the theatre, but between the audience and acceptance of those ethnic groups as equal citizens rather than subordinated "others."

To further discuss the resistance of ethnic physicality in the theatre, we will narrow our focus for the remainder of this section to the black body specifically as example. This is not to say that Asian or Hispanic or other ethnic representations are absent from this resistance. Indeed, they have also undergone similar changes in the levels of casting and imaging during the last

several decades. However one chosen discourse will serve our purpose here, as the issues of inscribing and re-inscribing citizenship on the body are translatable between the examples given and other theatrical sites. We have already seen example of the reified status of traditional, constrictive black representations within the Federal Dance Theatre's production of *How Long Brethren*, but now we turn to those productions which have moved the lens of physical coding as presented to audiences in America. Like all sites of contestation, these changes are not defined by a singular event but rest in a liminal phase of constant struggle through individual steps in the theatrical process. First, we shall look at Orson Welles' acclaimed all-black production of *Macbeth* for the Federal Theatre Project, followed by the acclaimed (and now canonized) 1959 production of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Next, the rise of the Negro Ensemble Co. under Robert Hooks and Douglas Turner Ward will be explored, finally shifting focus to the evolution of black citizen identity as portrayed in the more radical work of Amiri Baraka's (LeRoi Jones) and Suzan-Lori Parks.

Reification and Assimilation: Coding the "Black" Body on the Twentieth Century Stage

Most know the 1936 production of *Macbeth* for two notable reasons: the start of Orson Welles' meteoric rise as director on the American theatre and film scene, and the bold success that this show gave to the struggling Federal Theatre Project, which was the most controversial of the WPA's programs (Smith "The Play that Electrified Harlem" 1). More notable for the purposes of this discussion was that Welles cast this version of Shakespeare's tragedy with all-black actors. This was an outgrowth of the FTP's decision from the start to create a Negro theatre unit devoted to black performance (another highly controversial decision), but up till this point the unit had mainly served to provide FTP productions with "singers and dancers" *in support* of predominantly white work (Smith 3). The Unit's director, John Houseman, had attempted to

steer production towards African-American plays being cast with African-Americans, but “neither Frank Wilson’s earnest, awkward *Walk Together Chillun!* nor Rudolph Fisher’s slick *Conjur Man Dies* was the kind of ambitious fare [he] hoped to present” (Smith 2). Because of this, Houseman decided that one aim of his unit was to be the production of classical works as performed by black actors without reference to their ethnicity.

Hallie Flannigan then entered the picture. She, along with Houseman, chose the not-quite 21 year-old Orson Welles to direct a play for the Negro Unit and its Lafayette Theatre on 131st Street in Harlem. Houseman further asked Welles to select a play for this production, and Welles’ wife suggested *Macbeth*, set in nineteenth-century Haiti, transforming the ubiquitous witches into “voodoo priestesses” (Smith 2). Welles’ choice was probably not based in a personal ideological desire to refocus the nature of the black body on stage; rather, he was mostly interested in the visual possibilities offered by this setting. Indeed, the very setting which Welles rejoiced in for its visual expansiveness actually called to mind a place of “otherness” in the very actors he cast in the production. Two facts are immediately seen in play here: one, the text itself is Shakespeare (whose themes and characters are distinctly NOT part of the American vision of the common man, the citizen who has “struggled,” nor the American dream); and, secondly, the placement of black actors within the rather narrow images of non-American Haiti and the Voodoo culture. In this way Welles’ production seemed, at the time, as if it was in some way breaking the barriers of black representation on stage, yet it fought against itself by typifying the “otherness” of those same black bodies as they appeared as foreign (Haitian) practitioners of “savage” stereotypes. The FTP production of *Macbeth*, therefore, showed the same innate physical characterization of ethnic otherness as separate and inferior in 1936 that *Metamora* had exhibited a full century before.

Because of the disparity between the presence of African-American actors in black roles on the stage and the visual/textual reinforcement of their subordination, the active movement of citizen imagery was not enhanced by this particular production. Reactions to the opening of *Macbeth* on April 14, 1936 bear this out:

The critics were a bit bewildered by it all. They couldn't help but respond to the production's swirling excitement and lush imagery... and most realized that transposing the scene to Haiti gave the witches an effectiveness they seldom had in contemporary presentations. Some critics carped, however, that this radical rethinking of *Macbeth* "wasn't Shakespeare at all" but rather "an experiment in Afro-American showmanship."⁹ Percy Hammond of the anti-New Deal *Herald Tribune* went further and called the show "an exhibition of deluxe boondoggling..." (Smith 4)

These comments reflected the image that white America held of black bodies on stage – relegating them to the minstrelsy of the nineteenth century, or, at the very best, supporting caricatures in theatrical and film productions that reaffirmed white rights to citizenship. Even after *Macbeth*, the best-known performance by an African-American physically playing the role of a black character was Hattie McDaniel's Oscar-winning performance in *Gone With the Wind* just three years later in 1939. Again, while we see the black body on film here, the character is reduced to servitude both in terms of onscreen stereotyping and textually in that the presentation seems "safe" to American audiences. It presents the black body as a maid to Scarlet O'Hara at the time of the Civil War, and presumably thus a slave despite the fact this issue is never raised or dealt with in the film.

For several decades following the Federal Theatre Project's attempt to create "Negro drama," the intention to discover a place for black actors on the stage and screen went into a period of paralysis – film roles were relegated to the "Hattie McDaniel" position of servant or

⁹ These two quotes are used by Wendy Smith in her article on the production. Originally printed in the January-February 1996 edition of *Civilization* magazine, the article used for this work was reprinted with permission on the Library of Congress Memory website and no attributions to these two quotes are provided.

musical entertainment (witness Dooley Wilson's performance as "Sam" in Michael Curtiz's 1943 *Casablanca*), while on stage there were similar restrictions in terms of both character and text to "white" theatre.

The next major step in forwarding a change in black imaging as citizens came with Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 *A Raisin In the Sun*:

When *A Raisin In the Sun* began its 530 performance run at the Barrymore Theatre on March 10, 1959 it was the first Broadway play by a black woman, directed by a black director (Lloyd Richards). It was remarkable not just for its warmth and humor but for being ahead of its time. It preceded, or to be more precise, anticipated, the Washington Marches, the King assassination and the bitter ghetto explosions. Through the story of one family, the Youngers of Chicago, the 29-year-old Ms. Hansberry explored the whole spectrum of black American issues of beauty, identity and class. Her challenge was twofold: to impel white Americans to let down the barriers preventing African-Americans to fulfill their dreams and to challenge people of color to redefine what those dreams should be. (Sommer "Berkshire Review")

Explored the "whole" spectrum? Perhaps a bit too encompassing for the work of any one theatrical production, but at the very least the reviewer here attempted to recognize the fact that there was (and is) a disparity between the African-American experience as "citizens" of this country and the experiences of the "predominant" white culture. The production of *A Raisin In the Sun* was also important because, for really the first time, African-American actors were portraying on stage black characters that were not simply caricatures in support of white characters. The cast of this show included Sidney Potier, Ruby Dee, Claudia McNeil, Louis Gossett, Ivan Dixon, Diana Sands and John Fielder. In its portrayal of a family dealing with issues, Hansberry's work was not unlike Miller's in *Death of a Salesman*, but by substituting the black identity physically on stage, principally in the body of Potier versus the image of Lee J.

Cobb as Willy Loman, she sought an acceptance of the black body *within* the citizen status of the American Dream and the “inalienable” rights of the original citizen image.¹⁰

When placed in context with the images of the black body as they had appeared before this production, *A Raisin In the Sun* was a site of resistance for its time. When the above review described it as “ahead of its time,” this was not really accurate. More to the point the play was instead acting as an agent of equalization in citizen image, placing the actors and their physical appearances onstage in the situations of some “normalcy” in terms of the conditions of the “character” of the American as described in Chapter 3. It was not resistive *to the a priori* understanding of the rights and privileges of the citizen, but instead sought to find the black body, and thus the African-American experience, as an extension of the citizen. Certain aspects of the previously discussed American “character” were reaffirmed even while finally positioning the black body on the stage as equal: the “masculinity” of the citizen image is reinforced through Potier as patriarch (or rather as singularly identified in the play as a seeker of rights); and, the goals sought for under this rubric by the Younger family are extraordinarily similar to the Loman family of *Death of a Salesman*. Indeed, one of the realities of Hansberry’s work is that she locates the structure of her drama firmly within the well-made-play narrative and also within the form of realism, which we have already seen works structurally to reaffirm the classical model of citizen. Yet, with all these factors, *A Raisin In the Sun* was a site for resistance because it fractured the stereotyped images of the black body in theatre at the time.

¹⁰ An interesting side note to this however is a look at the title page of the original playbill for Richard’s production of Hansberry’s play at the Barrymore Theatre – at the bottom of the page, following the normal accreditation of actors (including Sidney Potier billed above the title) lies an advertisement: “Gilbery’s Gin – The World agrees on Gilbey’s please!” with a picture of the Gin bottle hanging over a curve of the earth. This is interesting in that, as a visual reference, this ground-breaking production of black identity slips back (at least in the printed playbill) to tying black image to alcohol. I have done some exploring and discovered that while this was not a specific instance of this, the presence of such ads on the *first page* was less than common. The playbill for this show was found online at www.bpics.rubylane.com.

It might be easy enough to dismiss this positioning of the black body as overstated, instead focusing on the reifying attributes of the work, but this would be a mistake. The mere presence of Potier, Dee and their fellow African-American actors in this production in roles that imaged them as equal to the classical model of citizen rights pushed the boundaries (while not breaking them) between audience and performed citizenship. The body itself is, as this chapter has seen, one of the most primal and powerful coding devices for the image of what “is” and what “is not” accepted as citizen, and the act of changing that dynamic onstage in front of large audiences ¹¹ served as agent to strip away at least some of the almost innate understandings of white America as to what defined them as different and superior to African-Americans. Theatre had not been alone in its inceptions of the black body as caricature, reinforcing the subordinated stance of this ethnic group in American society. Novels, paintings, and other media also tended to reinforce in the minds of “average, white Americans” that their status was somehow secured in opposition to the otherness of the black position. Michael Bennett writes about this in “Frances Ellen Watkins Sings the Body Electric” when discussing the images of national identity in the poetry of Walt Whitman:

Whitman also engages in the problematic attempt to elide the distinctions between different components of the national body. His radical leveling instinct makes each body equal without regard to its place in the national hierarchy of citizenship. Several lists of America’s inhabitants, compiled from his experience as a journalist on a city beat, comprise a catalog of the high and low in American society in hopes of erasing the distinctions that separate them. The “half-breed” and “the quadroon girl... sold at the stand” become just another part of the corporeal scenery.... (28)

Bennett argues here that Whitman’s poetic intention of making *terms* interchangeable, that any one “is equal to ‘president’” (28), is enough to bring the African-American into full status as

¹¹ The play, as noted, ran 530 performances, was then produced regionally in a number of theatres, and ultimately was made into a successful 1961 film with mostly the same cast as the Broadway show. One note, however, is that the film version, unlike the stage, was not directed by an African-American. Daniel Petrie helmed the cinematic endeavor.

citizen. Yet this is, I believe, a very flawed argument. In the first case, unlike the theatre, literature and poetry *evoke* images rather than *present* them – so no matter the intentions of the written word the visual codified image of the body remains in the mind of the reader. Secondly, while attempting to *equalize* terms of description, Whitman was still using them. He thus reaffirmed the negative images of otherness implied in the very utilization of different terms for different bodies. *A Raisin In the Sun* eschewed terminology of difference for the physicality of the black body in the classic model of the American family life.

Moving forward from *A Raisin In the Sun*, we find yet another moment in resistance in 1965 with the founding of the Negro Ensemble Company by playwright Douglas Turner Ward, producer/actor Robert Hooks and theatre manager Gerald Krone. Both Turner Ward and Hooks had been cast-mates in the road company of Hansberry's play, and, motivated by the excitement they felt in producing that show, they sought to form a group which would:

... provide African-American, African and Caribbean professional artists with an opportunity to learn, to work, to grow and to be nurtured in the performing arts. The overall mission of the NEC is to present live theatre performances by and about black people to a culturally diverse audience that is often underserved by the theatrical community. (NEC Mission Statement)¹²

The specific mission of the NEC was to facilitate the placement of the black body onstage in front of audiences. This mission alone produced a friction against the established parameters of the “character” of the American citizen, but also incited a further fracturing of the body's encoding in ethnicity by expanding the theatrical presentation of these physical characteristics beyond the traditional and limiting forms of “realism.” In some ways this mission was a reaction to certain movements that argued the way to increase the visibility and viability of African-Americans on the stage was through color-blind casting – in other words ignore completely the coding of the ethnic body and cast regardless in currently accepted plays of the American stage.

¹² The mission statement here is taken directly from the NEC website: www.necine.org.

That idea was problematic in that it still sublimated the ethnic body itself, for the majority of plays discussed in terms of this casting were by white authors with white characters. As August Wilson said, “To cast black actors in ‘white’ plays was to cast us in the role of mimics” (Gates 44).

The purpose, then, of the NEC was to offer theatre which not only expanded the mere presence of the black body on-stage, but to offer the chance for that body to be expressed in combination with text – or, rather, the intertwining of contextual meaning behind characters which represented the black experience more fully and adventurously than the predominant white stage, and then to add the black body itself to this experience. Just prior to the actual forming of the NEC, Ward had written a play that served as a prime example of how this site of resistance worked: *Day of Absence*. Premiering at the St. Marks Play House in Greenwich Village in 1965, *Day of Absence* told the story of the white population of a small southern town who woke up one day to notice that all the blacks have disappeared. Turning minstrelsy on its head, the play cast all black actors in the roles, and the “white” characters were portrayed in whiteface makeup. In some respect one might argue that this only achieved exactly what Wilson was arguing against in the above quote, assimilating the black body, in performance, into “mimicry” of whiteness. Yet underneath the paint remained the black body, and the audience was *aware* of this distinction in character formation in the play. Ward’s play utilized “symbolic reversal” as Paul Carter Harrison writes in “Praise/Word:”

Symbolic reversal of social codes is vital for the “transformation of consciousness” needed to overcome the negative connotations of *blackness* constructed in Western consciousness for more than 2000 years. (2)

Through the placement of black actors onstage in whiteface, *Day of Absence* striped their traditionally limited physical coding by knowingly positioning the bodies of these actors as symbolic representations of white American citizens.

