

They Were Always Doing Shakespeare: Antebellum Southern Actresses and Shakespearean Appropriation

Robin O. Warren, University of Georgia

Abstract

Antebellum actresses performed in a wide variety of plays meant to appeal to the diversity of spectators who attended the nineteenth-century theater. Theater historians agree, though, that plays by William Shakespeare dominated standard repertory offerings. No one has recognized, however, that many of the non-Shakespearean plays actually appropriate Shakespearean plots, a phenomenon that may partly account for the popularity of these dramas. While many plays popular on Old South stages appropriated Shakespearean plots, four especially stand out for paralleling closely their early modern inspirations. *Evadne* (1819), by Richard Lalor Sheil, draws on *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600); *Virginius* (1820), by James Sheridan Knowles, uses *Titus Andronicus* (1592) as a guide; *The Wife* (1833), also by Knowles, follows the plot of *Othello* (1603); and *The Honey Moon* (1805), by John Tobin, corresponds to *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592). *Evadne* and *Virginius* stress the necessity of protecting a young, unmarried woman's purity while *The Wife* and *The Honey Moon* emphasize the importance of wifely fidelity and deference. As the experience of antebellum actresses Eliza Logan, Jane Placide, Frances Denny Drake, and Julia Dean Hayne shows, however, women who performed the lead female parts in these plays did not always live up to the expectations espoused in their stage roles; instead, they often exposed the artificiality of rigidly prescribed gender roles in their daily lives by transgressing against the very norms they affirmed on stage.

In 1820, Jane Placide, a young actress from Charleston, South Carolina, debuted with Charles Gilfert's Virginia Company in John Tobin's *The Honey Moon* (1805), an appropriation of William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592). The accolades that followed Placide's performance brought her to the attention of New Orleans theater manager James Caldwell, who hired her in 1821 to act as leading lady for his fledgling stock company at the Orleans Theatre. In just a few seasons, Placide won the steadfast admiration of English-speaking New Orleans playgoers for her performances in both Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean roles. An imbroglio that swirled around Placide just four years after her debut, however, reveals the gap that existed between conservative performed stage roles and the unconventional reality of performative scripts

enacted by Placide and other antebellum actresses in their daily lives (Burroughs 1970, 4-6, 29; Durham 1986, 29-30; Hostetler 1964, 49; Kendall 1952, 23-24; Ludlow 1966, 216-17, 226).

In 1824, James Caldwell built a new theater on Camp Street, which he named the American Theatre, and hired the young Edwin Forrest to serve as his leading actor. Forrest and Placide co-starred in non-Shakespearean favorites such as Augustus von Kotzebue's *The Stranger*, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, and Daniel Terry's adaptation of Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*, which Charlotte Cushman later made famous for her depiction of Meg Merrilies. They also played across from one another in Shakespearean standards such as *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Hostetler 1964, 77; Lyle 1938, 45, 53; Smither 1967, 39-44). Spending so much time with Placide on stage piqued Forrest's romantic interest, and he quickly found himself infatuated with the woman whom local critics called "Queen of the Drama in New Orleans" (Moody 1960, 44). During his second season, Forrest began to publish love poems dedicated to Placide in the *Louisiana Advertiser*, but he soon learned that James Caldwell also bore a keen interest in Placide. Their competition for the leading lady's attentions inevitably resulted in an explosive break between the two men. Caldwell announced a performance of *Twelfth Night* in which he played the Duke and Placide played Olivia; so fervidly did he deliver his lines that a few nights after the performance, Forrest challenged Caldwell to a duel. Caldwell refused Forrest's dare, whereupon the hot-headed young actor posted a series of broadsides that denounced Caldwell as a "scoundrel and a coward" (Alger 1877, 137; Hostetler 1964, 91; Moody 1960, 46; Smither 1967, 44). Caldwell's paternalistic obligation to oversee the welfare of his stock company members might have motivated him to gall Forrest and put an end to the young actor's romantic overtures toward Placide. More likely, Caldwell's own feelings compelled his intervention, for he and Placide maintained an unusually close relationship for the duration of their professional association, which ended only when she died in 1835.

During the fourteen years that Placide worked for Caldwell, the two took several long trips together, and he came to serve as Placide's financial and legal advisor, a position that her brother Thomas, as her oldest male relative, should have assumed. Placide not only relied on Caldwell to manage her personal affairs during her life, but she also left her entire estate to him when she died. Had Caldwell not already been married to Maria Carter Hall Wormsley, great-granddaughter of Robert "King" Carter, an early rich planter on the James River in Virginia, his relationship with Jane Placide would not be quite so remarkable, but Caldwell's marital status called the intimacy between him and his employee into question. Cognizant of their visible public positions, Jane Placide and James Caldwell never lived together openly, but the circumstances surrounding their relationship

certainly suggest that they carried on a long-term affair (Burroughs 1970, 95-97; Hostetler 1964, 22-25, 123, 133, 249-51).

While Jane Placide probably maintained a secret existence as Caldwell's mistress, she continued to play traditional stage roles that upheld the conservative social and sexual mores of the antebellum South, where a patriarchal culture dictated the chastity and obedience of unmarried and married women alike. These roles included acquiescent female characters from Shakespearean favorites, such as Queen Anne in *Richard III* (1592), Ophelia in *Hamlet* (1600), and Desdemona in *Othello* (1603). Many of Placide's non-Shakespearean roles appropriated parts from the early modern playwright's works and similarly emphasized feminine compliance. Juliana in John Tobin's *The Honey Moon* (1805), Margarita in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (1624), and Virginia in James Sheridan Knowles's *Virginus* (1820) all were women who bowed to the demands of the men in their lives (Burroughs 1970, 45, 54-55, 68). The contrast between Jane Placide's conventional stage roles and the unconventionality of her everyday life illustrates a tension that surrounded Shakespearean plays and their appropriations in the antebellum South. On the one hand, these plays affirmed the region's patriarchal ideology, which demanded faithfulness, chastity, and obedience from its white women; on the other hand, the actresses who performed these roles frequently undermined this ideology through the performative roles they played in their daily lives.

