Acting out Antiquity

Representations of the Classical World in Early American Theatre, 1732-1831

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores how the ancient world was represented on the American stage from 1732 to 1831. These two years mark the first recorded instance in which the ancient world was depicted on an Anglophone American stage in 1732, and the eventual premiere of what would become the first American-written play representing the classical world to experience runaway success in 1831. Prior studies in the American tradition of acting out antiquity have relied primarily on case studies and close readings as investigative tools. This thesis examines the period holistically, examining how Americans engaged with antiquity on stage from that first performance of Joseph Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy* (1713) in 1732 to the release of Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* (1831).

In this endeavour, this thesis deploys a novel, comprehensive approach that combines statistical analysis, periodized historical analysis, and close readings of key texts. By analysing the results of a large-scale data-collection exercise, it models the relative frequencies with which different texts were performed across different time periods, regions, and performance contexts. In doing so, this thesis identifies numerous hitherto forgotten plays that defined American audiences' experience of the Classics on stage, and maps out the wider cultural landscape in which they existed.

After a first chapter outlining and analysing the results of this data collection exercise, four diachronic chapters trace the emergence of a distinctly American dramatic interpretation of the Classics over the course of this century. Within each of these chapters is embedded a close reading of one of the most significant dramatic texts of the period in question. Through this mutually-informed combination of large-scale data analysis, periodized historical analysis, and detailed close readings of individual texts, this thesis not only offers a history of this particular species of the Classics' reception in the New World, but also a new approach to classical reception studies.

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I was first introduced to Dr Bradley at a University of Nottingham open day almost a decade ago, when, quite by chance, I stumbled into the room in which Mark was giving a talk about the university's Ancient History undergraduate programme. Despite having no prior experience of Classics, this happy accident persuaded me to dedicate myself to their study. Since then, Mark has been a constant feature of my academic career, acting as my personal tutor and dissertation supervisor during my undergraduate and Masters degrees, before overseeing my doctoral research. Throughout this time, he has consistently offered valuable guidance and advice in support of my academic development. Wherever he has been in the world, from Brazil to Uzbekistan, he has never been more than an email away.

Dr Pethers entered my life towards the end of my undergraduate degree, when I used my undergraduate dissertation as an outlet for my interest in the ancient world's reception in early America. Since then, Matthew has provided an invaluable expertise in the field of American Studies, helping me come to grips with a subject in which I had not been formally trained. His sage advice has directed me down paths of analysis I would otherwise not have identified, led me towards pertinent literature I would otherwise have missed, and generally guided me towards solid ground on occasions when I have erred.

Aside from the foundational role played by my supervisory team, it remains to thank the wider academic and support community at the University of Nottingham, of whom there are too many to name individually. Besides the tremendous personal and intellectual support that I have received, I am particularly grateful for the opportunities to teach that I have been allowed during my time at the university. Whether it be Classics and popular culture or beginners' Latin within the department of Classics, eighteenth-century political philosophy within the department of philosophy, or pastoral guidance within the Liberal Arts programme, the experience of teaching has been one of the most personally enriching of my academic career.

Alongside the University of Nottingham, several other institutions and individuals have proved indispensable in providing access to materials and expertise, as well as personal support, that have greatly facilitated this research. These include the Reverend Doctor Paul Edmondson and his team at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Travis Hensley and the staff of the Library of Congress' Kluge Centre, the reading room team at the University of Pennsylvania, and Nicholas Borowski, who so diligently assisted me during my time at the Library of Congress.

It remains to thank my wife, Lois, who has been subjected to reading through more drafts of analyses of forgotten plays than any one person can reasonably stand in a lifetime, and to our soon-to-be-born son, for providing the motivation to get this all wrapped up.

Note on Translations and Citations

Reflective of this thesis' position at the boundary of various disciplines, I have endeavoured to ensure that its presentation and citation of materials is as accessible to readers of different specialisations as possible.

I have presented all significant passages of Latin quotation in English translation. Where such translations already exist, I have used and referred to them. Where I do not refer to an existing English version, the translations are my own.

When classical texts are included in footnotes, I have decided to avoid the abbreviations that are commonly used to identify ancient works in favour of complete translations of their titles. For example, rather than citing a reference to book three, section forty-five of Cicero's *De Officiis* as 'Cic. *De Off.* 3.45', I instead cite this as 'Cicero *On Duties*, book 3, section 45'. Where no English translation of the title is appropriate, as is the case with works such as Virgil *Aeneid*, the full untranslated title is used.

When first introduced, plays and other pieces of dramatic literature are referred to by their full title, followed by the date of their initial release in brackets. 'Initial release' is a potentially nebulous term. Some plays received their debut performance years before they were the subject of a printed edition. Others were printed and in circulation long before any performances are recorded. When identifying a play's initial release, whichever of these two dates occurs first is used. After a play has first been introduced, it is afterwards typically referred to by a shortened version of its title. For example, Joseph Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy* will be introduced as *Cato, A Tragedy* (1713) and afterwards simply referred to as *Cato*.

Direct references and quotations to pieces of dramatic literature will be cited both within the text and within the footnotes. Quotations will be followed by bracketed references to the act and scene in which the quotation occurred, for example: (act two, scene one). A footnoted citation will then give the precise page on which the quotation occurred with reference to a specific edition. This has been done because the division of acts and scenes within many of the texts discussed are inconsistent across different editions. Citing both the act and scene as well as the page and edition within which the reference occur will enable readers to understand the cited material's position within the dramatic structure of the text and also give them the necessary information to locate that reference within the specific edition used.

When contemporary newspapers and periodicals are referenced, their citation includes the place of publication, the publication's title as it appears in its masthead, the specific date on which the publication was issued, and the page on which the referenced material is found (where available and appropriate). For example, a reference to material that occurs on page three of the 15th September, 1818 issue of the *American Beacon* that was published in Norfolk, Virginia, is cited as 'Norfolk *American Beacon* (15/09/1818) 3'. Where the place of publication is already included in the publication's title, it is not repeated in the citation. For example, a reference to page three of the 23rd December, 1805 issue of the *Boston Commercial Gazette* that was published in Boston, Massachusetts is cited as '*Boston Commercial Gazette* (23/12/1805) 3,' rather than the 'Boston *Boston Commercial Gazette* (23/12/1805) 3', as its location of publication can be inferred from its title.

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Introduction

Picture the scene: the year is 1778, three years since the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War. The rebellious Continental army, beaten and bloody following defeats in New York, Long Island, and Philadelphia, has spent the winter of 1777-8 encamped in Valley Forge, south-eastern Pennsylvania. With supplies short, morale low, and two-and-a-half thousand of Washington's twelve thousand men dying of exposure, disease, and starvation, the winter in Valley Forge has entered into American folklore as the lowest point of the Revolution.[1] By the end of the winter encampment, their commander, George Washington, sensing the dying spirits of his men, decided a morale-booster was necessary. Gathering up a corps of his theatrically-inclined officers and staff, he ordered the staging of his favourite play: Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy* (1713). [2] The decision to dedicate his army's limited energy and resources to the staging of a play may seem surprising, especially when one considers that the staging of such plays had previously been banned by the Continental Congress as a frivolity that could not be sustained during wartime.[3] It is a decision, however, that begins to make sense when one considers the play's subject matter.

Cato tells the tale of Cato the Younger's doomed resistance to Julius Caesar during the latter years of the Roman republic, as related by Plutarch. Cato, embodying the republican virtues of public dutifulness and stoic self-sacrifice, leads a small group of Romans loyal to the Republic from his base at the north African city of Utica. Caesar, having bested Pompey the Great, marches on Utica with overwhelming force to defeat Cato's forces and, in doing so, remove the only remaining obstacle in

[1] For example, during the dedication of the Washington Memorial Arch at Valley Forge National Park in 1917, Speaker of the House of Representatives Champ Clark described the encampment as the Revolutionaries' 'Winter of Discontent', at which their 'fortunes sank to the lowest point', United States Congress (1917) 364.
[2] Letters describing the event are reprinted in Bryans (2010) 124-5.
[3] The ban, issued by the First Congressional Congress on 20th October of 1774, prohibited 'the exhibition of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainment'. This prohibition was reinforced by two reiterative bans issued on October 12th 1778 and October 16th 1778. These bans are discussed in Brown (2006) 63; Ford (1899) 26-8; Rankin (1965) 187.

his path to seizing absolute power. Following various tribulations, including the death of his son and a love triangle surrounding his daughter, Cato realises the futility of his cause. After musing upon the philosophy of Plato, he chooses to fall on his sword, rather than submit to the tyranny of Caesar. The play closes with Cato's remaining family and allies praising his virtues, and Caesar's victory now seeming assured. A clear analogy emerges when the play is read in its Valley Forge context. King George and his redcoats can be seen in the guise of Caesar and his legions. The soldiers of the continental army can be read as analogous to Cato's republican soldiers. George Washington can be seen in the titular character of the stoic and dutiful Cato. The Massachusetts-born poet and lawyer Jonathan Sewall made this very comparison in an epilogue he penned for the play in the same year. After calling King George a 'British Caesar', he described how the Continental Congress had 'for a Cato, arm'd a WASHINGTON!'[4]

The theatrics in Valley Forge have embedded themselves in the mythology of the Revolution. The above story of half-starved revolutionaries crowding round an open-air theatre, looking to the Classics for inspiration, has been reiterated with varying degrees of floridity in almost every discussion of revolutionary-era theatre. Modern visitors to the Valley Forge National Park Visitor's Centre will find, amongst the replica muskets and eighteenth-century costumerie, an information panel detailing the event, complete with Colonel William Bradford Jr's May 1778 letter describing the occasion printed in full. As will be shown over the course of this thesis, the story of this performance has been amplified and embellished throughout its various retellings, with the story almost becoming more significant that the event itself. Yet, the Valley Forge *Cato* and the mythology that has emerged around it remain a powerful indicator of the importance of the theatre as a medium through which Americans encountered the classical world.

In an era in which literacy and access to print media remained limited, performance proved an important aspect of early American political culture, both inside and outside of the playhouse.

[4] Sewall (1855) 286-7.

Documents from early American print culture, so often encountered by the modern observer as sterile letters on a page heard only in the reader's thoughts, are increasingly understood by modern academia as being a part of this rich tradition of political performance. Jay Fliegelman's *Declaring Independence* (1993) has shown, for instance, that the Declaration of Independence, far from being staid letters upon a page to be read in private, was in fact designed as a piece of oratory to be performed in public.[5] In other words, it was a *declaration*, not just a document. The Valley Forge *Cato* is not the only instance of the classical world seeping into this tradition of political performance. When Dr Joseph Warren was delivering an oration upon the anniversary of the Boston Massacre in 1775, he chose to wear over his breeches a Roman toga, the symbol of the free-born Roman male citizen.[6] In 1784 and 1789 respectively, the cities of Philadelphia and Boston would erect Roman-style triumphal arches in order to celebrate the success of their generals.[7] While they may have lacked the grandeur of the Arch of Constantine, these examples demonstrate the importance of this reception of classical narratives and iconography in the performance culture of the early United States.

From the foundation of the first English-speaking settlements in North America the citizens, slaves, and leaders of the United States looked to the ancient world for inspiration. Alongside the mercantile profit-seeking, inter-European contesting of overseas dominions, and fear of religious persecution that motivated the Anglophone settling of North America, the earliest generations of colonists were also guided by a perceived inheritance of, and destiny to continue, the civilizing mission of the classical world. Beginning with the supposed nascence of arts and learning in ancient Greece, the philosophy of *translatio studii* traced civilization's journey westwards with the sun, first to ancient Rome, then to early-modern England, before finally moving across the Atlantic to the New World. George Berkeley's 1726 poem 'On the Prospects of Planting Arts and Learning in America', which he produced to

[5] Fliegelman (1993).
[6] This incident is discussed in Shalev (2007).
[7] These are discussed in Handlin (1985) 40; Tunnard and Reed (1956) 50-1.

generate support (and funds) for the creation of a college in America, used a dramatic analogy to describe the movement of arts across the Atlantic:

> The Muse, disgusted at an age and clime
>
> Barren of every glorious theme …
>
> There shall be sung another golden age,
>
> The rise of Empire and of arts, …
>
> Not such as Europe breeds in her decay;
>
> Such as she bred when fresh and young, …
>
> Westward the course of Empire takes its way;
>
> The first four acts already past,
>
> A fifth shall close the drama with the day[8]

Within this intellectual framework, each landmark in the growth of American theatrical infrastructure was reflective of the New World blossoming into its destiny as the inheritor of classical civilization. William Dunlap described North America's first brick theatre, built in Annapolis in 1752, as 'the first temple to the Muses' in North America.[9] Throughout the eighteenth century, Lewis Hallam, one of the pioneers of American theatre, penned multiple prologues claiming to be delivering 'The Muse' to North America.[10] The prologue for a 1771 performance of William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* (1750), a play representing an episode from Livy's *History of Rome*, traced the origins of theatre back to the classical world, describing how 'true taste, like the revolving sun, [has] From East to West, in even tenor run'.[11] The development of theatrical arts was not merely a means to entertain the masses, it was an expression of the artistic Muse, of civilization itself, uprooting itself from the old world and resettling in the new.

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[8] Berkeley (1871) 232.
[9] Dunlap (1832) 12, 93.
[10] Williams (2006) 304; Rankin (1965) 55.
[11] Silverman (1976) 238-9.

Throughout their national journey, representations of the ancient world would serve as a reference point against which audiences would measure themselves. Beginning in 1732, when a travelling company erected a makeshift stage at the junction of Pearl Street and Maiden Lane in New York City and staged a performance of *Cato*, American audiences would consistently attend performances of plays drawing on classical source material.[12] Reflective of the young nation's subaltern relationship to its English metropolis, the plays that regularly occupied American stages over the next century were primarily British imports, a repertoire that American managers selected from the corpus of English stage literature to suit the tastes and appetites of their own audiences. Plays written by native-born Americans might occasionally grace the stage, but if they did so it was usually as a temporary attraction, a novelty that, after a few performances, would be recalled and replaced by the more regular transatlantic fare.

In 1831 though, all this would change. Only a few blocks away from where that original 1732 performance of *Cato* took place, New York's Park Theatre would play host to one of the most significant landmarks in American theatrical history. Robert Montgomery Bird's new play *The Gladiator* (1831) would premier to a packed house, the first of many. *The Gladiator* retold the heroic exploits of the rebel gladiator Spartacus, and his doomed rebellion against Rome. It starred Edwin Forrest, the most famous actor of the day, in the titular role, and was a veritable blockbuster. Bird's play would receive upwards of one thousand performances over the next few decades. Street hoodlums would howl catchphrases from the play during their running battles with authority figures. As the dominion of the United States extended westwards, *The Gladiator* would go with it. From California to New York, *The Gladiator* delighted audiences across the length and breadth of the American continent. It would even become the first American play to make the unlikely journey eastwards, across the Atlantic, to entertain audiences in the global centre of Anglophone theatre:

[12] This performance is discussed in Johnson and Burling (2001) 109-10.

London. *The Gladiator* demonstrated that American-written plays could not only find a regular place on American stages, but could utterly dominate them.

What happened during these ninety-nine years between 1732 and 1831? How did American audiences move from admiring Cato's stoic, principled defence of Roman republican privilege, to howling in support of Spartacus' assault upon it? These two plays are not the entire story, but rather are bookends. On thousands of occasions between these two years, American theatres would entertain audiences with some retelling of an episode from the classical canon. Plays that have gone almost entirely unstudied once entertained American audiences in their droves with tales of Roman valour and Grecian grandeur. This tradition of staging the ancient world both reflected and informed the wider development of American civilization. This thesis will offer a comprehensive study of this tradition, charting its development over the course of a century and understanding its relationship to broader forces in the development of early American culture and politics.

0.1 Outline of Scholarship

The time is ripe for an extended examination of this subject. Such an investigation sits at the intersection of multiple disciplines, of varying degrees of maturity. Reception studies is a relatively young sub-discipline within the field of Classics that seeks to understand how the post-classical world has engaged with the classical canon. The study of American theatrical history, on the other hand, is almost as old as American theatre itself, with analyses of the development of American theatre produced almost concomitantly with the emergence of said theatre. This is not to say the field is static. Recent decades have seen theatrical historians increasingly question the parameters of their discipline, unlocking avenues of enquiry beyond that which was previously thought possible. The history of the ancient world's representation on the American stage affords an exciting intersection at which to unite these two strands of scholarship, an intersection in which it is possible to employ an experimental methodology at the cutting edge of literary criticism.

The post-classical existence of the classical canon was, until the turn of the millennium, studied under the classification of the 'classical tradition'. Early twentieth century scholarship such as Gilbert Murray's *The Classical Tradition in Poetry* (1927) and Gilbert Highet's *The Classical Tradition* (1949) emphasised the continuity of the Classics. They conceptualised the relationship between the classical and post-classical world as being broadly one-sided, with post-classical actors being the passive recipients of a corpus of material that is handed down from one historical context to the next.[13] Towards the end of the twentieth century, the Latinist Charles Martindale, looking towards the work of German literary theorist Hans Robert Jauss during the late 1960s that emphasised the role of the reader in interpreting a text, re-thought this relationship. Developing and applying Jauss' Reception Theory to the subject of post-classical engagement with the Classics, Martindale instead contended that modern interpretations of ancient texts are 'constructed by the chain of receptions through which their continued readability has been effected'.[14] Where Highet understood the reading of Classics in terms of hearing the voice of the author, Martindale instead posited it as a 'two-way process', in which past and present are placed in dialogue with each other.[15] Barbara Goff's *Classics and Colonialism* (2005) and surrounding works have further developed this idea, modelling the relationship between the classical and post-classical worlds in terms of push and pull. In contrast to Highet's understanding of the Classics as '*push*[ing] their way through history, independently powered by their own vigorous excellence', Goff identifies the alternate 'motive force of a critical mass of reappropriations, *pulling* the ancient texts forward into new situations'. 'There can be no push without pull', Goff writes, and any study of post-classical engagement with the Classics needs to account for both these factors. [16]

Building on Martindale's and Goff's work, figures such as Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray have worked to further refine and extend this approach. Their edited volume *A Companion to Classical*

[13] In his later monograph *The Immortal Profession* (1976), Highet described the texts he studied as '*minds* alive on the shelves. From each of them goes out its own voice'. By reading these texts, Highet claimed, 'one can call into range a voice far distant in time and space, and hear it speaking', Highet (1976).
[14] Martindale (1993) 7.
[15] Martindale (2007) 298.
[16] Goff (2007) 53.

Receptions (2008) included, by their own admission, an 'anarchic' collection of case studies ranging from Homer's influence on British First World War poetry, to Greek drama's reception in late twentieth-century South Africa, to Arabic translations of the Classics.[17] Volumes such as this have, to quote one of its reviewers, served to demonstrate the 'wide-ranging … possibilities of reception studies in multiple fields and in multiple literary and cultural periods'.[18] The field has continued to gain traction. Panels dedicated to some aspect of reception studies are now regular features at the Classical Association's annual conference.[19] In 2009, Oxford University Press launched the *Classical Receptions Journal*, an online periodical dedicated exclusively to the field of reception studies that is currently in its eleventh volume. Since 2014, Cambridge University Press' journal *Greece & Rome* has included a regular dedicated 'Reception' subject review section, outlining recent developments in the field.

With the wide-ranging research possibilities afforded by the field of reception studies now having been demonstrated, calls have more recently been issued for a greater degree of methodological rigour within the field. In *Greece & Rome*'s inaugural reception subject review, Katherine Harloe and Joanna Paul commented that the growing number of dedicated monographs being published was reflective of the growing 'confidence and rigour of new work in the field'.[20] Nevertheless, in 2017, Simon Goldhill's 'The Limits of the Case Study: Exemplarity and the Reception of Classical Literature' bemoaned the dependence on isolated case studies that continued to characterise much of the research being done within the field. The selection and exemplification of such case studies, Goldhill contended, was less indicative of their contemporary significance and more reflective of the 'politicized choices' of their selector. In selecting a subject for a case study academics are, according to Goldhill, making a 'critical decision … about what impacts are most relevant', each of them wearing a 'different set of blinkers' as they select examples that reflect the broader narrative of classicism to

[17] These are, respectively, Vandiver (2008); van Zyl Smit (2008); Etman (2008).
[18] Blevins (2009) 147.
[19] The 2016 conference in Edinburgh, for instance, featured panels on the 'Reception of Homer and Archaic Poetry', 'Classical Myth and Science Fiction', and 'Greek Tragedy and Reception'.
[20] Harloe and Paul (2014) 136.

which they subscribe.[21] Goldhill postulated that certain elements of classical reception are too broad-ranging to be exemplified in a single case study, and suggested the field resist the urge to closely analyse case studies in favour of a more comprehensive understanding informed by factors such as the contemporary 'circulation, dissemination, [and] prevalence' of the selected case study.[22] While other academics have echoed this request for reception studies to move 'beyond the case study', Goldhill's calls for a more holistic approach to the field remain unanswered.[23]

As more and more academics have turned their attention towards the field of reception studies, the body of research concerning the ancient world's reception in the United States has similarly expanded. Each year, multiple new studies into some aspect of the ancient world's reception in American culture, politics, and society are published. The importance of Thucydidean *realpolitik* during the Cold War, the emulation of Roman splendour in twentieth-century Las Vegas, and the presentation of the Roman Empire in American cinema have all been subjected to extensive and intelligent investigation over recent decades. In the year of 2016 alone, the *Classical Receptions Journal* hosted articles examining subjects ranging from Elvis Presley's imitation of Roman villas in his Graceland mansion, to the incorporation of Aesop's *Fables* into the radical politics of 1930s New York.[24]

This interest has recently begun to turn towards the nation's formative decades. The Classics hold a highly visible position throughout American politics and culture during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Classical pseudonyms were omnipresent throughout print culture, the Classics dominated curricula across all levels of American education, and neoclassicism served as the dominant mode of artistic and architectural expression. Yet, by the mid twentieth century only minor

[21] As Goldhill says, 'To decide that the history of classical scholarship is best expressed as a conversation over time by great men about shared questions of textual criticism may seem naïve, but it cannot be thought innocent. To see the study of Classics, alternatively, through the history of educational reform is a different set of blinkers that both reveals and obscures the lineaments of the field. To see it through religion would be a further determining narrative. And so on'. Goldhill (2017) 425-6.
[22] Goldhill (2017) 427.
[23] *Classics in Extremis* (2019) similarly expressed a desire to move 'beyond individual case studies to develop fresh methodologies and perspectives on the study of classical reception', Richardson (2019).
[24] Respectively, these are Tronchin (2016) 155-90; Monoson (2016) 90-113.

exploratory work into the subject had been performed. Firstly, in between studying Franco-American diplomatic relationships during the Revolutionary War, Gilbert Chinard had dedicated a 1940 article to examining the influence of Polybius' political philosophy on the American constitution.[25] Secondly, while directing the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. and studying the literary habits of the colonial gentry, Louis B. Wright had produced an eleven-page article in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*'s 1943 edition to commemorate the bicentennial of Thomas Jefferson's birth that detailed Jefferson's readings of classical literature.[26] Little else of note had been produced on the subject up to that point.

In 1955 Douglass Adair, a historian of Enlightenment-era republican ideology, railed against this sparse treatment of the subject, decrying in an issue of *William and Mary Quarterly* that 'there is not even a beginning on the Classics in Revolutionary America'.[27] Bernard Bailyn, that great titan of American intellectual history, remained sceptical of the importance of the subject and resisted Adair's call to arms. Bailyn declared in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967) that while 'the Classics of the ancient world are everywhere in the literature of the Revolution, … they are everywhere illustrative, not determinative, of thought'.[28] Others, however, took up Adair's challenge with aplomb. American classicists such as Richard Gummere and Meyer Reinhold turned their attention to the subject in subsequent decades. Gummere produced two monographs that examined how the founding fathers and other colonial gentry were influenced by their readings of the Classics: *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition* (1963) and *Seven Wise Men of Colonial America* (1967). Throughout the 1960s and 70s Reinhold produced multiple articles and monographs examining the changing attitudes to classical learning shown by the American colleges during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He would also coin the phrase 'Classica Americana' to

[25] Chinard (1940) 38-58.
[26] Wright (1943) 223-33.
[27] Adair (1955) 289.
[28] Bailyn (1967) 26.

describe the peculiar species of classical engagement that he was identifying within American intellectual culture.[29]

The increasing interest in the subject is reflected in its representation in academic conferences. The *Conference on Classical Traditions in Early America*, held at the University of Michigan in 1970, was dedicated exclusively to the topic of the ancient world's reception in early America. Two years later, the 1972 meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States in Dickinson College, Pennsylvania dedicated almost its entire program to papers discussing classical influences on early America.[30] Buoyed by the arguments of J.G.A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), which demonstrated, amongst other things, the foundational importance of the ideal of classical virtue to Enlightenment-era political philosophy, this field has gained further momentum. Even Gordon Wood, Bernard Bailyn's former doctoral student, would eventually contradict his teacher's scepticism concerning the importance of the Classics in early American intellectual history. In his article 'Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution' (1990), Wood declared that 'the writings of classical antiquity provided more than window-dressing' to America's governing class and were instead 'the principal source of their public morality and values'.[31] David J. Bederman assembled much of this body of research into his *Classical Foundations of the American Constitution* (2011). *Classical Foundations* comprehensively examines the prominence of the Classics in early American intellectual culture, the founding generation's relationship with classical political philosophy, and the application of that philosophy in the young nation. It would seem that an almost complete picture of the Classics' influence on early American political culture has been reached.

These studies, however, have remained narrowly focused on the political and intellectual culture of America's ruling class; the founding fathers, and has struggled to engage with wider American society's relationship with the classical tradition. Gummere's *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical*

[29] Reinhold outlined the term in his monograph *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (1984).
[30] Reinhold (1973) 1-3.
[31] Wood (1990) 24-5.

Tradition is certainly an example of fastidious and well-researched scholarship. Yet, it is largely biographical and antiquarian in character, with chapters examining subjects such as 'William Byrd and Samuel Sewall: Two Diarists in the Ancient Tradition', 'Logan, Franklin, Bartam: Humanist, Pragmatist, Platonist', and 'Jonathan Boucher, Toryissimus' reflecting the work's over-arching interest in the literary and intellectual culture of America's political elites. Bederman's recent 2011 work similarly retains a close, legalistic focus on the republican philosophy underpinning the design of the United States constitution by James Madison and the other fifty-four delegates who attended the 1787 constitutional convention that met in Philadelphia.