This reversal of physical identity onstage accomplished two important functions in crafting citizen identities: one, it removed “realism” as a constraining force from the theatrical performance of black bodies onstage; and, two, it showed that identity is easily re-inscribed onto the ethnic body by reversing the tool of subordination (black face) that had at one time been considered “normal” in American theatre. In terms of the concept of citizenship, these two fractures offer an important shift – that of the black body as subject rather than object. In using symbolic reversal of character representation through makeup, the play placed the black body, and thus the black experience, into a site of subjectivity in which “whiteness” was objectified and deconstructed through performance:

[*Symbolic reversal* was] used as an artistic/rhetorical strategy both to confront the stereotypic demons that haunt consciousness and reinvest formerly negative stereotypes with character traits that might valorize them as signified icons in a newly constructed mythology of the black experience. (Harrison 3)

“Citizenship” was presented here, in terms of the ethnic body, as a “mythology” of long-held constructions that could be upended visually through performance.¹³ For the African-American experience, the “realistic” mode of seeking the American Dream, essentially a white construct, was removed and ridiculed (*Day of Absence* is a farce for this reason). Instead, audiences

¹³ In a June 28, 2004 article “Beyond the Pale” on the use of whiteface in the Wayans brothers’ comedy film *White Chicks*, James Hannaham refers to the tradition of *Day of Absence* indicating its place in theatrical history. He says, “No one would ever take the Wayans brothers for Douglas Turner Ward.... Their productions are less political than frat-boy-contemptuous.... But if these performances can be cheap (and misogynist) shots, they also have an odd potency: imitation as revenge. Audiences get the thrill of seeing whiteness portrayed as nothing more than performance.” Hannaham is commenting here on the very nature of symbolic reversal and the effects of de-mythologizing the ethnic body as “other” by essentially revealing the “white” body as nothing more than constructed performance as well. (Hannaham 2)

witnessed the black body free of servitude through *discussion* of the absence of blackness in the text of the play, and then visually through *presenting* the absence of whiteness onstage.

The NEC intended to serve as a vehicle that would continue to push the boundaries of accepted images of the black body. As such, the NEC was linked to the civil rights movement of the 1960's, a movement which by the very definition of its name sought to acquire the "rights and privileges" of the "average" American citizen. The importance of the physical presence of the black body as actor onstage was highlighted by the fact that the NEC was not at all restrictive of its playwrights in terms of ethnicity – indeed, one of the more controversial aspects of the NEC's production schedule was that it DID exhibit plays written by white authors (including Peter Weiss' *Song of the Lucitanian Bogey* in 1967). To Hooks, Ward, and the other founding members of the NEC, this was irrelevant to the position of African-American actors in the roles they performed. Experimental work continued for several years, but economic misfortunes plagued the NEC, forcing the company to become more conservative both in terms of numbers of production and in structural experimentation with the theatrical form. "In the 1972-1973 season the resident company was disbanded, staff was cut back, training programs cancelled, and salaries deferred" (NEC). With all these problems, the NEC chose to perform only one new play in that season, Joe Walker's *The River Niger*. The play became the NEC's most successful production, moving to Broadway and winning the Tony Award for Best Play as well as the Pulitzer Prize. The success of the play helped save the Company, but also served to reify the theatrical form of "realism" (which *Niger* adhered to). Thus, while Walker's play ensured the continuation of the NEC as an artistic entity, it also acted as a restraining agent on the experimentation in form and structure of its shows.

Perhaps the most successful production of the NEC over that next two decades was Charles Fuller's 1981 *A Soldier's Play*, the story of African-Americans dealing with the prejudices of serving their nation in the U.S. Army. This play in particular represented an essential stand-still in further resisting images of citizenship through more profound or truly revolutionary ways. The central theme of the play made clear that it was asking for acceptance *within* the citizen structure of the United States, seeking a "granting" of rights by the white army. *A Soldier's Play* asked that ethnicity be underwritten to the American citizen narrative, not rewritten. Instead of asking if the central tenants of the nationalistic model were correct, it assumed their inherency and asked that the black body be allowed to *join*, to serve in the voluntary *quid-pro-quo* of service to one's government in exchange for the rights of citizenship.

Resistance and Subversion: Radical Re-Coding of the Black Body

There is no doubt that the NEC expanded the acceptance of the black body as a citizen, re-inscribing the body away from stereotypical imaging. Yet at the same time the needs of the company to "succeed" within the theatre community forced it to follow structures and forms which reinforced rather than exploded the mythologies of *a priori*, foundational truths in terms of citizen identity. To a great extent, the images produced in the examples of the previous section highlight the tendency for the black body to be assimilated within a dominant white male culture, rather than stripping away the hierarchy of accepted inherency under which these plays operate.

One critic of the NEC has been Amriri Braka, the more revolutionary and controversial playwright and poet, who the NEC once accused of "paying homage to Europe, its life, its rulers of degeneracy, and its death... play[ing] tagalong tagalong to white are, but also continu[ing] the dead myth of black art inferiority" ("Negro Theater Pimps Get Big Off Nationalism" 113). Baraka's assault on the NEC was founded precisely in his belief that the desire to achieve the

rights and privileges of the white nationalistic model of the citizen could not be, by themselves, an end to the marginalizing of the black body in the theatre. Instead, he argued, it reinforced the image of inferiority by claiming the “completion” of citizen status as a signal that African-Americans *began* at a lower status, and as such had to *become* citizens within the proper model rather than existing already as citizens in their own “right.” To a great degree this argument has certainly been made against the most well-known and successful African-American playwright, August Wilson, whose body of work (constructed in realist form) shows the black experience as it *is* in the context of American society, seeking yet again the American Dream of equality and, more importantly, opportunity.

Baraka (LeRoi Jones) was (and is) not interested in the finding solution within the existing framework of inalienable rights and could care less about increasing opportunity. His vision is, instead, violent and revolutionary. A controversial writer to say the least, Baraka’s work calls for a realization that *difference* between white and black is, and can only be, oppositional within the nationalistic frame of American Society. To Baraka, “otherness” is inscribed to a point that it cannot be *accepted*, only overwritten as “whiteness.” Baraka has recently re-emerged into the debate on identity and citizen imagery with his radical and incendiary poem “Somebody Blew Up America,” written following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Baraka does not pause to mourn or even consider the victims of the attack, instead using the poem to compare the intentions and hatreds of the terrorists to what he sees as terrorism and injustices against African-Americans throughout the nation’s history (Gwiazada 463). The immediate reaction to this poetry was harsh – the New Jersey state legislature sought to remove him as the state’s Poet Laureate and many ascribed Baraka a traitor (460). In a closer reading,

however, Baraka is maintaining his own argument about the condition of black ethnicity in the United States:

It is [no] surprise.... that Baraka's poetic response to the events of September 11, 2001 should be so unlike the kind of response produced en masse after the disaster and hastily compiled in commemorative anthologies. "Somebody Blew Up America" is neither a lament for the nearly three thousand people who lost their lives on that day nor an uplifting tribute to the wounded American spirit, nor, indeed, a call for speedy revenge. Instead, the poem offers an arresting diatribe against the evils of imperialism and the attendant evils of racism as the main forces of injustice. The poem raises tough questions about former terrorist episodes in American history directed mostly against blacks.... (463)

Thus, Baraka sees in his work an inevitability to the acts of Sept. 11, a result of the consequences of the nationalistic model of America (and specifically white America) portraying itself, and its citizens, as superior to the "otherness" not just of African-Americans, but to ethnic bodies around the world.

Baraka's viewpoint, of course, is nothing new. It takes us back to the theatre of his younger days and the images he placed onstage during the early 1960's. Baraka began his literary/theatrical career as LeRoi Jones in the "bohemian" arena of Greenwich Village (462). He was associated with the black theatre movement of that community, most notably when his play *The Dutchman* opened March 24, 1964 at the Cherry Lane Theatre. While on first glance *The Dutchman* would seem to embrace realism (set on a contemporary American subway), Baraka instead began to set this structure on its head by melding into it non-realistic moments which acted as fissures in foundational acceptance of the "reality" of culture. In this way Baraka was highly influenced by the openly political theatrical advocacy of Bertolt Brecht. Clay, the central character of the work, drifts into dialogue with Lula, a white woman, who approached him on the subway, and as the play progresses it seems as if Baraka is constructing an image of bonding, of sameness rather than otherness between the two separately identified ethnicities. Then, at the

end, and with no seeming warning, Lula murders Clay. *The Dutchman* explodes out of realism into a surrealistic world where violence against the black body is not even justified, it just occurs because the body is black.

This explosion of violence against the black body was paralleled by Baraka's intentions concerning the staging of the play itself, as is noted in the set description at the outset of the play: "*Dim lights and darkness whistling by against the glass. (Or paste the lights, as admitted props, right on the subway windows...)*" (Jones 2). The Brechtian staging concept at play here was intrinsic to the view Baraka attempted to show: that the "reality" of America was nothing more than a flimsy production of image. Indeed, the very title "The Dutchman," while often cited in terms of its archetypal literary meaning, may have been used more directly in reference to the metaphor of the stage. In stage technology a "Dutchman" is "a narrow band of muslin glued vertically onto two adjoining flats to give the appearance of a solid wall" (Ralph 58). Indeed, the idea of the stage technique of the "dutchman" is to be able to easily pull the flats apart, "breaking the 'wall' and dispelling the illusion of solidarity" (58).

Clay at first seemed to be the "image" of the black body as it strove to "move up" within the frame of middle-class American citizenship, the whole of which was (is) to Baraka an illusion. Through Clay, Baraka seemed to say that the *quid-pro-quo* exchange of citizen rights for acceptance of the capitalistic white American life was in itself no better than the codified legal position of slavery that preceded it. It is the thinly performed construct of unity that is as transparently artificial as the theatrical representation of the same. Lula refuses to allow Clay to claim his position in society, instead continually pushing him to see himself in the narrow and restrictive view of "blackness" that his ethnic body would be for her:

CLAY: My mother was a Republican.

LULA: And your father voted for the man rather than the party.

CLAY: Right!

LULA: Yea for him. Yea, yea for him.

CLAY: Yea!

LULA: And yea for America where he is free to vote for the mediocrity
of his choice! Yea!

CLAY: Yea! (Jones 20)

Clay (as played by Robert Hooks)¹⁴ presented at first the black body as having accepted the assimilation of his ethnicity into the foundations of America. Yet underneath, the difference, or rather “otherness,” of Clay remains. Lula serves as the activator for Baraka, stripping away the illusions of citizen status for Clay, leaving him with no where to return but to the stereotyped “savagery” of black man as servant/slave to white society. Shirley Anne Williams writes of Clay when she says, “... [his] survival [as] a Black man in America... is predicated upon his ability to keep his thoughts and his true identity hidden” (105).

Ultimately, Clay could no longer maintain the illusion of his status and “reverted” to the character that Lula expected him to be – angry, oppositional and simply “other” to her own body:

The rending of the veneer, the Dutchman, to reveal the irreparable breach is the climatic point of the drama. Goaded into finally abandoning his middle-class guise, Clay exclaims that Lula cannot possibly know or identify with his experience, his being, his blackness. He proceeds to unburden himself in a vitriolic and impassioned diatribe against Lula and her kind. But... she holds the knife. (Ralph 58).

¹⁴ Interesting in that Hooks would later become the target of some of Baraka’s most angry diatribes against the NEC and what Baraka would see as theatre which merely mirrored Clay’s desire to be part of “white” America.

Clay became, quite simply, the reflection of the inferior black body that Lula, as representative of the dominant American citizen, had to resist.¹⁵ When he became this visually onstage, he ceased to be a subject searching for his status and became the object of Lula and white society's violence. The knife she held, and that she plunged into Clay, was merely a tool for "excising" the black body from her world. The end of the play supports this model, as it describes another young black man entering the train and taking a seat across from Lula (who has, with the other white passengers of the train, disposed of Clay's body). An old "Negro conductor" enters, and "[does] a sort of restrained soft shoe, and half mumbles the words of some song" (Jones 38). Lula smiles at the young black man but ignores the conductor – and we know that this second young black man will soon be "excised" as well, while the caricature of the Negro conductor as servant/slave will continue to move about, reaffirming the black body as subordinate to the white in this play.

Baraka would continue these themes later the same year with the even more violent *The Slave*. Produced in December of 1964 at the St. Mark's Play House, *The Slave* presented Al Freeman, Jr. as Walker Vessels, a 40ish Negro academic turned revolutionary who enters the home of a former colleague Bradford Easley and his wife Grace on the night of mass revolt of violence by black America. This play was a more direct assault on the foundational systems of the American citizen, for it furthered the image that blackness and whiteness could not exist together under the rubric of American identity as it existed in the twentieth century. *The Slave* was nothing short of a manifesto, not for the inclusion of black ethnicity in that rubric, but for

¹⁵ This is despite the fact that Lula is a woman, and thus would seemingly fall into her own status as subaltern as will be seen in the following section on gender inscription of citizen. Yet Baraka cares nothing about feminism, and reveals a certain misogyny in that the female characters of his plays are almost always white and therefore no different in terms of oppressive imperialism than white males. Indeed, he sees the white female as "seductive" in manner, using the allure of sex to trap and constrain the black male body.

dismantling it completely. At the outset of the play, Walker steps forward and says: “Whatever the core of our lives. Whatever the deceit. We live where we are, and seek nothing but ourselves” (43). The violence that Baraka showed in the play was not, contrary to some readings, a call for the inevitable violent revolution he produced onstage. While Baraka embraced radical black separatism following Malcolm X’s murder in 1965 (Gwaizada 462), and later rejected this philosophy for a Marxist-Leninist activism, *The Slave* was written and produced before he adopted the more nihilistic view of race relations. It did, however, signal a view that stated that violence would occur *unless* the system was dismantled or thrown aside in some other way, and as such was meant to serve as a warning, a plea for change lest the fissures of ethnic difference expand beyond the breaking point.