Nineteenth-Century Repertory

The plays that Jane Placide and other southern actresses performed were part of a wide-ranging repertory that theater managers such as James Caldwell scheduled to appeal to the variety of playgoers who attended their theaters. Americans of every class, race, and sex attended the theater in the first half of the nineteenth century, and appealing to this diversity meant that theater managers had to offer a variety of entertainment. Theatrical offerings in the South paralleled those in other parts of the country: ribald farces, circus acts, music recitals, burlesques, and equestrian spectacles shared the stage with Shakespearean dramas and plays by contemporary European and English dramatists. An evening's entertainment generally featured one full-length, "legitimate" play and an assortment of the shorter variety acts that preceded, followed, and sometimes even punctuated the main offering. While adaptations of works by contemporary French and German writers such as Victor Hugo and Augustus von Kotzebue were popular, so too were plays by late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century British writers such as Oliver Goldsmith, James Sheridan Knowles, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Richard Lalor Sheil, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and John Tobin. A few native playwrights also wrote for the stage; John Augustus Stone wrote *Metamora*, the

wildly popular play that secured actor Edwin Forrest's fame, and theater managers Dion Boucicault and Augustin Daly both wrote and produced a string of popular dramas that theaters throughout the country staged (Dormon 1967, 252-280; Levine 1988, 21-23; Meserve 1986, 17, 117-18, 225; Meserve 1994, 50; Wilson 1973, 126).

Theater historians agree, though, that plays by William Shakespeare dominated standard repertory offerings. Theater historian and Shakespearean scholar Gary Taylor explains that the successive publication of affordable editions of Shakespeare's complete plays in the eighteenth century helped enshrine him as England's finest playwright. Famous performers also cultivated particular Shakespearean roles, with which audiences came to associate them over time, further entrenching dramas by the early modern playwright in the popular repertory of the day (Taylor 1989, 114-119). Local stock companies had to make sure that their performers could play the necessary supporting roles when the touring stars visited. When American actors and actresses began to rise to star status, they followed in the tradition of their English forebears. For instance, in the eighteenth century, English actress Sarah Siddons became known for her *Lady Macbeth*, while her niece Fanny Kemble thrilled American audiences with her characterizations of Juliet, Portia, and Beatrice when she toured the country in 1835 (Clinton 2000, 47-63; Shattuck 1976, 102-3). Later in the decade, American actress Charlotte Cushman, garnered fame for *Lady Macbeth* and for her breeches portrayal of Romeo (Shattuck 1976, 87-95). Similarly, southern stars Frances Denny Drake and her niece Julia Dean Hayne both benefited from the associations they made in playing the witty Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Bailey 1934, 71; Blackburn 1927, Appendix B; Dietz 1921, 54; Duggar 1941, 31; Koon 1989, 122; Margretts 1959, 254).

Shakespeare also maintained a following in part because audiences saw cut versions of some plays, and these revised forms presented simpler, shorter plots that spectators could follow more easily. The altered dramas also underscored thematic dichotomies that shored up current political and sexual ideology. For example, Colley Cibber's *Richard the Third* streamlines the cast and diminishes the corruption of the title character's peers, thereby turning Richard into the main site of evil in the play (Shattuck 1976, xi). Patriotic Americans could attend Cibber's version and leave feeling smug that they had vanquished such self-serving, aristocratic monarchs. Similarly, by deleting the frame story of Christopher Sly that begins *The Taming of the Shrew*, David Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio* draws more focused attention to the process of enfolding the recalcitrant Kate into the established patriarchy.

Managers modified full-length plays according to the taste of their clientele, as well. Though David Garrick's version of *Romeo and Juliet* ends tragically, many nineteenth-century companies gave the play their own happy surprise ending until William Charles Macready and

Charlotte Cushman restored the tragic finale (Shattuck 1976, xi, 92, 139). Theater historian David Grimsted notes, as well, that some managers followed the example of the Royal Patent Theatres at Drury Lane and Covent Garden and eliminated explicit sexual allusions or softened offensive words such as "whore," which became "wench." Juliet sometimes refused a kiss from Romeo at their first meeting, and Hamlet often failed to harass Ophelia about her wantonness. These rhetorical alterations helped to associate Shakespeare with morality, but the notoriety and gentility already affiliated with his name brought the same recognition to his plays that might not always suffer from drastic plot modifications. Thus, theatergoers could ostensibly bolster their moral codes and raise their class status simply by attending a Shakespearean production (Grimsted 1987, 112-23).

American theaters could easily follow the example of the English patent theaters in part because John Philip Kemble had tenaciously published his own acting versions of the Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean plays he produced at the Drury Lane Theatre when he was manager between 1783 and 1802. Then, when he moved to Covent Garden, he published his reworked repertory in 1808. Theater managers in England and America saw Kemble as "the high-priest of Shakespeare" and wanted to model their productions after his (Shakespeare 1974, xiv). Later editors of acting editions, such as Elizabeth Inchbald and William Oxberry, even reprinted some of his texts verbatim (Shakespeare 1974, ix-xxi). The early nineteenth-century American reading public, on the other hand, probably knew *Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays* (1773), as this single-volume edition was the first one of Shakespeare's plays published in the United States. Available by 1795, this text used Samuel Johnson's 1765 edition as its basis. Readers might also have owned multi-volume copies of individual plays imported from England and edited by Thomas Hanmer in 1744 or Alexander Pope in 1725. All of these editions differed from the staged versions, retaining many of those altered and cut words and phrases that theater managers deemed inappropriate for public performance (Taylor 1989, 127-29).

Judith Fisher and Stephen Watt recognize this trend in *When They Weren't Doing Shakespeare*, an anthology of essays treating non-Shakespearean repertory selections in nineteenth-century British and American theaters. The valorization of Shakespearean drama has resulted in a dearth of criticism treating plays by other authors, a lack that Fisher and Watt's volume helps to correct (Fisher and Watt 1989, xiii-xxii). Recent scholarship has rarely recognized, however, that many of the non-Shakespearean plays actually appropriate Shakespearean plots, a phenomenon that may partly account for the popularity of these dramas.

Repertory in the antebellum South differed little from that in other regions of the country, but, as Jean Marsden points out, different audiences bring a variety of interpretations and understandings to the dramatic productions that they watch, and for the last four centuries,

Shakespearean plays have engendered particularly diverse responses (Dormon 1967, 256; Marsden 1991, 1). Christy Desmet agrees, but she contends that a more deliberate exchange takes place as performers, spectators, and even new dramatists appropriate and circulate the signifier "Shakespeare," which in turn amasses and bestows "symbolic value on cultural projects" (Desmet 1999, 5; Marsden 1991, 1). For playgoers in the Old South, Shakespearean plays and their appropriations functioned in part to shore up the region's conservative patriarchal ideology. As historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown explains, southern families, like the English aristocracy that they emulated, wished to pass on intact their wealth to the next generation. Men needed the guarantee of chaste wives to ensure a line of legitimate offspring who could inherit and hand on their assets; hence, raising virtuous daughters who guarded their virginity and revered male authority was of paramount importance, especially to the wealthy (Wyatt-Brown 1986, 85-89). Since many Shakespearean plays and their appropriations emphasize the importance of female fidelity, they found a permanent place on the region's stages.