In line with the wider growth of interest of the ancient world's reception in American popular culture and literature, this narrow focus has begun to broaden out in recent years. Carl Richards' *The Golden Age of the Classics in America: Greece, Rome, and the Antebellum United States* (2009) has shown how the prominence of classical material in antebellum print culture and public oratory enabled Americans outside of the exclusive ranks of the political elite to freely engage with the classical tradition. Margaret Malamud's *Ancient Rome and Modern America* (2009) examined the incorporation of Roman models into American national self-image, dedicating an entire chapter to 'Working Men's Heroes' in the antebellum United States. She further built on this work in her *African Americans and the Classics* (2016), which showed how African Americans were able to incorporate their own vision of the Classics throughout their struggles for emancipation, despite exclusion from the traditional streams of classical learning. Caroline Winterer's *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (2007) investigated the relationship of female Americans with the Classics. Through this, she demonstrated the lively 'vernacular classical tradition' of affordable translations, adaptations, and histories that flourished from the eighteenth century onwards and widened the accessibility of the Classics. These works have built on the findings of figures such as Gummere, Reinhold, and Bederman to demonstrate that the sophisticated and formative engagement with the Classics demonstrated by the young nation's political elite was not unique to the founding

fathers, but present throughout all aspects of American society. The doors have been opened for further research into wider American engagement with the Classics.

Within the field of American studies and the history of American theatre, a similar revolution in scholarship has taken place. American actors, playwrights, and managers, characteristic of their profession, have proven themselves more than happy to record their experiences and achievements for posterity, and have done so with all the braggadocio that one might expect when actors are asked to write their own histories. This has ensured that, beginning with William Dunlap's *History of the American Theater* (1832), histories of America's theatrical tradition have been produced almost concomitantly with the emergence of said tradition. These histories are highly personal and almost always biographical in nature. Dunlap, having served as an actor, playwright, and manager of New York's Park Theatre for upwards of thirty years, regularly intersperses his *History* with personal anecdotes from his time in the theatre, invectives upon his dramatic rivals, and excuses for his various financial and dramatic failures.[32] Noah Ludlow, a frontier actor and manager who recorded his experiences in the *Dramatic Life as I Found It: A Record of Personal Experience* (1880), makes sure to take time out of outlining his 1817 season in Nashville to record the popularity he experienced in southern high society and how he mingled with 'one or two prominent citizens' including Sam Houston and John Henry Eaton.[33] Those texts that do display more historical rigour usually maintain a tight geographical focus and were published primarily as local interest pieces. William Warland Clapp's *A Record of the Boston Stage* (1853), for instance, was a collection of short articles that Clapp had previously published in the *Boston Evening Gazette* outlining the history of different theatrical institutions in his city.

Despite this, these texts offer an invaluable bank of knowledge concerning the on-the-ground goings-on of theatres during the period in question. They give valuable details of which plays depicting the

[32] Dunlap (1832) 222-3, for instance, attributes blame to an actor and certain audience members for the failure of the play *André*, which was written by Dunlap in 1798.
[33] Ludlow (1880) 120.

Classics were being performed and when, what happened during those performances, and how they were received by audiences. They also offer a unique insight into the ideology and goals, both personal and artistic, of those involved in the industry. William Dunlap, for instance, was an avid believer in the power of theatre as one of the most 'effective instruments for promoting the best interests of man' and a prominent activist in the post-revolutionary movement to promote a theatrical tradition that reflected America's republican sensibilities.[34] This is reflected in his *History*. His preface takes the form of a four-page discussion of the English actor Colley Cibber's *Apology* (1740) and the arguments it makes in defence of the theatre, he dedicates entire chapters to discussing the present moral condition of the theatre and offering proposals for its improvement, and he concludes his work by decrying the notion that theatres had become 'open marts of vice and portals to destruction'.[35]

These relatively contemporary accounts set the tone for subsequent treatments of the subject during the early- to mid-twentieth century. Building on the materials provided by Dunlap and his peers, texts such as George Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* (1928) present an annalistic and antiquarian account of New York's stage history. These studies are rigorously researched and provide as near a complete account of their subject area as can be produced given the extant source material. However, they almost invariably adhere to the framework of enquiry established by Dunlap, their investigation rarely straying beyond the themes upon which Dunlap was occupied. Dunlap's anxiousness concerning the morality of his trade finds itself re-trodden throughout the various histories of the subject produced during the mid-twentieth century. Arthur Hobson Quinn's *A History of the American Drama* (1951) and Hugh Rankin's *The Theater in Colonial America* (1965) are each meticulous and thorough treatments of their subject. Yet, adhering to Dunlap's avenues of interest, they both open with extended discussions of the contested morality or immorality of the theatre, the motives of its

[34] Dunlap (1832) 1.
[35] Ibid. v-viii; 65-76; 403-6.

opponents, and the potential legitimacy of their fears, discussions that the countless subsequent treatments would further re-tread.[36]

This era of scholarship was also primarily interested in studying the theatre for its own sake, as a discrete phenomenon that is interesting in of itself. Their investigations almost exclusively focus on the literary and dramatic implications of the processes they are identifying, with little effort to link these findings into wider developments occurring within the American nation. Brooks McNamara's *The American Playhouse in the Eighteenth Century* (1969), for instance, offers a comprehensive architectural history of playhouse design throughout the eighteenth century that is well supported by archival and archaeological research. His history identifies several cases in which classical models have been fundamental in underpinning and informing the designs of American playhouses.[37] Yet he makes little effort to link these architectural phenomena to the broader phenomenon of American neoclassicism and its relationship to the emergence and development of American national identity.

The history of American drama is highly colourful and spotted with all manner of weird and wonderful characters and occasions that are certainly interesting in of themselves. But, to study the emergence of American drama as a discrete and isolated phenomenon denies its broader relevance to wider trends occurring within American culture and society. It is to presume that activities within the playhouse have no implications for developments outside of it. It is to downplay the unique role that theatrical performance has played in the formation of the United States as we recognise it today.

Fortunately, within the last few decades this has all changed. A series of studies that examine the broader civic, rather than purely literary, implications of America's emerging theatrical tradition have opened the door to a whole new sphere of scholarship. Lawrence Levine's landmark text *Highbrow-Lowbrow* (1988) studied the development of the theatre in terms of its relationship to America's

[36] Quinn (1951) 1-3; Rankin (1965) 1-3.
[37] He regularly identifies cases in which theatres have displayed Latin mottoes or imitated architectural features of ancient theatres, such as the proscenium arch, McNamara (1969) 8, 41, 43, 61.

emerging class structure.[38] Heather Nathans' *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson* (2003) shows how the heterogeneous development of theatres across different urban centres reflected the diverse ideals of American nationalism that existed within the young nation. Nathans further built on this in *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage* (2009), which examines how public debates over slavery and emancipation were reflected on the stage. Jeffrey Richards' *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (2005) studied the theatre's relationship to post-revolutionary America's emerging national identity and comprehensively demonstrated the formative role that performance culture played on the development of the young nation. Recently, Jason Shaffer's *Performing Patriotism* (2007) showed how performance culture provided and codified the language with which patriotism was expressed in the young nation. Academia has never been more conscious of the broader political significance of early American theatre than it is at present.

These texts all identify and discuss important episodes within the Classics' reception on the American stage. Each of them dedicate space to discussing *Cato* and its Valley Forge performance.[39] Some discuss examples of Shakespeare's Roman plays and their presentation in early America.[40] Their discussions of these examples are intelligent and well-argued. Yet, they present the Classics on stage as a series of unconnected episodes, an occasional interruption to the usual theatrical fare of more contemporaneously-set material.

These two strands of scholarship – the first relating to classical reception studies and the formative influence of the classical tradition upon the progress of early American history, and the second relating to theatre studies and the broader significance of theatrical history outside of the playhouse – have recently begun to coalesce. Discussions of the representation of the ancient world on the early American stage have long been limited to isolated discussions of individual episodes or texts. Joseph Addison's *Cato* and its Valley Forge performance, for instance, have been the subjects of dozens of

[38] Levine further discusses this topic in his various discussions of Shakespeare's reception in the United States, including Levine (1984) 34-66; (2001) 32-50.
[39] Shaffer (2007) 59-65; Nathans (2003) 37; Richards (2005) 60.
[40] Levine (2001) passim.

articles that largely re-tread the same points concerning classical virtue and republican discourse. Discussion has only just begun to broaden beyond this single case study. Helene Foley's *Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the American Stage* (2012) has looked at performances of Greek tragedies from the nineteenth century onwards and has demonstrated, amongst other things, the roles played by college theatre groups in developing and adapting classical tragedy for American audiences.[41] More recently, Sarah Chinn's *Spectacular Men* (2017), which looked at the presentation of race, gender, and nationhood on the early American stage, included a chapter titled 'Tyrants, Republicans, and Rebels: Performing Roman Masculinities'.[42] By examining some of the more prominent examples of plays set specifically in ancient Rome that were performed and written in America during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Chinn was able to identify ways in which the presentation of ancient Rome on stage reflected changing ideals of masculinity in early America. This tentative blending of academic strands has, though still in its infancy, already produced exciting results and these various case studies have demonstrated the wealth of source material available. These findings are, however, the tip of the iceberg in terms of this subject's research potential. Just as Simon Goldhill has called for scholars within the field of classical reception studies to move beyond their dependence on the 'case study', the tantalising glimpses offered in these examples invite a more comprehensive investigation into the reception of the classical world in American theatrical life.

Finally, a third development, thus far unrelated to the fields of reception studies and theatre studies, has been occurring within the field of literary studies. Pioneered by Italian literary scholar Franco Moretti, a wholly novel approach titled 'distant reading' looks towards the social sciences, rather than humanities, for methodological inspiration. Originally outlined the approach in Moretti's article 'Conjectures on World Literature' (2000) in *New Left Review*, distant reading rejects the close readings of exceptional texts that are the traditional mainstay of literary studies. Citing historians of the *Annales* school such as Krzystof Pomian, Moretti accuses such an approach of being idiographic and rendering

[41] Foley (2012) 32.
[42] Chinn (2017a) 171-209.

literary historians as 'collector[s] of rare and curious works'.[43] Building on the *longue-durée* and world systems analysis approaches of the *Annales* school, Moretti advocates instead for the statistical analysis of large-scale quantitative data sets. In Moretti's field of nineteenth-century novels, this means avoiding close readings of individual exemplary texts in favour of analysing the rate at which thousands of novels of different genres were published. Using novels' titles to identify their genre, Moretti has studied the frequency with which different literary genres were published in different regions over an extended period. This data has allowed him to chart the rises and falls of different genres and, building on Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, Moretti has generated the model of the 'cultural ecosystem'. Genres survive if they are read and disappear if they are not, he reasons. If a genre disappears, it is because its readers have disappeared. Just as natural selection dictates the development or extinction of biological organisms, the pressure of 'cultural selection' dictates the survival of different literary genres.[44] By abstracting thousands of novels down into a data set, Moretti believes he can develop 'a sharper sense of their overall interconnection', and offer a more 'scientific' approach to literary history.[45]

Moretti's approach has made a noticeable splash, both inside and outside of the academy. New York University's Alexander Galloway has described Moretti's work as 'an important historical shift in the humanities', while the *New York Times* has published multiple articles lauding Moretti and revelling in the irony of a literature Professor 'urging his colleagues to stop reading books'.[46] This data-led approach has begun to be employed across numerous different disciplines and Moretti has founded and leads the Stanford Literary Lab to disseminate and showcase its possibilities.[47] Yet, distant reading is not without its flaws, or its detractors.

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[43] Moretti (2007) 3.
[44] Ibid. 72.
[45] Ibid. 1.
[46] Galloway (2013); Schulz (24/06/2011); Schuessler (30/10/2017).
[47] In 2012, the Classics department in Moretti's home institution of Stanford launched *Orbis*, a geospatial network model of the ancient world that uses a data-led approach to map connectivity between different regions of the ancient world.

Although praising the 'new kinds of access to interpretation' and 'focus on noncanonical literature' Moretti offers, his approach has been called a 'blunt hermeneutic instrument' guilty of 'astonishing generalisations'.[48] His abstraction of novels down to their genre based solely on their title has been a particular subject of criticism. Katie Trumpener's 'Critical response' (2013) to distant reading has highlighted numerous instances where Moretti has not only elided texts' sub-generic distinctions, but in some cases completely misidentified their genre. For example, based on the inclusion of the word 'tale' in its title, Moretti has categorized texts such as James Hogg's *Tales of the Wars of Montrose* (1835) as belonging to the genre of 'Tales'. However, when Trumpener read several of these texts it became apparent that they could more accurately categorized as historical novels, despite bearing the word 'tale' in their titles. Trumpener argues 'the same generic designation' could describe 'completely different' texts, and concludes by advising her peers to 'forego counting to stay in the library'.[49]

Despite these apparent flaws, distant reading is not as incompatible with the close readings and diachronic studies that characterise contemporary literary criticism as both Moretti and his critics seem to believe. The reception of the ancient world on the American stage, a novel blending of previously distinct disciplines, provides an opportune setting to demonstrate the potential synergy of these approaches. With its emphasis on quantitative data and broad-ranging, macroscopic investigation, distant reading offers a possible antidote to the over-reliance on decontextualized case studies that Simon Goldhill bemoans as characterising modern classical reception studies. If developed and applied to the ancient world's reception on the early American stage, it offers the potential to link together the disparate case studies into a cohesive history of the reception of classical narratives in the performance and literary culture of the Enlightenment-era Western world. In a field that remains dominated by reiterative close readings of Addison's *Cato*, a holistic approach that incorporates Morettian quantitative analysis alongside traditional methods of literary and historical criticism has

[48] Boot (2014) 154; Fitzpatrick (2013); Trumpener (2009) 170.
[49] Trumpener (2009) 164, 171.

the potential to identify and offer up wholly original lines of questioning and consolidate the progress made across all three of these fields.

0.2 Research Questions

A number of research questions will guide this novel blending of disciplines and approaches. Firstly, this thesis will seek to identify and understand the broad historical patterns present in the frequencies with which different depictions of the ancient world were performed in America drama. The exploratory forays into the ancient world's representation on the stage that have been produced in the works of Foley and Chinn have largely relied on taking the texts of prominent plays or notable performances as case studies and subjecting them to close examination. This is, of course, a perfectly valid means of historical enquiry. Foley's chapter discussing American performances of Euripides' *Medea* in *Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the American Stage* has, for instance, shown how Euripides' play has been diversely re-imagined as a commentary upon contemporary gender politics, the assimilation of east Asian immigrants to the United States, and the Israel-Palestine conflict.[50] Chinn's *Spectacular Men* compared the titular characters in Joseph Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy* (1713) and John Howard Payne's *Brutus; or, The Fall of Tarquin* (1818) to demonstrate how Roman history can be used to explore diverse and contradictory ideals of masculinity.[51] Yet, this focus on studying individual texts and performances is of limited use for understanding the broader tradition of representing the ancient world on stage that they inhabited. The various performances identified by Foley, while interesting and innovative re-imaginings of an ancient text, were largely one-off affairs, often performed within college campuses or other such exclusive contexts. Chinn's contrast of the texts of *Cato* and *Brutus*, while a well-reasoned and persuasive textual analysis, does not take into account the differing popularities and performance contexts of these two plays and how that might affect their reception by audiences. How often were these different plays actually being performed? How did their

[50] Foley (2012) 186-218.
[51] Chinn (2017a) 171-209.

popularity vary over time? Were there regional variations in the frequency with which different plays were performed? Did different theatres within the same city present complementary or contradictory versions of the ancient world? By tracking the relative frequencies with which these plays were performed over the period in question, it will be possible to examine how the broader reception of the classical tradition on the American stage developed over time and generate an image of the wider theatrical landscape that individual case studies inhabited.

By looking closely at the individual plays, their advertising materials and performance contexts, and the manner in which they were received by their audiences, this thesis will further investigate the relationship between these representations of the classical past and audiences' understanding of their own history, society, and identity. By studying accounts and reviews of performances, discussions of plays in print culture, and the details of their performance contexts, it will show how American managers, playwrights, and audiences used representations of the ancient world as a lens through which to understand their own circumstances. More than that though, it will show that this was not a one-way exchange. Americans were not passive recipients of a fixed classical corpus into which they gazed for wisdom. Rather, the classical tradition proved a malleable body of material into which audiences projected their own hopes, anxieties, and hang-ups and, in the process, produced a vision of the ancient world that reflected their own particular circumstances. By pursuing this line of enquiry, this thesis will explore the extent to which representations of the Classics both reflected and shaped the development of American national identity.

Developing this point, it will be necessary to ask why representations of the classical world were used at all. What motivated managers and playwrights to produce plays set in the ancient world, and audiences to attend them, rather than those drawing from contemporary events or any other period of history? What unique dramatic possibilities did representations of the Graeco-Roman world offer that could not be found elsewhere? Alternatively, what were the limitations of the ancient world as a setting? What dramatic requirements were such plays unable to fulfil? By incorporating Barbara Goff's

'push-pull' model of classical reception into this investigation, it will be possible to investigate the driving forces behind the reception of classical narratives in American drama. Was this survival of the classical tradition in theatre powered by the classical texts 'pushing' their way forward through history, fuelled by their own excellence, or rather were they being 'pulled' forward into new situations by, as Goff would say, a 'critical mass of reappropriations'.[52] In order to answer these questions, it will be necessary to not only consider the plays in question, but also their place in America's broader theatrical tradition and relation to non-classical plays that found popularity on the stage.

Finally, where did this engagement with the Classics within the theatrical sphere fit into the wider reception of the ancient world in early American society and the Enlightenment-era Atlantic world at large? For example, is there any relationship between dramatic representations of antiquity and the United States' broader political imitation of ancient models? Can the trends and patterns identifiable within eighteenth and nineteenth century theatre be understood as symptomatic or even informative of wider instances of classical reception in the Enlightenment-era Western world? Works such as Mark Bradley's volume *Classics and British Imperialism* (2010) have shown how classical models became incorporated into and exerted a formative influence on British imperial identity. How did American engagement with the Graeco-Roman world differ from that of their colonial metropolis? Given that American theatres were quite often performing British-written texts based on classical source material, did the question of ownership of the Classics ever emerge? Did differing trans-Atlantic interpretations of the Classics ever contest one another's legitimacy and, if so, how was such a contest resolved? Investigating these questions will enable this thesis to situate its findings concerning the ancient world's representation on the American stage within the growing pool of research concerning the reception of the ancient world in the politics, culture, and society of the Enlightenment-era western world.

[52] Goff (2007) 53.

0.3 Research Methods

In order to explore these questions, this thesis will adopt a three-stranded methodology that integrates aspects of distant reading, diachronic study, and close textual analysis into one holistic approach. This methodology will exploit the best qualities of these three approaches in order to not only shed light on the rich tradition of classical engagement that existed in early American theatres, but also offer a novel approach to the field of classical reception studies. It will demonstrate that Moretti's technique of distant reading, far from being incompatible with the traditional techniques of literary criticism, can be used to enhance them meaningfully. In doing so, it will move the approaches of classical reception scholarship beyond the analysis of isolated case studies and towards a comprehensive understanding of the ancient world's reception in post-classical politics and culture.

The broadest, distant reading aspect of this approach is provided by the results of a large-scale data collection exercise with which I commenced this project in 2016. After first identifying over one hundred plays that represent events from the classical canon or use the ancient world as a setting that were performed in the early United States, an extensive database of performances of these plays was produced. This database includes over two-and-a-half thousand entries that record the date, venue, lead actor, and other such information that relates to the performances of these plays. Through a statistical analysis of this data, it is possible to chart the number of performances that different plays received over time, map out how the performance frequencies of plays differed across the country, and identify plays that became favourites of particular theatres or actors. This data allows this thesis to offer the first quantitative analysis of the broad trends present in the frequencies with which different representations of the ancient world were performed over the century in question.

This quantitative data enables discussion of the subject to move beyond the confines of anecdotal evidence and isolated examples. On numerous occasions, scholars have repeated the claim that *Cato* was the most popular play of the eighteenth century, without being able to offer any evidence beyond examples of its Valley Forge performance and quotations by notable political figures to support this

claim.[53] In doing so they have been guilty of exactly the crime that Krzysztof Pomian accused pre-*Annales* school historians of: being idiographs who disregard the normal in favour of the extraordinary.[54] More than that, they have used the extraordinary as a source from which to infer the norm. Rather than using the example of a single notable performance to extrapolate that a play received vague nation-wide acclaim, this database enables a comprehensive understanding of how often a given play was being staged over a period in question. This data can, in turn, be used to evaluate and understand the significance of different plays and properly contextualise exceptional performances such as the Valley Forge *Cato* within the broader landscape of American theatrical culture, thus enriching any analysis of such exceptional moments.

Just as Moretti is able to infer shifts in the cultural ecology and reader preferences of nineteenth-century Britain from the rises and falls of different literary genres, the peaks and troughs in popularity of different plays can be used to identify changes in the tastes of American audiences. If a newly-written play has been found to have enjoyed only one or two performances in a theatre before being seemingly shelved for good, it can be considered to have failed to strike a chord with audiences and that demand was insufficient for future revivals. Whereas if a play, perhaps one that has been on the peripheries of the repertoire for several years, experiences a sudden growth in the number of performances it receives over a set number of years, the opposite can be suggested. The piece attracted large enough audiences and generated sufficient profit as to warrant further repeat performances. The reasons for this growth in popularity could be manifold. Perhaps its themes and ideals were particularly relevant to contemporary developments in American politics and society. Perhaps there was a broader growth in interest in whichever element of the classical world it took as its subject matter that piqued audiences' interest in the play. Perhaps recent innovations in stage

[53] Ford (1899) 1-2 calls *Cato* 'most popular play in America during a large part of Washington's life'; Longmore (1988) 173 states that 'The Tragedy of *Cato* was the most popular … play in the American colonies throughout the eighteenth century'; Wills (1984) 137 describes *Cato* as 'the most popular [play] in eighteenth-century America'.

[54] Pomian is discussed in Moretti (2007) 3.

technology made the play slightly cheaper to stage. Or, perhaps even one actor or actress proved particularly effective in one of the play's roles. The results of this data will enable these questions to be identified and investigated with a solid grounding in the day-to-day activities of the theatres.

With this macroscopic view established, these results have then been used to inform a diachronic historical analysis that seeks to explain and understand the trends revealed in the data within the context of their immediate historical period. The data may have revealed, for instance, that performances relating to some aspect of the life of Alexander the Great experienced a statistically significant surge in popularity in New York during the 1810s. In order to understand the causes and implications of this change in the popular repertoire, a periodized historical analysis will situate these developments within the immediate history of the years in which they occurred.

As part of this approach, the century being studied has been broken down into four rough periods that are characterised by particular trends in the presentation of the Graeco-Roman world that have emerged. These four periods cover the 1730s to the 1770s, the 1770s to the 1790s, the 1800s to the 1820s, and the 1820s to the 1830s, with a certain degree of bleed-over accepted given the natural indiscretion of such categorization. The identification of these periods was a dialectical process, balancing the accepted periodization of early American history with the statistical trends that emerged out of the results of the distant reading tier of analysis. In fact, the results of the quantitative data analysis have mapped neatly onto the categorizations typically employed by early American cultural and political historians, so providing validation to these distinctions.

This diachronic approach will examine the events and wider developments of these decades, both in terms of American performance culture and public discourse at large. First-hand accounts, reviews of performances, advertising materials, photographs and drawings, and other such extant evidence from the period will be studied in order to understand the drivers of the changes that have been identified within the data. Unlike many of the histories of American theatrical culture that were introduced in the earlier summary of historiography concerning the subject, this analysis of historical developments

will be fully grounded in the statistical facts concerning the relative popularity of different plays and the different demographics of audience to which they appealed.

The final strand of this investigation is a focused close reading of a select number of plays that, based on the findings of the previous two tiers of investigation, have been identified as particularly emblematic, causative, or illuminative of the wider changes in how the Classics were presented on stage. These are often the plays drawing on classical source material that were most frequently performed during one of the periods identified during the distant reading and diachronic tiers of enquiry. These plays became the most commonly-used medium through which the classical world were presented on stage, typifying the way in which audiences engaged with the classical tradition. For the bulk of this century, these exceptionally popular plays were British imports, written for the London stage and then transported across the Atlantic, some of them upwards of a century old when they experienced their exceptional American success. By subjecting these emblematic plays to a close textual analysis and investigating how they were modified, performed, and received in the United States, it will be possible to offer a precise and focused case study of the broader trends identified in the previous two tiers of research. This close analysis will look at how the play in question adapted and presented the ancient source material that it took as its basis, the social and political ideals it presented, and its performance contexts and reception within the United States. In this, it will utilise not only the text of the play but also contemporary documents, such as reviews and diary entries, relating to its performance within the United States.

Such close readings have been employed before in the study of the representation of the ancient world on the early American stage. Plays such as Addison's *Cato* have been subjected to numerous detailed close readings along all manner of themes.[55] Yet, these analyses are largely reliant on anecdotal pieces of evidence, such as *Cato*'s notable Valley Forge performance and the regular

[55] Julie Ellison's *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (1999), for instance, explores the relationship between *Cato* and the public expression of feeling in Anglo-American political culture.

references made to it by certain founding fathers, as indeterminate proof of the play's significance in early America and evidence of how it was received. Unaware of the exact nature and scale of the play's popularity, or of its position within the nation's wider dramatic tradition, the sophistication of these studies are limited in terms of the broader context they can provide. Informed by the quantitative and diachronic tiers of investigation, these analyses of exceptional texts will be situated within a grounded understanding of the realities and context of their dissemination.

Rather than simply identifying broad changes in the cultural landscape and inferring possible causes or comparing the presentation of differing political ideals in two texts decades apart, this thesis will incorporate these various approaches into one cohesive approach to cultural history and classical reception studies. By uniting quantitative data concerning the popularity of different plays with qualitative close readings of statistically significant plays that are informed by an awareness of their immediate historical context, it will be possible to understand the unique conditions of the ancient world's reception in American political and cultural history. Individual texts and artefacts can be discussed within the quantitative reality of their dissemination. Examinations of individual historical periods can be mapped onto an understanding of their position within the broader *longue-durée* of cultural history. Analyses of macro-statistical data can be holistically informed by the practicalities of an individual datum's occurrence. This thesis employs an experimental research methodology and, by producing a comprehensive analysis of the ancient world's reception on the early American stage, offers proof of its effectiveness.