In *The Slave*, the assault was centered on well-meaning liberalism - white attempts to understand and “help” the African-American to grow and join the greater society. Walker represented a further evolution of Clay from *The Dutchman*, the black male body that not only had assimilated into society on a socio-economic level, but also at the intellectual level, gaining acceptance to a point through *knowledge*. For the American citizen of the mid-twentieth century, this meant knowledge of and acceptance of inherent rights, and, more importantly, the inherent “goodness” of the transactional model of citizenship. Like the illusions of his earlier work, Baraka seemed to indicate that this inherency was nothing more than an illusion of equality, and that the assimilation of the black body into white American culture was nothing more than a recoding of that body as inferior. The “good” intentions of academic liberals like Easley and Grace are seen as shams, deceptions which sought erasure of, rather than the embracing, of blackness. Thus, the black body could not find status within America as citizen by merely accepting the conditions of that state:

GRACE: What are you doing here, Walker? What do you want?

WALKER: Nothing. Not really. Just visiting. (*Grins*) I was in the neighborhood; thought I'd stop by and see how the other half lives.

GRACE: Isn't this dangerous?

WALKER: Oh, it's dangerous as a bitch. But don't you remember how heroic I am?

EASLEY: Well, what the hell do you want, hero?

WALKER: Nothing you have, fellah, not one thing. (48)

Walker is stating, as simply as possible, Baraka's belief that to achieve true status as citizen for the black body, African-Americans could no longer tie their desires to the images of opportunity, privilege and possession that are represented through traditional citizenship in the United States.

Ultimately, the theatre of Baraka served as a sort of pressure point on the ethnic citizen image, asking the important questions of how the black body could possibly be situated within the nationalistic model of American culture. While Baraka's plays served as theatrical sites for this questioning, the answers he kept arriving at were as problematic as the hegemony of citizenship he assaulted – for the presence of the black body in front of the white audience in both *The Dutchman* and *The Slave* elicited only violence in his work. This seemingly inescapable conclusion would also seem to be what leads Baraka later into the nihilism of black separatism and forges his open advocacy within several years of this very violence. Indeed, Baraka himself was and is not immune from the flaws of racial difference that he criticized. His later work in poetry reveals a distinct anti-Semitism (Gwiazda 463-64), exhibited in "Somebody Blew Up America," wherein he insinuates Jewish knowledge/participation in the events of 9/11 (464). Still, the effects of the production of these plays in the 1960's did serve an important purpose in ripping at the fabric of assumed citizen imagery, not only in the very basic placing of the black

body on stage but by marrying it with a contextual positioning of the African-American experience as oppositional to the “inherency” of the classically defined American citizen.

If Baraka asked the questions onstage about the chasm between American citizen and the black body, then later writers have sought to better answer those same questions without sliding into the realm of violent reconfiguration. The most striking of example of this is the theatre of Suzan-Lori Parks, which completely explodes the underlying assumptions about status and position within America and erases the “realism” of theatrical form to support the dismantling of the overall nationalistic system. Two plays which instantly come to the fore in this discussion are *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* (1990) and *The America Play* (1995). Both plays transform the black body, overtly coding the ethnicity into a new spectrum of understanding through re-identification of other American images and identity around them. The central character of *Last Black Man* is indeed named simply “Black Man,” an initial signifier of the character as ethnic body. As Yvette Louis writes:

[*The Death of the Last Black Man*] tells the story of the repeated death experience of the character called simply Black Man. He is hung from a tree that is subsequently hit by lightning, is “fried” in an electric chair, and falls twenty-three stories. The play’s context is the history of racial violence and of the discursive and conceptual associations of the black body with the fragmentation that made “flesh” its primary narrative. (142)

The narrative of the “flesh” referred to here is the citizen coding of character that occurred and occurs in dominant theatrical forms during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The “flesh” means the body, in its most basic form. But, while Parks does address the violence and invasive rewriting of black physicality, she does not seek the violent severing of the black body from the American construct as Baraka did. Instead, Parks seeks to crumble the argument of inherency by deconstructing all images equally on the stage, placing, for instance, a black body in the continually assassinated character of Lincoln in *The America Play*. This directly addresses

the fears of August Wilson in the black body placed in color-blind casting of white roles, because instead of mimicry of white characters, as played by black actors in Parks' work, the actors instead act as agents that change the nature of those "white" characters.

To Parks the body is another expression of language (141). If, in Parks' view, the dominant hierarchy of American culture asks that black bodies be "assimilated" into its own frame of existence, her plays then implode this idea by showing the removal of *all* Americans (especially the polemic iconography of men like Lincoln and the "Founding Fathers") from this overbearing narrative.

While embedding the drama deeply within the African American experiences of slavery, violence, and racial oppression, Parks makes use of deconstructed language and dramatic form to contest dominant discourses that have pathologized the black body and represents a counternarrative of the black body as the source of abundance. (141)

Thus, the plays of Parks seek, not the addition or removal of the black body, but rather to refocus and bend of that very frame around the black body. Parks achieves this not just through the use of the body and its language onstage, but in the structuring of the plays themselves.

In *The America Play*, Parks' image of the black American challenges the perception of superiority by white maleness by stripping away the characteristics of the dominant citizen, physically removing them from the bodies of her characters. The "Foundling Father" is a character that is identifiable as "black," yet at the same time represents the white male founders of America. Also tied to the iconographic image of Abraham Lincoln, "The Foundling Father" states, near the end of the play, the following:

So very lovely to be here so very very lovely
to be here the town of – Wonderville has always been
a special favorite of mine. Now, I *only* do thuh greats. Uh
hehm: I was born in a log cabin of humble parentage. But I
picked up uh few things. Uh hehm: 4score and 7 years ago
our fathers – ah you know the rest. Let's see now. Yes. Uh

house divided cannot stand! You can fool some of thuh people
some of thuh time! Of thuh people by thuh people and for thuh
people! Malice toward none and charity toward all! Ha! The
Death of Lincoln! Haw Haw Haw Haw (Parks 197)

The “body” of Lincoln is shot multiple times during the play, “killing” the image of white maleness it represents even when it attempts to assimilate the black body into its frame. For Parks the differences that separate the black body from the dominant white are not transactionally fixed by simply adapting one to the images of the other. Instead, the black body exists in its own signified location of citizenship, as does the “white” body, the female body, etc., yet none hold superiority because, in the end, they are *all* different in some significant way.

Unlike the successes of the NEC or Wilson before her, Parks eschews “realism” as a foundational structure within her dramatic narrative. Instead, she sees this form as problematic in its tendency to reaffirm the status quo of understanding in the American mindset and so obliterates it into a surrealistic world of moments and drifting situations that are not held to reality (i.e. the “Great Hole of History” in *The America Play*). As Frank Haike states in “The Instability of Meaning,” “The Play Uniquely resists linear logic. Not only do the spectators try to track down the meaning of the work, but the play also chases its own meaning” (73). Meaning is understanding in this mode – the understanding of the individual’s place within the collective whole (or hole if we wish to extend the metaphor) of American society and then to collectively understand how ethnicity on the body plays on this concept.

Taken in each instance, these moments of resistance in black theatre have not (even in the powerful work of Parks) changed the overall belief in or adherence to the concepts of citizenship in America as have been described in earlier chapters. They serve merely as an evolution of friction against that model by one particular ethnic group and its bodies in performance. What these resistant moments have accomplished is at least the shifting of ethnic inscription on the

black body away from the absolute otherness of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into a realm of “acceptance” within the nationalistic model, but as of yet the overall foundational understandings of what this means have certainly not been dissipated in the collective mindset of the American public. Baraka’s radicalized rejection of white assimilation and Parks’s images of the black body as citizen, as such, remain on the fringe of the more common inclusion of the African-American experience as “searching” for its own place in the American Dream. In this way, the work of the NEC and August Wilson have had more widespread effect on overall citizen imaging of the black ethnic physicality in the viewing and comprehension of the wider audiences they have reached, while Baraka is often dismissed entirely due to his political agenda (Gwiazda 7).

The image of the African-American as someone who wishes to “elevate” into the world of full citizenship is, therefore, mostly reinforced rather than subverted, and this particular image is mirrored from the stage onto screen (large and small) in the images of black Civil War soldiers fighting for their “rights” as citizens of the U.S. in Edward Zwick’s 1989 *Glory*¹⁶ and even further in the middle-class images of the Huxtables in the previously noted *The Cosby Show*, the successful rise of the “butler” Benson from position of servitude to equal politician in *Benson*, and perhaps the clearest example in the 1970’s *The Jeffersons* where a family is overtly shown to be “Movin’ On Up” to the East Side of New York, indicating an overt calling for ethnic inclusion in the model of the American citizen. In this way stage and screen have allowed for the movement of the black ethnic body internally to American culture, thus re-inscribing the black body as “citizen.” This is no more apparent than in the adoption of the preferential term

¹⁶ A moment in particular in this film highlights this – the one character who would seem to question the actually inherency of what being a citizen means is performed by Denzel Washington, yet by the end of the film he has “accepted” his honor and duty to the country and, in a stunning visual image of this nationalistic acceptance, he becomes the standard bearer of the U.S. Flag in the climactic battle of the film, ultimately sacrificing himself for “the good cause.”

“African-American” as signifier of ethnicity, the very understanding of which asks for inclusion in the existing system of the American Dream, the rights and privileges of the individual under the nebulous umbrella of “freedom,” and the acceptance of ethnicity as being on equal footing with others in American society. This, however, does not remove the central issues of the model, asking ethnic bodies within the American frame to join in a foundational understanding of the modernity of the American model and its superiority to others – it simply expands the definition of internal inclusion in this frame while continuing to seek “otherness” to distinguish and rarify those that claim status as American.

Of course, this chapter has focused fairly narrowly on the black body as an example of citizen physical inscription, yet other ethnic groups and gendered bodies which exist within the legalistic coding of the American citizen follow similar dilemmas in understanding their positions within our culture. To explore all these identities in the context of theatrical performance would, to say the least, take up an entire dissertation in its own right. Here it is sufficient to note the example of the black body in theatre and how it has resisted, re-inscribed itself, and sought for position in the overall paradigm of the citizenship question. There is no doubt that the Hispanic body, the Chinese body, the Native-American body, the gay body, or the female body all contend in similar ways with their own collective ethnic self-imaging and the needs and requirements of the legal understanding of being a citizen of the United States, and theatre has provided sites of contestations for all these subaltern physical identities to push at the greater collective understanding of them as “others” within our own borders. In all cases the tensions remain the same – the desire to achieve inclusion in the existing and accepted ideology of America in contrast to the desire to retain ethnicity in its own right while avoiding assimilation into that very same culture.

Ultimately, what these moments of theatre produce for us is a rupture in how we accept our rights as citizens based on our physical presence in American culture. The sites we have discussed are indicative of the recognition of the levels of stratified “otherness” that exist in the nationalistic model, but in discussing them at all we reveal even more levels. Many “citizens” of America in the legal sense find themselves not only in one are of subalternation, but in multiple and overlapping frames of identity definition. The gay black man, the Hispanic woman, the lesbian (who is both gay in body and feminine), the black gay lesbian; all again are labels of physical coding that seek ever further stratified differentiation, and unearth the troubling problem that is central to this work: no level of attempted “elevation” or “broadening” of the nationalistic frame can encompass all difference within itself – it MUST identify and stratify difference to sustain itself, and the body remains the most central tool of this hierarchical inscription. One could take the idea of the body as citizen even further (as does happen) and identify how even within certain body codes there is enough difference to stratify one’s productive power – height, weight (“fitness” as superior to “fatness” even in to heterosexual male bodies), and even societal “norms” of beauty as performed on stage and screen are not erasable when one accepts that foundations are inherent and “God given” to Americans – for to accept this is to accept innate inferiority in character and physicality which serves to separate any particular body from the collective whole.

Now that we have seen how a brief study of the body as a mechanism of citizen coding works, and now that we have seen what it reveals about the assumption of and acceptance of the nationalistic citizen construct, it is time to ask the question that all of this begs – just what do we do when the theatre produced always seems to either fall back within the frame of understood privileges or at the best exposes their faults? The final chapter of this work will take the brief

moments of true rupture that we have witnessed in such plays as *The Slave* and the works of Suzan-Lori Parks and move forward from them to examine theatre as a site which can continue to rip apart the mythologies of the nationalistic model of the citizen in deference to a new image: the individual as holistic citizen.