The cultural capital associated with Shakespeare's name also ensured the production of his plays and their appropriations in the urban antebellum South. Lawrence Levine, Michael Bristol, and Thomas Cartelli have all written about the central place that Shakespeare occupied within nineteenth-century American culture, but Levine and Bristol see his popularity as resulting from reverence, while Cartelli contends that appropriations in the form of burlesques and farces reveal an irreverence that bolstered the emerging democratic ethos (Bristol 1990, 123-30; Cartelli 1999, 29; Levine 1988, 21). Cartelli does concede, however, that appropriations can also enrich or thicken a narrative, and he agrees that serious re-readings can draw on the cultural capital of the original creator to gain clout and to encourage the author's institutionalization (Cartelli 1999, 18). Given the respect for white male authority in the Old South, the popularity of Shakespeare makes more sense in the latter terms.

Southerners, like Americans in other regions of the country, also associated Shakespeare with morality and gentility. Appropriations of the early modern playwright's works also received plenty of attention, as they drew on the celebrity and cachet associated with Shakespeare's name. While many plays popular on Old South stages appropriated Shakespearean plots, four stand out especially as paralleling closely their early modern inspirations. *Evadne* (1819), by Richard Lalor Sheil, draws on *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600); *Virginus* (1820), by James Sheridan Knowles, uses *Titus Andronicus* (1592) as a guide; *The Wife* (1833), also by Knowles, follows the plot of *Othello* (1603); and *The Honey Moon* (1805), by John Tobin, corresponds to *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592).

Knowles was a devotee of Shakespeare and often borrowed the early modern playwright's plots and stylistic devices. Like Shakespeare, Knowles wrote in verse, rather than prose, and he favored a five-act play structure peppered with multiple plots. He featured soliloquies and wordplay, as well as syntactical inversion and some Elizabethan phrasing. Indeed, Knowles's imitative style quickly gained him a reputation with nineteenth-century critics as "a modern Shakespeare" (Murray 1986, 164). John Tobin's ability to mimic Shakespeare also brought him great acclaim. When *The Honey Moon* debuted at the Drury Lane Theatre in London on January 11, 1805, reviewers praised the drama for its similarities to *Shrew* and commended Tobin for his ability to model his drama on England's finest playwright (*Cumberland's British Theatre* 1826, 6, quoted in Smith, J. 1977, 15). Scholars have not remarked on Sheil's use of Shakespeare, but the plot of *Evadne* follows *Much Ado* too closely for us to discount the similarities between the plays. Since nineteenth-century critics appreciated successful imitations, Sheil likely borrowed from Shakespeare to endow his dramatic endeavor with esteem (Introduction to Foulkes 1986, 1-9, especially p. 1). Nevertheless, Sheil's awareness of the parallels between his text and *Much Ado* becomes immaterial in light of theorist Roland Barthes's argument that "as soon as a fact is narrated . . . [a] disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, [and] writing begins" (Barthes 1995, 125). Sheil himself ceases to matter, while his text becomes the bearer of a variety of possible meaning(s). Because spectators and readers in both England and America revered Shakespeare's name, however, *Evadne's* association with the early modern playwright assured the play of an enthusiastic following in both countries.

Antebellum southern spectators enjoyed the appropriations played out on their stages as much as theatergoers in other parts of the country, especially when their themes buttressed the region's moral codes and values. *Evadne* and *Virginius* stress the necessity of protecting a young, unmarried woman's purity, while *The Wife* and *The Honey Moon* emphasize the importance of wifely fidelity and deference. Though these emphases would have found approval in the North, they particularly resonated in the antebellum South, where the economy depended on the subordination of women and slaves. As Jane Placide's experience shows, however, the actresses who performed the lead female parts in these plays did not always live up to the expectations established by their stage roles. When Eliza Logan Wood, Frances Denny Drake, and Julia Dean Hayne played *Evadne*, *Virginia*, *Julia*, or *Juliana*, they exposed the artificiality of rigidly prescribed gender roles in their daily lives by transgressing against the very norms they affirmed on stage.

Antebellum Actresses And Appropriation

Eliza Logan Wood, a favorite with antebellum theatrical companies throughout the 1840s and 50s, commanded a large repertory, but she particularly favored Sheil's *Evadne*, a drama about a maligned woman proven true (Yeomans 1952, 52). Announcing Eliza's arrival for a star appearance in 1854 at The New Orleans St. Charles Theatre, the *Daily Picayune* encouraged playgoers to turn out for her performance of *Evadne*, "one of Miss Logan's most successful parts" ("St. Charles Theatre" 1854). Like Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Evadne finds herself wrongly accused of cheating on her betrothed. The villainous Ludovico, like Don John in Shakespeare's play, defames Evadne in order to hurt his political rival and her fiance, Vicentio. Since a woman's honor reflected that of her father or husband in Renaissance Italy, the setting for both *Evadne* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, Ludovico can strike at Vicentio by damaging his promised bride's reputation. As does Hero, Evadne strongly protests the charges brought against her, but false ocular proof — a painted miniature of her supposed lover, the King of Naples — convinces Vicentio that she has betrayed him by sleeping with their sovereign. Incensed by Ludovico's shenanigans and the threat to Evadne's reputation, her old and revered family name, and Vicentio's honor, the king agrees to help by faking his own death. As expected, Ludovico then tries to install himself as ruler and simultaneously claim Evadne as his own lover. The king suddenly reappears, condemns Ludovico, and clears Evadne's name.