0.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises five chapters that trace the ancient world's reception on the American stage from its first instance, the 1732 performance of *Cato*, to the premiere of Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* in 1831. They will show how over the course of this century, a tradition of representing the ancient world emerged that was a particular product of the cultural circumstances in which it developed – a tradition that was distinctly and uniquely American.

The first chapter will discuss the extensive data collection and distant reading exercise that examines the performance frequencies of different plays during the entire century in question. After first outlining the methodology by which the data was collected and processed, as well as the considerations that must be taken into account when using the data, this chapter will begin to discuss the conclusions that can be drawn from it. The results of this exercise in distant reading will be discussed and the broad trends present in the development of American theatrical culture outlined. Statistically significant plays will be identified. Year-by-year accounts of performances will reveal the points at which plays began to rise or fall in popularity. Breaking down different plays' popularity according to factors such as region, venue, and even the lead actor will enable a sophisticated understanding of different plays' popularities. This novel use of quantitative analysis not only ensures that subsequent discussion is contextualised within the broader theatrical landscape, but also offers a unique insight into *longue-durée* of the ancient world's reception on American stages.

Building on this unique foundation, the subsequent chapters develop the results of this distant reading exercise and integrate them into a qualitative discussion of the four periods that it has identified. Each of these chapters will culminate in a close reading of an individual play deemed to be particularly significant for understanding the reception of the Classics on stage during that period.

The second chapter examines the formative years of American drama during the colonial period. It studies the period from the first stirrings of theatrical activity during the early eighteenth century to the 1774 ban issued by the First Continental Congress, which prompted an exodus of the various professional theatrical troupes that had made the thirteen colonies their home. This chapter is the shortest of the five offered within this thesis, reflecting the fact that theatrical infrastructure during this period was relatively rudimentary and performances infrequent when compared to later periods. The half-century between the first performance of *Cato* in 1732 and the 1774 ban saw numerous significant wider developments in American society: the emergence of a gentrified political class that distinguished itself from the *hoi polloi* of colonial society, the development of colonial governmental

institutions that variously looked to different and contrasting examples from the old world for models, the emergence of a shared sense of cultural identity amongst the otherwise diverse and heterogeneous colonies, and, perhaps most importantly, the colonies' ultimate political separation from Great Britain. This chapter challenges two commonly held notions about colonial-era theatre and its handling of classical source material: firstly, that plays such as Addison's *Cato*, with their didactic and proselytizing emphasis on exemplary Roman patriarchs, dominated the popular stage, and secondly, that American dramatic infrastructure was so rudimentary as to preclude a stratification of theatrical experience accordance to class. Instead, it presents a wholly different view of colonial-era theatrical experience. It first highlights the importance of David Garrick's little-known *Lethe; or, Aesop in the Shades* (1740) as an example of how representations of the classical canon, by drawing on a ubiquitously recognisable corpus of material, were able to cut across the cultural boundaries dividing the otherwise heterogeneous colonies. It then contends that a distinct dramatic tradition existed within the colleges, dramatic societies, and other elite spaces of early America, and that this tradition offered a wholly dissimilar vision of the ancient world to that offered to the public by professional theatrical companies. Finally, it explores the relationship between these phenomena and the wider developments of the era.

The following chapter examines developments from 1774 to the end of the century during which, having won independence, Americans of all stripes were faced with the challenge of defining the character of their new nation. After first dividing colonial society according to loyalist and patriot, independence introduced a new form of political factionalism to post-Revolutionary America. As Federalist and Anti-Federalist groups clashed in their different visions of American nationhood, the theatre soon found the perils of wartime preferable to those of peacetime. Placed under unprecedented pressure to reflect the political and cultural sensibilities of their audiences, even if the audiences themselves had not yet decided what those sensibilities were, theatres were left vulnerable to considerable controversy should they fail to reflect a consensus that had not yet been decided. This tumultuous period of self-realisation closed with the death of George Washington in December of

1799 and the opportunity to put to rest, alongside their first President, many of the controversies of this quarter-century. The funerary performances and public displays of mourning that surrounded the death of one of the nearest things that Americans had to a consensus figure, provide a unique window into the role that the Classics played in the building of American national identity. Taking William Whitehead's tragedy of *The Roman Father* (1750) as a case study, this chapter shows how staging the ancient world became a means to escape the partisan contests of the time, while still performing materials that were politically relevant to their audiences. This case study shows how contemporary Enlightenment ideals of gendered political participation were mapped onto the classical world, and how theatrical representations of that world informed and reflected a broader neoclassicism that was becoming endemic to the young nation.

Washington's death in December of 1799 provides a natural break between these chapters, not only because of its proximity to the turn of the century, but also because of the tangible shift in theatrical repertoire that occurred after his death. Thomas Jefferson's success in the election of 1800 and the democratisation, demographic shifts, and national expansions that followed over the next two decades fundamentally altered how Americans experienced antiquity on stage. As political and intellectual leaders drew increasingly anxious parallels between the declines and falls of various ancient polities and the apparent trajectory of their own civilization, theatre managers did almost the exact opposite. With the entertainment sector having become ever more varied and competitive, managers turned to ever greater and broader spectacle in order to attract a crowd. The Classics became the prime venue for this celebration of excess as managers became more confident in modifying and adapting texts set in the ancient world in order to suit the interests of their patrons. This chapter takes as a case study Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander the Great; or, The Rival Queens* (1677), an aged play depicting the final days of Alexander the Great that experienced an unlikely surge in popularity during these two decades. This text's American reception reflects the relationship between the increasingly expansionist ambitions of the American nation and the classical models to which they aspired. It shows that, while certain sections of American society were pessimistically reading Edward

Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) as a sign of things to come, the broader theatre-going population was instead celebrating the very grandeur and excess that so many feared.

Finally, chapter five examines the turbulent 1820s and the developments that culminated in the writing, premiere, and runaway success of Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* in 1831. This decade is more broadly characterised by the populist politics, heightened class-consciousness, and anti-Indian sentiment that accompanied the rise of Andrew Jackson to the office of President. As urbanisation, immigration, and industrialisation altered the face of American society, so too did the classical models that were emulated change, both inside and outside of the playhouse. This chapter will investigate how, as American playwrights began to experience greater popular success, they became increasingly confident in questioning the conventional styles and forms of British drama. It will show how changes in the economic organisation of theatres and the rise of so-called 'star actors' influenced the presentation of the ancient world and reinforced the importance of class identity in the playhouse. Examples including James Sheridan Knowles' *Virginius; or, The Liberation of Rome* (1820) and John Banim's *Damon and Pythias* (1821) will be introduced to demonstrate how different star actors could offer distinct interpretations of the same text, reflecting their own histrionic talents and the expectations of the audiences that they cultivated. This chapter ultimately shows how this rise in the power of star actors, combined with the wider social and economic developments of Jacksonian America, both influenced and enabled the production of Robert Montgomery Bird's blockbuster hit *The Gladiator*. *The Gladiator* is studied alongside *Pelopidas*, Bird's now forgotten abortive first attempt at an ancient play that went unperformed as it was deemed an unsuitable use of the star actor's talents. Comparing *Pelopidas* with *The Gladiator*, which Bird wrote explicitly with the star actor in question in mind, not only highlights the innovations in *The Gladiator* that made it a success, but also demonstrates how economic changes in the organisation of theatres could influence the presentation of the ancients. This demonstrates that *The Gladiator* was uniquely reflective of America's particular social, political, and economic circumstances. It represented, for the first time in

the history of American theatre, a vision of the ancient world that was exclusively, distinctly, and unmistakably American.

While the ninety-nine years that forms the subject of this thesis has been periodized, several common themes emerge throughout: the use of the ancient world as a medium to explore contemporary political fears of autocracy and tyranny; the mapping of contemporary gendered ideals of public duty onto classical societies; and an emerging competitive discourse concerning ownership of the Classics, to name a few. Over the course of these five chapters, this thesis traces the broad developments in how audiences engaged with the ancient world on stage and sheds light on several previously forgotten texts that were fundamental to the American experience of the Classics. More than that though, this thesis offers an attempt to integrate the seemingly incompatible approaches of distant reading, historical analysis, and close textual study into a holistic approach to classical reception studies and literary history. The application of this methodology to the reception of the ancient world on the American stage demonstrates its value and invites further applications of this approach across other fields and contexts.

Chapter One

Distant Reading, 1732-1831

The medium of theatre is particularly well-suited to the approach of distant reading. By gauging the frequency with which different plays were performed over a given period it is possible to gain an insight into the extent and nature of individual plays' dissemination. This will enable a novel understanding of the broad trends present in how American audiences engaged with the ancient world through the dramatic medium. It is important to remember that this exercise is not intended to provide answers concerning the causes of such trends and their implications. Nor is this data intended to offer a comprehensive and exhaustive account of every single instance of dramatic entertainment that engaged with the Classics. Instead, the goal of this distant reading exercise is to produce a broad impression of the macroscopic developments in how antiquity was presented on American stages. This macroscopic picture will enable the categorization of this century of theatrical history into discrete periods that are distinguished by demonstrably distinct theatrical cultures, and for the identification of key dramatic texts within each period. The results of this data will ensure that, when details of these periods and texts are subjected to qualitative analysis in subsequent chapters, such analysis is fully informed by the quantitative reality of their dissemination. Before beginning to examine the results of this distant reading exercise, it is necessary to discuss the methods by which this data was collected and the implications this has for its interpretation and use.

1.1 Methodology

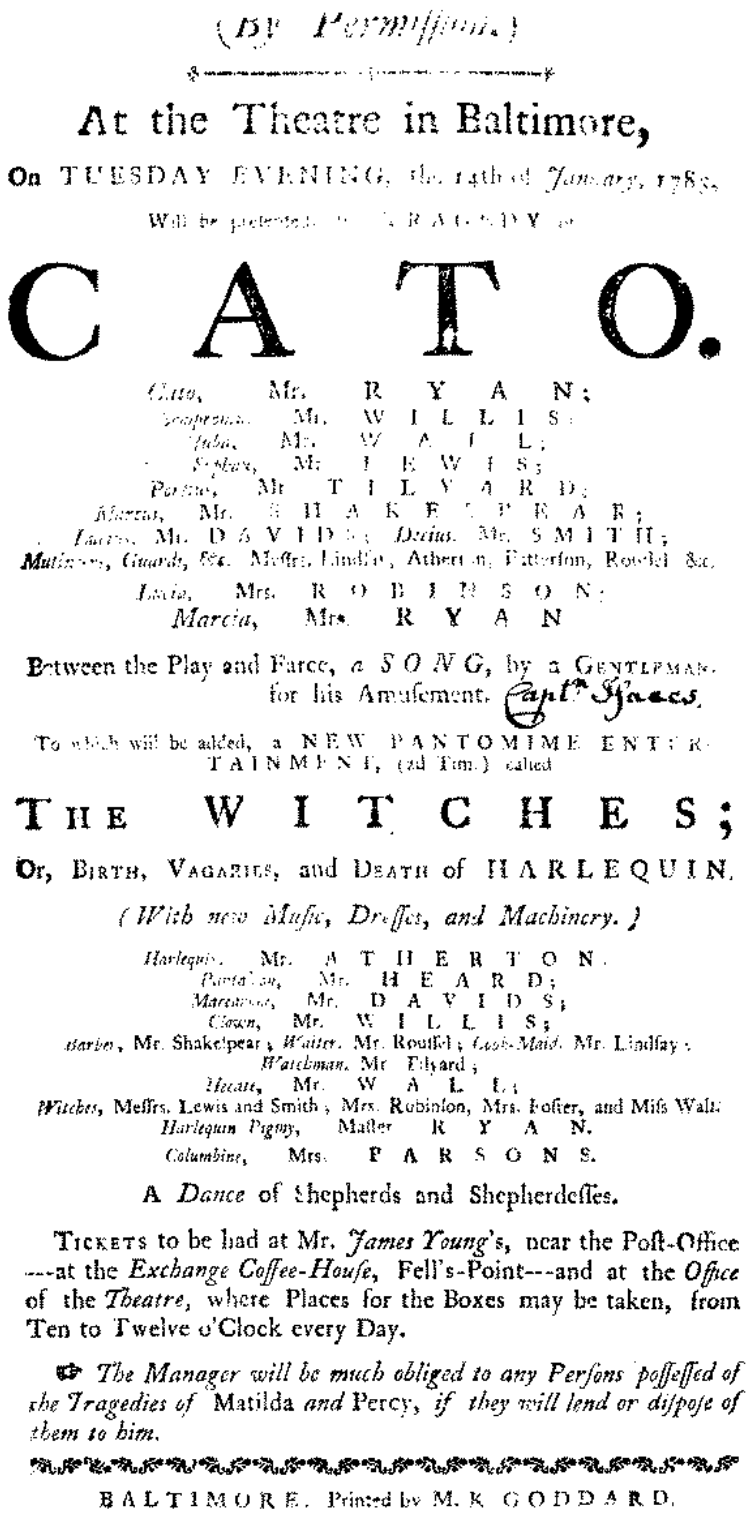
The database of performances that has been produced by this distant reading exercise is the first of its kind – not only in its tracking of a single category of performance over an extended period, but also in its combination of traditional methods of physical archival research and computer-based digital

research. As Lisa Gitelman has demonstrated, data is by no means a natural resource of information that provides mechanically objective results. Instead it is a cultural resource, whose results are dependent on the manner of its generation, presentation, and interpretation.[1] No data-set is infallible, and all must be understood in the context within which they are gathered. Before discussing the results of this data, this section will outline the methodology by which it was gathered and the considerations that must be taken into account during its interpretation. It will explain the sources of primary evidence from which this data was drawn, the processes through which it was gathered, and the fields that have been chosen to be recorded. Finally, it will explain how these factors may influence the results given by this data, and how these influences may be taken into account when interpreting its results.

1.1.1 Sources

The primary type of evidence that has been used in the compilation of this database of performances is the promotional material used to advertise said performances: namely playbills and newspaper advertisements. Examples of these can be seen in figures 1.1 and 1.2 respectively:

[1] Gitelman (2013) 1-5.



(*By Permiſſion.*)

At the Theatre in Baltimore,

On TUESDAY EVENING, the 14th of *January*, 1783,

Will be preſented a TRAGEDY of

CATO.

Cato, Mr. RYAN;
Sempronius, Mr. WILLIS;
Juba, Mr. WALL;
Syphax, Mr. LEWIS;
Portius, Mr. TILYARD;
Marcus, Mr. SHAKESPEAR;
Lucius, Mr. DAVIDS; *Decius*, Mr. SMITH;
Mutineers, Guards, &c. Meſſrs. Lindſay, Atherton, Patterſon, Roufell &c.

Lucia, Mrs. ROBINSON;
Marcia, Mrs. RYAN

Between the Play and Farce, a SONG, by a GENTLEMAN, for his Amuſement. Capt. Isaacs.

To which will be added, a NEW PANTOMIME ENTERTAINMENT, (2d Time) called

THE WITCHES;

Or, BIRTH, VAGARIES, and DEATH of HARLEQUIN.

(With new Muſic, Dreſſes, and Machinery.)

Harlequin, Mr. ATHERTON.
Pantaloon, Mr. HEARD;
Marcheſa, Mr. DAVIDS;
Clown, Mr. WILLIS;
Harlon, Mr. Shakelpear; *Waiter*, Mr. Rouſſel; *Cook-Maid*, Mr. Lindſay;
Watchman, Mr. Tilyard;
Hecate, Mr. WALL;
Witches, Meſſrs. Lewis and Smith; Mrs. Robinſon, Mrs. Foſter, and Miſs Walt:
Harlequin Pigmy, Maſter RYAN.
Columbine, Mrs. PARSONS.

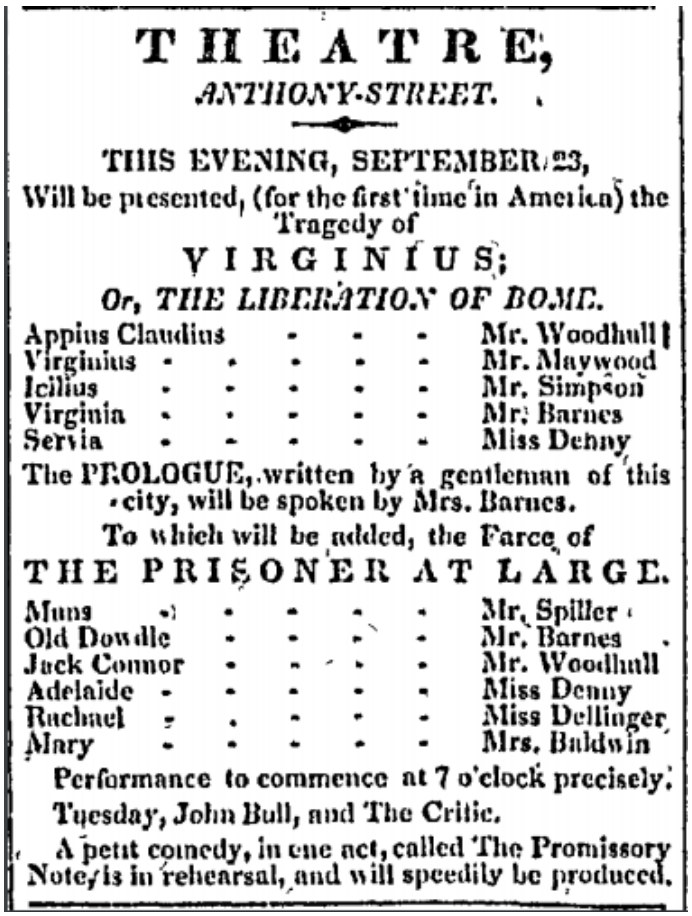
A *Dance* of Shepherds and Shepherdeſſes.

TICKETS to be had at Mr. *James Young*'s, near the Poſt-Office ---at the *Exchange Coffee-Houſe*, Fell's-Point---and at the *Office* of the *Theatre*, where Places for the Boxes may be taken, from Ten to Twelve o'Clock every Day.

☞ *The Manager will be much obliged to any Perſons poſſeſſed of the Tragedies of* Matilda *and* Percy, *if they will lend or diſpoſe of them to him.*

BALTIMORE. Printed by M. K. GODDARD.

Figure 1.1 – Playbill from Baltimore, Maryland, dated 14/01/1783. *Early American Imprints*, Series 1: Evans, no. 44316.



THEATRE,
ANTHONY-STREET.

THIS EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23,
Will be presented, (for the first time in America) the Tragedy of
VIRGINIUS;
Or, THE LIBERATION OF ROME.

Appius Claudius	Mr. Woodhull
Virginius	Mr. Maywood
Icilius	Mr. Simpson
Virginia	Mrs Barnes
Servia	Miss Denny

The PROLOGUE, written by a gentleman of this city, will be spoken by Mrs. Barnes.

To which will be added, the Farce of
THE PRISONER AT LARGE.

Muns	Mr. Spiller
Old Dowdle	Mr. Barnes
Jack Connor	Mr. Woodhull
Adelaide	Miss Denny
Rachael	Miss Dellinger
Mary	Mrs. Baldwin

Performance to commence at 7 o'clock precisely.
Tuesday, John Bull, and The Critic.
A petit comedy, in one act, called The Promissory Note, is in rehearsal, and will speedily be produced.

Figure 1.2 – Newspaper advertisement, New York *American* (23/09/ 1820) 3.

Sources such as these contain essential information about the performances in question. They provide essential details concerning the play being performed, the date of the performance, and its location. They also give several pieces of supplementary information concerning factors such as the specific theatre within which the performance occurred, the actors that were performing different roles, and the additional entertainments that accompany the play. Figure 1, for instance, not only details when and where the performance of Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy* (1713) is being given, but also that Mr. Ryan will perform the titular role and that it will be followed by a song and a pantomime featuring witches. Figure 2 details that the New York performance of Knowles' *Virginius; or, The Liberation of Rome* (1820) on September 23rd will take place in the theatre on Anthony Street, will feature Mr. Maywood in the titular role, will be introduced by a prologue written by a gentleman of the city, and will be

followed by a farce about an escaped prisoner. It even tells us that this particular performance of *Virginius* is the first of its kind in America.

Such promotional materials have formed the main source of information, but this database has also drawn on reviews, diary entries, correspondences, and newspaper articles that mention or discuss performances. These sources tend to be more revealing of intimate details relating to the performance, but less rigorous in detailing basic facts concerning its date and location than advertising materials might be. For example, Alexander Mackrabie was an avid theatre-goer and resident of New York during the mid-eighteenth century who regularly corresponded with his brother-in-law to discuss the latest events of the playhouse. When describing a 1770 performance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599), Mackrabie comments on the inability of some actors to pronounce Roman names, but neglects to mention the particular theatre within which it occurred.[2] Similarly, a review or newspaper article discussing a recent performance might offer an in depth analysis of how an actor embodied a particular character or how the performance was received by its audience, but not specify the date on which the performance was given. This fact means that such sources are of inconsistent usefulness with regards to mapping the relative popularity of different plays, as they cannot be relied upon to give details with the same level of rigour as advertising materials can. They do, however, offer information concerning the nature of performances and their reception by their audiences. By studying these two strands of information together they can mutually support each other. Advertising materials offer the essential details to form the basis of a quantitative evaluation, while review materials offer a focus on individual performances that can later be used to inform qualitative analyses.

The significant bulk of this extant material has been digitised and is freely available through a variety of remotely accessible digital archives:

[2] Examples of Mackrabie's letters are discussed in Rankin (1965) 114, 121, 129, 138-9.

- The British Library's *Early American Imprints Series I: Evans*. This is a collection of digitised imprints that were printed in North America between 1639 and 1800. It includes a variety of newspapers and playbills and is accessible to registered readers of the British Library.

- The British Library's *America's Historical Newspapers*. This is a collection of digitised newspapers that were printed in North America between 1690 and 1999. It includes newspapers from across the United States and is accessible to registered readers of the British Library.

- The Library of Congress' *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. This is a collection of the Library of Congress' digitised newspaper holdings covering the years between 1789 and 1922. It includes newspapers from across the United States and is publicly accessible.

These digital resources have been supplemented by more traditional archival materials. Extended archival visits to the University of Pennsylvania's Kislak Center for Special Collections, the Library of Congress' John W. Kluge Center, the Commonwealth of Virginia's Library of Virginia, and Colonial Williamsburg's John D. Rockefeller Jr Library that I undertook between 2017 and 2019 have provided access to relevant sources that are not remotely accessible.

Some of the work of processing this vast body of information has already been performed by historians of American theatre looking at particular regions or periods. Odai Johnson and William Burling's *The Colonial Stage: 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar* (2003) offers as comprehensive a calendar of every extant performance that occurred between 1665 and 1774 as is possible. Jared Brown's *The Theatre in America during the Revolution* (1995) includes a short calendar of extant performances that occurred during America's wartime years.[3] George Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* (1927-49) provides a record of the New York stage from its beginnings until 1894. Using these pieces of

[3] Brown (2006) 173-88.

secondary literature alongside digital and physical archival materials, it is possible to study the entirety of the period from 1732 to 1831.

It is important to remember, however, that this wealth of resources by no means offers a comprehensive and exhaustive record of the activities of American theatres. There are several distinct species of performance that, while relevant and interesting to our investigation, simply have not been recorded or, if they have, such records have been lost. For example, it is known through indirect reference and second-hand allusions that African-Americans pursued a distinct performance tradition outside the bounds of European-American theatres, with a venue known as the 'African Grove' attested to have operated in Harlem, New York as early as 1821.[4] Yet, due to this group's limited access to conventional print media and the relatively limited extant archival record of their activities, the type of consistent and computable evidence of this strand of performance needed to inform such a quantitative approach is limited.[5] Furthermore, there may be geographical gaps in the historical record, especially amongst the southern states whose archival records were severely damaged during the chaos of the Civil War. For example, the logbooks of notable Virginians such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson frequently refer to attending the theatre and include notes concerning expenses for theatre tickets. However, because these documents do not always specify the play being performed, and there is no corresponding record of these performances in the extant corpus of advertising materials, the details of these performances may only be speculated upon.[6] These lacunae within the source material must be taken into account during the processing and interpretation of this data.

[4] The Africna Grove is discussed in Hughes (1951) 106; Rankin (2013) 8.
[5] For example, the British Library's *African-American Newspapers* database does not possess any records from earlier than 1827. In contrast, their *Early American Newspapers* and *Early American Imprints* databases, which principally contain materials aimed at and produced by implicitly white audiences, include material from as early as 1639.
[6] The *Diary* of George Washington and *Memorandum Books* of Thomas Jefferson record purchasing tickets and attending theatrical performances on 58 separate occasions from 1768 to 1772 alone, Johnson and Burling (2001) 286-424.

1.1.2 Processing

The following fields of data have been recorded:

- The play being performed.
- The author of the play being performed.
- The year in which the performance occurred.
- The exact date on which the performance occurred.
- The state in which the performance occurred.
- The settlement in which the performance occurred.
- The company of actors that performed the play.
- The venue in which the performance occurred.
- The actor who played the lead role in the play.
- A relevant citation.

Recording the data and locations of different performances allows for the relative popularity of different plays to be measured and understood in terms of their geographical distribution. The inclusion of fields relating to the actors and companies that delivered the performances as well as the theatres within which they were given offers an insight into how different actors and audiences engaged differently with the classical world.

The online, digitised stores of newspapers and playbills offer an extensive bank of source material, containing hundreds of thousands of examples of digitised material relating to the theatre. The vast scale of these resources posed a certain challenge. Manually reading through each and every page of these sources would simply not be feasible, nor would it be strictly necessary. As has been stated, this database aims less to produce an exhaustive account of every single performance that occurred, but

rather to generate an impression of the broad trends present in the ancient world's reception on the American stage. Furthermore, given the already-discussed lacunae that exist within the extant source material, such an exhaustive account is simply not possible.

Instead, the use of text-recognition and keyword-identification software was identified as a practical means to effectively process large quantities of material involved in this database. By first producing a list of plays that were in circulation in North America that made use of classical source material, this software was then used to search the digital collections for instances of those plays' titles appearing in the corpus of print material. This software has its frailties. Peculiarities of typeface, smudging, and damage to original manuscripts may prevent such software from successfully identifying the keywords for which it has been directed to search. In order to ascertain the reliability of this software, it was experimentally applied to a two-week period of history during the late 1780s. After results had been produced via this keyword search methodology, the same two weeks were subjected to exhaustive investigation via manual processing of all extant print material. Contrasting the findings of the two approaches found no marked difference in results, with the keyword search method approach generating the same data as the manual search approach. As such, the use of text-recognition software was chosen as a practical and reliable means to accomplish the goals of this distant reading exercise.