CHAPTER 5

SACRIFICE AND RUPTURE: THE “FUTURE” AND MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE HOLISTIC CITIZEN

In the preceding chapters we have moved through a discussion of theatrical performance mostly in terms of its reification of the classically defined images of the American citizen: the legalistic position; the assumed rights and privileges of that position; and, the characteristics which mark the physical existence of the “citizen” through encoding of the body. Along the way we have encountered moments of active resistance to these codified concepts of collective identity. Yet, these shifts always seem to bring us back to an underlying acceptance of, or at the very least a call for, universal “truths” concerning this identity. In works on stage and screen, attempts to contest the narrative of the citizen ultimately choose not to target the foundational assumptions of the rights and supremacy of the American citizen, but rather seek to broaden the frame of that identity, allowing for the extension of privileges over a wider canvass of individuals and subaltern groups beneath it. The mission of this dissertation, however, is not to merely acknowledge these moments of contestation, but to call for a greater activation of tension in theatrical production: the use of the dramatic image to demonstrate the possibility of complete rupture from the nationalistic model, and subsequently the imaging of the “citizen” as a holistic being who functions outside of, and despite, a legal definition as an individual member of a national collective.

The goals of this chapter are to identify several examples today’s theatrical production that shift the audience’s perceptions from the “now” to the “future,” a move which will challenge each of the “pillars” of ideological citizenship and disconnect them from our subconscious acceptance. I call specifically for theatrical images which 1.) remove the concept of “Natural Law” as base for citizenship, 2.) do not require the “consent” to be governed to find a place

within a national identity, 3.) recognize that there are no “inherent” rights for our voices to be heard, 4.) eliminate the misunderstood belief that citizenship guarantees protection, 5.) reconstruct transactional views of citizenship to strip our adherence to a *quid-pro-quo* of exchange between the citizen and his/her government, and finally, 6.) to eradicate the arrogant misconception that our status as “Americans” gives us a superiority both ideologically and practically over the non-citizen.

The same limitations in understanding and perceptions about the *a priori* constructs of the citizen cannot help but shade any present production of image – limitations which again reflect Kristeva’s approach to individual “subjectivity” within any collective (McAfee 57). The underlying acceptance by the American individual within the nation state that he/she is a member of color these perceptions always – thus making the escape from, and viewing of, the individual body as existing outside of its nationalistic context an extremely difficult endeavor. This, more than anything, is the reason for the failures of the previously explored ruptures in this work. And yet, if we return to the tenuous suturing of collective identity under the model proposed by Chantal Mouffe (*Dimensions of Radical Democracy* 235-237), we can envision a “citizen” whose nationalistic and legal position is merely a thin connective tissue rather than the concrete image of absolute foundational “reality.” This, then, is the beginning of the “holistic” citizen, one whose identity is collectively viewed, not just in terms of an individual nation state, but rather as an operating “social agent” (235) of a larger ensemble of subject positions that stretches across the totality of human contact.

The “holistic” citizen does not seek or even accept “rights” and “privileges” as a *quid-pro-quo* of its status within a particular state, but instead views itself as belonging to a larger ethical frame of responsibility to otherness that transcends any form of “uniqueness.” In this

regard, much of the work in recognizing the potential of the holistic citizen is found in an understanding of the violence of opposition that exists when the inherency of the nationalistic model applies itself in force. Acceptance of the traditional position of citizenship brings with it a dangerous assumption: the superiority of one's self as individual, and of the collective whole that is the United States in opposition to *all others*.

We have seen already how the opposition to otherness expresses itself *within* the borders of the nation-state (especially in regards to ethnicity and gender), but this model extends itself further by totalizing all existence *outside* the bounds of American national identity as further removed from the possibility of “enjoying” the foundational privileges of being “American.” The result of this fissure between the claimed supremacy of being American and the position of *not* being so is demonstrated on a near daily level in our culture today: the bedrock belief that “democracy” and “freedom” can be spread as a tool of enlightenment (even if achieved at the point of a gun or a cruise missile); that others should obviously “want” this model of government (again assuming it as the highest pinnacle of political evolutionary thought); the degradation and caricaturing of “aliens” (the French, Mexicans, etc.) who might seek to challenge the opinions of or global desires of the nation state of America; and, of course, the absolute understanding of America's “right” to control and enforce its understanding of what is “God-given” on the international stage.¹

The delineation of the “holistic” concept of the citizen will, within the scope of this chapter, find two distinctive tracks in its development as a theatrical image. First, I will explore the emergence of the American as simply one among many “citizens” of the world,

¹ The idea that the oppositional nature of defining oneself as superior to “otherness” is, in itself, an act of “violence” is hard to dismiss – especially given the fact that as this work is being written America finds itself in an ongoing war with multiple “enemies,” a conflict that claims to be about “freedom” and the “rights” of our nation to be secure from all threats to the exclusion of the potential violence to *others*.

interconnected through a frame of sacrifice and exchange which removes both the accepted positioning of rights and privileges of the elitist American nationalistic model. Secondly, I seek to show an image of the “body” in the future that can be rearranged visually to demystify and decode our understandings of citizen status, especially as it is inscribed upon the physical body as an instrument of “difference.” The first track comes from moments in theatrical performance which demonstrate characters ostensibly coded within the legal, nationalistic frame of American citizenship and which thrusts these characters into positions of alterity. Such characters are forced, then, to make choices that essentially sacrifice their “superior” position in deference to the needs of others. This will be accomplished by looking at David Lan’s 1996 play *The Ends of the Earth*. The second track of discussion will concentrate more in the realm of the future, and as such will find its principle source of rupture in the images of science fiction – particularly in the imaging of the non-human body (android) in the world of “Star Trek.”

The Ethics of Sacrifice and Exchange: Views of the Holistic Citizen

The fundamental underpinnings of the holistic citizen call for a shift from the *quid-pro-quo* of rights for privilege under the traditional American model in favor of a broader model, a universal definition that is defined not by birth, social class, ethnicity, and geography of residence but by an *ethical response* to the “other.” Theoretically this call lies in much of the critical work usually described as post-modern ethics, especially in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas in deference to *difference* and ethical responsibility towards the “face” of the other. To many entering this particular realm of discourse the very idea of codifying some form of collective identity is, in itself, a problematic endeavor – for if identity does not live in a foundational reality (which is what I am indeed attempting to renounce), it must then exist *only* as set of signified meanings created culturally. The conundrum here is that most attempts at

exploding the dominant image of the citizen, as we have seen, drift inevitably towards a foundational approach, relying on an underlying acceptance of at least one of the pillars of the transactional citizen to make their claims.

It is this “wall” between the desire to find an ethical basis for the holistic view of the citizen and the foundational demands of the nation state that remains the central problem: how to define the concepts of *ethics* and thus *justice* within a frame that resists absolutes. The idea of an ethical universe begs for a foundational approach, however small the ground upon which it rests may be. Likewise, the concept of justice seeks an acceptance of “rights” to delineate it in terms of human activity. Todd May describes this dilemma quite succinctly when he asks:

... how can “we” (on our own terms) “enlightened” and “progressive” secular intellectuals presume to speak on behalf of that wider community without laying claim to a universal wisdom that suppresses difference and thus writes another chapter in the violent history of Western ethnocentrism? (79)

In order to have *justice*, one must first have a codified or at the very least accepted understanding of *right* and *wrong*, *equality* and *inequality*, yet these concepts have so far managed to elude humankind in its very efforts to achieve them. It is precisely for this reason that individuals existing within the American frame of identity rely on a legal set of parameters in order to understand the extremely tenuous and abstract ideas of “freedom” and “natural rights.” To change this dynamic, however, we must reenter the fray surrounding the post-modern theory of identity: how does one establish a practical model of *ethics* within the rubric of linguistic thought that achieves the noble goals of *justice* while, maintaining deference to what Lyotard has so eloquently described as the *differend* - that is, “a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of rule of judgement applicable to both arguments (Lyotard xi)?”

The nature of *responsibility* in a world dominated by alterity asks the would be ethicist to abandon the observational distance of theory and proceed, full-throttle if you will, not only into claiming a constructed *position* in the discourse, but also in undertaking some form of active participation in the world at large. The individual would thus become an holistic citizen of humankind rather than the more narrowly defined idea of the “American.” This holistic citizen would then find his- or herself located in specific contingent situations of action and exchange, situations which do call not for a *claim* of one’s own rights and privileges, but would instead seek that individual’s identity solely as an ethical response to the “other” that is encountered. This is the heart of the concept of holistic citizenship that this work calls for – a localizing of the individual within a collective whole that supercedes national boundaries and operates on a basis of more universal (albeit contingent) ethics when confronting the idea of violence.² The approach to the construction of the holistic citizen thus follows three primary foci: first, to recognize the nature of conflict within the positioning of the citizen as responsible and ethical even when identifying oneself as legally a member of one nation-state or another; second, to identify the contingent workings of exchange that exist in the world as it *is* rather than as we would *like it to be*; and, finally, in exploring what mechanism humankind can use to move toward the broader communal existence.

I first turn to David Lan’s *The Ends of the Earth* (1996) to explore a theatrical representation that moves away from the transactional, nationalistic model of citizenry that

² It is also important to note that the term “violence” as I am using it is not relegated to the actions of physical harm between one individual or group versus another individual or group, but rather as a term that defines any oppositional needs or desires. The “violence” that is the ongoing “war on terror” and specifically the conflict continuing as of this writing in Iraq is the expression of American collective desire under the nationalistic model to ensure the “rights” of its citizens to be “safe” from outside threat (again delineating “otherness” as both inferior and dangerous to these rights); the opposition to American involvement is not a uniform hatred of “our way of life,” as is portrayed by the U.S. government, but instead a complex layering of needs and desires on the part of a vast number of different ethnic and nationalistic groupings and individuals in their own frame in the middle east and specifically Iraq.

reflected American collective identity with such ferocity in earlier chapters. In a way, the use of Lan's play is in itself a turn from dominant ideological positioning, for it is written by a "non-citizen" of the U.S., while its central protagonist *is* nationalistically coded (i.e. legally positioned) as an American. The play sets its plot against the backdrop of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990's, events which reveal striking examples of just how violent disagreements between two seemingly irresolvable differends can be. The play seeks to find a new frame for both "justice" and "ethics," placing it firmly within the theatrical imaging of nationality first as an agent of separation, yet turning the idea of legalized national status into an unimportant, merely semantic concept. The situations of war and violence that existed in the Balkans at this time were terrifyingly real – tens of thousands of Croations, Serbians, ethnic Albanians, and Bosnians lost their lives in the heated flames of ethnic warfare and hatred. Many more of all of these ethnic groups were dislocated, and despite the best-intentioned efforts of outside intervention (carried on through the claim of "the rights" of the individuals involved under the lens of American idealism, an intervention which produced its own level of violence) these tensions still rage on, and are mirrored most recently in the escalation of violence and war in the Middle East.

Any dramatic piece that attempts to explore the nature of conflict using the "reality" of current or past wars demands our attention as an audience. Lan, however, makes a striking choice in *de-emphasizing* the events of war that surround his play. The central character Daniel's preoccupations have little to do, through most of the play, with the violence of war that encircles him, especially in the first half of the plot. Even when the war does enter as a crucial element, we are never shown as an audience any philosophical or rational support for either "side," a term I use loosely because Lan uses them loosely. The audience never knows which combatants fall within which specific ethnic group, all that is revealed is that they are fighting and killing each

other, and apparently have no desire to stop. The plot of *The Ends of the Earth* deals instead with Daniel's own soul-searching for meaning in his life as he anguishes over finding a cure for his terminally ill daughter.

Thus, at the outset, Lan's play takes the American Daniel and removes him from the frame of American citizenship. The transactional freedoms and rights supposedly guaranteed for the legal American citizen have failed Daniel, for they do not provide a cure or solution to the "reality" of his daughter's illness. He therefore departs the confines of his nation-state borders to search for remedies from outside the frame of his citizenship. On a deeper level, *The Ends of the Earth* sees Daniel seeking an understanding of his own place in the world purely in reference to his own needs, an individualistic claim that further separates him from the *quid-pro-quo* collective identity of America. Put simply, being American will not save his daughter, nor will it guarantee him the opportunity through individual status of finding the answers to his dilemmas. Instead, he must navigate the world with the identifying position of being an American citizen reduced to the most slender of threads, a simple legal and geographic reality rather than an all-encompassing one. Daniel seeks what he presumes to be "justice" for his daughter's condition (a cure), but must search for it through a larger holistic frame of ethics now that he is "stripped" of all encoding that might previously have identified him as a citizen of the U.S.

I pause here to note that the terms "justice" and "ethics" are far from the same. "Ethics" is placed not within the frame of equality or balance between difference and the need of competing "others," but rather in the shifting scales of exchange wherein one side of a discourse or relationship gains or loses based on the contingent need of its opposing other at any given time. "Justice," it seems, is based more concretely on a call for the *recognition* of gain or loss as appropriate to the competing needs of "others," a recognition of the differend on which Lyotard

based most of his practical hope. Levinas, Lyotard and Nancy are notable among the philosophers of the last half of the twentieth century who explored this ethical dilemma. All succeeded in finding unique paths to the observation of the problem, yet all fell short in their inability to offer a practical solution to either myself as a self-aware *existent* (as Levinas defines it) or to the *other(s)* which I am in connection to and community with in the world around me. In attempting to posit my own model of ethics, I side more with Kristeva and the more recent works of Todd May, both of whom sought to move beyond the mere observational stances of the above theorists. I do not, however, choose to negate the importance of such writers as Levinas or Lyotard, nor minimize their contributions in the identifying of ethical issues that desire resolution.

The question of “justice” arises first. It is difficult to juxtapose a retributational sense of justice (in which gain and loss of need can be measured and applied) with the desire for equilateral responsibility (where the needs of opposing “others” are recognized and responded to by those opposed in difference). Again, I turn to Lyotard: “A wrong results from the fact that the rules of the genre of discourse by which one judges are not those of the judged genre or genre of discourses” (Lyotard xi.). In other words, it is difficult to apply justice to any given situation without first resting on an accepted common frame of reference for what the term means. When discussing the ideas of retribution and justice it is even more problematic to view them outside of the lens of an essentialized American frame of view concerning justice as the replacement of, or transactional payment for, rights lost in some way.