Evadne follows *Much Ado* closely until the end, but a slight difference in the resolution of the two plays is key to understanding the appeal of both plays to antebellum audiences. Each play champions a single woman's duty to protect her virginity. (Indeed, nineteenth-century stage versions of *Much Ado* played down the sexually explicit language in the accusations leveled at Hero by eliminating such lines as "She knows the heat of a luxurious bed" [see Shakespeare 1974, 4.1.33, 45]). *Evadne*, however, also lauds filial devotion and loyalty. While Hero acquiesces to her father's wishes and pretends to die rather than live as a reputedly fallen woman, she escapes condemnation by a series of coincidences — not by professing concern for her father's slandered name. Borachio confesses to defaming her for pay from Don John, and Dogberry, the oafish constable, realizes that he can procure political clout for himself when he overhears Borachio and turns him in to Hero's father. In contrast, Evadne actively seeks retribution by articulately reminding the king of her late father's honorable standing: defiling the daughter, she chides, means tarnishing the father's memory. Concerned for Evadne's familial honor, the king turns on Ludovico, rights Evadne's reputation, and restores her to Vicentio (Sheil 1994, 5.1.349-95, pp. 73-74 of 80). The associations of Sheil's play with Shakespeare's *Much Ado* assured *Evadne* an enthusiastic following in nineteenth-century America, but the drama's consistency with southern cultural mores embedded it even further in the repertory of the Old South, where a strongly entrenched patriarchy

made the honoring of fathers paramount for children. While Evadne stands up to the preeminent masculine power figure by insisting on her innocence, she also endorses the patriarchal structure by lauding her father and placing concern for his good name ahead of her own reputation.

Eliza Logan Wood, who so often played Evadne, enjoyed a close relationship with her father, Cornelius Logan, a comic actor and playwright who served as her manager, but she also defied the stereotype of a dependent daughter. After Cornelius died in 1853, Eliza continued traveling and performing on her own, but even before his death, she occupied a liminal space. On the one hand, she depended upon her father's business expertise to book engagements and make travel arrangements, but on the other hand, she occupied a public position far different from the private, domestic realm that most southern women then occupied. After Cornelius died, Eliza initially assumed a demure persona and asked manager Sol Smith to help her obtain performance positions "with the most favorable terms possible." She soon gained confidence in making specific requests, however, for within a year, she crowed to Smith, "you would scarcely believe what a little business woman I am" (Eliza Logan to Sol Smith, 1 April, 1853, and 11 February, 1854, Sol Smith Collection, Box 5 of 6, Missouri Historical Society). Her boast was not empty, either, for Logan procured lucrative engagements in Savannah, Columbus, Memphis, and St. Louis until she married and went into semi-retirement in 1855 (Blackburn 1927, Appendix C; Keller 1957, 117-125, 136; Langley 1937, 58-60, 76-77; Yeomans 1952, 52, 124-27, 139-40).

Eliza Logan got her start in the North, but she made her career in the antebellum South. Born in Philadelphia in 1830, Eliza was fortunate enough to attend a private academy in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for her elementary education. She and her five sisters did not go on to finishing school, then the equivalent of higher education for young women, even though their two brothers trained for the legal and medical professions. Instead, Cornelius Logan encouraged his daughters to cultivate theatrical careers, but initially only Eliza followed his example. Her younger sister Olive later took up acting in addition to newspaper reporting and public speaking, but Eliza first attracted the most attention for her stage talent. She debuted at the Chestnut Theatre in Philadelphia at the age of eleven. When she and her father began touring together two years later, they found their largest and most enthusiastic houses in the South. Between 1843 and 1849, Eliza and Cornelius worked as stock company members for Noah Ludlow and Sol Smith in Mobile, New Orleans, and St. Louis, but by 1850, Eliza had gained such popularity that the partners began to feature her as a star. In addition to playing the heroine in Sheil's *Evadne*, Logan often enacted the lead roles in Knowles's *The Hunchback*, Bulwer-Lytton's *Lady of Lyons*, and Benjamin Thompson's adaptation of Kotzebue's *The Stranger*. Though non-Shakespearean roles largely dominated her repertory, Logan did include Juliet, Hero, and Cordelia in her offerings. She appeared at the St. Louis Theater

more than any other star in the 1850s, but Ludlow and Smith also booked her in their New Orleans and Mobile theaters (Blackburn 1927, Appendices B and C; Duggar 1941, 179; Keller 1957, 119, 121, 125, 136; Langley 1937, 76-77; Marston 1856, 3-4; Meserve 1986, 90; Wills 1971, 21-28; Yeomans 1952, 52, 124-27, 139-40). In 1859, Eliza married George Woods, who had just begun to manage The People's Theater in St. Louis. Noah Ludlow notes that Eliza's expertise, gained from years of acting, helped George immeasurably; after they married, she continued to act, but she also worked alongside her husband as co-manager, "furnishing him with a practical knowledge of theatrical matters in which he otherwise would have been deficient" (Ludlow 1966, 730).

Like Eliza Logan, Jane Placide defied the retiring female stereotypes she often played on stage; in addition to the Shakespearean roles that she played across from Edwin Forrest in 1825, she also acted in James Sheridan Knowles's *Virginius*. While southern theatrical companies did not stage *Titus Andronicus*, the apparent model for Knowles's play, they frequently scheduled performances of *Virginius*, which probably appealed more to audiences than would *Titus* because of its paucity of gore (on the similarities between the two plots, see Murray 1986, 164-67). Shakespeare wrote *Titus* early in his career, and the play included many conventions of the bloody revenge tragedies then the rage on early modern stages. The drama takes place in ancient Rome, and its plot swirls around a political rivalry. The events also feature the gang rape and murder of an innocent young woman in addition to human sacrifice, bodily mutilation, and mother-son cannibalism (Maus 1997, 371). Antebellum southerners fancied themselves as genteel and cultured, and they undoubtedly found the rawness of *Titus* repugnant, even though many could ignore the horrors inflicted on the African American slave population in their midst.

In contrast, *Virginius* found a standard place in the region's repertory; the play's popularity probably stemmed from its streamlined focus on the defamation of the lead female character and the revenge extracted by her father for the damage done to her name and that of their family. This plot, like that of *Evadne*, would have resonated with antebellum southerners who so highly prized the purity and honor of their single white women. A retelling of a Roman story that became one of several sources for Shakespeare's *Titus*, the drama traces Virginius's agonizing decision to kill his daughter Virginia after Appius Claudius has compromised her sexual honor. Before Claudius has even seen and desired Virginia, however, her father has vouched for her innocence and virtue. Presenting her to Icilius, her betrothed, Virginius boasts that she is

My daughter truly filial — both in word
 And act — yet even more in act than word;
 And — for the man who hopes to win her hand —
 A virgin, from whose lips a soul as pure

Exhales, as e'er responded to the blessing
Breathed in a parent's kiss. (Knowles 1994a, 2.2.50-55, p. 28 of 95)

Virginius's pride in his daughter derives not only from her chastity, but also from her obedience and filial devotion to him. Called to speak with her father about her future in act 1, for example, she quickly comes into his chambers and immediately asks, "Well, father, what is your will?" (Knowles 1994a, 1.2.53, p. 17 of 95). For southern playgoers, Virginia would have represented the ideal antebellum daughter: she has internalized an allegiance to patriarchal ideals and accepted for herself a submissive and dutiful role.