1.1.3 Considerations for Interpretation

In order to draw the most effective conclusions from this exercise, it is necessary to consider how the nature of the extant sources and the means by which they were processed affect the results of this database. As has already been discussed, the extant corpus of evidence does not provide a comprehensive record of every single performance that occurred on the American stage. Certain regions or species of performance are under-represented in the surviving records of theatrical history. In contrast, others are notably well-represented. The performance histories of the principal professional playhouses of cities such as New York and Philadelphia, for example, are consistently well-

recorded. Their coastal position and function as major ports placed these cities at the centre of the economic, political, and demographic developments over the course of this century and encouraged a prolific and relatively well-preserved print culture that ensures performances are often attested to in multiple sources. Moreover, the modern significance of New York's theatre scene to broader Anglophone theatrical culture has ensured that the city's performance history has already been the subject of several dedicated studies. For instance, George Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* offers an annalistic account of performances staged in New York's professional theatres throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The same cannot be said of, for instance, Richmond, Virginia, where a disastrous theatre fire in 1811 combined with the disruption of archival records occasioned by the Civil War has resulted in a notably fragmentary performance record. This imbalance in the degree to which the performance histories of different periods and regions have been preserved offers a unique challenge in the handling of the results of this data and demands multiple solutions.

Firstly, it will be important to ensure that any national level representations of data are further broken down according to the region and time frame within which they occurred. National-level representations of the popularity of different plays are liable to being skewed by over-represented areas, such as New York, and risk disregarding under-represented communities. By critically breaking down these national-level results according to the different cities in which performances occurred, it will be possible to understand how audiences in under-represented areas experienced the ancient world on stage. This will thus enable a more nuanced understanding of how the popularity of different plays manifested across the nation.

Secondly, it is necessary to remember that certain communities are almost wholly unrepresented in the evidence corpus, and therefore conclusions drawn from this data are of limited applicability to those groups. As has been discussed, there is considerable evidence of a distinct African-American performance tradition outside the bounds of the implicitly white theatres. Yet, formal records of that tradition are almost entirely absent. As such, the quantitative evidence presented in this chapter is of

limited use for understanding such groups' engagement with the Classics on stage. Such a discussion must instead be informed by qualitative evidence in subsequent chapters.

It is also important to avoid directly comparing the number of performances that different plays received across geographical and chronological boundaries. A small town might, hypothetically, host only ten performances over the course of a year, and five of these performances might be of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. In contrast, suppose a large city that hosts one hundred performances a year stages *Julius Caesar* ten times. Directly comparing the total number of performances would suggest that *Julius Caesar* was twice as popular in the large city than in the small town, since it was staged there twice as often. Yet, understood proportionally, *Julius Caesar* would have accounted for half of all performances in the small town, while comprising only a tenth in the large city. As such, it is important to understand the total performances received by different plays proportionally, relative to their respective wholes.

This data presents several unique challenges in its interpretation. Yet they are certainly not insurmountable. By mediating the interpretation of these results through an intelligent understanding of these challenges it will be possible to draw reliable and well-informed conclusions concerning the broad trends present in how the ancient world was represented on American stages during the century in question.

1.2 Results

The complete results of this data collection exercise can be accessed online through the University of Nottingham Research Data Management Service. Given the large quantities of data involved in this exercise, it has been necessary to present them according to their different historical periods in order to facilitate easy comprehension. This periodization has been based on trends that emerged out of the data. The aim of this distant reading exercise is both to map out the broad developments in the relative popularity of different plays that engaged with classical source material, and to identify notable trends, correlations, and abnormalities that will be analysed and examined in subsequent qualitative chapters.

As such, it will lose little time detailing the plots, themes, and intricacies of the various plays it identifies, as these discussions have been reserved for later chapters. The Appendix towards the rear of this thesis contains brief summaries of the various plays discussed, should the reader wish to consult this during the reading of this chapter.

1.2.1 Colonial theatre, 1732-74

These forty years saw the nascence of American theatrical culture and the origin of the American tradition of representing the ancient world on stage. When the first amateur performance of Addison's *Cato* was staged in a makeshift theatre in New York in 1732, there was nothing resembling a professional theatrical infrastructure in the North American colonies. A few years later in Charleston in 1735, Henry Holt founded the Holt Company, and issued the first season of professional performances in American history.[7] Holt would be the first of many to attempt to make a living by performing to American colonists.

During this period multiple troupes of British actors, frozen out of the monopolistic and cliquey theatres of their motherland, crossed the Atlantic to build a life for themselves in the New World. Forming travelling troupes that traversed the Eastern seaboard, they struggled against disease, natural disasters, and political opposition to perform in cities from Charleston, South Carolina to Boston, Massachusetts. Theatrical infrastructure was unquestionably rudimentary during this period. In lieu of proper premises, itinerant theatre troupes would often make do with modified warehouses, dining rooms, and lofts. Their repertoire, like themselves, was British. Plays written by Britons including Colley Cibber, Nathaniel Lee, Joseph Addison, and, of course, William Shakespeare populated stages in Baltimore just as they did in London.

[7] Johnson and Burling (2001) 113.

By 1774 progress had been made. Permanent, dedicated playhouses had been built. Young Americans, inspired by the efforts of the Britons they saw on stage, were beginning to take up acting and join these troupes. One American even attempted to write a play, although, as this data will reveal, young Mr Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* (1765) can hardly have been called a success. The theatre had begun to entrench itself as a regular part of colonial life across much of the eastern seaboard. Yet, this progress would be rapidly curtailed by the 1774 ban. This ban prompted the majority of the, mostly British-born, actors to abandon their progress in continental America, and retreat to more hospitable climes on the Caribbean islands for the duration of the conflict, awaiting the opportunity to return.

These forty years between the first dramatic representation of the ancient world and the banning of all dramatic performances laid the groundwork upon which all subsequent theatrical enterprises would build. Americans were, for the first time, introduced to the ancient world on stage. Before beginning to investigate which plays representing antiquity that Americans were watching, it is important to assess what proportion of the performed whole these performances represented. When Americans went to the theatre, how likely were they to be presented with a play set in antiquity?

Fortunately, given the relatively small number of performances taking place during this period, it is possible to estimate how much of the overall theatrical market these representations of antiquity occupied, and how often Americans were exposed to antiquity in the playhouse. The total number of performances is so small relative to later periods that it is feasible to approximate the total number of all performances of any type that were given, whether or not they engaged with the Classics. From this, it is possible to not only understand the manner in which the ancient world was presented on stage, but also to calculate what proportion of total performances engaged with the Classics. Such an exercise is simply not possible for later periods, the scale of theatrical activity makes it difficult enough to evaluate which plays representing antiquity were being performed, let alone calculate the total number of all performances of any play of any type.

Table 1 below breaks the colonial period down decade-by-decade. For each decade it displays the total number of performances given of any play, how many of these performances were of plays set in the ancient world, how many of these were of plays that referenced or alluded to the ancient world, and how many were of plays that featured no classical allusions or settings. A reference or allusion to the ancient world is defined quite broadly. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) for instance, despite being set in Renaissance Italy, features regular allusions to Graeco-Roman religious and mythological figures, and so has been categorized as alluding to the ancient world.[8] This category has been included to evaluate the extent to which audiences were being exposed to the language of classicism, even if they weren't watching a play directly set in the ancient world.

Year	1730 - 1739	1740 - 1749	1750 - 1759	1760 - 1769	1770 - 1774	1730 - 1774
Total performances	43	2	324	781	491	1641
Total performances of plays set in the ancient world	7	1	38	76	49	171
Total performances of plays alluding to the ancient world	21	1	97	243	158	520
Total performances of plays with no classical allusions	15	0	188	462	278	943
Average total performances per year	4.3	0.2	32.4	78.1	98.2	37.3
Average performances of plays set in the ancient world per year	0.7	0.1	3.8	7.6	9.8	3.9
Average performances of plays alluding to the ancient world per year	2.1	0.1	9.7	24.3	31.6	11.8
Average performances of plays with no classical allusions per year	1.5	0	18.8	46.2	55.6	21.4

Table 1 – Total number of performances received by all plays, 1730-74.

This table shows, amongst other things, a consistent growth in the number of yearly performances of plays set in the ancient world from 1750 onwards. This is in line with wider developments in the total number of performances of plays of any type that, excepting the years from 1740 to 1749, consistently rose from 1730 onwards. Figure 1.3 below visualises how the proportions of plays that were set in the

[8] For example, in Act I, Scene I of *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo claims 'she'll not be hit / With Cupid's arrow, she hath Dian's wit', referring to Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt, and Cupid who is associated with love, Shakespeare (1900) 18.

ancient world, alluded to the ancient world, and featured no classical allusions of any kind varied decade-by-decade.

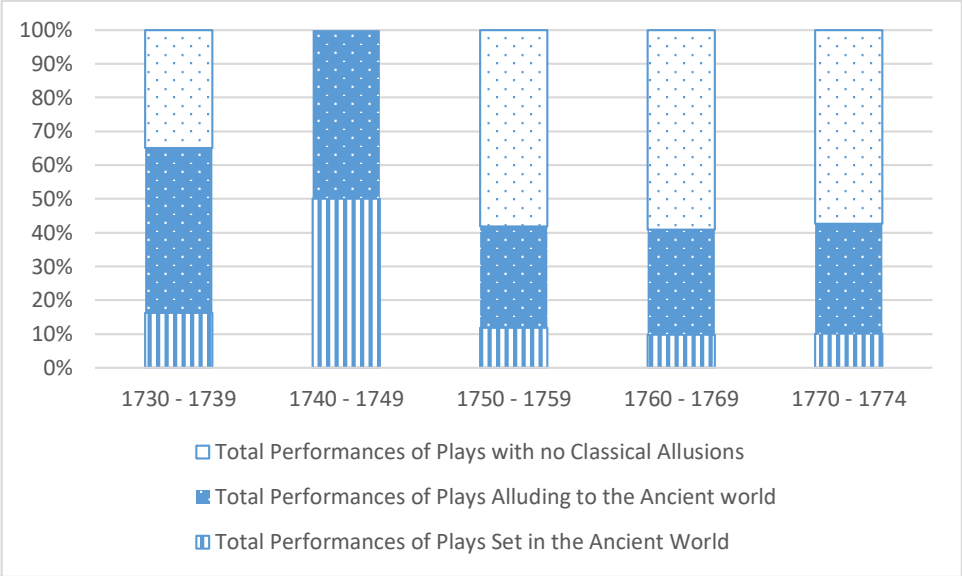


Figure 1.3 – Relative frequencies with which different varieties of performance were given, 1730-74.

Table 2 and Figure 1.4 below further break these figures down according to the colony in which they occurred. New York, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Maryland possess the most developed urban centres of the period (New York City, Charleston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, respectively). As such, they provide the largest sample sizes from which effective conclusions can be drawn.

State	New York	South Carolina	Pennsylvania	Maryland
Total performances	575	212	482	211
Plays set in the ancient world	66	21	46	20
Plays alluding to the ancient world	169	54	140	61
Plays not alluding to the ancient world	341	137	295	130

Table 2 – Total number of performances received by all plays according to region, 1730-74.

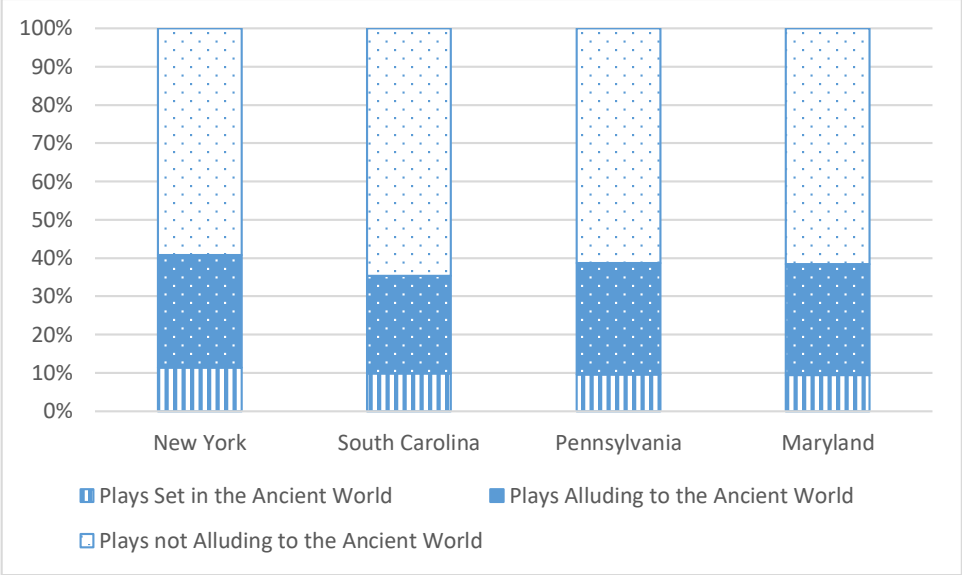


Figure 1.4 – Relative frequencies with which different varieties of performance were given according to colony, 1730-74.

They reflect a surprising consistency across all four colonies, with each colony hosting a repertoire in which one in ten of performances use the ancient world as a setting and at least one-third of performances engage with the classical world to some extent. Across all four colonies the proportion of performances that were of plays set in the ancient world varies within a range of less than 2%. The regularity with which audiences were exposed to the Classics on stage, either directly or via non-classicising plays that featured allusions to antiquity, is suggestive of the importance of the Classics in the colonial repertoire.

Table 3 and figure 1.5 below show the total number of performances that different plays representing the classical world received between 1732 and 1774 across all thirteen colonies.

Play	Total performances
Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens	6
All for Love	3
Amphitryon, or The Two Sosias	2
An Attic Evening's Entertainment	3
Cato	22
Coriolanus	1
Cymon	4
Damon and Phillida	34
Julius Caesar	2
Lethe	41
Midas	13
Neptune and Amphitrite	9
The Death of Harlequin	1
The Distrest Mother	12
The Prince of Parthia	1
The Roman Father	7
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	10

Table 3 – Total number of performances of different plays set in the ancient world, 1730-74.

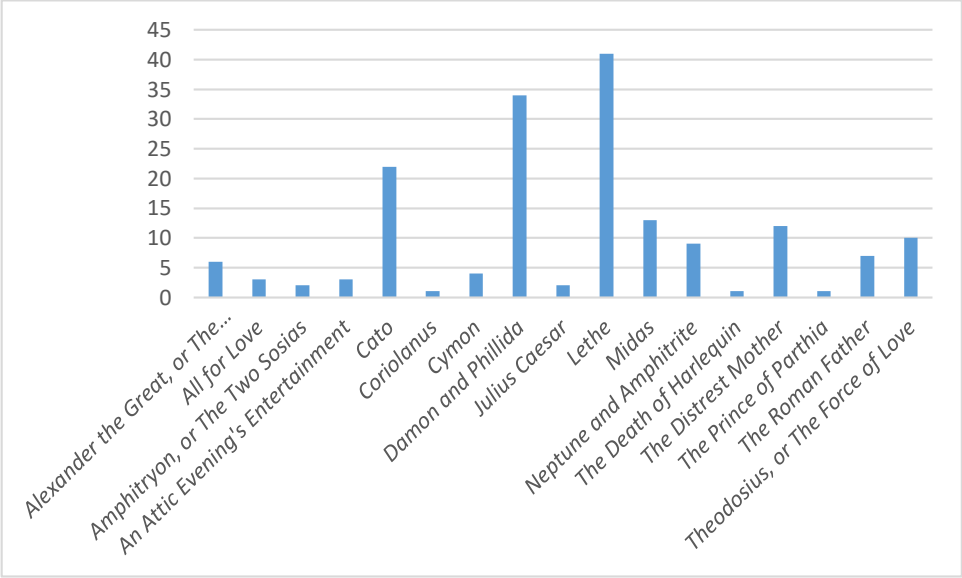


Figure 1.5 – Total number of performances received by different plays set in the ancient world, 1730-74.

One of the first things that jumps out from these results is the sheer variety of plays engaging with classical narratives that were performed. In a period during which the Classics on stage are broadly

understood to have begun and ended at Addison's *Cato*, these results reveal upwards of fifteen different plays representing the classical world that graced American stages. These plays range greatly in tone and subject matter. Kane O'Hara's burletta *Midas* (1760) dramatized, in musical form, book eleven of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Apollo comes to earth disguised as a shepherd. Nathaniel Lee's Restoration-era tragedy *Alexander the Great* (1677) showed the final days of Alexander the Great's life in Babylon. William Whitehead's tragedy *The Roman Father* (1750) took the legend of the Horatii out of the pages of Livy's *History of Rome* and onto stage.

Figure 1.6 below represents this data in terms of the proportion of overall performances that each play received. For ease of representation, individual plays that received fewer than ten performances are condensed into the 'Other' segment.

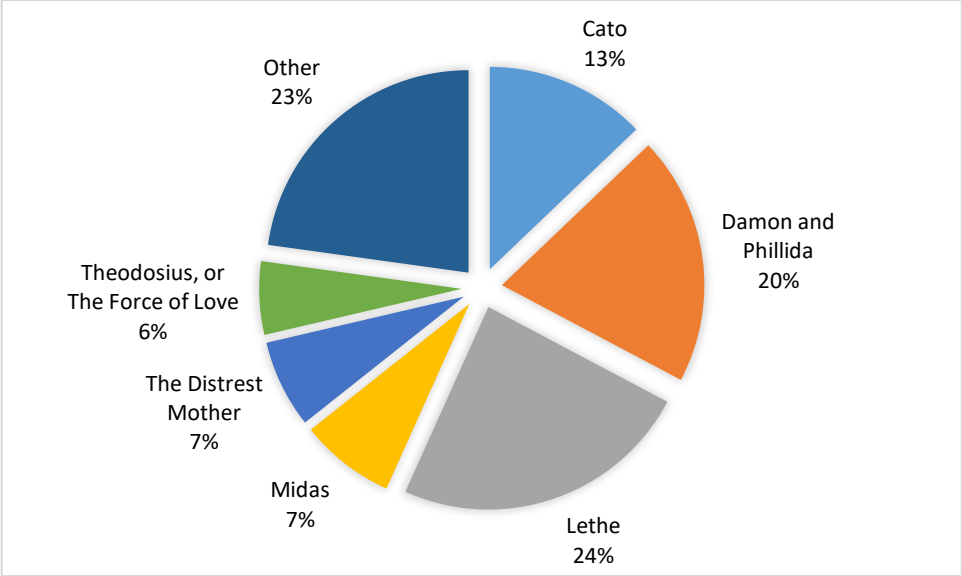


Figure 1.6 – Proportion of performances received by different plays, 1730-74.

This figure further reveals why this data-oriented distant reading exercise is necessary. Contrary to various claims that *Cato* was likely the most popular single play in colonial America that have been made based on its prevalence within the epistolary culture of the colonial political elite, figure 1.6 suggests a radically different picture of popular engagement with the Classics on stage. It suggests that *Cato* was not the most or even second most popular play. That honour instead seems to belong

to David Garrick's *Lethe; or, Aesop in the Shades* (1740), an unassuming farce set on the banks of the river Styx. Colley Cibber's *Damon and Phillida* (1729), the second most performed play, is similarly unassuming, being a comic opera about shepherds in ancient Arcadia. *The Prince of Parthia* by the aforementioned Thomas Godfrey, America's first native-born playwright, experienced underwhelming popularity. The play received only a single performance before being permanently shelved, inviting further investigation in chapter two as to why this initial attempt at American drama failed to strike a chord with audiences.

Tables 4 and figures 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, and 1.10 below break these performances down according to the decade in which they occurred.

	1732-49	1750-9	1760-9	1770-4	Total
Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens	0	0	4	5	9
All for Love	0	0	3	0	3
Amphitryon, or The Two Sosias	0	2	0	0	2
An Attic Evening's Entertainment	0	0	3	3	6
Cato	8	6	5	3	22
Coriolanus	0	0	1	0	1
Cymon	0	0	0	4	4
Damon and Phillida	0	11	18	9	38
Julius Caesar	0	0	0	2	2
Lethe	0	11	21	13	45
Midas	0	0	4	13	17
Neptune and Amphitrite	0	0	0	9	9
The Death of Harlequin	0	0	1	1	2
The Distrest Mother	0	5	7	1	13
The Prince of Parthia	0	0	1	0	1
The Roman Father	0	1	3	3	7
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	0	2	5	4	11

Table 4 – Total number of performances according to decade, 1730-74.

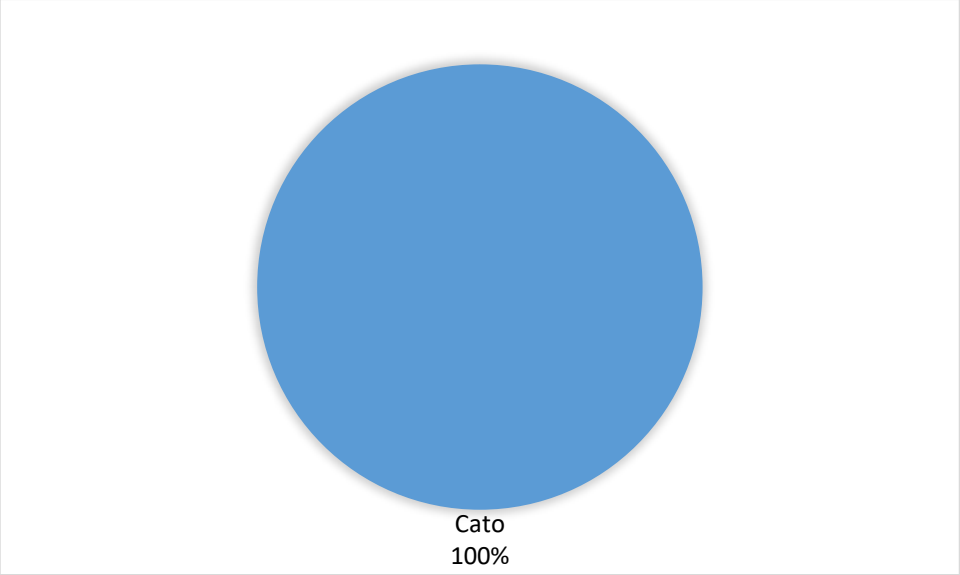


Figure 1.7 – Proportion of performances received by different plays, 1730-49.

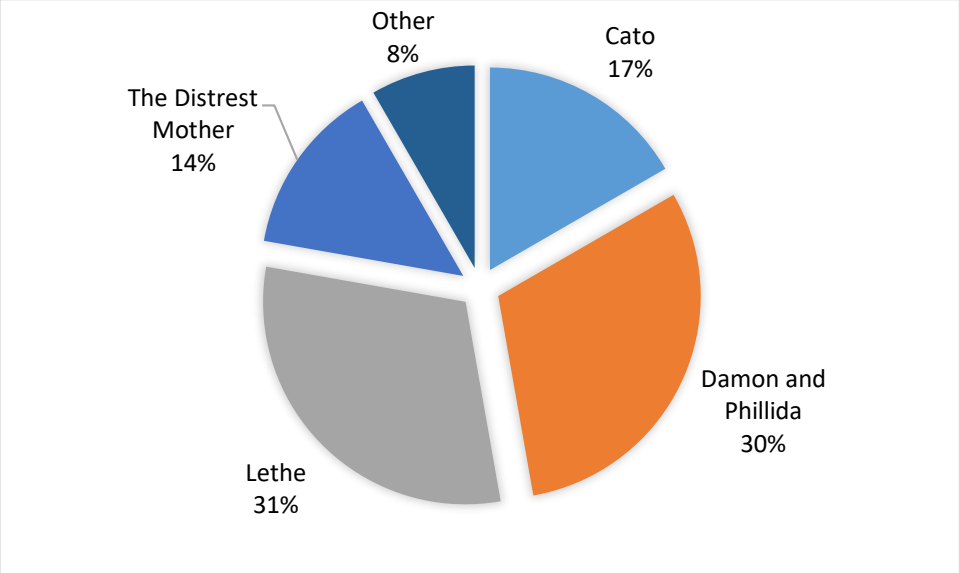


Figure 1.8 – Proportion of performances received by different plays, 1750-59.

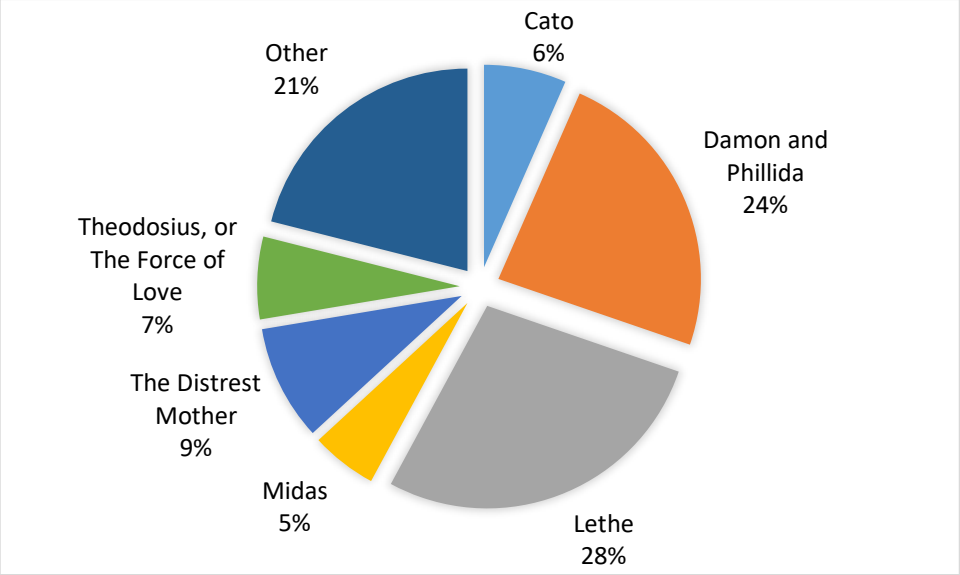


Figure 1.9 – Proportion of performances received by different plays, 1760-9.