Levinas most notably offered several excellent starting points from which to move forward. He set up the basic problem as being connected to *time*. How do we reconcile past, present and future in the overall discourse? There is no doubt that injustice and inequality existed

in the past, and that these differentials were epitomized within the coding of who was or was not an American citizen. Similarly, these conditions remain present with us today. But must they exist in the future, and will they inevitably lead to violence and ultimately war (questions which hold resounding importance when one considers the state of the world as we speak of these matters)? Levinas says:

Pain cannot be redeemed. Just as the happiness of humanity does not justify the mystery of the individual, retribution in the future does not wipe away the pains of the present. There is no justice that could make reparations for it. One should have to return to that instant, to resurrect [sic] it. To hope then is to hope for the reparation of the irreparable; it is to hope for the present. (Levinas *Existence* 91)

The moral question is plain here: how do we recognize and deal with injustice in the past if it cannot be redressed with any sense of real justice? The answer is that it is unnecessary to redress or provide retribution. Such actions ultimately lead to further injustice and more calls for retribution.

As much as I owe to Levinas, I wish to depart from his observational position in reference to concepts such as *sacrifice* and *responsibility for the other*, which unfortunately only achieve a real meaning in envisioning an impossible utopian society. Instead, I choose to shift the discussion into a theoretical field in which exchange and sacrifice can be viewed as a *liminal* concept. Without such a change in point of view, we reduce any discussion of “exchange” to a transactional ideal of rights/duties that remains problematic in the dominant ideological frame of citizenship. I adapt the term liminal here from the work of Victor Turner, especially in reference to his ideas on change/transformation (although in this discussion I am using the term without the baggage or presuppositions of ritualistic behavior that are often associated with the word). I therefore locate “ethics” and “justice” in a state of constant change and flux, in which exchange *actually* takes place – there is no “pure sacrifice,” nor utopian equality, to be achieved. In this

light there is no “natural” domination by a privileged object over subject that is inherently irreversible – as with the model of the nation-state over its citizens.

“Conflict” is not necessarily wrong or undesirable. Instead, an activist approach should attempt to find the gradated levels of conflict in relationship to the “other” that keeps the communities in conflict from escalating to higher levels, those of “violence.” This is my concept of “ethics,” and applies directly to the imaging of the “holistic” citizen as one who seeks commonality and responsibility without turning to ones nationalistic coding as source for the engagement of this form of “conflict.” In the most practical example, the ongoing war in Iraq was initiated and prosecuted under a view that has nothing to do with the original reasons cited (weapons of mass destruction, ties to 9/11 terrorists, etc.) – rather it continues to be waged primarily because of an American view of its own rights, privileges and needs as paramount, and therefore transferable, onto other nation-states (a post-modern colonialism of ideology). Since this transference could not be achieved through other means, the only options were a continued recognition of another state’s difference (however detestable or undesirable it may have been), or the use of violence to force that state into an extension of “America.”

It is in reference to 9/11 that I return the discussion here to the desire for “justice.” The actions of the government of the United States following that horrible day have been pursued out of a desire for two things: retribution and security. Both are in service to the misunderstanding of the collective rights of Americans, taking us back again to the territory of transactional exchange wherein we demand protection for our “rights” from a government we give “service” to. Such calls for retribution and security rely solely on the need to redress the past. It leaves the present and the future, unfortunately, in a place of violence and conflict. The more liminal concept of “justice” and “ethics” I pursue here asks for the removal of the past as foundation for identifying

“wrongs,” especially as they relate to our standing as American citizens. Instead I call for a repositioning of ourselves as responsible and holistic citizens of the world, not just viewing sacrifice in the narrow frame of duty to country, but in exchange with our own desires and needs for “justice.” Theatricality can help us envision this *sacrifice of the past*.

Lan’s play, *The Ends of the Earth*, offers us a glimpse at one possible avenue of exploration for this philosophy. The *London Times* review of this play, derisive of its intent and success, includes a very interesting quote: “The setting [the Balkans] is not the problem, *nor are the politics*” (Nightingale B15). I quote here because this phrase assumes a nationalistic need for competition and violence between differing nations, ethnic groups, etc. Such presuppositions again return us to the idea that “politics” is something quantifiable in terms such as “correct/incorrect” or “right/wrong.” Placing such evaluations on how individuals should exist, behave, or even produce theatre, demands a recognition and acceptance of the inherency of *established* norms of political discourse. But it is the difference in acceptance of these discourses that leads us, again and again, into hatred, violence and war. Bataille addresses this idea when he speaks of “insubordination of material facts:”

Human life, distinct from juridical existence, existing as it does on the globe isolated in celestial space, from night to day and from one country to another – human life cannot in any way be limited to closed systems assigned to it by reasonable conceptions. The immense travail of recklessness, discharge, and upheaval that constitutes life could be expressed by stating that life starts only with the deficit of these systems; at least what it allows in the way of order and reserve has meaning only from the moment when the ordered and reserved forces liberate and lose themselves for ends that cannot be subordinated to anything one can account for. (Bataille 128)

I believe Bataille is writing in recognition of the basis of war – the “immense travail of recklessness” he speaks of here is a precise and eloquent description of the tendency towards violence as an ends to irresolvable conflict. It is the supposed “superiority” of one nation’s

collective identity (represented as “citizenship”) that most often produces this state of violent conflict.

The Ends of the Earth refuses to take “political” sides within the context of conflict – the “war” that occurs behind the action of the play is, in some ways, mere philosophical scenery for Daniel’s quest for meaning in life. The “conflict” within Daniel is not political, nor religious, nor tied to any positioning as an American. It is, rather, more essentially concerned with the results of his own decisions in life, and how they affect the other(s) around him. The “war” that he thus stumbles into as a part of this quest is, in a greater sense, a vision of where Daniel’s own passive acceptance of his position as an American can lead when conflict isn’t resolved before it expands to greater and greater violence.

Lyotard would place this conflict within the frame of the differend, where language strips the possibility of communication as a form of resolvable conflict away, and ultimately leaves human beings in oppositions that cannot be reconciled:

... the powers that be (ideological, political, religious,... etc.) presuppose that the human beings they are supposed to guide, or at least control, are in possession of something they communicate. Communication is the exchange of messages, exchange of communication of goods. (Lyotard 12)

Violence, then, occurs when one human or community of humans comes into a state of conflict with *otherness* in which *exchange stops*, and the result is the application or expression of force (“war”) to resolve the differend. Lyotard unfortunately offered no solution to the violence he described, and was mirrored by Levinas in his desire for a more utopian society in which all “others” would share their ideals of sacrifice and responsibility. Inevitably this desire leads us to a form of cultural colonialism, such as we are witnessing in current U.S. foreign policy. Bataille also concentrated on the idea of *sacrifice*, constructing the term to refer to one-sided exchange where one human gives to an “other” unconditionally and with absolutely nothing in return. This

sacrifice by one is the ideal by which the differend is resolved, not by oppression, but by the willing surrender to the needs of the other (Bataille 132).

Initially *The Ends of the Earth* mirrors Bataille's concept. As Daniel seeks a solution to his daughter's terminal illness, he meets an old Balkan man, Yosip, who asks him to make the arbitrary sacrifice of giving up smoking. Daniel believes that he is offering an *exchange*, the sacrifice of his habit for the life of his daughter. Yet on closer reading, Yosip is not offering an exchange – he is asking for a purer sacrifice in line with Bataille:

YOSIP: What is hard is to give and get nothing back.

DANIEL: To make a sacrifice?

YOSIP: (Laughs) No. One sacrifices. Why? You feel in your heart an emptiness. You give so it may be filled. Or there is a desire for something specific – health, knowledge, power. You give, you receive. No, to truly break the cycle one must give and desire in return absolutely nothing. (Lan 34)

At this point Daniel, as an American, is still expecting his “rights” as a citizen, even though he is external to that position in the play. He nonetheless has, initially, trouble in seeing his ability to sacrifice (“duty”) without the transactional rewards of protection he assumes to be “inherent,” not just as an American but when navigating his relationships with others outside of the U.S.

Bataille still saw the act of sacrifice as “ethical” in and of itself, yet it could not truly settle the question of how we separate the needs of one individual nor indeed the needs of a collective identity (whether they be Americans, Bosnians, Palestinians, etc.). Levinas also expounded Bataille's view of sacrifice as utopian when he spoke of the “face,” which both defines oneself in relation to the “other” and calls for *responsibility to the other*, responsibility which when carried to its logical conclusion brings us again to pure sacrifice (Levinas *Ethics* 100). James Olthius attempts to deal with this seeming impasse in his reading of Levinas, and

like myself seeks to find some path away from the post-modern stalemate of observation of the differend in what he terms *mutuality*:

The dance of mutuality is always drenched in vulnerability and risk because it is a non-coerced meeting of two free subjects in the wild spaces of love. Timing and spacing are of the essence. Reaching out does not guarantee being met. The timing may be off; the partner may be otherwise occupied, not-at-home, angry, depressed, in a different space. Venturing out, but not meeting, leads it to impasse, and brings with it hurt, grieving – suffering. When people learn to accept that the vulnerability of mutuality always includes moments of distance, pain, and suffering, impasses may be avoided or broken, and the suffering – from such non-meetings can even turn into suffering – with experiences of empathy, non-blame, and shared disappointment. (147-148)

This concept of mutuality is the key to a liminal transition of the understanding of conflict and exchange I posit as central to the creation of the “holistic” citizen. The past is irreparable, the present is in flux as we speak, and the future is an open book yet to be written.

Daniel sacrifices in *The Ends of the Earth*, yet he is not “pure” in his intentions. In the second act of the play, Daniel returns to the Balkans and is captured by Pintijle’s guerillas (again non-identified with any visible ethnic coding other than the most generic “Balkan”). He is forced from his passive stance in life to make a second sacrifice – smoke again to the detriment (in his mind) of his daughter’s life in order to stop violence against Takic, a character who robbed him earlier in the play. When Daniel smokes, he has now shifted in his views and as a character makes a sacrifice in line with the “pure” vision of such as Bataille and Levinas would envision it. Lan, however, immediately eviscerates this “pure” sacrifice as any sort of road to utopia. Pintijle kills Takic anyway. Sacrifice in its purest sense is removed as a real option to end violence and war, and subsequently Daniel finds out that his daughter died before he broke his initial promise not to smoke. Each sacrifice or exchange made by Daniel is only a momentary gesture, settling his quest for meaning and position in the world only for the briefest of moments before

shattering it again. Thus, Daniel is further removed from his original status as an American with each of these exchanges, each nominal sacrifice, each lesson in the reality that no accepted *quid-pro-quo* will arrive with any decision he makes.

The path to a holistic view of citizenship rests in the letting go of the past, and further letting go of *hatred* as a tool of superiority and as an emotional template which covers our relationships and identities like a gauze, thus demanding retributational justice. Americans, as “citizens,” were collectively assaulted on 9/11, and this singular event pushed many citizens of this country back into the mode of expecting the protection of their “rights” by the government through retaliatory action. In this way, non-citizens (and not just the collective identities of Arabs, but subsequently of many others including the oft-maligned citizens of France) become even more “foreign,” and this inferior to Americans. Julia Kristeva speaks of this with her concept of the “foreigner:”

Hatred makes [the foreigner] real, authentic so to speak, solid, or simply existing. Even more so, it causes to resound on the *outside* that other’s hatred, secret and shameful, apologetic to the point of abating, that the foreigner bears *within himself* against everyone, against no one, and which, in the case of flooding, would cause a serious depression. But there, on the border between himself and other hatred does not threaten him. He lies in wait, reassured each time to discover that he never misses and appointment, bruised on account of always missing love, but almost pleased with the persistence – real or imaginary? – of detestation... Living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of *being and other*. It is not simply – humanistically – a matter of our being able to accept the other, but of *being in his place*, and this means to imagine and make oneself other for oneself. (Kristeva 13)

The Ends of the Earth images Daniel as a citizen of America that must come to grips with the fact that that very positioning is the root of his inability to find “his place” in relation to these others he meets, and the violence produced is in some part a reflection of his own subconscious

positioning of Yosip, Pintijle, and Takic as “foreigners,” in whose places he must now struggle to see himself.

Lan continues to deconstruct Daniel’s citizenship as the play progresses. This is especially apparent towards the end of the play, when Daniel again meets Yosip “up on the mountain,” and Yosip offers him another exchange:

YOSIP: I asked you to do one thing: give up smoking. (*He sighs deeply, looks at his watch.*) Shall we try again? (*He puts a piece of cake on a plate, takes it to Daniel.*) Do you know what this is? Hold out your hand. (*He breaks off a piece, puts it in Daniel’s hand.*) It is all created being. It is everything that has ever been created. It is in your hand. Do you believe me?

DANIEL: I do.

YOSIP: Oh wait, I’ve made a mistake. (*He changes the piece of cake.*) That’s it. Now you have the right one. Good. (Lan 70-71)

Lan, through Yosip, is saying there is no absolute, no perfect outcome – that what is necessary in exchange between Daniel and the rest of the world (the other) is a continually shifting concept of sacrifice and exchange which must be actively engaged only in the present moment, not in reference to the past. There is, therefore, no more need for equality, but for a liminal site of exchange which constantly serves to reverse positions in the discourse, granting then stripping privilege in fleeting and momentary gestures.

For the “citizen” of America, this is perhaps the hardest part of perceived rights and privileges to let go of – the idea that privilege is truly contingent on the exigencies of the moment, not a foundational or inherent “reality” granted through the mere legal status of being American. Lan’s use of the young girl, Dusja, and the jam Rosa brings her at the end of the play, is an example of this – the jam is an exchange which shifts the discourse and bridges the ethnic differences between the “mountain” and “valley” peoples (which Lan uses as a more neutral

representation of ethnicity), and becomes for Daniel a form of reception of his “holistic” place in relation to these “others,” these foreigners:” sacrifice is not needed under the model of Bataille as long as it occurs at all, as long as there is reception of the sacrifice by the “other,” whether that “other” is another or ourselves (as Kristeva would envision it). For the American citizen, this means being able to image oneself as NOT-citizen rather than as one.