While Jane Placide played the meek and retiring Virginia on stage, she hardly displayed those qualities in her own life. In addition to violating the South's social and sexual norms through her unusually close relationship with James Caldwell, she breached antebellum decorum by leaving her extended family and moving to a distant city, where she lived on her own and established a successful career in the public sphere. Jane's parents, Alexander and Charlotte Placide, introduced all five of their children to the theater as young children, and they encouraged them to pursue dramatic careers as young adults. Alexander was an actor and pantomime artist who had immigrated to America from France in 1791; he first played in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston but then moved south to Charleston, South Carolina, where he rose to become manager of the English theater in 1800. Charlotte Wrighten Placide, an English actress, met Alexander while she was performing in Charleston during the 1796 season. The two fell in love and married the same year. Born in 1804, Jane was the Placide's third child; she began performing bit parts at four, and she debuted in her first adult role at sixteen. Over the course of her fifteen-year career, Jane Placide not only performed for New Orleans audiences, but she also traveled to New York City and to London, where she was well received. She helped Caldwell recruit performers for the St. Charles Theatre in both cities, and in New Orleans, she entered with him into several real estate investment ventures. In short, Jane Placide carved out a place for herself as a sophisticated businesswoman and a talented actress in a world that otherwise offered very few, circumscribed roles to its women.

Frances Denny Drake and her niece, Julia Dean Hayne, also challenged the status quo in their personal lives, but played stage roles that undergirded the retiring positions that married women in the Old South were supposed to occupy. Both women, for example, regularly included Sheridan's *The Wife* and Tobin's *The Honey Moon* in their stock repertory. The two plays follow their Shakespearean models, *Othello* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, by calling for wifely fidelity and obedience, characteristics that Drake and Hayne eschewed when they left abusive husbands and initiated divorces. Wise to the source of their income, however, the two actresses continued

to perform in *The Wife* and *The Honey Moon*, as well as their Shakespearean counterparts, for the dramas all drew appreciative audiences in the antebellum South.

Unlike many appropriations which draw on their sources implicitly, Knowles's *The Wife* explicitly borrows from *Othello*. In an epilogue added by Charles Lamb for the play's opening performance at Covent Garden in 1833, the lead female character, Mariana, who was first played by Ellen Tree, recognizes these close parallels even as she acknowledges some differences between the two plays. Mariana declares, "I dream'd each night, I should be Desdemona'd But my Othello, to his vows more zealous / Twenty Iagos could not make him jealous" (Knowles 1994b, epilogue, ll. 23, 30-31). Her lines show that Mariana, like Desdemona, has fallen prey to a scheming, jealous, and power-hungry villain intent on tarnishing her spotless reputation and ruining her marriage. Ferrardo, Iago's counterpart, gets St. Pierre drunk and brings him to Mariana's room, where he leaves his scarf; like the handkerchief planted on Cassio in *Othello*, the scarf serves as ocular proof of Mariana's supposed indiscretion. Unlike Othello, however, Mariana's husband Leonardo never doubts his wife's chastity; instead, he ferrets out the culprit and restores her good name (Knowles 1994b).

The Wife further differs from *Othello* by evading the complications of race and class posed by Shakespeare's play. Leonardo, a prince of Mantua, is hardly equal in status to Othello, no matter how distinguished an army career Shakespeare's Moor had built for himself. Knowles's high-born protagonist undoubtedly appealed to elite southerners who fancied themselves the equivalent of English aristocrats and to middle-class southerners who had aspirations of upward mobility. Similarly, the play might have attracted playgoers who recoiled from the specter of a free black man marrying a young white woman. James Dormon follows this logic when he asserts that *Othello* found an audience in the South because most theatergoers probably saw the drama as a warning against mixed-race relationships (Dormon 1967, 276). Historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown's analysis of miscegenation in the Old South lends credence to Dormon's argument. Wyatt-Brown explains that southerners cast a blind eye to relations between white men and black women, but in order to preserve the racial purity and legitimacy of white heirs, relations between white women and black men were taboo (Wyatt-Brown 1986, 105-15). A review of Aristotle's *Poetics* recalls that tragedy compels in part because it dramatizes the abhorrent; hence, white audiences could have enjoyed the play for its portrayal of a relationship that they found loathsome (Aristotle 1997, 22).

The play might also have been popular as a producer of white and black racial identity, for the actors and actresses who played in *Othello* enacted ideas of blackness and whiteness that affirmed and established norms for both groups. When antebellum actresses played white women such as Desdemona across from white actors who were enacting black men such as Othello, the

whiteness of the actresses was heightened. As Toni Morrison explains in *Playing in the Dark*, "the fabrication of an Africanist persona is reflexive," deflecting back onto white characters their own fears and desires and allowing them to define themselves as what they are not (Morrison 1992, 17). Following this line of thought, the colorlessness that film scholar Richard Dyer ascribes to whiteness finds its actual multi-colored content solely in contrast to blackness. Whiteness comes into existence only when the nonwhite is there in the background (Dyer 1988, 44-64, especially pp. 48-49).

Whether or not Othello appeared to playgoers as sooty black, tawny and bronze, or just lightly tanned depended upon which actor played the part and perhaps when he played the role, but any contrasting shade created the duality necessary to establish Desdemona's whiteness (and thereby her sexual vulnerability). Historians James Dormon and Tilden Edelstein claim that actors who played Othello throughout the antebellum period lightened their skin tone more and more so that by the 1850s, southerners would have watched a performer who was hardly black at all. Dormon and Edelstein trace the careers of several famous actors who played Othello and contend that their considerable influence in the acting world would have caused widespread imitation. English actor Edmund Kean initiated the trend for altering Othello's appearance in the 1820s when he began playing the part with bronze-colored skin, an exotic turban, a flowing robe, and metal wrist-bands, a costume that made him look more like an Arab from Morocco than a man with black skin from the heart of Africa. Edwin Forrest, whose name became synonymous with *Metamora*, the fictional Native American dramatic hero that he made famous, not surprisingly gave his Othello an Indian look when he further lightened the character in the 1830s and 40s. Finally, Edwin Booth, who played Othello for the first time in 1849, became the lightest Othello ever, wearing just the slightest touch of tan makeup along with sumptuous Persian robes that transformed him into an aristocratic Oriental suitor (Dormon 1967, 276-77; Edelstein 1982, 183-86).