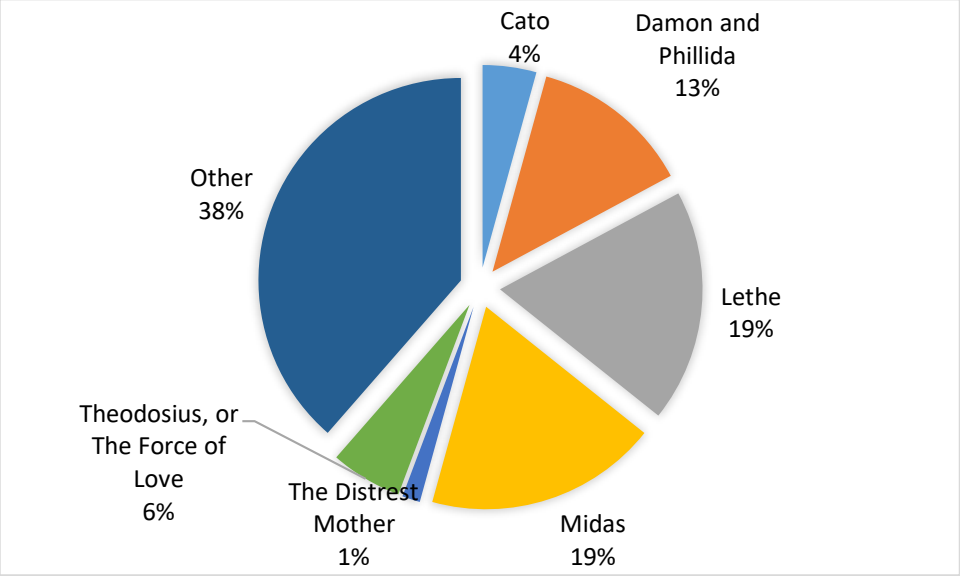


Figure 1.10 – Proportion of performances received by different plays, 1770-4.

Presenting these performances chronologically shows that the diversity of plays being performed was not consistent over the course of the colonial period. In fact, from 1730 to 1749, the only representation of the classical world that is recorded is Addison's *Cato*. From 1750 onwards, this portfolio begins to rapidly diversify. The three most popular plays (*Cato*, *Damon and Phillida*, and *Lethe*) go from accounting for 100% of performances between 1730 and 1749, to just over three quarters between 1750 and 1759, down to just under two-thirds between 1760 and 1769, and finally

down to just under one third during the final half-decade of the period. The 'Other' section of the above pie charts, which accounts for plays that received fewer than five performances, grows to account for over one-third of performances. As the colonial period progresses, American audiences' experience of the ancient world on stage became increasingly varied.

Table 5 below breaks down the numbers of performances received by each play within South Carolina, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania, the four regions whose theatrical culture is best attested to in the historical record. Figures 1.11, 1.12, 1.13, and 1.14 below represent these results as bar charts.

Total performances according to colony	South Carolina	Maryland	New York	Pennsylvania
Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens	1	0	2	3
All for Love	0	0	1	2
Amphitryon, or The Two Sosias	0	0	2	0
An Attic Evening's Entertainment	0	0	3	0
Cato	8	1	7	2
Coriolanus	0	0	0	1
Cymon	0	0	3	1
Damon and Phillida	2	4	18	4
Julius Caesar	1	0	0	1
Lethe	3	11	12	9
Midas	2	1	4	6
Neptune and Amphitrite	0	0	2	7
The Death of Harlequin	0	0	1	0
The Distrest Mother	1	1	8	1
The Prince of Parthia	0	0	0	1
The Roman Father	1	1	1	3
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	2	1	2	5

Table 5 – Total number of performances according to colony, 1730-74.

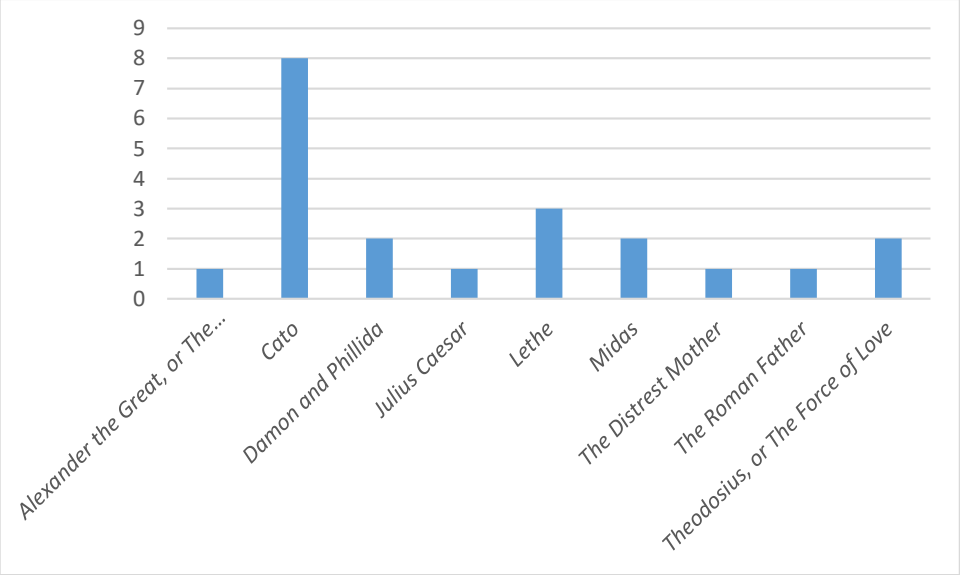


Figure 1.11 – Total number of performances received by different plays, South Carolina, 1730-74.

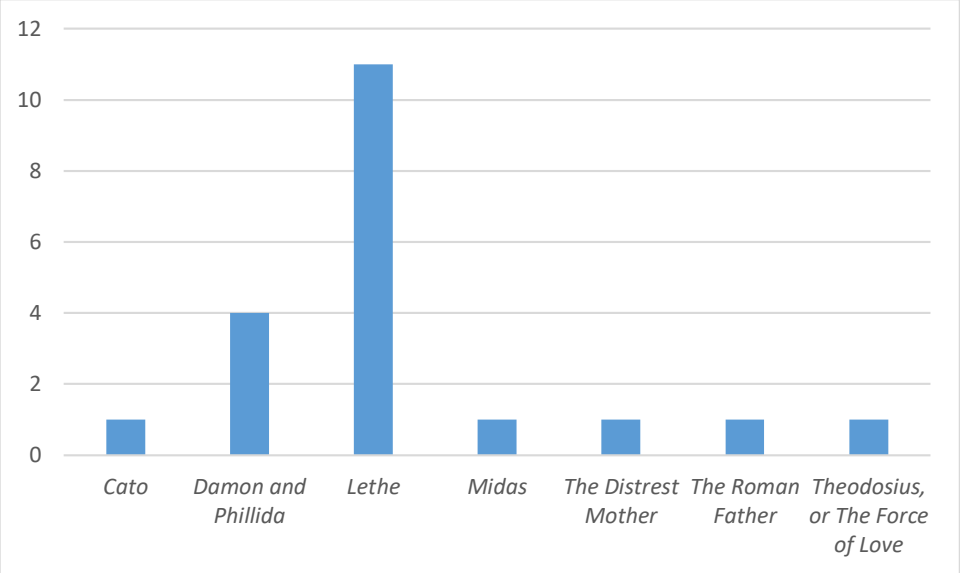


Figure 1.12 – Total number of performances received by different plays, Maryland, 1730-74.

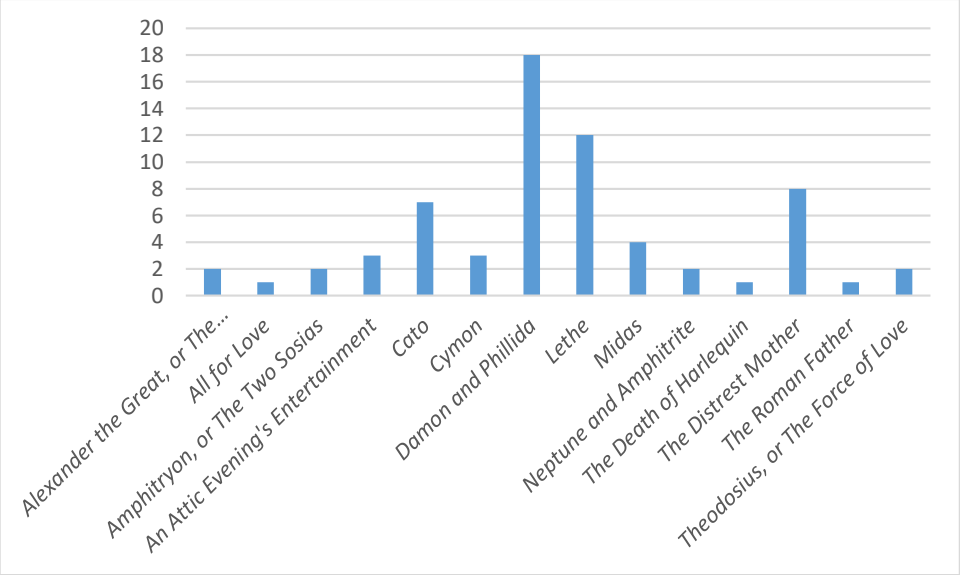


Figure 1.13 – Total number of performances received different plays, New York, 1730-74.

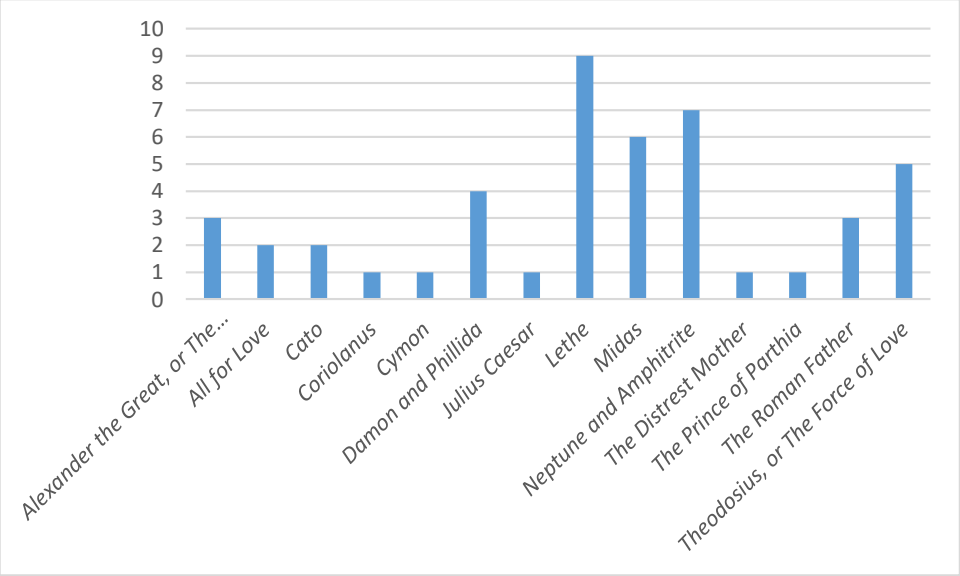


Figure 1.14 – Total number of performances received by different plays, Pennsylvania, 1730-74.

These reveal further details about the nature of *Lethe*'s success. The play seems to have enjoyed reasonable popularity across all four of these colonies, being either the first or second most performed single play in every instance. *Cato*'s popularity, in contrast, seems to have been rather concentrated in the colony of South Carolina, with the play being the most performed play there by a considerable margin, yet receiving a relatively inconsequential total number of performances in Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania. South Carolina's abnormally high interest in *Cato* is significant. South Carolina,

being far to the south of these three other colonies, was also relatively distinct from them in terms of its economic organisation, cultural traditions, and population. The reasoning and significance of this anomaly will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

Finally, beyond considering the year and region in which a performance occurred, it is also worth examining the background of the performers. While professional troupes account for the bulk of performances, it is worth noting a strand of amateur student performances that persists throughout this period. In contrast to the peripatetic troupes of professional actors that travelled from settlement to settlement, extracting as much revenue as possible before moving on, these amateur performances were distinctly more local and less mercantile in character. Produced by students of local educational institutions for the purpose of personal edification and entertainment, these performances turned dormitories, classrooms and dining halls into makeshift theatres. With no desire or need to sell tickets, the advertising materials usually relied upon as evidence of performances are absent with regards to these student theatrics. Instead, college diaries or newspaper articles that mention such performances are the principal evidence pool for this tradition of amateur theatre. For example, in 1751 an attempt by students of the college of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia to stage a performance of *Cato* was noted in the diary of John Blair on account of the drunkenness that ensued.[9] Another such student performance of *Cato* was reported upon more positively in 1774, when the *South Carolina Gazette* described how a group of local students had staged the play at the behest of their tutor in order to demonstrate the eminence of their oratorical education.[10] Identifying the differences in the repertoires performed by these two distinct spheres of theatrical activity, professional and amateur, will offer an insight into how their different motives and performance contexts influenced their engagement with classical source material. Table 6 and figures 1.15 and 1.16 below break down the repertoires that were performed within these two spheres:

[9] Johnson and Burling (2001) 149.
[10] Ibid. 472-4.

Play	Professional	Amateur/Student
Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens	6	0
All for Love	3	0
Amphitryon, or The Two Sosias	2	0
An Attic Evening's Entertainment	3	0
Cato	13	5
Coriolanus	1	0
Cymon	3	0
Damon and Phillida	31	0
Julius Caesar	2	0
Lethe	40	0
Midas	12	0
Neptune and Amphitrite	9	0
The Death of Harlequin	1	0
The Distrest Mother	12	0
The Prince of Parthia	1	0
The Roman Father	6	1
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	10	0

Table 6 – Total number of performances according to context, 1730-74.

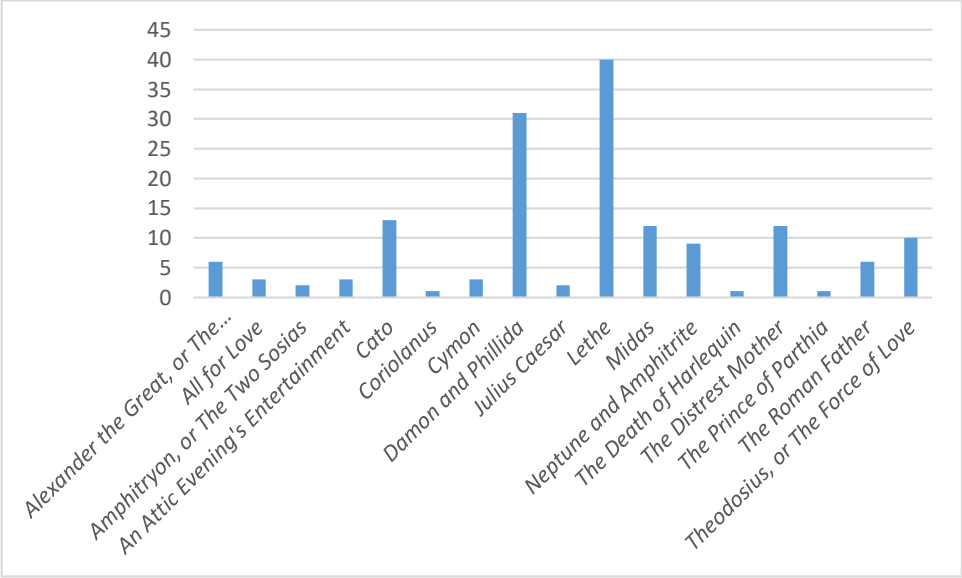


Figure 1.15 – Total number of performances given by professional theatre troupes, 1730-74.

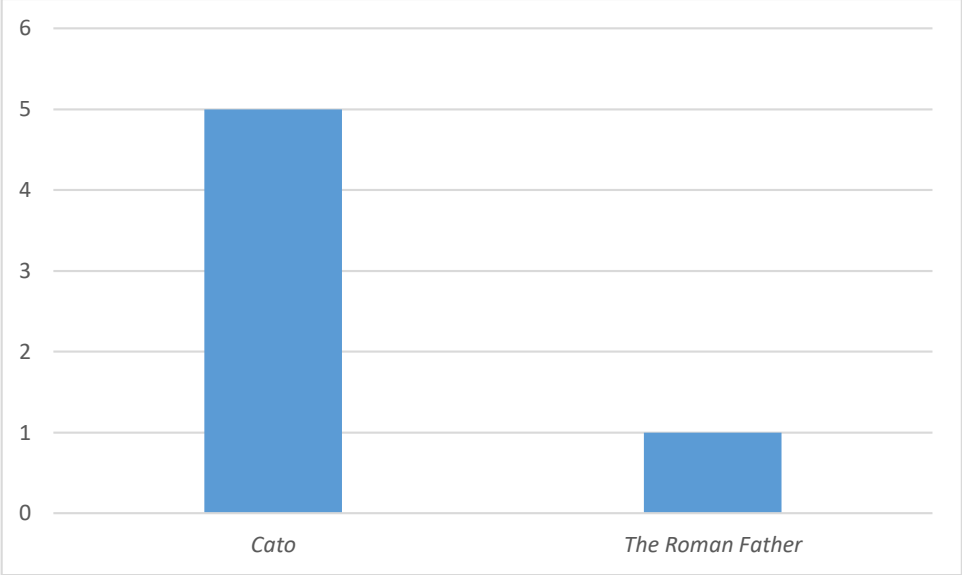


Figure 1.16 – Total number of performances given by amateur/student groups, 1730-74.

While a relatively small number of student performances have been recorded, those instances that have remained extant suggest that this amateur theatrical tradition fostered a radically different version of the ancient world to that seen on professional stages. The professional theatre troupes, which consisted of itinerant, primarily British-born, actors, portray a diverse repertoire of various genres of plays that represent several different aspects of the classical world, ranging from burlettas about Ovid's Midas to tragedies about the death of Alexander the Great. In contrast, the amateur performances of different student groups in America's various schools and colleges offer a distinctly narrower view of antiquity. The only two plays that find themselves represented within this dramatic tradition are Addison's *Cato* and Whitehead's *The Roman Father*, two austere tragedies centred around the characters of stoic, paternalistic Roman statesmen. Of those two, *Cato* is the more popular by a notable margin. This disparity between the professional and student theatrical traditions has important implications for the influence of class and education on the manner in which classical narratives were represented on stage and will be explored in greater detail in chapter two.

This data reveals that colonial theatrical culture was far more diverse than current discussions of the period would allow. As the period progressed and theatrical infrastructure grew, so too did the variety

of classical narratives that were represented on stage. Plays that have now gone largely forgotten were the principal point of contact through which American audiences encountered the Classics on stage. Plays such as Garrick's *Lethe* were able to cut across regional boundaries, enjoying considerable popularity across the American colonies, while others experienced more geographically focused popularity. Outside the boundaries of the professional theatres, students in America's infant educational institutions pursued their own amateur tradition of representing the ancient world on stage that proved distinct from that plied in the professional playhouses. All of these developments, however, would come to a pause in 1774, when the first Continental Congress issued their blanket ban on all such theatrical activity. Yet, as will be seen, this legislation did not quite occasion the total cessation of theatrics that its writers had hoped.

1.2.2 Wartime theatre, 1775-83

Almost as soon as a British Counter-Revolutionary force arrived in America, they began staging plays. So strong was the propensity of British military personnel to stage performances that they earned the nickname 'Howe's Strolling Company', in reference to General Howe, their commanding officer.[11] Besides entertaining the soldiery, these performances also served to display the military might of the British forces, winning converts among the colonists away from the dour Puritanism that had predominated in many American cities and towards the British culture of liberality and merriment. The extravagance of British military theatrics reached its conclusion with the 1778 'Meschianza', a large fete thrown in occupied Philadelphia to honour General Howe's retirement from military service. The celebration included a spectacular fireworks display, several orchestral performances, and a naval regatta along the Delaware River. One of its climaxes was a parade of British military officers dressed in the armour of medieval knights that culminated in a jousting tournament. While Philadelphia's Quaker communities looked on in dismay, a significant portion of the city's more liberal population engaged in the frivolities by dining at fine banquets, enjoying fireworks displays, and pinning courtly

[11] Brown (2006) 31, 173.

favours to the breastplates of British officers about to joust. The spectacle made a clear statement about British military reach: the armed might of the British Empire was in America, had seemingly inexhaustible resources, and were a darn sight more fun than their revolutionary antagonists.

The British troops did not hold a monopoly on dramatic display though. Twenty miles from Howe's Meschianza, Washington's Continental Army were encamped in Valley Forge, in which they staged their now legendary Valley Forge performance of *Cato*. Following the Valley Forge performance, the Continental army began staging performances with such regularity that the Continental Congress felt it necessary to reissue the ban on theatricals twice in the year of 1778. The performances by the Revolutionary forces made for sharp contrast with those of the British. Unable to compete with British theatrics in terms of extravagance, they tended towards more modest-scale productions of plays with messages and themes that were politically appropriate to their developing ideology. By the start of the 1780s the American colonies had fully emerged from the brief dramatic doldrums initiated by the 1774 ban and into a violent swirl of rival, politicised performances that reflected the very real conflict taking place off-stage.

Within this context, Thomas Wall, a professional actor who had remained in continental North America when the rest of his troupe had fled America in response to the 1774 ban, saw an opportunity and in 1781 gained permission from the colony of Maryland to give performances. Starting with one-man-shows in converted lofts and warehouses, Wall gradually attracted a small troupe of keen local amateurs and eventually began to give complete performances of full-length plays. Wall's company, which would play in Maryland through the remainder of the war, developed a strong partnership with the Revolutionary forces and would eventually perform joint-productions with American military personnel that featured music by allied French military bands. Yet, unlike the military performances of the rival armies entertaining themselves as they vied for control of North America, Wall's was a business enterprise and so had to balance any ideological concerns with the demands of his bottom line.

These three spheres of dramatic activity, that of the British military, American military, and Thomas Wall's company, offer three distinct versions of theatre's use of the ancient world during this seminal era of American history. Two are inextricably linked to the conflicting ideologies of their performers. The third is more mercurial, walking a narrow tightrope between political and financial concerns. Table 7 and figures 1.17 and 1.18 below display the overall performance record of this tumultuous period:

	1775	1776	1777	1778	1779	1780	1781	1782	1783	Total
Busiris, King of Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Cato	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	2	5
Coriolanus	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lethe	0	0	0	6	1	1	0	6	5	19
The Distrest Mother	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
The Grecian Daughter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
The Roman Father	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4

Table 7 – Yearly performances received by different plays, 1775-83.

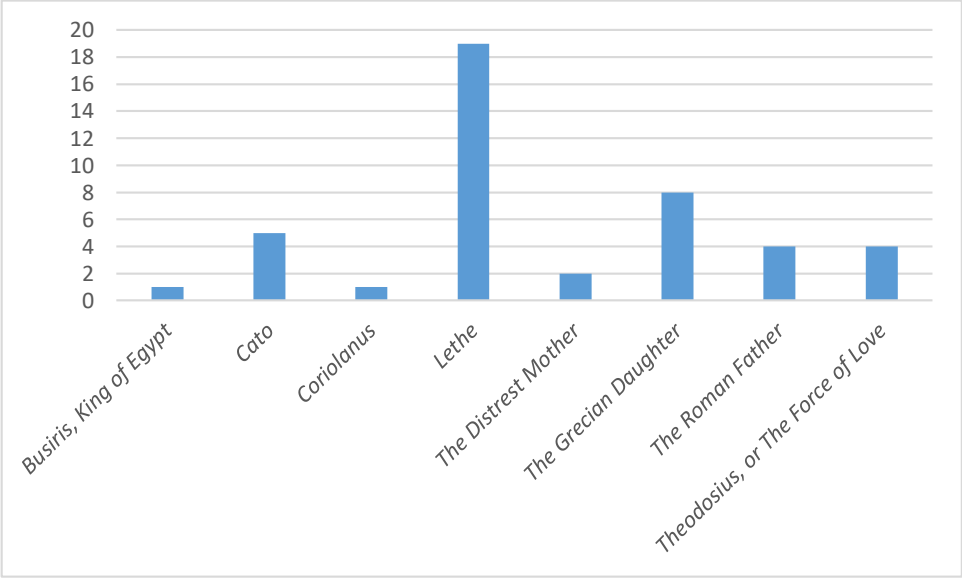


Figure 1.17 – Total number of performances received by different plays, 1775-83.

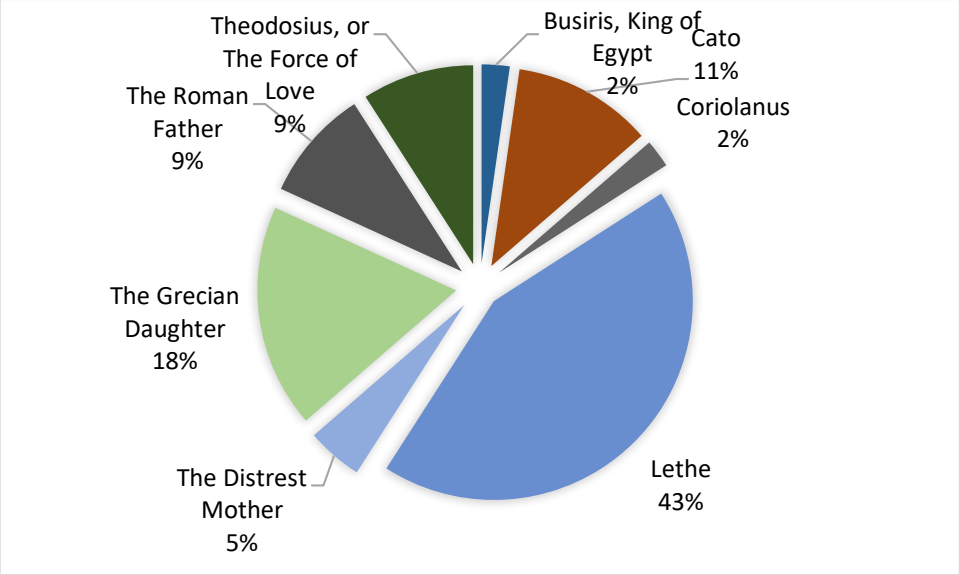


Figure 1.18 – Proportion of performances received by different plays, 1775-83.

These results represent the total number of performances, given by any faction, received by different plays over the course of the eight-year period between 1775 and 1783. They would actually seem to suggest a certain degree of continuity between the colonial and wartime theatres. In both cases, Garrick's *Lethe* serves, by a considerable margin, as the most popular play that directly represents the narratives and characters of antiquity. *Cato* continues to enjoy middling overall popularity. The most notable difference is the sudden popularity of Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* (1772). The play was first performed in London in 1772, so its absence from the repertoire for the period prior to 1774 is understandable. Table 7 reveals that the play remained absent from American stages during much of the war, and that it was only in the final year of the war that it experienced its sudden burst in popularity. While it may have reached American stages late, the play evidently struck a chord.

Table 8 and figures 1.18, 1.19, 1.20, above, break down these total performances according to whether they were staged by the British military, American military, or Thomas Wall's Maryland-based company respectively. They suggest that these three spheres of theatrical activity engaged with the ancient world in wholly distinct ways.