At the very end of *Ends of the Earth* we are given no absolute answers, only shifting needs to be dealt with. Inequalities and injustices cannot be erased; “difference” cannot be balanced without one party to the discourse having some form of privilege at any given moment. We cannot say “we have a ‘Differend’ and there’s nothing to be done about it.” It is also naïve to assume that violence as an extrapolation of conflict will ever be erased, even in the form of war. The idea of “ethics” that is bound to a new view of the citizen as a holistic part of the larger world instead calls for the constant re-examination of the self as other. At the end of Lan’s play there is an interesting exchange of dialogue between Yosip and Daniel:

DANIEL: (*Desperate*) But what must I do?

YOSIP: Are you cold?

DANIEL: Yes.

YOSIP: Then put on your coat.

In the end there is no call for sacrifice, equality, nor solution – just an action appropriate to the problem of the very moment at hand.

How does *The Ends of the Earth* ultimately shift the view of what a “citizen” is, especially in the context of American identity? By showing us the view of one of us (Daniel) severed from nationalistic signifiers such as the “right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” None of these so-called unalienable rights remain present for Daniel by the end of

the play – their artificiality is exposed with the elimination³ of any possibility for reward for Daniel. Two of the pillars of the dominant American citizen image are exploded here: the *inherency* of rights and privileges in exchange for duty or service, and the claim of superiority these rights as constructed supposedly accords over “others.” Thus, the only way for us to navigate, as an audience, the experiences of Daniel in the play is to “let go” of our perceptions of just what our legal position as a citizen really means beyond a simple tethering of geography (where we live).

Ultimately, Lan’s play creates an image of Daniel as an American built purely on the merest of legal and geographical threads, and removes the ideological pillars that are used to establish a superiority of position for the citizen: the divine rights of common man consent are obliterated, the protection of one’s government disappears, and the transactional relationship between the American citizen and his government is severed. Daniel emerges here as a “holistic” citizen, whose position is only identifiable in the simplest of relationships with those around him at any immediate and contingent moment. The American citizen thus becomes a metaphorical “citizen of the world.”

(De)Constructing Citizenship Identifiers: Can an Android Eliminate the Coding of the Citizen Body?

As soon as we eradicate the ideological pillars of the transactional model of citizenship, then we also must turn to theatre as a way to obliterate the physical coding of an individual within cultural/societal models. If the “body” can be decoded, stripped of identifiers, then the arbitrary, yet somehow omnipresent, qualification of what makes a “good” citizen, as was explored in earlier chapters, is also removed and moves us further towards the holistic citizen as

³ “Destruction” here representing each dramatic moment in which Daniel “fails” to achieve his goals through reliance on his nationalistic standing as an American citizen, even when his physical and geographical ties to the United States have been cut off.

imaged on stage and screen. We have already seen how the “body” can be used to separate, subordinate, and essentialize “difference” between not only those outside the nationalistic boundaries of the United States, but within as well. Both ethnic and cultural coding played a significant part in the hierarchy of citizen imagery throughout the last two centuries. Looking towards the future, however, we can open space for the potential eradication of these physical codes as signifiers of citizenship.

Science fiction, as a theatrical genre, gives us perhaps the clearest avenue for deconstructing physical coding on the body. The very nature of the genre (seeking to “imagine” a future different from our own) creates space for a changing view of normality, in which the audience can accept more extreme slippages in the fundamental representations of such concepts as “rights,” “individuality,” and indeed “citizenship.” The mere temporal locating of a dramatic work in the future allows us to let go of our subconscious identification with the nation-state of America by envisioning a world in which one day the United States may no longer exist. It also creates the opportunity to image “individuals” within a frame that no longer divides along cultural and ethnic physical coding, as well as obliterating the body completely through the introduction of imagined non-human life forms - from the alien to the artificial. Physical coding could dissolve completely when the body is radically changed through differing views of evolution and technology. The potential for a “changing” body becomes all the more important to conceptualize on stage and screen given the rapid advancements in technology occurring today, especially when we consider the implications and ethical debates currently raging around “cloning.”

For this particular discussion, let us turn to the image of the artificial life form as it appears in science fiction. The word “robot” has become so commonly understood to represent

the artificial life form that it is easy to forget that it was the creation of theatre in the first place. In 1920, Karl Capek wrote *R.U.R.*, a play that literally created the term “robot.” *R.U.R.*, written in the Czech language, adapted the term “robota” from the Czech word for “drudgery” or “servitude,” with “robotnik” commonly referring to a peasant or serf (Jerz 1). Robots thus were viewed as mechanical servants of mankind, and, while they rise up and destroy their human masters in the play, the robots that rebel must ultimately return to the sole surviving human for “meaning” in their existence. *R.U.R.* very much reflected the time period of the early twentieth century, as rapid technological advances were seen as potentially subversive and dangerous to culture. But ultimately society (especially in the U.S.) returned to the idea of science as the “evolutionary servant” of mankind’s “will,” what Corliss Lamont calls “the reason of science” as foundational to a Lockian view of human rights (191-192). The artificial life remained a mechanical creation, not a true “living” being, and so therefore resided outside the rights and privileges of a human being.

The image of the robot becomes fairly common over the next eight decades, especially in the theatrical mediums of film and television. From *The Day the Earth Stood Still* to “Lost In Space,” the “mechanical” man is represented as both potential servant and potential danger to the individual citizen of the future, but rarely is it imaged as a potential citizen itself under the dominant ideological model of rights and duties. The robot must perform duties, but “rights,” as expressed heretofore, are ignored, most certainly because the artificial life form is just that – a creation of man, not of divinity, so ineligible to receive the rights of “man.” This particular representation of robots as “tools” rather than as equals of mankind mirrors the historical movements of the twentieth century, especially in America, where technological advances are understood to be the *effect* of democratic freedoms and ingenuity, not the *progenitors* of those

ideals. Rather, Americans believe their status as citizens grants them the abilities and knowledge to advance science, and as such claim a position of superiority over their physical world.

One must remember that science fiction, while attempting to envision the future, remains a product of our own era. Because they remain tied to our own understanding of citizenship, images of the future (including those of artificial life forms) often find themselves seeking the same “recognition” of rights in the same way as other subaltern groups have in earlier American theatrical history. The robot, as a potential citizen, often retains a claim to the pillars of citizenship (albeit transferred to an imaginary nation-state). The robot, however, does change the very significant concept of the body as signifier for the image of the citizen, and in doing so weakens the ties to the transactional model of the citizen by its very presence in drama.

With his vision of the future in *Star Trek* and its numerous television progeny, Gene Roddenberry created a universe which attempted to seek new space and understanding of where previously “coded” bodies might find themselves in the future in relation to one another. Ethnicity was constructed as a mere fact of physicality through the character of Uhura, a Black officer to whom *no reference* of skin color was ever attributed in three seasons of the original show’s run (1966-1969). Gender was also addressed, with conflicting images of women at times as completely indistinct in abilities from their male counterparts, yet at other times (especially through costuming choices) remaining essentially objects of male attention.⁴ Despite the flaws of constructing this image of the future around ideals of current thinking, *Star Trek* entered a realm of new possibility for the body to be “read” as distinct from “otherness:” black or white (sometimes literally), male or female, human or non-human, and most importantly through the

⁴ The view of women as “sexual objects” may rest less with the philosophical intentions of the show than it does with Gene Roddenberry’s own misogyny – both William Shatner in *Star Trek Memories* and writer David Gerrold have noted Roddenberry’s predilection towards women as hyper-sexualized objects of the male fantasy. However, as this reflects a dominant trend toward patriarchal assumption that we see historically it is safe to say this is not the individual view of women of one man.

artificial life form. The primary example of the artificial life form is the android character of Data from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Through seven seasons of *Next Generation*'s run, Data was presented seeking his place within the society of the future and, more specifically, within the construct of the United Federation of Planets, which stands in as nation-state for the promotion of Lockian democratic idealism and designator of citizen status within the show.

Data becomes a focal point of bending definitions of what it is to be a citizen of the future. Data serves to provide, in the form of a regularly seen and identifiable character, a “person” who challenges the normative assumptions of what constitutes “life,” and therefore by extension, a “citizen.” Even when stripped of ideological markers, it is all too easy to conflate “citizen” with “life form” as interchangeable terms under the holistic model. *Star Trek*'s “Federation” is supposedly an entity that celebrates its diversity in a vast array of differing life forms, under which beings are given equality of rights as a matter of fact. But, as previously stated, *Star Trek* still reflects a present-day pattern of thinking which still produces, at the most basic level, a differential between beings as presented – whether through gender and sexual difference or human versus non-human images. This differential continues to color our perceptions, as well as the accepted view of what it is to be a citizen.

One of the ways in which the show reflects the cultural lens of our own perceptions is through gender. Despite a desire to imagine a future distinct from our own narrow constructions, the “Federation” of the future cannot help but retain the patriarchal construction of our own nation-state. Amy Allen writes:

A feminist conception of power must also be able to examine power relations in terms of culturally encoded meanings and definitions. For example, a feminist analysis of power operating from this perspective must examine the way that key concepts such as femininity, masculinity, and sexuality are defined in a given cultural context. (132)

The given cultural context of *Star Trek* is the United Federation of Planets, which is imaged as a “logical” evolution of the democratic rights, privileges and duties of the United States. As much as we might like to see this as an “enlightened” society of the future, a product of equality and holistic citizen responsibility (especially between sex and gender), the Federation, as presented, is a patriarchal organization because it continues to rely on age-old views of biological determinism to help define individuals within its structure. Thus, despite *seeking* to view the body as uncoded, the show continues to reflect twentieth-century thinking too often when representing gender and sex. The character of Data, however, offers one particular avenue of escape from this line of thinking.

Rhonda Wilcox notes that “*Star Trek*’s plots about the future often parallel contemporary sociopolitical issues” (69). Current issues are thus thrust into the imaginary future of the Federation. Reading Data as a site for the exploration of these issues is not hard – for he is an ideal image for the unpacking of constructivist points of view (and therefore citizenship) precisely because he literally is a “constructed” being even within a structural mode of thinking. He is an android, designed, built and given “life” by a human (male) “father,” existing as separate and distinct from those he serves with and to whom he relates. He is not organic, and thus inhabits an existence that differs fundamentally from those characters that are otherwise “alien” in the scope of the show (races like the Vulcans, Klingons or Romulans).

Data’s presence in this society (the Federation) is explored in many episodes, but most especially in two: “The Measure of a Man” and “The Offspring,” from the second and third seasons respectively. What can be posited from a viewing of these two episodes are three basic premises: first, that Data is recognized and eventually considered a “sentient citizen” of the Federation; second, that this recognition is primarily allowable because he is constructed in the

image of the male, patriarchal template; and third that, despite that construction, his existence and presence opens space for the possibility, if not complete realization of, a redefinition of the body as a marker for citizens status, especially in erasing the biological determination of such factors as gender and ethnicity. Wilcox writes that the construction of Data is comparable to that of African-Americans, and specifically to that of black slaves (73). The reasoning for this comparison lies in the analogy that is promoted initially and by the Federation in “Measure of the Man,” in which Data is viewed as “property.” But this comparison is false, because the show quickly discredits the idea of the android as property (as we shall see in the closer reading of “The Measure of a Man” below). More accurate is the parallel positioning of Data to the issues of gender and women in society.

The very title of the first episode encountered here, “The Measure of a Man,” calls into question the idea of masculinity and reconnects it to the physical image of the citizen. At the outset of “Measure of a Man,” Commander Bruce Maddox, a cybernetics expert who helped with the discovery and initial revival of Data, arrives to demand possession of the android (now serving as a Starfleet officer) so that he can take him apart for study. Maddox does not view Data as a “life form,” let alone a “citizen.” To Maddox, Data is merely machinery, simple parts to be played with - to be used for (in his own words) “the betterment of man.” Immediately the codifier of masculinity comes to play here, and initially “feminizes” Data as a body not clearly defined. Starfleet typifies a patriarchal society that asserts what Allen calls “power-over,” the active control of one social agent over another *whether intended or not* (123-124). The reasoning behind Maddox’s request is ostensibly noble: the possible furthering of scientific knowledge that will lead to the recreation of Data’s existence in other such androids, thus improving the

condition of “mankind” This “noble intention” is, however, pursued without reference to the *condition* of Data or other androids to follow.

At first, the character of Jean-Luc Picard is unsure how to handle Maddox’s demands. Despite his relationship to Data as his captain, he is well established as an explorer seeking to broaden the horizons of scientific understanding, a structural and humanistic portrayal of the “enlightened” man. His own indecision, despite his character’s affinity and indeed friendship with Data (he considers Data a “crew member” even when thinking of turning him over to Maddox), illustrates that the matter of whether Data is indeed a life form and a citizen has not been fully answered even in his own mind. The episode thus establishes a discourse, in the form of a dramatized “trial,”⁵ to determine *who* or *what* Data is. The episode attempts to equalize gender as an issue at this point by turning to a female character, Captain Phillipa Lumois, to act as judge in this affair. Lumois’ character ascribes to the liberal humanist approach (the broadening of the frame) in achieving equality, allowing women to appear as equals in rank and responsibility on screen within the hierarchy of Starfleet. Lumois and other women are granted authority within the “quasi-military” order of the patriarchy, yet they must adapt and perform within the patriarchal structures in ways that continue to reinforce biological determinism (Freedman 150). For instance, while we see Lumois as a judge, she does not remain solely a character of command ability. She is also presented, almost immediately, as a former “love” interest of Jean-Luc Picard, reinforcing the female body as subject to men. Lumois remains a “women” first, a Judge and officer second.