In 1827, when Thomas Abthorpe Cooper played Othello at the St. Charles Theatre in New Orleans across from leading stock actress Jane Placide, he did not follow the trend to lighten his makeup begun by Edmund Kean earlier in the decade. Cooper prided himself on his traditional acting techniques and disdained Kean's willingness to experiment with new dramatic approaches. In contrast, the young Junius Brutus Booth greatly admired Kean and had emulated his stage manner in England before making his way to America in 1821. Hence, when Booth performed with Placide in *Othello* at the St. Charles Theatre in March of 1829, his skin tone might have appeared more swarthy than black, even though he had played the Moor as black-skinned in an 1822 Savannah performance. Edwin Forrest's skin certainly looked tawny rather than coal-black when he starred opposite Placide just a month later and again when he returned to New Orleans

in 1839, playing Othello to Mary Ann Duff's Desdemona. By the time Julia Dean was playing Desdemona in the early 1850s, Edwin Booth was carefully holding his body so that his thinly applied beige makeup did not besmirch the whiteness of the actresses who performed with him in *Othello*, and in an 1852 performance, a strolling player in Macon, Georgia had to play the lead role "nearly white" so as not to displease the citizens. By 1860, actor James Wallack backed out of playing Othello in Mobile when the play disagreed with playgoers' sense of propriety (Burroughs 1970, 68; Dormon 1967, 277; Edelstein 1982, 186; Hostetler 1964; Koon 1994, 83-84; Shattuck 1976, 22-25, 42-50; St. Charles Theatre Advertisement 1839).

Literary scholar Charles Lower counters the views of Dormon and Edelstein, contending instead that southerners would not have allowed racial views or politics to contaminate their appreciation of great art. He cites numerous stage productions of the play throughout the antebellum period, ranging from Charleston to Memphis to New Orleans, and he quotes several sympathetic play reviews that never mention Othello's race. Such evidence, Lower says, shows that southerners would not have objected to watching a black Othello and discredits the notion that playgoers would have seen the play as an anti-miscegenation drama. Indeed, he asserts that reviews excising explicit discussion of Othello's color but referring to him as the "Moor" implicitly affirmed southerners' preference for his portrayal as a black man, thereby emphasizing the distinction between art and life. Of course, reviewers may not have been troubled by a lighter-hued Othello, either. Lower does concede that Edmund Kean lightened his skin tone and that makeup instructions, memoirs, paintings, and lithographs "provide considerable evidence of tawny Othellos," but he maintains that a preponderance of black-skinned Moors also peopled the stage. His list includes William Charles Macready and Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, who did favor darker tones, but he also names Edwin Forrest and Edwin Booth, who were both known for their lighter-skinned portrayals of Othello (Lower 1983, 205). Virginia Mason Vaughan similarly observes that William Charles Macready elicited no negative reactions from his slave-owning audiences in the South on his antebellum tours throughout the region, and she goes on to note a trend for whitening post-bellum Othellos, a tradition that reflected the heightened racial tensions and the increasingly rigid sexual taboos between races.

Proving Lower and Vaughan or Dormon and Edelstein right finally becomes a rather futile task, for as Lower asserts, historians can too easily simplify the view from afar just to prove a certain set of rigid assumptions. By focusing instead on the complexity of *Othello*'s shifting representations, greater insights into antebellum race relations, particularly attitudes toward miscegenation, can be gained. Edelstein says that for three centuries, *Othello* has essentially become "a forum" for Americans to work out their feelings toward race in their culture (Edelstein 1982, 194). Philip

Kolin agrees. He calls the play a "cultural seismograph" and notes that Othello has been interpreted as a white Venetian, an Arab, a blackamoor, a Spaniard, and a sub-Saharan African, depending on how various actors and audiences have used his character to respond to the upheavals of gender, race, and class concurrently at work in their culture (Kolin 2002, 1). Playgoers who attended the play in the Old South, then, might have seen lighter or darker skinned actors performing the part of the Moor, but any hue would have contrasted with the whiteness of the actress' skin who played Desdemona. Viewers, who were already attuned to the slightest subtleties of skin variation in their racially stratified society, would have been very sensitive to staged portrayals of skin tone, particularly as the Civil War approached and racial tension increased.

However antebellum playgoers interpreted *Othello*, they probably welcomed the comparative simplicity of *The Wife's* appropriated but streamlined plot. In particular, the play's emphasis on wifely fidelity would have resonated with most audience members. Before Leonardo has vindicated Mariana, for example, their family priest, who clearly doubts Mariana's innocence, cautions her to cultivate modesty and virtue in her person. He warns:

A woman hath in every state
 Most need of circumspection; — most of all
 When she becomes a wife! — She is a spring
 Must not be doubted; if she is, no oath
 That earth can utter will so purge the stream
 That men will think it pure! (Knowles 1994b, 3.4.68-74, p. 58 of 94)

In the same way that Othello calls Desdemona "a weed" that attracts summer flies and "a cunning whore," Mariana's priest implies that his parishioner has become a permanently polluted stream. Southern readers would have known the brutal terms that the Moor employed from their Shakespearean texts, but theater managers most likely softened his abusive language for the stage by replacing terms such as "whore" with "strumpet," since most stage versions cut explicitly sexual references. (Actor William Charles Macready began this trend for chaste versions of *Othello* [see Vaughan 1994, 146, 135-53; for Shakespeare quotations see Shakespeare 1969a, 4.9.50, 76, p. 250; Shakespeare 1969b, 4.9.50, 76, pp. 562-63; Shakespeare 1974, 4.2.75, p. 62].) The didactic purpose of this name-calling might have mitigated its harshness for southerners who relied on married white women to uphold and reproduce the patriarchal ideology of the region.