	British military	American military	Thomas Wall's company
Cato	0	2	2
Coriolanus	0	1	0
Lethe	10	0	9
The Distrest Mother	2	0	0
The Grecian Daughter	0	0	6
The Roman Father	0	0	4
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	0	0	3

Table 8 – Total number of performances given by different groups, 1775-83.

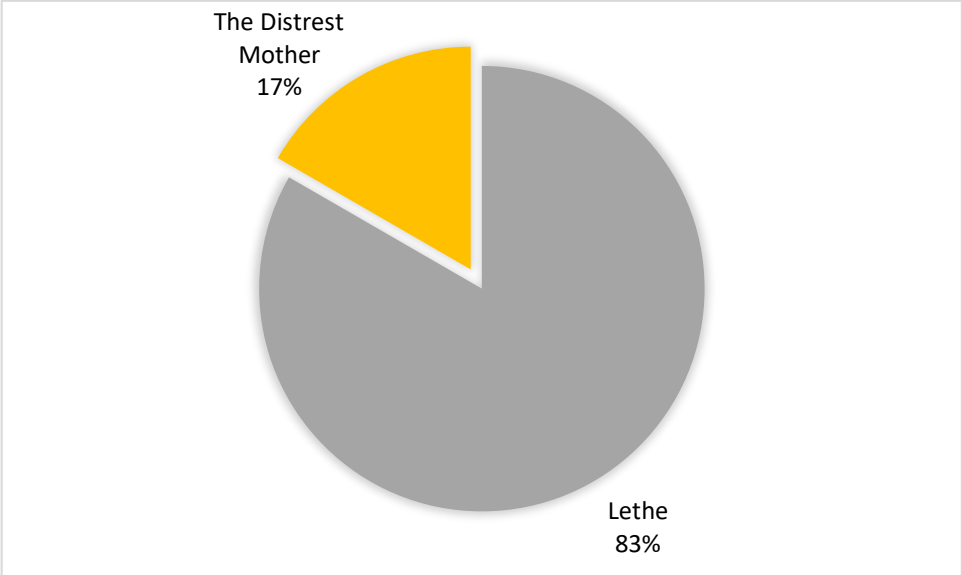


Figure 1.19 – British military performances, 1775-83.

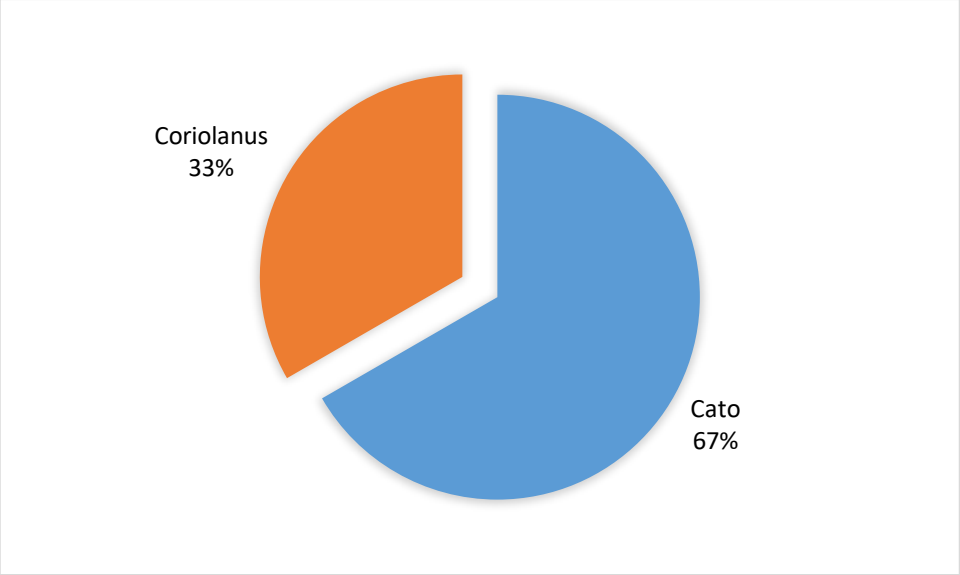


Figure 1.20 – American military performances, 1775-83.

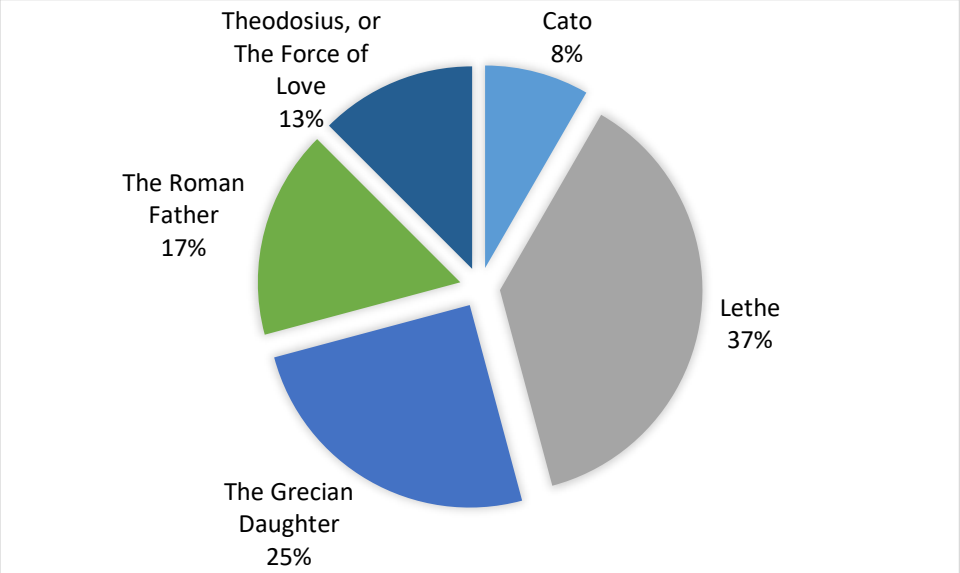


Figure 1.21 – Performances of Thomas Wall's company, 1775-83.

Figure 1.18 shows that *Lethe* enjoyed popularity within British military contexts well in excess of the wider continent, accounting for over 80% of British military performances and less than half of all performances given nation-wide. In contrast, the play is completely absent from the American military repertoire, which instead heavily favours *Cato*. With its emphasis on plays examining paternalistic statesmen from the pages of Roman history, the American military repertoire seems to bear certain similarities to the student-performed repertoire of the colonial period. Perhaps American college

graduates, taking up positions of leadership within the Continental army, brought their dramatic tastes with them when tasked with staging plays to edify and entertain their servicemen. Above all, these two figures show that the ideological and military conflict being fought in North America during these years was reflected in how the ancient world was presented on stage. Despite drawing on the same corpus of British-written plays, Continental and Loyalist military audiences experienced the Classics in radically different ways.

The performances given by Thomas Wall's company in Maryland during the latter years of the war further reinforce this picture of a theatrical culture in flux. To an extent, they suggest that Wall occupied a middle-ground between these two conflicting forces, offering a repertoire that included the light-hearted comic representations of classical material that were so enjoyed by the British military, in the form of *Lethe*, as well as the austere parables of Roman statesmen that edified the Continental soldiery, in the form of *Cato*. Figure 1.20 also shows that the sharp rise in popularity experienced Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* can largely be attributed to Thomas Wall's company. Of the eight performances that were given in the year 1783, six were given by Thomas Wall. The remaining two performances were given by independent amateurs in New York under the guidance of a Mr. Dennis Ryan.[12]

Table 9 below breaks Wall's performances down according to the year in which he gave them. It shows that, despite only performing during the final two years of the war, Wall's repertoire shifted dramatically during this brief time.

[12] See Brown (2006) 186.

	1782	1783
Cato	1	1
Lethe	5	4
The Grecian Daughter	0	6
The Roman Father	0	4
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	0	3

Table 9 – Yearly performances given by Thomas Wall's Company, 1782-3.

Initially relying on the old standbys of *Cato* and *Lethe* during his first year of performing, these two old favourites rapidly declined in terms of their total share of stage time in 1783. By 1783 *Lethe*'s total share had declined from over 80% to less than 25%. In its place, Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter*, Whitehead's *The Roman Father*, and Nathaniel Lee's *Theodosius*, each of which drew on diverse regions and aspects of the classical past to examine themes of statecraft and civic duty, grew in popularity. This data reveals a shift in his performance habits away from a *Lethe*-centric repertoire reminiscent of that performed by the professional troupes of the colonial period, of which Wall himself had been a member, towards a more novel selection of plays, drawing on texts hitherto unexperienced by American audiences. This rapid reinvention in the presentation of the Classics suggests that the ideological pressures of the Revolutionary war were moving dramatic tastes in novel directions, and that the theatrical culture that emerged after the cessation of hostilities would be irrevocably changed by the experience.

1.2.3 Post-war theatre, 1784-1800

As the dust of the Revolution settled and the defeated British forces gradually evacuated from their former colonies, the professional theatrical troupes abandoned their self-imposed exile in the West Indies and returned to a new nation with a new theatrical landscape. The anti-theatricalism that had predominated in many of the American colonies waned into non-existence. With the question of America's status as an independent nation answered, American leaders, dramatists, and audiences now faced the much more difficult question of what the character of this independent nation should be. This matter was further complicated by controversies such as that which arose surrounding the

Jay Treaty, and whether the United States' diplomatic policy should favour Britain or France. As Federalists, Anti-Federalists, and Democratic-Republicans put forth their conflicting visions of the American nation, the new political and economic elite of American cities, embracing the didactic possibilities of the drama, pooled their resources and financed their own theatres. Even the Puritan bastion of Boston succumbed to the trend. By the end of the century the city contained two separate fully-stocked theatres with resident acting troupes: one financed by a wealthy group of Tontine bankers and the other by the leadership of the guild of Mechanics. These two groups each sought to use the theatre to advance their own cultural and political vision for their new nation. In the post-Revolutionary debate to decide the values of the new nation the theatre, and its use of ancient source material, became a potent tool to influence the hearts and minds of the newly enfranchised American citizenry.

Table 10 below shows the number of performances received by different plays during the fifteen years between the cessation of hostilities and the end of the century. Figures 1.22 and 1.23, also below, represent this data as bar and pie charts respectively, condensing plays that received fewer than five total performances into an 'Other' section. They show that these post-war years saw the emergence of a theatrical culture dramatically different from that of preceding years, despite drawing from a largely unchanged repertoire of plays.

	1784	1785	1786	1787	1788	1789	1790	1791	1792	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800	1784-1800
Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens	0	0	5	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	5	5	1	0	0	21
All for Love	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
An Occasional Prologue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Antony & Cleopatra	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Apotheosis of Franklin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Artaxerxes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Busiris, King of Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cato	1	2	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	2	3	3	1	0	0	1	0	19
Coriolanus	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	5
Cymon	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	9
Cyrus, Or, The Force of Superstition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Damon and Phillida	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Daranzel: or, The Persian Patriot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Goldsmith's Epilogue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Julius Caesar	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
King of the Genii, or Harlequin Neptune	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lethe	1	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	13
Love and Magic, or, Harlequin Gladiator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Medea and Jason	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Melpomene	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Midas	0	0	5	3	1	0	1	0	1	1	6	4	4	1	0	0	0	27
Neptune and Amphitrite	0	0	1	3	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Orpheus and Euridece	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Poor Vulcan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Pygmalion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
The Corsican, or The Dawnings of Love	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
The Death of Bucephalus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
The Deserter of Naples	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
The Distrest Mother	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
The Grecian Daughter	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	3	8	5	1	3	0	0	1	27
The Grecian Fabulist	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
The Roman Actor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
The Roman Father	0	1	2	0	0	2	1	1	3	1	2	2	4	0	3	3	6	31
The Water of Oblivion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
The Whitsun Frolic; or, Harlequin Gladiator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2

Table 10 – Yearly performances received by different plays, 1784-1800.

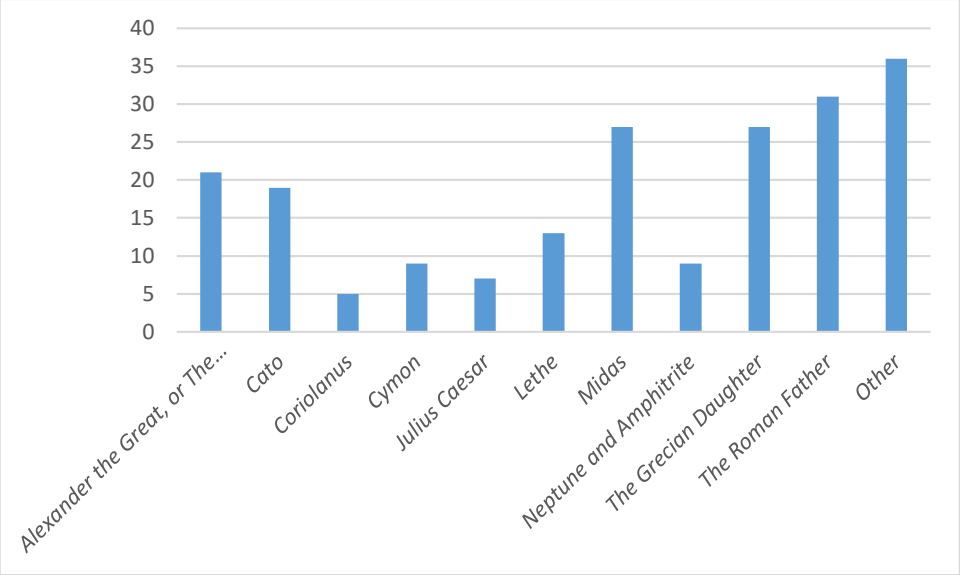


Figure 1.22 – Total number of performances received by different plays, 1784-1800.

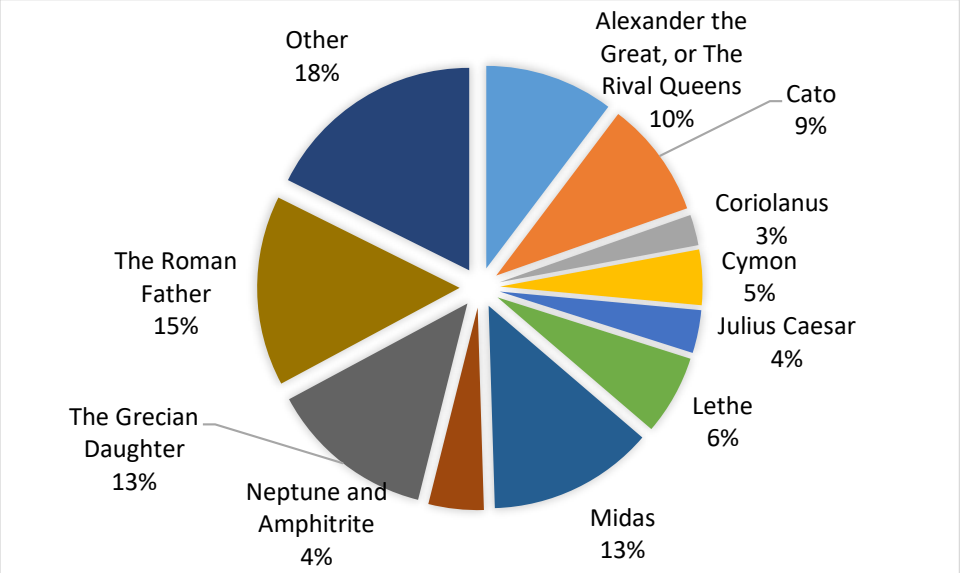


Figure 1.23 – Proportion of performances received by different plays, 1784-1800.

The most notable change is that *Lethe* and *Damon and Phillida*, the two most popular plays of the Colonial period that drew on classical source material, are vastly diminished in significance. *Damon and Phillida* received only one performance, a number so negligible it has been elided into the 'Other' section. Similarly, *Lethe*, which once dominated the Colonial classical repertoire, ranks only as the sixth most popular. It is noteworthy that table 9 reveals the popularity of both plays to have been

concentrated towards the start of the period, with over half of *Lethe*'s performances occurring before 1788.

The popularity of these two plays is supplanted by two interlopers, William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* and Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter*. Both of these tragedies examine classical ideals of citizenship and public duty through an eighteenth-century lens. *The Roman Father* represents the battle between the Horatii against the Curiatii, in which the rival cities of Rome and Alba Longa each select a group of champions, the Horatii and Curiatii respectively, to do battle on their city's behalf. *The Grecian Daughter* shows the efforts of the pious Euphrasia of Syracuse to overthrow the tyrannical Dionysius and restore her father, the rightful ruler, to power. Whitehead's play had been performed since the colonial period and Murphy's had premiered during the latter years of the war. While they may not have been new to American stages, the popularity that they experienced during the post-war years was unprecedented. With peaks and troughs these two plays gradually grow in popularity over the course of the period. Following minimal performances during the second half of the 1780s, Murphy's play would go on to dominate the early 1790s, being the most performed play of 1793, 1794, and 1795. Whitehead's *The Roman Father* similarly peaked towards the end of the century, being the most performed play of 1798, 1799, and 1800.

This is emblematic of a wider lessening of interest in comic treatments of the classical world, and a growth in popularity of plays that deal with themes of statesmanship and political virtue. The five most popular plays of these sixteen years are all oriented around depicting the trials and tribulations of a titular statesperson. The novel political pressures that accompanied American independence were evidently having an impact on how American audiences viewed the ancient world on stage, and what lessons they sought to draw from it.

Table 11 and figures 1.24 to 1.28 below break these figures down according to the city in which they occurred:

	Charleston	Baltimore	New York	Philadelphia	Boston
Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens	2	3	7	4	4
All for Love	1	0	1	1	0
Antony & Cleopatra	0	0	2	0	0
Apotheosis of Franklin	2	0	0	0	1
Artaxerxes	0	0	0	1	0
Cato	0	1	3	6	0
Coriolanus	0	0	3	1	0
Cymon	1	0	3	5	2
Cyrus, Or, The Force of Superstition	0	0	1	0	1
Damon and Phillida	0	0	1	0	0
Julius Caesar	0	0	5	2	0
King of the Genii, or Harlequin Neptune	0	0	1	0	0
Lethe	1	1	2	2	1
Love and Magic, or, Harlequin Gladiator	0	0	1	0	0
Medea and Jason	0	0	1	0	1
Melpomene	0	0	1	0	0
Midas	4	1	9	4	9
Neptune and Amphitrite	0	1	4	4	0
Orpheus and Euridece	0	0	0	1	1
Poor Vulcan	0	0	1	0	1
Pygmalion	0	0	0	0	1
The Corsican, or The Dawnings of Love	0	0	2	0	0
The Death of Bucephalus	2	0	0	0	0
The Deserter of Naples	0	0	0	0	1
The Distrest Mother	1	0	0	0	0
The Grecian Daughter	2	2	4	15	2
The Grecian Fabulist	0	0	1	0	0
The Roman Actor	0	0	0	0	1
The Roman Father	5	3	7	8	7
The Water of Oblivion, or Harlequin Distributor of the Water of Lethe	1	0	0	0	0
The Whitsun Frolic; or, Harlequin Gladiator	0	0	1	0	0
Theodosius, or The Force of Love	1	0	0	1	0

Table 11 – Total number of performances according to state, 1775-1800.

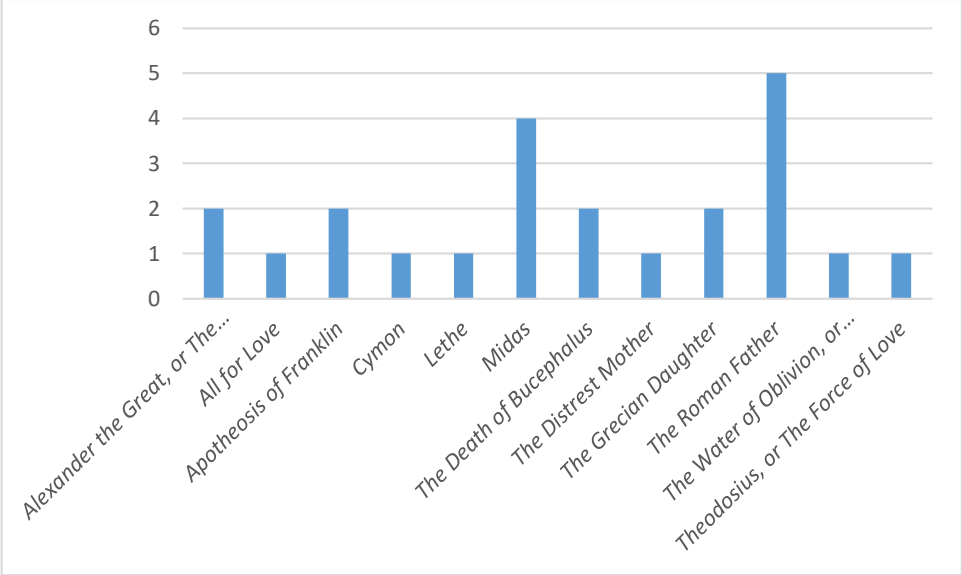


Figure 1.24 – Total number of performances received by different plays, Charleston, 1785-1800.

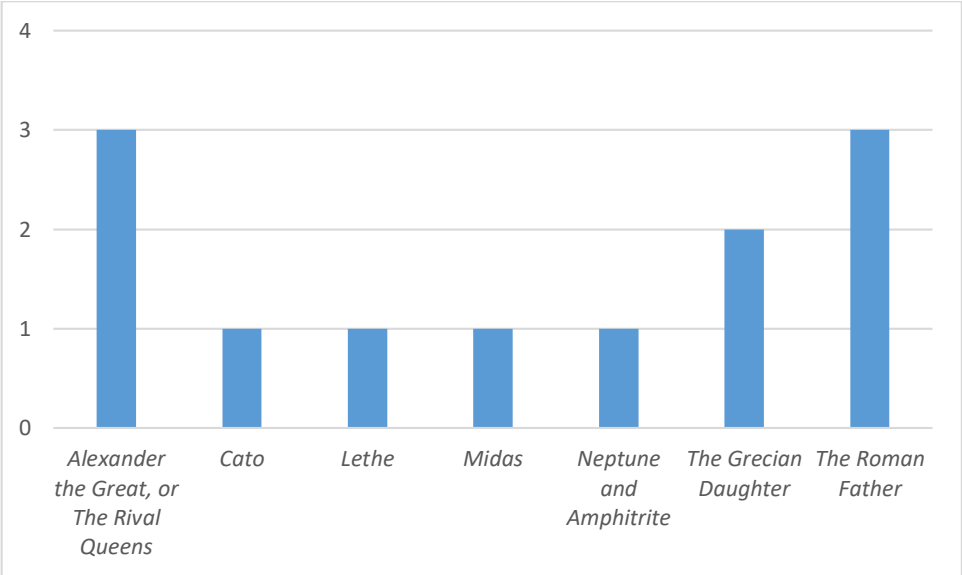


Figure 1.25 – Total number of performances received by different plays, Baltimore, 1785-1800.

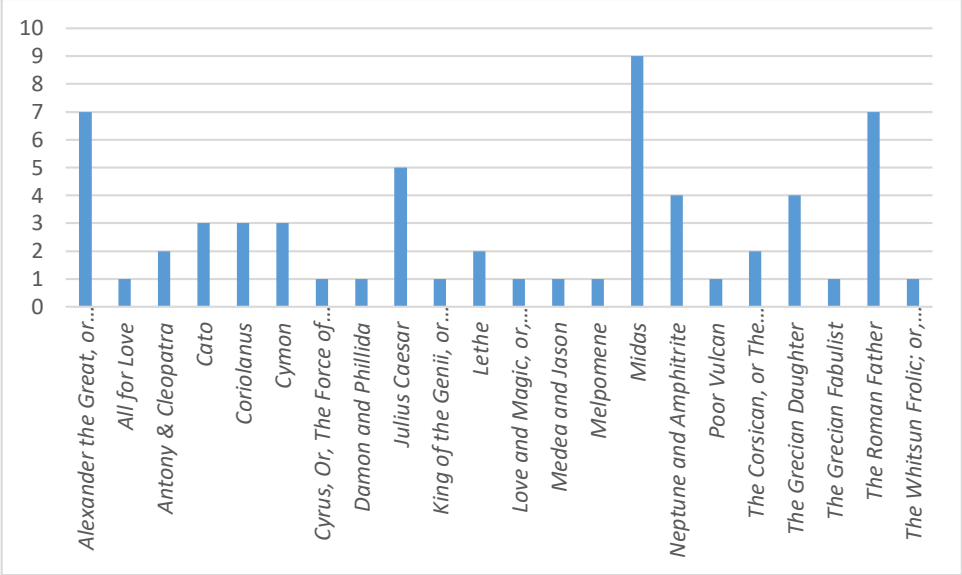


Figure 1.26 – Total number of performances received by different plays, New York, 1785-1800.

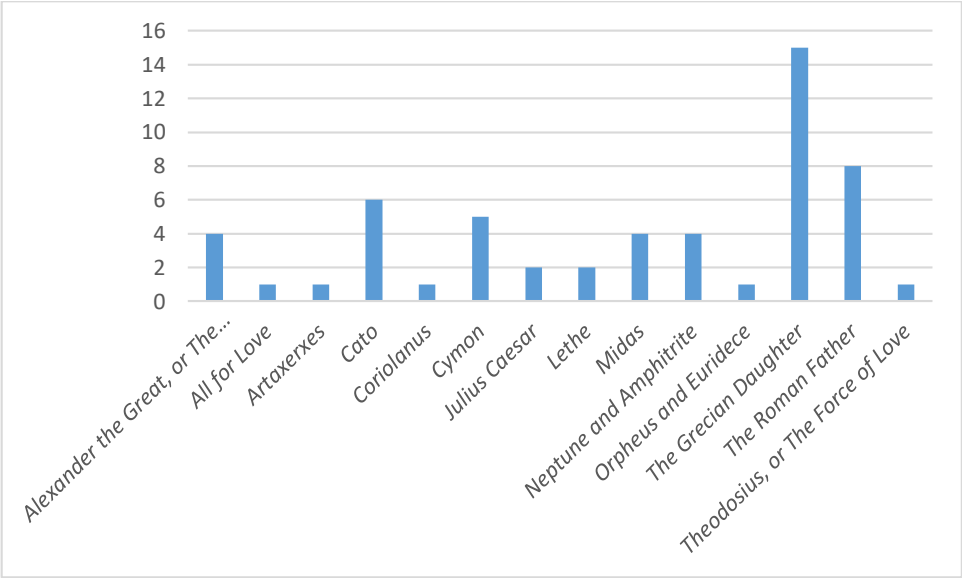


Figure 1.27 – Total number of performances received by different plays, Philadelphia, 1785-1800.