The “trial” of Data is entrusted to the dual characters of Picard and First Officer William Riker. Picard must “defend” Data’s right to be called a “person,” while Riker, another friend of

⁵ It is interesting to note again the use of the “trial” as a dramatic tool to explore questions of citizenship. In this way *Star Trek* recalls thematically such plays as *Inherit the Wind*.

the android's, must "prosecute," advancing the argument that he is "a mere toaster."

Thematically, the episode turns first to the prosecution, allowing Riker to present a fairly flawless and reasonable case that Data is simply a machine, bereft of rights as either an individual or as a citizen of the Federation. Data, Riker asserts, is merely the "it" that Maddox refers to him as. During his investigation, Riker discovers that Data has an off-switch for emergency deactivation. In the trial, Riker uses the ability to "turn off" Data to claim that the android body is no more than a collection of parts. Riker also demonstrates this assertion by asking Data to remove his arm for inspection. This qualified difference between the "wholeness" of human beings and the fractured, mechanical nature of Data's body is seemingly damning at this moment, yet leads us to a deeper question that remains unexplored openly in the episode at hand. If Data's arm can be removed, what of other "parts" which define his masculinity? And is Data "male" without those parts?

The literal deconstruction of the android body on screen is highly provocative: the central biological determinant between man and woman historically has been the presence or absence of the male phallus. What position does Data then occupy if that phallus can be removed at any given moment without detriment to his existence as a life form? Data is a male because he has been made as such, by a male "father" (scientist Noonien Soong), and has been programmed to act as such – i.e. his ability to perform sexually with a female crew member earlier in the series. Positioned on the android body, however, this masculinity is extremely tenuous. Unlike the accepted biological determinism of "man" and "woman" that prevails in structural, positivist thought in our present society, the potential removal of Data's masculinity could be reduced to mere functionality. And yet, even within this episode, the desire to do so is suppressed. Indeed, if it were to be explored openly it might damage Data's chances at being granted "citizen" status. It

is precisely because Data is constructed as male that Picard will be able to successfully argue his “rights” and status as a person, and therefore a citizen of the Federation.

In the finale of the prosecution, Riker carries through with his deactivation of Data, simply “turning off the machine.” Metaphorically Riker enacts here the power to silence others, and the action claims that those who have the power are “citizens” while those who can be silenced are commodities, subjects of the power. Data’s body is reconstituted into an image of the feminine or other subaltern group, as they have been similarly bounded through history. The “off switch” for subjugated groups such as women may not be the physical, mechanical button of the android, but the systematic silencing of such groups’ voices through law, custom and taboo serve the same cultural function. In essence, Riker demonstrates, on the body of Data, what Allen (citing Hartsock) describes as the subjugation of knowledge where subordinate groups are “not allowed to function within official knowledge” (38). The power to silence, whether expressed as a physical action or a sociopolitical mechanism, remains the same. Thus, the ability to commodify and control is reinforced and supported. At this point in the episode, Data must be seen as the feminized “property” of Starfleet.

Picard, however, does not accept the positioning of Data as mere machine. His decision to fight, however, is complicated because he cannot himself see past the arguments Riker presents. He says to one character, “He even had me believing Data was an ‘it’.” To create space for Data’s acceptance as a person, Picard realizes he must first reconstruct what the definition means, and when he realizes he cannot, he instead turns to the defense that this very concept is “unknowable.” What it means to be a “person” is impossible to quantify outside of the established patriarchal order. Picard re-enters the trial and places Data on the stand. He produces several objects, belonging to Data, to illustrate that he exhibits elements of “desire.” Most

notable among these is a hologram of the departed Tasha Yar, with whom Data admits to having been intimate. Sexual ability, and specifically masculine sexual ability, is thus a building block in the construction of Data as a citizen. Reconstructing Data's masculinity is extremely important for Picard to be able to argue for Data's acceptance as a "person." The ability of the android body to be recognized within the already established constructs of male sexuality allows him to be "humanized" in the view of the other characters in the scene, characters who stand in for society as it is today.

Reconfiguring Data as a masculine body pushes the android one more step towards "citizenship" in the Federation. Next, Picard turns to the idea of "reason" and "sentience" as signifiers of the "citizen," attempting to reconnect the android body with the Lockian principles of individual rights granted to all.⁶ Picard first asks if Maddox considers Data to be a person. Maddox replies, "No. It is a machine." Picard then asks Maddox to prove that he, Picard, is a "sentient" person. Maddox is stumped, stating only that Picard is "obviously" sentient. The concept of "sentience" becomes crucial in the argument, representing in one word the idea of the holistic citizen as distinct from the nationalistic connection – for it calls on a designator of belonging to the greater universal whole rather than merely to an organization (Starfleet) or nation-state (Federation). Picard continues, pressing Maddox to answer how one can, by simply looking at him and Data, determine citizenship ("sentience") for one and not the other. Maddox cannot respond to this challenge. It is here that a post-structural space begins to emerge for Data that reflects not just the android body, but all "life forms" presented in space as alien to the

⁶ While "divinity" as source for these "natural" rights is never brought into this frame as specifically as it is under Locke or under the foundational appeals of the United States, there is nevertheless an understood "universal" grant of rights. The universality of these rights, on the other hand, cannot help but return to play whenever the phrase "human rights" is uttered – as it is in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, to which a Klingon character responds "Inalienable.... Human Rights.... Why, the very words are exclusionary and racist."

human body. The “reality” of their existence depends solely on the previously defined criteria for their status as illuminated through their differences with *that which is not “sentient.”*

Picard asks Maddox to list the criteria that define “sentience” in life forms, and thereby give the categorized parameters that establish what a person is or is not. Maddox lists three: intelligence, self-awareness, and consciousness. The first calls upon the “enlightened” view of man as “rational.” Rather, “conscious thought” differentiates “man” from “mere” animals. This criteria is immediately bestowed upon Data, as his positronic brain is easily recognized by all (even Maddox) as example of his ability to process, store and utilize information – the “knowledge” that is so important to gaining acceptance within the patriarchy (Allen 38-39). By exhibiting high intelligence, Data reaffirms his potential to be viewed as a “citizen” within existing power structures. He is now a “beneficial” member of society, able to perform duties in exchange for protection by the state.

The second criteria, self-awareness, leads immediately to the work of Jacques Lacan in deconstructing the nature of identity. Self-awareness is given heavy emphasis here as key to individuality and sentience. Picard advocates, with extreme effectiveness, that Data has experienced his own self-awareness, demonstrated in the court by the expression of knowledge of his situation and his desires. Therefore, Data, while being artificial, exemplifies the Lacanian mirror stage and recognition of himself as “I” as opposed to “other” (182-183). Data as an individual also locates himself through the action of self-awareness in the already codified patriarchal order, by exhibiting his connection to the symbolic order of society and his adherence to what Lacan proposes as being “in the name of the father” (186). Data is a product of a “father,” Noonien Soong, and his presence as an artificial life form (an android body) is no different than the biological assemblage of DNA through sex to create new human life. The presence of a

“parent,” and more importantly a *father*, allows Picard to successfully bridge the gap between artificial and biological life forms. Data has no need for a “mother” in this equation, for the identification of Soong as “his father” is all that is needed to allow him entry into the symbolic patriarchal order of the Federation and Starfleet.

The third criteria described by Maddox is that of consciousness. The very discussion of what is or is not “consciousness” appeals to an underlying “truth” to existence that calls upon the inherency of individual rights in any society, Picard catches Maddox in a post-structural dilemma here, for the concept of “consciousness” is un-provable in Data, in Picard, and indeed in any person through the scientific determinism that Maddox is espousing. It is a concept that asks for faith, or spiritual belief, in the “divine” as source for citizen rights. Picard succinctly states the conundrum posed when he states, “what we are really asking is, does Data have a soul?” Since the idea of a soul is un-definable by reason or rationality, it is negated and removed from the discourse at this point. While Data is ultimately recognized as “sentient,” and an individual citizen of the Federation, the inability to answer the question of consciousness opens the potential for envisioning any individual body as distinct from the traditionally ascribed “divine,” or spiritual, place in society. If one criteria can be removed from the discussion, then the potential exists (albeit unexplored here) for ALL criteria for codifying the body as a citizen to be eliminated.

“The Measure of a Man” ends with two important moments: one, Captain Lumois determines that Data is indeed a sentient person with the rights of said sentience, rights which not only create Data as a self-aware individual but as a citizen of the Federation; and, two, Maddox refers to Data as “him” for the first time rather than as an “it.” In this moment, Maddox grants Data his place in the male hierarchy, de-feminizing the android and solidifying Data’s

masculinity as significant trope in his newly reified citizenship. Data gains, therefore, “power-over” his own individuality, having won it in legal battle with the patriarchy. And yet, the victory is not complete, for Data is not allowed to further explore or deconstruct his android position, but must exist as a male within the symbolic order of the Federation in order to avail himself of citizen status.

A second episode, “The Offspring,” in which Data endeavors to create an android progeny of his own, follows “Measure of a Man” by re-opening some of the same questions, especially in regards to the potential of radical body reconstruction on screen. Much that was left unspoken in the first episode comes to play here, through the one-time character of Lal. Gender identifications of citizenship are reexamined, as Data’s “offspring” must endure the same battle he has already won. Data creates Lal, patterned on his own design and matrix, without gender at first - neutral and unmarked in society. Pronouns are unusable in the first half of the episode, as Lal simply remains “Lal” in all discussion. For a brief moment, the android body created by Data exists outside the symbolic order, neither male nor female. Data has potential to break with the symbolic order, but has chosen to remain within it to establish his “citizenship.” As such, he now performs the task of “father,” and tells Lal to choose a gender – a decision that is accepted, even by Data, as absolutely necessary to the new android’s existence. Why? Is this “enlightened” Federation of the Twenty-Fourth Century not able to function without the binary distinctions of the past? Because *Star Trek* finds its origins as a show born of twentieth-century thinking, it cannot escape the definitions of structure and biology that we have accepted in our own society. Lal therefore must choose between the binaries of gender.

What is potentially subversive to the patriarchy here, and crucial to a future imaging of the citizen, is that Data allows Lal to make the determination of its gender – Lal must choose a

representation of biological sex, but it is Lal's *own choice*. Lal considers several possibilities, and ends up with four images as candidates for gender identification: a male Klingon (alien), a male Andorian (alien), a male human, and a female human. Lal selects the female body for "her" identity, rejecting the dominant masculine construction of her father and the patriarchy as a whole. Unfortunately, this is the last "choice" allowed to Lal, who immediately upon taking the feminine construct becomes object to the hegemony of Starfleet, both in the person of an Admiral who wishes to remove her to a research station and in the person of Data, now a part of the patriarchy and wishing to control her future as "father." As Steven Collins writes in "For the Greater Good:"

In addition to the contradictions between liberal autonomy and hierarchy in *TNG*, tension exists between the values of liberal egalitarianism and Starfleet's hegemonic interests. That is, although *TNG* pays lip service to democracy, it is deemed that "too much democracy" is a condition to be avoided at all costs. (144)

Lal, now as a woman, is not allowed to choose her own position in society after the initial choice of gender. In "Measure of a Man," Data was eventually granted citizenship in the Federation as well as individual identity. Lal has the latter, but is never accorded, at any time, by any character (not even Data), the rights associated with the concept of citizenship. She remains a possessed object, with the conflict of the story residing in which patriarchal agent will possess her – Data or the Starfleet Admiral. The very idea that she might be in control of her own destiny is not allowed for, only her objectified position as either "valuable research asset" of Starfleet or as "daughter" to Data.

In "The Offspring," Data performs the tropes of the Lacanian father model. As Lal experiences the mirror stage (186), working in Ten Forward and observing her differences with humans, she witnesses a couple kissing. Her reaction is: "he's biting that female!" Even in the

mirror stage of her self-aware existence, Lal has been programmed with certain hegemonic understandings of power. Her view is instinctively constructed so that the male she witnesses has “power-over” the female. In an attempt to replicate the behavior she has witnessed, she grabs the newly arrived Riker and kisses him. Data, seeing the kiss, responds “Commander, what are your intentions towards my daughter?” Her active choice is denied in this statement. Despite her own desire to experience “kissing,” it is Riker, as the male, that Data questions, granting him the authority and power in relationship to Lal. Indeed, Data’s earlier decision to place Lal in Ten Forward in service of its patrons is a very basic codification of her female status. The best way, in both Data and Guinnan’s opinion, for her to learn about her connection to society is to *serve* others. They defend this choice when the Admiral questions it, revealing even more patriarchal control (and confirming that we still project the double standard into the future of the sci-fi genre) when he asks, “is this the kind of place you think is appropriate for her?”

Lal has no options out of this hegemony, as it has been constructed and reified around her. As Collins further writes:

Any loss of “control” on behalf of an individual crew member, therefore, becomes an impediment to the overall efficiency of the machine and threatens the integrity of the Enterprise itself. (144)

Lal can have no control, since she bears the same societal questions as Data did before her, but with the added limitations of her constructed gender. This dual-assault on her potential as citizen leaves no choice but for her “death.” The episode cannot reconcile the differences between her own self-determined gender construction and the patriarchy, so Lal begins to feel emotions (that Data cannot – another aspect of “feminization” versus “masculinity”), and suffers a neural-net meltdown that leads to her demise. The patriarchy of Starfleet, Data, and thus the audience are spared the potential subversive nature of Lal’s continued existence.