The Taming of the Shrew and John Tobin's appropriation, *The Honey Moon*, focus not only on ensuring marital fidelity, but also on inculcating wifely submission and obedience. Antebellum audiences knew David Garrick's shortened version of Shakespeare's *Shrew*, *Catharine*

and Petruchio (1756), which excises the frame story of Christopher Sly and focuses entirely on the conflict between the title characters. Garrick's rendition played to great acclaim on Old South stages, but Tobin's play received even more approbation. Soon after the play's successful London debut in 1805, Philadelphia's Park Theatre scheduled a performance, and American audiences reacted with similar appreciation. Samuel Drake's company included *The Honey Moon* in its repertory as the troupe traveled west in 1815, and the drama became a favorite with Noah Ludlow, who was then a fledgling actor with the troupe. When Ludlow struck out on his own, he frequently staged the play on opening night. As a result, the drama quickly became a standard season opener for many southern theatrical companies (Dormon 1967, 260; Smith, J. 1977, 14).

In the same way that Garrick's version of Shakespeare's *Petruchio* sets about to tame Catharine's scolding tongue and teach her docility, so too does Tobin's *Duke of Aranza* work on reforming Juliana's willfulness and pride. Intent on showing his manly prowess, *Petruchio* boasts to his friends Grumio and Gremio that he has heard lions roar and thunder rumble like artillery, so a "little din" such as a woman's chatter will not daunt him. Furthermore, *Petruchio* assures them, because he has overcome "pitched battle" midst "loud larums, neighing steeds, and [clanging] trumpets," vanquishing the shrewish Catharine will hardly be a test for him (Garrick 1981, pp. 187-220, 1.1.48, 52-53, p. 194). Both Catharine and Juliana stand up admirably to the browbeating they receive from their husbands, but eventually each caves in and repents of her assertiveness. The contrition that the two express verbally would have buttressed antebellum southerners' belief in a wife's duty to submit to her husband, but as a 1976 American Conservatory Theatre production directed by William Ball shows, facial expressions and body language can undermine and dismantle this message (Rothwell and Melzer 1990, item 602). If the actress playing Catharine uses a sarcastic tone when she reminds her sister, "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, [and] thy sovereign," she can show scorn for the words she mouths (Garrick 1981, 3.1.250-51, p. 219). Similarly, if Juliana rolls her eyes or looks disgusted, she can call into question her assertion

That modesty, in deed, in word, and in thought,
Is the prime grace of woman; and with that,
More than by frowning looks and saucy speeches
She may persuade the man that rightly loves her,
Whom she was ne'er intended to command. (Tobin 1994, 5.1.114-19, p. 89 of 104)

Nonetheless, actresses who risked undercutting the sentiments expressed by Catharine and Juliana with body language or intonation could have endangered their careers. Audience disapproval,

combined with poor press reviews, could keep playgoers from attending future performances as well as deter theater managers from re-engaging such transgressive performers.

Had Frances Denny Drake and Julia Dean Hayne played Catharine and Juliana as independent-minded women who only complied reticently with their husband's wishes, it is likely that neither would have attracted such large audiences or received as many contracts from theater managers. Nor would local newspapers have raved so approvingly about their demure but compelling stage performances. Despite the conservative personae that they portrayed on stage, however, Drake and Hayne did cultivate autonomous performative roles in their personal lives. Both women terminated unhappy marriages even though they risked public censure, and they subsequently juggled the demands of career and single motherhood with great success.

Frances Denny grew up in Albany, New York, but she joined Samuel Drake's theatrical company in 1815 and accompanied them on a tour of the South, where she ended up making her career. Denny performed with the Drakes in Lexington, Louisville, and Frankfort, where they established a permanent circuit, but she also traveled throughout the South, playing in starring roles across from such well-known actors as Junius Brutus Booth, Edwin Forrest, and Thomas Abthorpe Cooper. Denny became known as "the Siddons of the West" for her portrayal of tragic Shakespearean heroines, especially Juliet and Desdemona. She could also play comic parts with aplomb. Hero, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Catharine, in the Garrick adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, were two favorites (Bailey 1934, 71; Dietz 1921, 16, 36, 52; Duggar 1941, 31; Ludlow 1966, 91, 100; Meek 1930, 76; Smith, S. 1868, 13; Smither 1967, 67-68). In 1823, Frances married one of the Drake sons, Alexander, a comic actor who never quite matched his wife's stage skills or public renown. When Alexander died suddenly in 1830, he left Frances to raise their four children on her own (Ludlow 1966, 367). Extended family helped with child-care so that Frances could continue acting, and over the next twenty years, she solidified the acclaim she had begun to cultivate in the first fifteen years of her career.

Frances Denny Drake's niece, Julia Dean Hayne, also attained great fame as a star in the South. Born in 1830 to actors Edwin Dean and Julia Drake Fosdick Dean, the daughter of Samuel Drake, Julia Dean Hayne spent the first eleven years of her life with her paternal grandparents in Dutchess County, New York. Her mother died when she was only two, and her father felt inadequate to the demands of raising a toddler, so he enlisted the aid of his parents. Apparently, the needs of a pre-teen did not seem quite as daunting, however, for Edwin Dean resumed custody of Julia when she turned eleven. He immediately began training her for the stage, and by 1843, he had procured positions for himself and Julia with Ludlow's stock company in Mobile. She made quite a sensation there according to actor Joseph Jefferson, who recalled working with her that year

in his autobiography. He asserted that Julia's beauty, confidence, and stage presence dazzled her Alabama audiences and held them spellbound. Over the next two years, she and her father went on to play stock roles in Nashville, Cincinnati, and Louisville.

By the time Julia turned fifteen, her father was seeking starring positions for her. Like her contemporary, Eliza Logan, she gained a reputation for her representations of the lead roles in non-Shakespearean favorites such as *Evadne*, *The Lady of Lyons*, and *The Stranger*, but she also cultivated her reputation as a budding Shakespearean actress. In addition to gaining renown for her depiction of Hero in *Much Ado*, Julia Dean became known for her portrayals of Juliet, Ophelia, Desdemona, and Catharine. In a March 1846 letter to Sol Smith, Dean touted Julia's popularity and successful reception, as evidenced by many laudatory newspaper articles, which he assured Smith were "entirely unsought" on his part. He went on to boast that his daughter exhibited "an extraordinary degree of talent" and urged Smith to engage her in New Orleans before the end of the 1846 season (Edwin Dean to Sol Smith, 15 March, 1846, Sol Smith Collection, Box 4 of 6, Missouri Historical Society). Smith had already booked the remainder of the season, but Dean's words did not fall on deaf ears, for Smith and Ludlow featured Julia Dean during their 1847-48 season, and thereafter she became a regular star in their theaters and many others throughout the Southeast (clipping from the *Mobile Sunday Times*, March 1868, Julia Dean Hayne Theater Papers, Theatrical Collection, 1823-1890, Box 1 of 2, Missouri Historical Society; Craig 1963, 167-68; Dietz 1921, 42-44; Duggar 1941, 150, 164; Jefferson 1890, 147-48; Koon 1994, 83; Ludlow 1966, 665-67; Smith, S. 1868, 206).