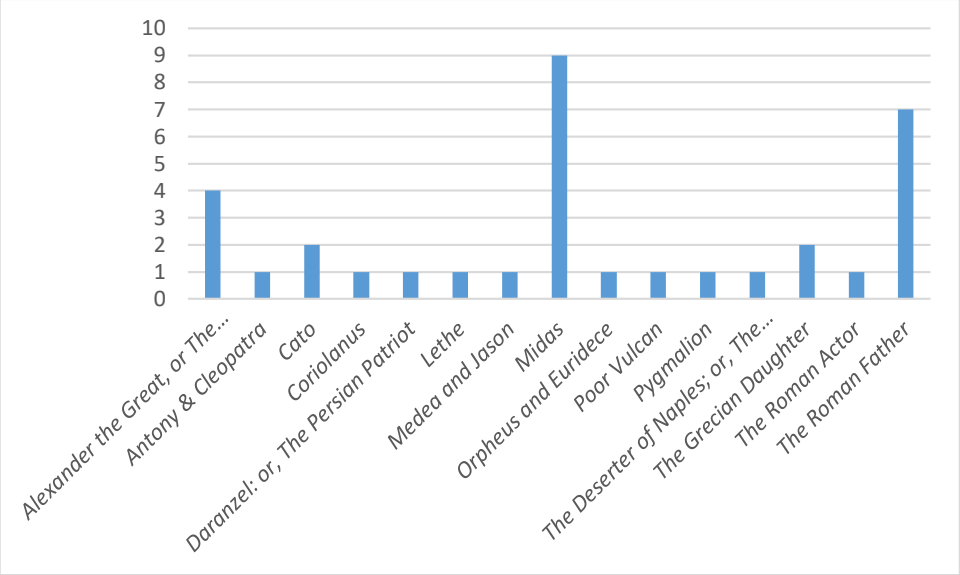


Figure 1.28 – Total number of performances received by different plays, Boston, 1785-1800.

Charleston, Baltimore, New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston, being the five principal urban centres for which reasonable data survives, have been represented in the above graphics. They show that the national-level popularity experienced by *The Roman Father* is not isolated to a single city, with the play being either the most popular or second most popular representation of the ancient world in each of the above five cities.

This is not to suggest that theatres in all five of these cities represented the Classics homogeneously. Kane O'Hara's *Midas*, a holdover from the colonial repertoire, continues to enjoy considerable, albeit inconsistent popularity, being the most popular play in both Boston and New York, yet being scarcely performed in Philadelphia or Baltimore. The evaporation of *Cato*'s popularity also occurred at dissimilar rates across these cities. The play is absent from Charleston's stages, despite enjoying considerable popularity in South Carolina before the Revolution. In Philadelphia, however, the play retained a reasonable portion of its stage presence, being the third most performed text in the city. The unusually high popularity that these three plays, each of which examine themes of republican virtue and dutiful stoicism, experienced within Philadelphia compared to other cities is particularly notable. That Philadelphia, the political centre of the young nation, demonstrates an abnormally high

interest in such politically pertinent texts is suggestive of a meaningful relationship between the developing political ideology of the young nation and audiences' experiences of the ancient world on stage. This relationship will be explored in chapter three.

Despite lasting only a decade and a half, the period between the end of the War of Independence and the close of the eighteenth century saw a revision of the American experience of the ancient world on stage. Although drawing from a largely unchanged corpus of plays, the frequency with which different plays were performed changed radically, with former crowd-pleasers disappearing from the stage as previously peripheral plays came to the fore. The connection between the political pressures of American independence and this shift in focus away from innocuous comedies such as *Lethe* towards politically-charged examinations of classical statesmanship such as *The Roman Father* demands further investigation.

1.2.4 Democratic theatre, 1800-19

The beginning of the nineteenth century heralded a new era for both the theatre and the nation at large. When George Washington died in December of 1799, he had spent the final decade and a half of his life watching the newly independent American nation transform from a military battleground to a political one. The election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800 signalled a significant victory for the Democratic-Republican party that he and James Madison had founded during the 1790s, and a radical shift in the political ideals of the young nation. Where their Federalist opponents had championed a model of disinterested, paternalistic statesmen governing in the best interests of the nation, Jefferson adopted an anti-elitist stance that emphasised the political sovereignty and, ultimately, the political enfranchisement of free-born white males. These changes were reflected in the playhouse.

Sarah Chinn has identified the twenty years between Jefferson's election in 1800 and the emergence of urban working-class culture in the 1820s as being characterised by a general absence of classical material from the stage. She contends that the period immediately after the revolution during the 1780s and 90s and the period of Andrew Jackson's political dominance during the 1820s and 30s

represented the two peaks of classical narratives' influence on American stages. Compared to this, the two decades following the turn of the century did little but divide 'these two specific moments in which Rome figured so significantly in the public theatrical imagination'.[13] Her claim is half right. Plays that she identifies with the revolutionary and Jacksonian periods were noticeably absent from the Democratic stage. That is not to say, however, that classical material at large was absent. Subjecting the performance record of this twenty years to a distant reading analysis reveals that the stories and characters of antiquity continued to occupy American stages, though not in the form that one might expect.

Table 12 and figure 1.29 below display the total number of performances received by different plays during the period from 1800 to 1819. They suggest several significant developments:

	1800-4	1805-9	1810-4	1815-19	1800-19
Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens	10	9	18	19	56
An Occasional Prologue	1	0	0	0	1
Brutus, or The Fall of Tarquin	0	0	0	14	14
Cato	1	2	1	0	4
Coriolanus	0	5	4	3	12
Cymbeline	2	0	0	1	3
Cymon	5	0	0	0	5
Julius Caesar	2	5	2	5	14
Harlequin's Invasion	0	1	0	0	1
Midas	1	1	0	0	2
The Corsican, or The Dawnings of Love	2	0	0	0	2
The Distrest Mother	3	2	2	0	7
The Grecian Daughter	6	3	4	4	17
The Roman Father	10	2	2	0	14
Paratheatricals	47	6	2	9	64

Table 12 – *Yearly performances received by different plays, 1800-19.*

[13] Chinn (2017a) 171-3.

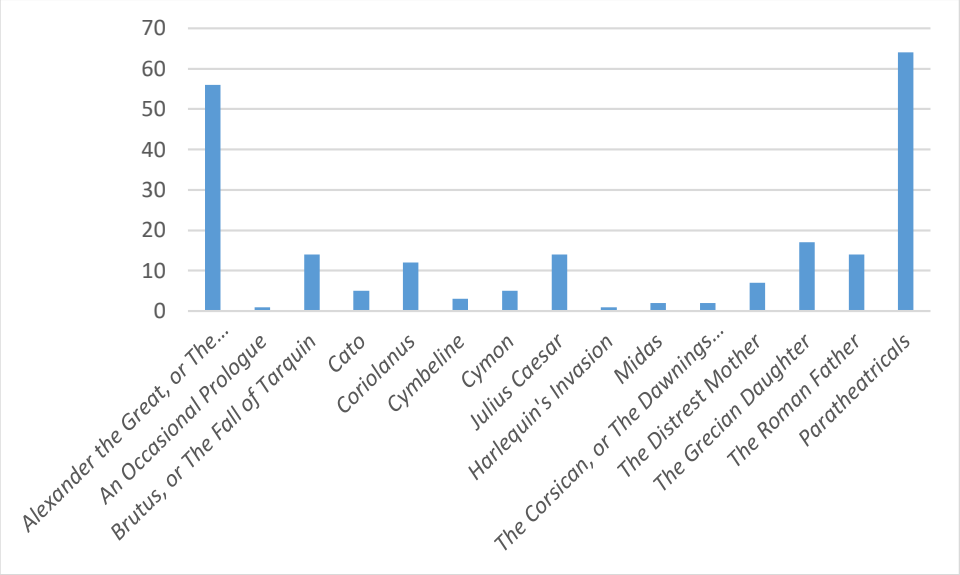


Figure 1.29 – Total number of performances received by different plays, 1800-19.

Firstly, both *The Roman Father* and *The Grecian Daughter* have been reduced to middling importance. *Cato* and *Midas,* which had been performed since the colonial period, have almost disappeared from the stage. Garrick's *Lethe*, the most performed play of the period before 1774, is completely absent. These plays, which had served as the primary medium through which American audiences experienced the ancient world on stage in previous decades, are radically declined in importance. Table 12 shows that what little popularity these texts received over this twenty-year period was mostly concentrated in the first 5 years after the turn of the century. From 1815 onwards, *The Roman Father*, which had dominated the stage during the years immediately after the revolution, was absent.

Two strands of drama emerge to take their place. The first is a spike in popularity of Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander the Great, or, The Rival Queens* (1677). The relatively antique play portrays the death of Alexander the Great and had enjoyed minor success on American stages since its first performance in Pennsylvania in 1768. This popularity expanded rapidly during this newly democratised era of American history with the play becoming the most performed single play of the period. Table 12 shows that, while *Alexander* was presented with regularity on American stages throughout these two decades, it enjoyed its greatest market share of performances between 1810 and 1814 when it

accounted for over half of all performances. A play that had occupied American stages so unexceptionally for almost half a century experiencing such a sudden and dramatic rise in popularity is extremely noteworthy and will be discussed further in chapter four.

The second strand of drama that grew in popularity during this period is a species of performances that have been termed ‘paratheatricals’. They have been termed so because they exist beyond the traditional structural forms of conventional drama. These are not plays. They are short, unscripted stunts, side-shows, and pantomimes that made use of some form of classical imagery or characters and promised audiences spectacle and amazement. Given that they are unconstrained by traditional scripts, details concerning the exact nature of these performances is often lacking, the only extant information being their titles and whatever specifics are mentioned within advertisements. Specifics may be lacking, but figure 1.29 shows their popularity to have been undeniable, with this species of performance being more popular than any individual play when taken as a whole. Table 13 below gives the titles of these paratheatricals and the number of performances that they each received:

Title	Performances
Alexander's Feast	2
Care and Mirth; or, Harlequin Gladiator	2
Care and Mirth; or, Harlequin Animated	1
Care and Mirth; or, Harlequin's Animation	2
Cyrus, Or, The Force of Superstition	1
Daranzel: or, The Persian Patriot	1
Exercise of Hercules	8
False and True; or, A Trip to Naples	1
Goldsmith's Epilogue	1
Hercules and Omphale	10
Horse Bucephalus	1
Le Deserteur de Naples	1
Love and Magic, or, Harlequin Gladiator	1
Medea and Jason	3
Medea and Jason, or, The Power of Secrecy	1
Medea and Jason; or, The Golden Fleece	3
Media and Jason	1
Neptune and Amphitrite	1
Neptune, God of the Ocean, and his Queen	3
Orpheus and Euridece	2
Telemachus in the Island of Calypso	1
The Death of Bucephalus	3
The Deserter of Naples; or, The Eruption of Mount Vesuvius	1
The Egyptian Pyramid, or The Strength of Hercules	2
The Grand Aeudifocican, or Mysteries of Mechanism	2
The Shipwreck; or, The Hermit of Mount Vesuvius	4
The Siege of Oxcydroce	2
The Whitsun Frolic; or, Harlequin Gladiator	1
The Witches, or, Harlequin Salamander	1

Table 13 – Individuals paratheatrical performances and the number of performances they received, 1800-19.

These titles along with the corresponding descriptions that appear in advertising materials permit a plausible hypothesis of the content and themes of the corresponding performances. The advertising material for the *Exercises of Hercules* rather comprehensively explains how the performer, an Indian man named Sena Sama, will perform a variety of feats of strength with a cannon ball.[14] The 'plot' of *Hercules and Omphale* is almost entirely explained in its advertising materials, which describes the grand palaces, chariots, dances, battles, and acts of god that it will represent, bragging first and

[14] Norfolk *American Beacon* (20/04/1818) 3.

foremost of the 'new Scenery, Machinery, Dresses and Decorations' that it will employ in their deliverance.[15] While the text of *Goldsmith's Epilogue* might be lost, we know that it culminated in the deliverer taking 'a FLYING LEAP into a representation of the Crater of Mount Vesuvius, At the Moment of irruption'.[16] Given the evident variety of these types of performance, it is helpful to categorize them according to the aspect of the ancient world with which they seemed to engage.

These performances can be broken down into six main themes/subjects:

1. **Alexander the Great**

   Representations on the theme of Alexander the Great include *Alexander's Feast*, a depiction of a grand feast within Alexander's court, and *The Death of Bucephalus*, an equestrian display inspired by Alexander's horse.[17] It is plausible to suggest a congruency between this category of paratheatrical and the growing popularity of Lee's *Alexander the Great*.

2. **Classical Mythology**

   Representations of episodes and characters from classical mythology are particularly diverse in their form and tone. They draw on the myths of Jason and Medea, Orpheus, and Telemachus as well as depicting the deeds of various ancient divinities. These representations seem to have made extensive use of a variety of machinery, pyrotechnics, and stage effects to simulate displays of Medea being surrounded by a shower of fire or of Neptune's chariot descending from the heavens.[18]

3. **Herculean Strength**

   The mythology surrounding Hercules was such a popular theme within the sphere of classical mythology that it was necessary to separate it into its own category. These

[15] *Philadelphia Gazette* (22/02/1802) 2.
[16] Alexandria *Times; and District of Columbia Daily Advertiser* (15/12/1800) 3.
[17] *New-York Daily Advertiser* (04/08/1819) 2; Charleston *City Gazette* (09/09/1800) 3.
[18] New York *Mercantile Advertiser* (17/09/1800) 3; Washington *National Intelligencer* (16/11/1804) 3.

Herculean entertainments range from fully-fledged pantomimes representing episodes from the Hercules myth to simple strongman displays with the title of Hercules attached. In many cases the performances seem to be absent of any direct connection to the Hercules myth, and instead comprise an ordinary display of strength that are given a title such as *The Exercises of Hercules*.[19] The ease with which an ordinary strongman routine might be given an extra lustre by appealing to the classical world may go some of the way to explaining the frequency with which they were performed.

4. **Orientalist Exoticism**

   These performances typically consisted of representations of some of the more exotic, far-flung regions of the ancient world in Persia or Egyptian. Examples include the so-called *Grand Aeudifocican*, an animatronic representation of, amongst other thing, the royal court in ancient Egypt, that was displayed in Washington D.C.[20]

5. **Gladiatorial Combat**

   A variety of pantomimes and skits seem to have made use of the gladiator motif. Mostly they seem to have comprised a single scene of mock gladiatorial combat within a wider fantastical pantomime, as was the case with *The Witches, or, Harlequin Salamander*.[21] Some pieces, such as *The Whitsun Frolic; or, Harlequin Gladiator,* appear to have gone a little further though, and took the form of a one man show in which a performer acted out the different styles and actions of an ancient gladiator.[22]

6. **Vesuvian Eruption**

   These performances comprise representations of the eruption of Vesuvius. These displays were usually rather elaborate and involved constructing a makeshift Vesuvius

[19] Norfolk *American Beacon* (20/04/1818) 3.
[20] Washington *National Intelligencer* (19/11/1804) 3.
[21] *Providence Gazette* (13/09/1806) 3.
[22] New York *Mercantile Advertiser* (02/06/1800) 2.

and simulating its eruption. Not all directly reference the ancient world, instead some simply represent the volcano erupting, making it questionable as to the extent to which they were directly engaging with the Classics. The city of Pompeii was, however, at this time establishing itself on the circuit of the Grand Tour and letters from visitors to the ruined city were frequently published in American newspapers.[23] Given this wider interest in Pompeii, it seems reasonable to include all representations of Vesuvius' eruption, even those that were absent any direct reference to the ancient world, as at least engaging with the wider classical zeitgeist.

Table 14 and figure 1.30 below show the relative popularities of these different categories of paratheatrical performance:

	Total
Alexander the Great	7
Gladiatorial combat	8
Herculean strength	20
Vesuvian eruption	8
Mythology	15
Orientalist exoticism	4

Table 14 – Categories of paratheatrical performances and the number of performances they received, 1800-19.

[23] One such can be found in the *Providence Gazette* (18/01/1817) 2-3.

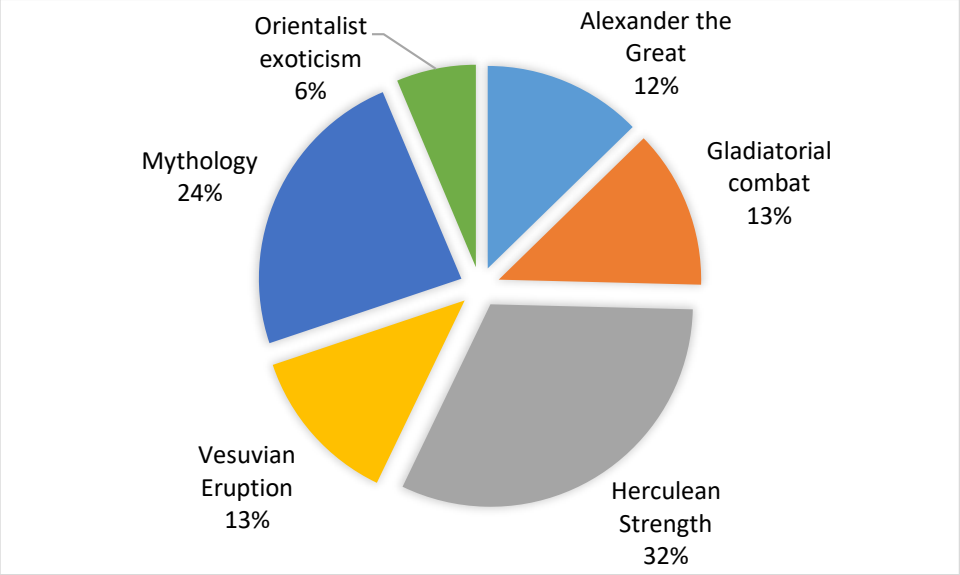


Figure 1.30 – Total performances received by different categories of paratheatricals, 1800-19.

They show that these paratheatricals most commonly engaged with the myth of Hercules. Representations of Orientalist Exoticism, on the other hand, occupy a relatively slim portion of the stage time assigned to these paratheatricals. To better understand the popularity of this unconventional species of performance, and its relationship to more traditional drama, it will be necessary to understand how these performance frequencies manifested within different cities.

Table 15 below represents the total performances that different plays received in each of the principal cities for which significant data exists. Table 16 further breaks down the paratheatrical category according to the performances received by each particular category of subject matter in each of these cities. Figure 1.31 represents the data from table 16 as a stacked bar chart, visualising the relative popularity of different categories of paratheatrical performance.

	Charleston	New York	Philadelphia	Boston	Washington D.C.
Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens	6	21	5	15	2
An Occasional Prologue	0	0	0	0	1
Brutus, or The Fall of Tarquin	0	5	0	4	0
Cato	0	1	1	1	0
Coriolanus	2	3	1	6	0
Cymbeline	0	2	1	0	0
Cymon	1	1	3	0	0
Julius Caesar	2	4	3	4	0
Harlequin's Invasion	0	1	0	0	0
Midas	1	0	0	1	0
The Corsican, or The Dawnings of Love	0	2	0	0	0
The Distrest Mother	1	1	3	1	0
The Grecian Daughter	2	5	5	0	1
The Roman Father	3	3	5	2	0
Paratheatricals	6	25	11	3	6

Table 15 – Total number of performances according to city, 1800-19.

	Charleston	New York	Philadelphia	Boston	Washington D.C.
Alexander the Great	2	4	0	1	0
Gladiatorial combat	3	5	0	0	0
Herculean strength	0	2	9	0	1
Vesuvian eruption	0	5	1	1	0
Mythology	1	8	2	0	3
Orientalist exoticism	0	1	0	1	2

Table 16 – Categories of paratheatrical performances according to city, 1800-19.

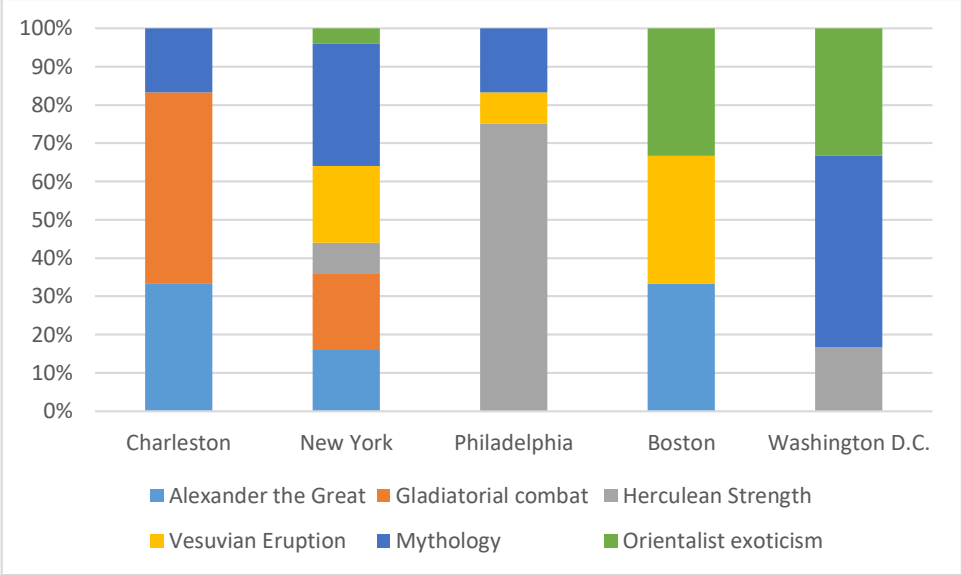


Figure 1.31 – Relative popularity of different categories of paratheatrical performance according to city, 1800-19.

These results suggest a certain degree of homogeneity across each of these major theatrical hubs. In every case, the combination of Lee's *Alexander* and these paratheatricals account for over half of performances. Table 15 further shows that the retention of interest in *The Roman Father* and *The Grecian Daughter* was primarily concentrated in Philadelphia, where the two plays combined accounted for just over a quarter of all performances. In Boston they accounted for barely 5%. This is understandable given that both plays were shown to be particularly popular in Philadelphia during the period between the revolution and the turn of the century.

This distant reading exercise has demonstrated that these twenty years between the didactic theatre of the late eighteenth century and the working-class theatres of the Jacksonian era were far from bereft of the Classics. Classical narratives continued to occupy American stages. In some cases, they did so via the medium of conventional drama in the form of Lee's *Alexander*. In other cases, the characters and events of antiquity found themselves represented in genre-defying paratheatrical performances, which, as tenuous as their links to the texts of antiquity might seem, nonetheless served as a medium through which American audiences engaged with the ancient world. This data

poses various questions concerning these spectacular paratheatricals' engagement with the Classics, the reasons for *Alexander*'s seemingly inexplicable rise in popularity, the relationship between these two trends, and the extent to which these trends reflected and informed wider changes in American politics and culture. These questions are all examined in chapter four.

Besides raising these questions, this data also foreshadows the beginning of the next era of American theatre. Table 12, representing the total number of performances received by different plays during these decades, shows that, during the final few years of these two decades, an interloper would emerge onto the American theatrical scene. John Howard Payne's *Brutus; or, The Fall of Tarquin* (1818) would receive its first American performance in 1819. In that year alone it would receive fourteen performances, making it the most popular play of that year by a wide margin. *Alexander*, the second most popular play of that year, would receive only three performances. Such a meteoric rise in popularity is not necessarily unheard of, yet Payne's *Brutus* was unusual for other reasons. Every play that thus enjoyed considerable popularity on American stages was written by a Briton, imported across the Atlantic from the colonial metropolis. *Brutus* was written by a native-born American. From 1819 onwards, the hegemony of British-written plays over American stages and their portrayal of the classical world would be challenged, and *Brutus* would ultimately herald the beginning of a new era in how American audiences experienced the ancient world on stage.

1.2.5 Jacksonian theatre, 1820-31

Within broader American society, the 1820s are marked by demographic and economic shifts, an increasing class and ethnic consciousness amongst the emerging white working class, and the electoral success of Andrew Jackson. These all changed the face of American society, and the playhouse was not excluded from these changes. The so-called 'star system' would emerge during this decade. This new economic model for theatres placed unprecedented emphasis on celebrity 'star' actors as a means to attract audiences. This development came much to the chagrin of supporting actors and managers, who saw their own profits and prestige diminished by swaggering stars. The most notable

of these stars was Edwin Forrest, the larger-than-life Philadelphian who would become the undisputed master of the stage, a living avatar of American masculinity, and one of the most important patrons of American dramatic literature. The success experienced by Payne's *Brutus* towards the end of the 1810s was but the beginning of the glut of American-written visions of antiquity that would emerge. Forrest regularly hosted competitions with cash prizes for original dramatic works. In doing so he not only provided a financial incentive to aspiring playwrights but also furnished himself with some of his most frequently used dramatic vehicles. Chief among these was Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* (1831), which premiered in New York's Park Theatre on 26th September 1831 and which Forrest would perform over one thousand times over the course of his life. This section will identify the most significant plays of the 1820s that used the ancient world as a setting and evaluate the dramatic landscape as it was upon the release of *The Gladiator*.

Figure 1.32 below shows the total number of performances received by different plays set in the ancient world. Table 17 breaks these performances down according to the year in which they occurred.

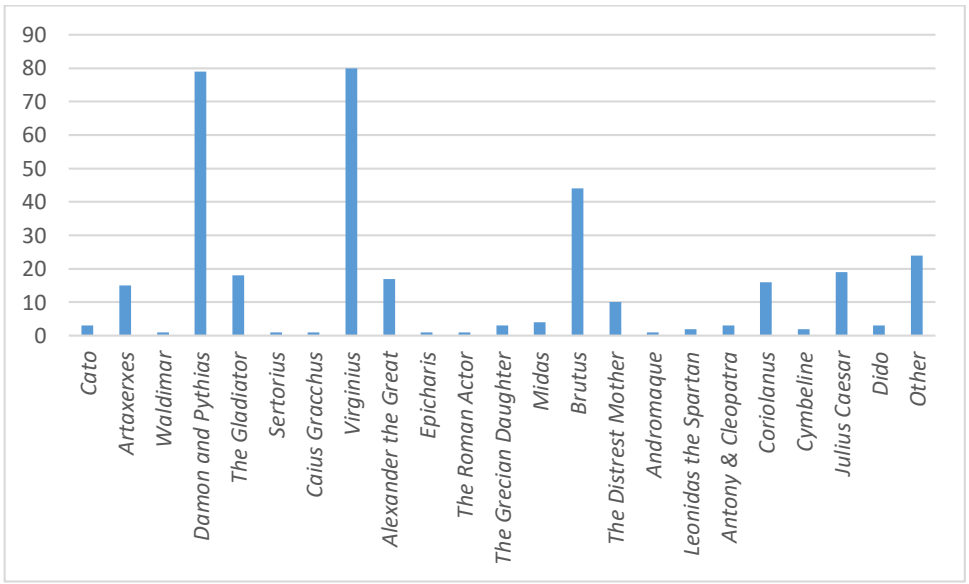


Figure 1.32 – Total number of performances received by different plays, 1820-31.