Still, the issues and struggles portrayed through Data and Lal open the possibility of change in the construction of the body through the genre of science fiction. The decisions to return and rely on structural patriarchal construction remain an effect of those producing the show, not in the nature of the android body itself. Data's own masculinity is defined by the culture that has assimilated him into its own hierarchy, but Data's gender is changeable at any time through a mere rebuilding of his body. Lal offers the possibility of a gender-neutral artificial life form, and it is easier for the audience to see this potential in the android body than it is in the human body. Ultimately, images such as Data and Lal lead the audience to begin accepting the questions that are raised through these android representations. Eventually, if one can question gender, ethnicity and other physical codings on these bodies, then those questions may be applied to the human body without descriptors such as "abnormal" (terms often associated with trans-gendered operations, etc., today).

A Call To Arms: Merging the Eradication of Citizen Pillars with Reconstruction of the Body

In the end we must, as producers of theatrical images, strive to achieve the potentials of both tracks of citizen redefinition discussed in this chapter. Images of individuals must continually attempt to sever their ties with the transactional views of exchange, as Daniel does in *The Ends of the Earth*, and images of the body must continually be disassembled (both literally and figuratively), as with Data and Lal, so that the codes of cultural citizenship are liquefied and ultimately washed away. Both individual examples discussed herein strive to re-imagine and re-order the individual outside of our current context of citizenship, yet each do continue in some way to hold on to the understandings of the past, even when located in the future. Daniel remains a white male body, so that physical coding remains despite his separation from the nation-state.

Data' and Lal's physical coding may change, yet the *a priori* acceptance of societal structure remains.

What I call for here is a conflation of these concepts, through dramatic production, the writing of scripts, etc., which seeks to accomplish both ends of the dual-track endeavor: to create the image of the citizen as both bereft of transactional responsibility to a nation-state and as physically uncoded through gender or ethnicity. The potential power in shifting these images is clear: when audiences see continued questioning of the “norms” of behavior, claims to inherent rights, and devaluation of the coded body, through characters on stage and screen, then those questions become transferable to the way we view ourselves as individuals within society in the present.

CONCLUSION

American theatre has always served to create, reinforce, and challenge images of the “citizen.” At the start of this dissertation, I asserted that the desire for a uniquely American understanding of the citizen was grounded in two basic tracks: the need to call upon a unifying ideological model and the impetus to continually disrupt that same model. In attempting to address both intentions, theatre has continually produced images that have, at almost every moment in American history, struggled to escape from a dominant view of the citizen as transactional, existing in a *quid-pro-quo* relationship with the state.

Historically, Americans have sought to trace their concept of collective identity to a philosophical and political evolution of “democracy” and common-rights, and thus desired to see their self-positioning as a “pinnacle” of this linear process of thought. By attaching the initial legal construction of the American citizen to the Lockian principles of “divine rights” for the common man, the early leaders of the United States began a process of citizenship which immediately adopted a dominant ideological position – one that served to separate and differentiate not only those who existed outside the borders of the U.S., but also to subordinate many within America as well. The dominant ideology at play here sought to construct the citizen following several “pillars:” that citizenship in the U.S. was derived from Natural Law, and therefore was “God given;” that we are governed only because we give our consent; that every citizen has a voice and the right to be heard; that being a citizen guarantees protection from “exterior” harm; that as a *quid-pro-quo* for protection we must always perform duties and services for the state in exchange for that protection; and, most importantly, that because we are “Americans,” we occupy a moral high ground from which we can claim superiority over those who are not “citizens.”

Colonial and post-Colonial theatre began as a site where citizen identity was performed in accordance with an American need to separate from Europe. We have seen how such plays as Tyler's *The Contrast* sought to establish a uniquely American character onstage that reflected the rights of the transactional model – especially through independence from England, and, more importantly, through the claim of one's right to “stand up” and be heard. The initial theatrical impulse worked here to establish the citizen as one who operates under the umbrella of “freedom,” a *right* supposedly guaranteed by the state. But the “freedoms” promised were not offered without expectations. The citizen had to transactionally offer service and duty in return for “his” rights.¹ The various *Bunker Hill* war plays, the frontier drama of Forrest's *Metamora*, and many other theatrical productions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries all served to reinforce the most basic tenants of this transactional image of the American citizen.

The twentieth century saw the desire to challenge and subvert this dominant ideological position for the citizen, especially as increasing numbers of individuals and groups within the United States sought greater rights for themselves. Women, ethnic and racial groups (African Americans, etc.), and differing subaltern positions within such larger stratified classifications demanded more inclusion as citizens of the United States. Unfortunately, as was seen in earlier chapters of this work, that claim became problematic in that it almost always called upon one or more of the very same pillars which supported the dominant model which was being challenged. Theatrical moments such as *Waiting for Lefty* desired to upend the social and political structures (especially in reference to economics) of America, but almost universally sought their activism under the same *a priori* understanding of collective identity as inherently tied to the “common rights of man.” These rights were also continually reinforced as being “divinely” granted, as was

¹ I intentionally omit “or her” at this moment, since the inclusion of women legally as citizens does not fully occur until 1920 when suffrage is finally granted for women in the U.S.

the “right to think” addressed in *Inherit the Wind*. In the end, the majority of attempts by twentieth-century drama to subvert the image of the citizen failed to remove the desire for a singular, codified view of collective identity. Instead, these moments of subversion only succeeded in enlarging the frame of the dominant ideology encircling the citizen, allowing for the assimilation of new groups (ethnic, gender, etc.) into the transactional model. Additionally, theatre, film and television began to add another layer to the citizen model: a moral component through which an individual could be assigned value as either a “good” or “bad” citizen. The “character” of individuals portrayed on stage and screen, therefore, became an important part of the citizen image, and subsequently was applied within the culture as a whole (hence the ever-present attacks on “character” we see in modern political campaigns).

The “body” has also been historically tied to how the citizen is performed in theatre. As the single most visible codifier of difference between individuals and groups, the body was a tool for separation by both the state (through such legal positions as slavery or disenfranchisement) and American culture. Simplistic signifiers such as race (skin color) and gender were utilized to exclude residents within America from both a legal position, as well as serving to hierarchically subordinate individuals even after they were granted legal citizenship. Many plays, as seen in chapter 4, were produced which sought to erase the body as coded image. These attempts all too often fell short because they could not escape the same appeals to inherency that other challenges in the twentieth century encountered. The African-American body, for instance, initially struggled simply to overcome the stereotyped images of “black face” that carried over from theatre in the nineteenth century. More recent plays strove to “upend,” or rather invert, physicality as performed onstage, and to attempt to re-code the black body. In some cases, this re-coding desired a more complete assimilation of white culture and inclusion in the dominant

ideological frame; in other plays (the works of Baraka and Parks), the impetus was to fully deconstruct the ethnic body and to seek a new space of understanding that existed outside of the accepted transactional model.

Ultimately, the citizen image in theatre always returned to an ideological construct, and the moments of subversion discussed herein failed to shatter that dominant ideological position because they sought, in the most basic terms, a dismantling of only one side of the transaction – the *duties* to be performed by the citizen in exchange for his or her rights. The *rights* themselves were never questioned, nor openly challenged. Indeed, the various calls for greater inclusion by subaltern groups almost always called upon these rights, and these claims were subsequently only made in service to the demand for more rights. The very first pillar of the traditional transactional model was, therefore, continually reinforced in theatrical production throughout American history.

It is only with the exploration of the future of the citizen that space ultimately erupts for the possibility of envisioning what I have termed the “holistic citizen.” Chapter 5 explored how theatre can explode the transactional model on two levels: removing the citizen completely from the processes of exchange between rights and duties, leaving only a tenuous connection to the state through the barest of legal and geographical positions; and, secondly, placing the body on stage and screen in such a way as to challenge accepted physical codes like race and gender. As example of how theatre can accomplish the first of these tasks I offered Lan’s *The Ends of the Earth* to show how an American character could, through alienation from his country, be re-positioned as one who exists solely in the contingent transaction of the moment. Daniel *sacrificed*, but not for his government or nation. The explosion of the citizen occurs as he also receives no inherent rights or privileges for his sacrifice. In the character of Data (an android), as

explored in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, we see the second task addressed – the potential eradication of the body as a tool for separation and subordination. In both cases, there remains an unfortunate remnant of dominant ideological positioning, not surprising since they are indeed products of society still bound in inherent thinking. Still, these moments of dramatic subversion give us the ability to look to theatre and its various forms to continue dismantling the traditional “pillars” of citizenship.

Current events surrounding the United States and the relationship of its citizens to the rest of the world affirm the importance of this discussion. The construction of the citizen along the dominant ideological terms described herein has produced an image of the citizen that positions its self as “superior” to those who fall short of both the legal and cultural image. The continual reinforcement of the transactional model has instilled in most Americans the belief that our rights as citizens are both inherent and supreme. As such, we believe our ideals should be imposed on “others,” even while the claim of superiority is maintained and enforced. When the thinly veiled reasoning behind recent U.S. military actions is stripped away, we can see that the application of force, in these instances, is really a product of this ideological positioning. The basic premise of both the war in Iraq and the greater “war on terror” are predicated on the assumption that the American form of government, and its view of citizenship, is somehow universally “good.” Furthermore, it is assumed that those nations or individuals who might threaten the security of the United States will no longer be a danger if only they are assimilated into an American idealism and understanding of the *a priori* rights and privileges accepted here. Indeed, the most basic reason for violent retribution for 9/11 lies in the demand of U.S. citizens for the assumed protection promised under the transactional model of collective identity.

If Americans remain tied to this dominant ideology concerning the citizen, then the answer to contesting claims of privilege can only be continued violence, struggle, and oppression of “otherness” as it exists outside our borders, and within as well. Baraka’s vision of violent separation will always return unless we can strip away adherence to the pillars of citizenship as “inherent,” including the dissolution of our notions that we have “rights” in the first place. Ultimately, we must seek to find ourselves again as “holistic” citizens, whose responsibilities are reconstructed only in terms of immediate sacrifices to the contingent needs of each moment we encounter. Should another terrorist attack against the U.S. occur in the near future, it is almost assured that, as a nation, we will respond once again with military force in order to “eradicate” the threat that the “otherness” of Islamic fundamentalism produces. Such a cycle of violence will only serve to continually divide the American citizen from the rest of the world, categorizing any violence produced by the U.S. as “defense of our rights, our *freedoms*,”² while at the same time decrying any violence perpetrated against our nation as “terrorism,” “barbarism,” and even “evil.” If Americans could, perhaps, change the way we see ourselves in relationship to these “others,” then we would one day emerge as a collective identity that could conceivably sacrifice for the more holistic good of the world at large.

But how can Americans change the way we think? The fundamental argument I put forth here is that theatre (a term under which I include film and television) must continue to explode the transactional model, and thus shift the perceptions of its audiences to a holistic mode of thinking. Historically, theatre has served as an agency that reinforced, even through its dominant forms (realism), the acceptance by Americans of their rights, privileges and responsibilities as

² The semantic justification for each and every military action in the past five years has almost universally been claimed under this one word – “freedom.” Speech after speech given by President George W. Bush and officials in his administration used the word freedom over and over, reinforcing their solid presumption that America has the innate “right” to defend its citizens by any means, and to impose its views on all others.

citizens. To disrupt and remove these ideological assumptions, I argue that theatre must abandon all claims made under the traditional pillars of citizenship. As artists, we must strive to place the American citizen onstage as a character deconstructed, both in action and physicality, from the inherency that makes us accept the illusion of superiority. The form of realism that has (intentionally or unintentionally) reinforced calls for inherent rights, and for a “divinity” behind them, should continue to be dismantled and resisted. The body must continually be deconstructed (both literally and figuratively). Finally, the image of the citizen must be shown as one who rejects all desires to see one’s self as occupying a position that is philosophically and evolutionarily “superior;” the citizen must sacrifice – not only holistically to all “others,” but also in giving up the past foundationally in justifying one’s actions towards others.

To end my exploration, I would like to quote one of my Hmong students, who recently gave a speech in my class: “When my family first came to America, we were excited because, you know . . . this was the land of the ‘free.’ But Thailand, where we came from, seemed much more free . . . Here, you have to pay for everything. There we could fish for free” (Yang 2006). While this student was referring to the simplest of economic exchanges, his declaration elicited the following reaction from one fellow student: “So, we’re not really free, are we?” By simply giving this speech, this young man forced his audience to briefly encounter the fact that we *assume* a “reality” about our place as American citizens – we do not even recognize the most basic transactions we engage in every day. We do not see that we pay taxes, purchase licenses, and engage in a myriad of other exchanges, all of which are *responsibilities* we must perform in our daily lives. During the writing of this dissertation, the question was posed to me: could I indeed ascribe transactional inherency beyond a mere political ideology? In other words, was the implantation of the dominant ideological model solely the representation of a majority, rather

than reflective of ALL Americans? While I will never claim that every single individual accepts the assumptions we have discussed as *a priori* reality, I think it is fair to say that even the most open-minded and resistive of us (including, I would suggest, many in the theatre and academic communities) claim a foundational position. In response to the events of 9/11 and the subsequent political climate, how many of us have made claim to our “right of free speech?” As instructors at universities, how many times have we claimed “academic freedom” in resisting institutional desires to control the content of courses?

In the end, we must all, as educators and as artists, recognize our own presuppositions concerning citizenship. If the work we produce, especially the theatre we present to fellow Americans, is ever to demolish our most basic acceptance that our place, as citizens, is somehow “divinely” given and inherent, then we must abandon all pretense that *rights* or *privileges* exist as anything other than contingent moments of our legal and geographical location. In order to fully explode ALL of the pillars of citizenship described herein, we must seek to abandon theatrical representation of the transactional model on *both sides of the equation*. We must strip away our own fundamental beliefs that we have any inherent rights at all. And so, this work is intended to serve as a “call to arms” for theatre and theatre artists, to recognize that the images we place on stage and screen do indeed have a powerful impact on the perceptions of American citizens, and to challenge us to constantly produce theatre that may subvert, and ultimately destroy, our notion of American collective identity.

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