In 1854, when Julia was playing in Charleston, South Carolina, she met and fell in love with Arthur Hayne, the son of a well-to-do coastal family. The two married, but Julia soon found to her dismay that her new husband was an abusive drunk. At first, their union seemed to promise great happiness. Julia's father, Edwin Dean, crowed to Sol Smith in February 1855 about Arthur Hayne's fine South Carolina family connections and his long-standing love for Julia (Edwin Dean to Sol Smith, 1 February, 1855, Sol Smith Collection, Box 4 of 6, Missouri Historical Society). By July, however, Dean's tune had changed: he noted that Smith's "aversion" to Hayne upon their first meeting was well founded, for "his cruel treatment . . . will destroy her health . . . and break her heart." Dean went on to assert, "I am convinced that she cannot long live with him" (Edwin Dean to Sol Smith, 11 July, 1855, Sol Smith Collection, Box 4 of 6, Missouri Historical Society). Later the same month, Dean admitted to Smith that Hayne abused Julia when he was drunk, but "to everybody else, he is extremely complaisant" (Edwin Dean to Sol Smith, 20 July, 1855, Sol Smith Collection, Box 4 of 6, Missouri Historical Society). Arthur Hayne might have turned to drink to drown feelings of inadequacy, for, as Noah Ludlow noted, he had failed to measure up to

his elite Charleston family's standards of worldly success (Ludlow 1966, 711-12). His father was Robert Y. Hayne, a South Carolina senator, and though Arthur trained for a career in medicine, Edwin Dean conceded to Sol Smith in February, 1855 that Arthur was still living at home off of his family's means when he was thirty-one (Edwin Dean to Sol Smith, 1 February, 1855, Sol Smith Collection, Box 4 of 6, Missouri Historical Society). Julia Dean became Arthur's ticket to attaining independence from his family, but resentment over the contrast between her professional success and his failure manifested itself in an ugly brutality that ultimately drove Julia to sue for divorce in 1865 (Bill for Divorce, filed by Julia Dean Hayne in Probate Court, Territory of Utah, Great Salt Lake City County, 20 December, 1865).

Obtaining a divorce in nineteenth-century America was difficult, but southern states made the procedure nearly impossible. Laura Edwards and Suzanne Lebsack write that southerners found divorce anathema because it threatened to unravel the social and economic fabric of the region: if white men could lose authority over their wives, they could also lose control of their slaves. Hence, most southern states reinforced husbands' power by requiring a special legislative act to secure a divorce, but lawmakers did not acquiesce lightly. A plea of abandonment, wifely adultery, or impotence might attain legal severance of a marriage, but rarely did charges of abuse or irreconcilable differences sway a legislative body to grant a divorce (Edwards 2000, 24-26; Lebsack 1984, 34-35, 68-69). Victoria Bynum recognizes the irony in lawmakers' reluctance: on the one hand, southerners venerated marriage as an ideal institution that provided love, honor, and protection to women, but on the other hand, their governing bodies refused to protect unfortunate women caught in abusive or degrading marriages that existed far outside the ideal (Bynum 1992, 2).

Sally McMillen notes that frontier states were the first to relax divorce laws, and this liberality might have been a factor that led Julia Dean Hayne to file her suit in Utah (McMillen 2002, 54). She was also touring the West at the time, and her decision might have simply coincided with where she was performing. Regardless, the court ruled in her favor; Arthur's intemperance, coupled with his neglect of Julia and their three children, swayed the legal decision, for she received full legal custody and total control of her financial and material assets (Divorce Decree, No. 25, Filed by Hon. Elias Smith in Probate Court, Great Salt Lake City County, Territory of Utah, 27 August, 1866). Julia Dean Hayne's upstanding reputation and popular reception with western audiences might also have worked in her favor, for historian George Rable remarks that a female plaintiff would not succeed unless she could establish unquestioned respectability (Rable 1989, 11).

Even when divorced women maintained impeccable reputations, they usually endured severe social disapproval. The threat of rejection could not outweigh the misery that drove many women to petition for divorce, but possessing a skill that promised actresses the ability to support

themselves may have made them more willing to leave their husbands and seek legal redress. Julia Dean Hayne banked on her professional skills and continued to play to enthusiastic houses in the West and South. Frances Denny Drake's example might have provided the courage that her niece needed to pursue her divorce, for Frances had herself divorced her second husband, George Washington Cutter, whom she had married in 1840, ten years after Alexander's early demise. Like Arthur Hayne, Cutter was a drunk, and his intemperance drove Frances to leave him and sue for divorce within just a few months. She resumed her first married name and continued to act until her retirement in 1850 (Dietz 1921, 36; Ludlow 1966, 367; Swain 1970, 181-82, 190-91).

Conclusion

The Shakespearean plays and their appropriations that dominated the repertory of nineteenth-century American theaters were especially popular in the Old South, for these dramas reflected the weight that antebellum southerners put on establishing a clearly defined male lineage and training their sons and daughters to occupy distinct positions within the private and public spheres. Many of these plays emphasize the importance of a woman's filial duty and marital fidelity, and they celebrate women's occupation of the domestic realm. Yet the independence that actresses such as Frances Denny Drake, Julia Dean Hayne, Eliza Logan, and Jane Placide exhibited in their personal lives stands at odds with the submissive roles that they frequently played on stage. Indeed, these women flouted the region's conventions simply by performing in public, but they also transgressed against antebellum mores when they arranged their own acting and travel schedules, when they negotiated their own financial dealings, or more dramatically, when they initiated divorces from abusive and non-supportive husbands or carried on affairs with married men. The gap between actresses' on-stage experiences and the realities of their lives not only reveals the hypocrisy and inequity inherent in the powerful patriarchal social structure that governed the Old South, but also lays bare the artificiality and malleability of prescribed gender roles and deflates the ostensible divide between private and civic life.

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