	1819	1820	1821	1822	1823	1824	1825	1826	1827	1828	1829	1830	1831
Cato	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Artaxerxes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	1	4	1
Woldimar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Damon and Pythias	0	0	4	5	16	8	6	12	6	7	6	5	4
The Gladiator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Sertorius	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Caius Gracchus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Virginius	0	6	6	4	5	8	7	14	10	8	7	4	1
Alexander the Great	3	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Epicharis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
The Roman Actor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
The Grecian Daughter	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Midas	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Brutus	14	10	8	0	4	2	1	2	3	1	3	5	5
Virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Distrest Mother	0	0	0	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Camillus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Andromaque	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Leonidas the Spartan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Antony & Cleopatra	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Coriolanus	0	1	0	0	2	4	1	2	2	0	0	0	4
Cymbeline	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Julius Caesar	1	1	0	0	3	5	0	4	1	1	1	0	3
Caius Marius	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dido	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Other	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	3	0	6	8

Table 17 – Yearly performances received by different plays, 1819-31.

These two figures suggest a theatrical culture that was dramatically changed from that of previous years. The plays that dominated the theatre in previous decades have all but disappeared from the stage. Lee's *Alexander* occupies a consistently peripheral position, never accounting for more than 15% of yearly performances. Addison's *Cato* and Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* have been reduced to insignificance. Whitehead's *The Roman Father* has completely disappeared from the stage. Garrick's *Lethe* is but a distant memory, not likely to have graced the stage in the lifetimes of many of those in the audience.

The loosely classical paratheatricals that had enjoyed such a spike in popularity during the first decades of the nineteenth century are still present, albeit in a much reduced form. The theatres still

played host to occasional performances of gladiatorial combat and displays of Herculean strength, but they were by no means the mainstay of the dramatic repertoire that they had been during the 1800s and 1810s. The proliferation of pleasure gardens and circuses provided a dedicated space for such entertainments outside the boundaries of the playhouse. An 1827 guidebook to New York listed the abundance of entertainment spaces available: the Park, Bowery, and Chatham Garden theatres offering traditional dramatic fare; three circuses offering equestrian and acrobatic displays as well as ballets and farces; three public gardens; three museums hosting panoramic paintings, curiosities, and various natural history exhibitions; as well as a variety of regular boat excursions and hot air balloon trips.[24] The equestrian shows and melodramatic spectacles to which managers resorted in order to draw in crowds at the start of the century now had their own dedicated spaces – not that these seem to have been particularly missed by the managers of the city's theatres. [25] New York's two leading theatres of the Park and the Bowery seemed to find that contracting a star actor for a season could provide as much, if not more, of an audience draw as any number of jugglers and strongmen dressed as Hercules.

A wholly novel theatrical repertoire emerged in the first years of this decade. Two plays of the London repertoire, James Sheridan Knowles' *Virginius; or, The Liberation of Rome* (1820) and John Banim's *Damon and Pythias* (1821), enjoyed the unlikely honour of having jointly received the most performances of any play set in the ancient world, having both received exactly seventy-nine extant performances. These two plays take two very different aspects the classical past for their subject matter. *Virginius* follows the overthrow of the decemvirs, a populist yet tyrannical oligarchy that seized power over Republican Rome, by the titular Virginius. *Damon and Pythias* presents the Greek legend of the friends Damon and Pythias who, when one is sentenced to death by an oppressive despot, the other agrees to take his place as a prisoner. What is most notable about the American

[24] Bank (2006) 46-8.
[25] David Grimsted describe a gradual 'division between kinds of entertainment, between the legitimate theater, the opera, the ballet, vaudeville, and the circus' over the course of the first half of the century, Grimsted (1968) 110.

popularity of these two plays is the rapidity with which they were embraced by audiences. Both *Virginius* and *Damon and Pythias* premiered in New York in the same year that they premiered in London (1820 and 1821 respectively). George Winchester Stone Jr, commenting on how American theatrical trends often lagged behind those of their British peers, remarks that an English visitor to the United States during the late eighteenth century 'would have enjoyed a nostalgic experience of seeing almost the very repertory that [they had seen] in the theatre in London twenty years earlier'.[26] This is clearly no longer the case in the 1820s. American audiences were able to experience novel plays almost contemporaneously with their trans-Atlantic cousins.

These two plays are closely followed in popularity by *Brutus, or, The Fall of Tarquin* (1818), written by the New York-born John Howard Payne. The play tells the tale of Lucius Junius Brutus' overthrow of the Roman monarchy and establishment of the Republic. While it may have been written by an American, Payne wrote the play while studying and working in London. *Brutus* premiered in London's Drury Lane Theatre on 3rd of December 1818 before arriving in New York's Park Theatre in March of the following year to much fanfare and excitement.[27] Given its author's dual involvement in both British and American theatrical scenes, *Brutus* can perhaps be considered more of a trans-Atlantic text, rather than being uniquely British or American. Table 17 shows that *Brutus*' popularity is largely concentrated in the three years immediately after its premiere, with the play's popularity contracting after 1821. This is not, however, to say that *Brutus'* sole attraction to American audiences was its novelty value as having been written by a 'local boy done good'. *Brutus* was regularly performed over the course of the decade, suggesting that, while it may not have had the blockbuster success of *Virginius* or *Damon and Pythias*, it at least embedded itself in the popular consciousness enough to earn regular audiences.

[26] Winchester Stone Jr (1976) 341.

[27] On the morning of *Brutus* American premiere in New York on 15th March 1819, the *New-York Daily Advertiser* published an article describing how 'Expectation is on tip-toe, and every American is anxious to witness the performance of a piece which has had sufficient merit to obtain the praise and patronage of a London audience', *New-York Daily Advertiser* (15/03/1819) 2.

Brutus' success pales in comparison to that of *The Gladiator* though. Despite only premiering during the final week of September, Bird's tragedy received twelve performances before the year's end, accounting for just under one third of performances for the year of 1831. This immediate success anticipates the high frequency of performances the play would receive over the course of the next half-century. *The Gladiator* became a workhorse within Forrest's repertoire and would be performed upwards of one thousand times before the end of his life.[28]

The slight spike in popularity of Thomas Arne's *Artaxerxes* (1762), an English opera depicting the life of the fifth-century B.C. Persian ruler, during the late 1820s is also notable. There are only two records of the opera being performed before 1828, once in 1770 and once in 1787.[29] Yet it would be performed on no fewer than fifteen occasions by the end of 1831. To understand the reasons for this rise in its popularity, as well as its implications for the broader theatrical scene, it will be necessary to look closely at the place in which *Artaxerxes* received all of these performances: New York City.

[28] The popularity of *The Gladiator* is discussed in Chinn (2017a) 201; Foust (1919) 39, 167-8; Illard (1975) 15-16; Malamud (2009) 40; Nathans (2009) 175; Odell (1928) 547; Quinn (1951) 237; Richards (1997) 167 Volo and Volo (2000) 317.

[29] In 1770 a performance of Colley Cibber's comic opera *Damon and Phillida* in Boston's concert hall was accompanied by a selection of songs from Artaxerxes, Johnson and Burling (2001) 362. The Old American Company performed the piece in its entirety at Philadelphia's Southwark Theatre in 1787, Seilhamer (1968b) 220.

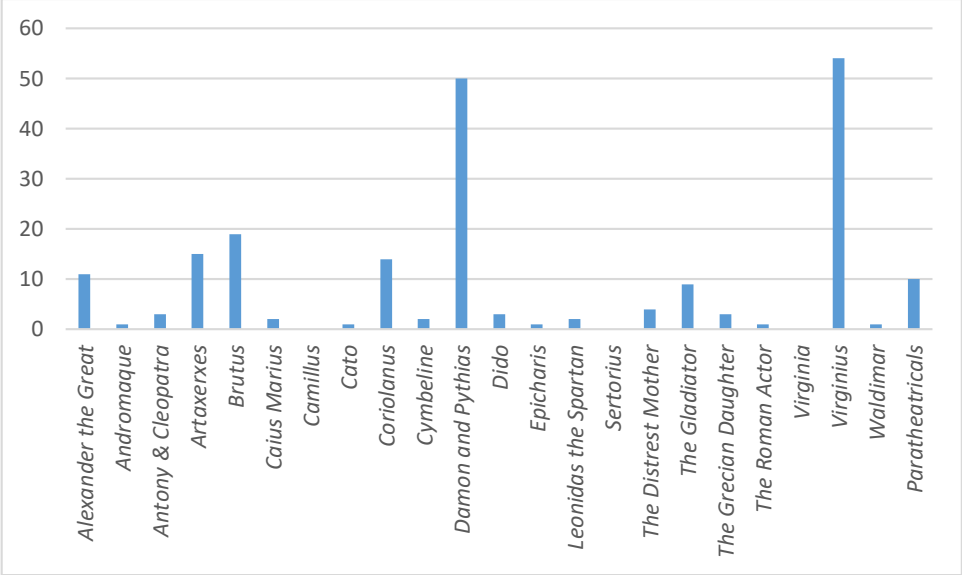


Figure 1.33 – Total number of performances received by different plays, New York, 1820-31.

One of the first things that becomes apparent when looking at the performance figures for New York is their apparent broad similarity to those for the nation at large. *Damon and Pythias* and *Virginius* are both far ahead of their competition in terms of performances, with *Brutus* being in a distant third. It is important not to extrapolate from this similarity that New York's dramatic culture was ubiquitous nationwide. Instead, the apparent similarity of New York's performance frequencies to the nation-at-large is likely more reflective of the sheer quantity of data available for New York. This is in part due to New York's considerable population growth occasioning a proliferation of dramatic venues and a greater number of performances to record, but also in part due to the wealth of materials detailing New York's performance culture.[30] As a result of this, the database holds 228 records for New York during this time period, yet only 45 for Baltimore. What data there is for Baltimore suggests a rather different theatrical culture.

[30] The 1830 U.S. Census recorded New York's population as 202,589. The next largest city was Baltimore, with 80,620.

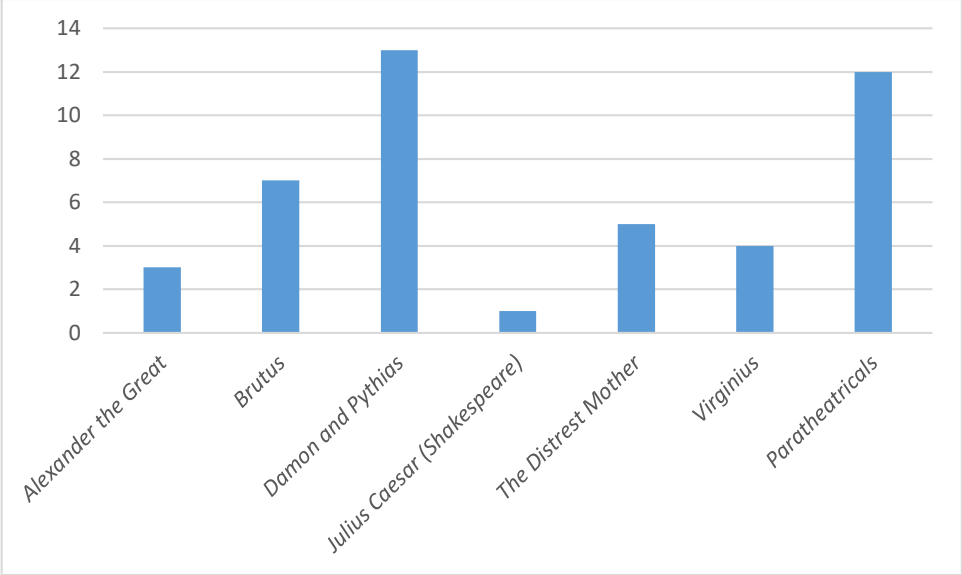


Figure 1.34 – Total number of performances received by different plays, Baltimore, 1820-31.

Figure 1.34 shows that Knowles' *Virginius* occupies a significantly smaller share of performances in Baltimore than in New York. On the other hand, paratheatricals continue to be a mainstay of the Baltimore stage. This perhaps derives from the fact that Baltimore's dramatic venues had not proliferated to the point of stratification, as they had in New York. Where in New York the growth of venues such as pleasure gardens had provided a distinct venue that specifically catered to paratheatrical performance, Baltimore's dramatic spaces remained relatively finite and thus multipurpose. Baltimore's theatre on Front Street, Old Town continued to describe itself as a 'Theatre and Circus', and offer a combination of entertainments.[31]

Artaxerxes is absent from the Baltimore theatrical repertoire. So too is any other operatic fare. Every recorded performance of Thomas Arne's *Artaxerxes*, Stephen Storace's opera *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1792), and Kane O'Hara's burletta *Midas* occurred in New York. Breaking down New York's performances according to the venue in which they occurred helps explain this anomaly.

[31] An example of it advertising itself as such can be found in the *Baltimore Patriot* (25/11/1831) 3.

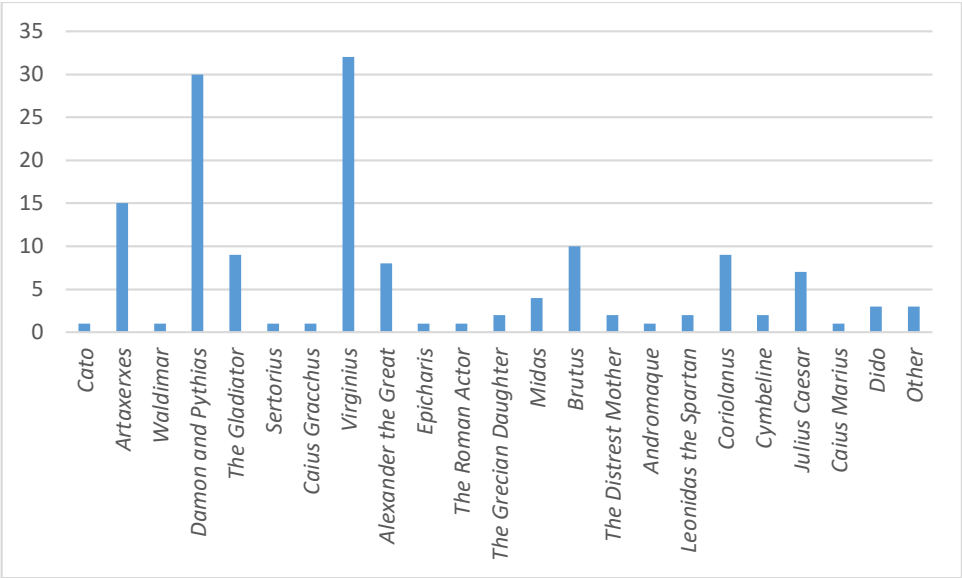


Figure 1.35 – Total number of performances received by different plays, New York's Park Theatre, 1820-31.

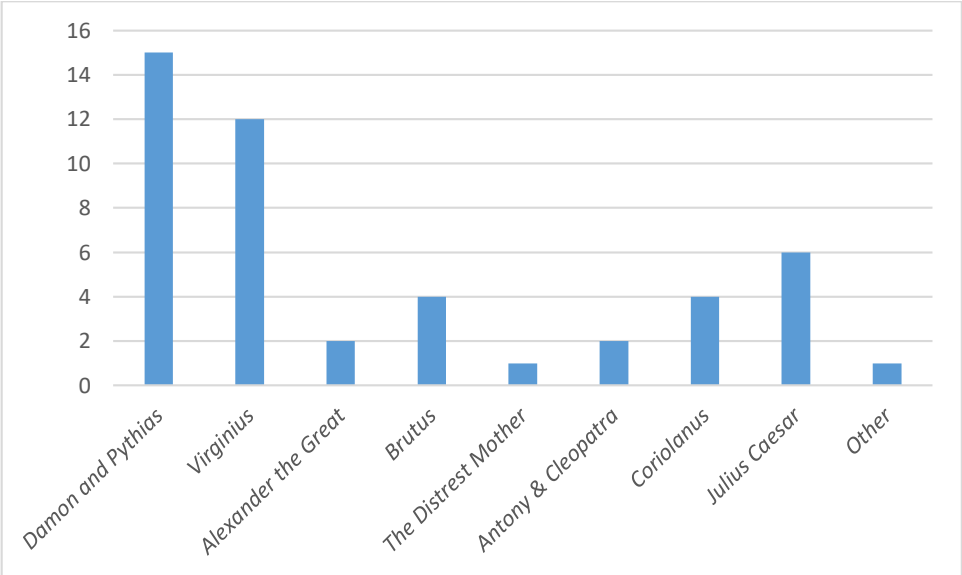


Figure 1.36 – Total number of performances received by different plays, New York's Bowery Theatre, 1820-31.

The above two figures reveal that the growing interest in the opera was the sole purview of the Park Theatre, with the Bowery instead sticking to the conventional drama. This is understandable in the context of broader developments in performance culture identified by Lawrence Levine and Bruce McConachie. Levine has shown how, by the middle of the century, professional dramatic venues had

begun to fracture into those perceived as 'highbrow' and those perceived as 'lowbrow'.[32] McConachie has also described how the opera was claimed as the unique cultural purview of the educated urban elites by the 1840s, with the rituals of opera-going and its concomitant codes of behaviour, dress, and language becoming incorporated into patriciate class-consciousness.[33] While the Park Theatre of the late 1820s was a long way from the exclusive opera houses of the late nineteenth century. By this time it was attempting to cultivate a more sophisticated image for itself and distance itself from its rival the Bowery, which had in turn begun to associate itself more with New York's white working class.[34] The Park's early penchant for the opera shown in these graphs predicts the increasing class-based stratification of the entertainment sector that would develop in coming decades.

It is further noteworthy that, while both venues regularly performed *Virginius* and *Damon and Pythias*, the Park slightly favoured *Virginius* while the Bowery leant more towards *Damon and Pythias*, a distinction whose significance will become more apparent when both plays are subjected to closer scrutiny in chapter five. This difference aside, there is relatively little to separate the repertoire being performed in the two venues. In both venues *Brutus* succeeded in implanting itself in the regular repertoire. Most notably, the plays of Shakespeare receive a roughly equal showing in both venues. This is particularly important as Levine identifies the appropriation of Shakespeare away from popular culture and into elite culture during the latter nineteenth century as a key marker of the stratification of American entertainment culture.[35] Shakespeare's continued role as a shared text between both the Park and the Bowery reinforces Levine's argument concerning the lack of inter-venue class stratification in early nineteenth century theatres.

The only other notable difference besides the Park's forays into opera is its apparent monopoly on *The Gladiator* during this period. This does not necessarily reflect different stylistic tastes of the two

[32] Levine (1988) 24.
[33] McConachie (1992) 62.
[34] The differing reputations of the two houses is discussed in Grimsted (1968) 83-4; Lewis (2007) 14; McConachie (1992) 120; Odell (1928) 544; Quinn (1951) 200.
[35] Levine (2001) 42-50.

venues. Rather, it derives from the fact that Edwin Forrest held the unique right to perform *The Gladiator* and had been contracted to perform at the Park Theatre during the final third of 1831. When theatres such as the Bowery would contract Forrest in subsequent years he would perform *The Gladiator* to their audiences with just as much frequency as he had to the Park's.[36] Studying the repertoires of the two leading star actors of the day, Edwin Forrest and Thomas Cooper, further highlights several notable distinctions in how the ancient world was presented. Figures 1.37 and 1.38 below respectively represent the proportions of their stage time that Forrest and Cooper dedicated to different plays. As *The Gladiator* was exclusively written for Forrest and thus not available for Cooper to perform, it has been excluded from these graphics, in order to better highlight the differences in performance frequency within the two actors' shared repertoire.

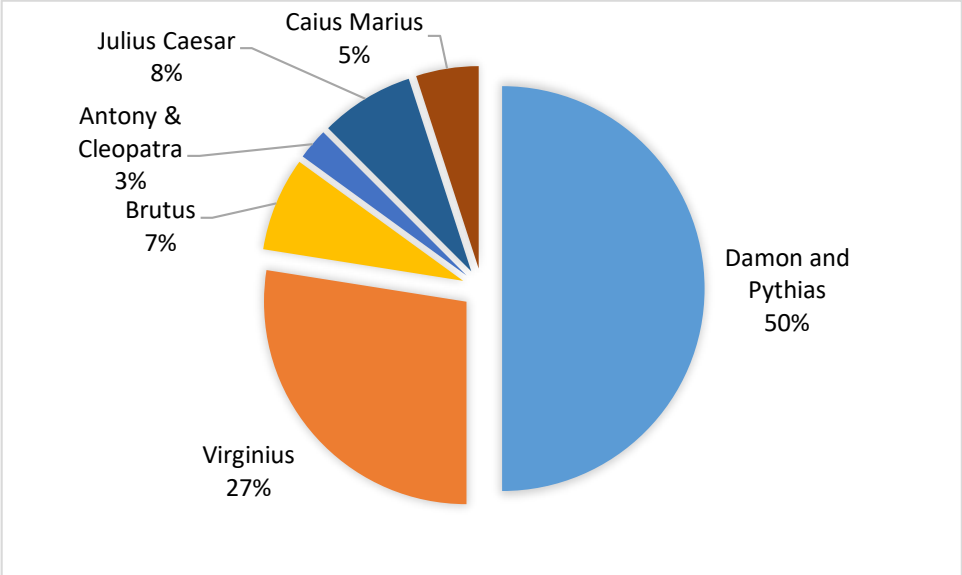


Figure 1.37 – Proportions of performances given to different plays, Edwin Forrest, 1820-31.

[36] Forrest performed *The Gladiator* frequently when he was contracted to perform at the Bowery's 1833-4 season, Odell (1928) 544.

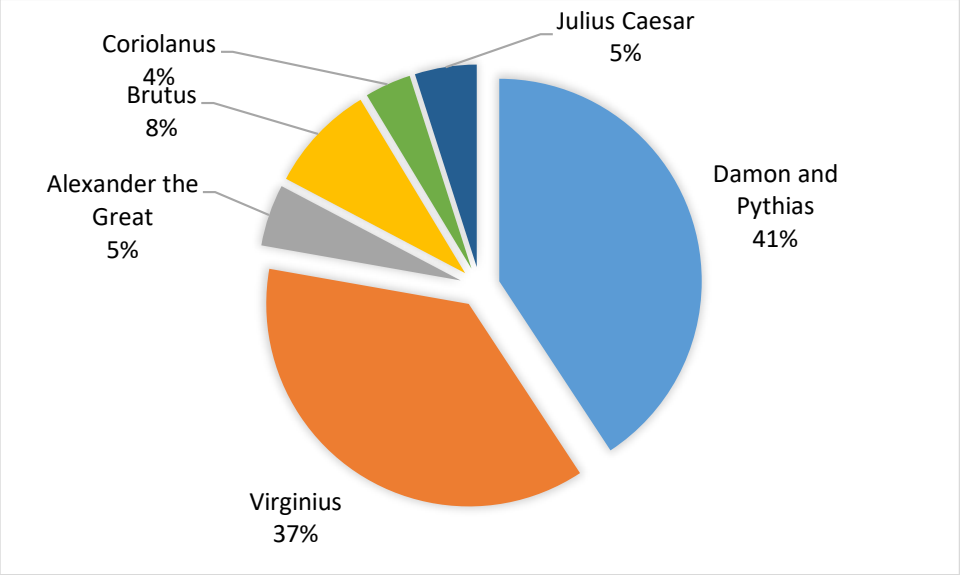


Figure 1.38 – Proportions of performances given to different plays, Thomas Cooper, 1820-31.

These two men were the two most prominent actors of the day. Forrest's bombastic, hyper-virile acting style was honed on the western frontier and informed by observations of the various eccentrics and dispossessed that he encountered there.[37] Cooper, on the other hand, offered a more orthodox acting style.[38] Informed by his training under London's greats, the New York *Mirror* of 3rd September 1831 described him as 'the property of former times, an old fallen oak, putting out a few green branches – a broken column supporting some roof erected over its carved beauties', and a 'once idolized veteran'.[39] The two do not only differ in acting style. While both include *Brutus* and a cohort of Shakespearean Classics, the above graphics reveal subtle but significant differences between the repertoires they performed. While they each dedicate considerable time to both *Damon and Pythias* and *Virginius*, Forrest heavily favours *Damon and Pythias* over *Virginius* while Cooper performs both with relatively equivalent frequency. Forrest dedicated roughly half his performance time to *Damon and Pythias* and only around a quarter to *Virginius*. Cooper, on the other hand, dedicates just over a third of his performance time to each, favouring *Virginius* when compared to Forrest. There are a few

[37] Lawrence Barrett, Forrest's biographer, describes 'the vigor of his style, the ruggedness of his methods, and … the magnetic qualities of the man', Barrett (1881) 53.
[38] Joseph Ireland, Cooper's biographer, stresses 'his fine-cut features, his noble form, his dignity of manner and grace of action' and describes his formal education and training under Stephen Kemble, Ireland (1888) ix, 1-11.
[39] Odell (1928) 561.

curious incidents when the two actors performed *Damon and Pythias* together, alternating who performed the roles of Damon and of Pythias.[40] These occasions, the political leanings of each of these actors, and the relationship of those leanings to their acting styles and audience bases will be discussed further in chapter five.

This data has shown, without question, that the wider revolutions experienced in American politics and society during this decade were felt within the playhouse and its engagement with the Classics. During much of the previous ninety years, the repertoire of plays set in the ancient world from which American theatres drew was largely unchanged. Managers would stage plays such as Lee's *Alexander the Great* and Whitehead's *The Roman Father* throughout the Colonial, Revolutionary, early National, and Democratic periods. They merely modified the frequency with which they were performed. During the 1820s this corpus of material was rapidly swept away in favour new texts, fresh from the pens of their playwrights. Within months of being written, Payne's *Brutus*, Knowles' *Virginius*, Banim's *Damon and Pythias*, and ultimately Bird's *The Gladiator* became smash hits that redefined the way Americans experienced the Classics on stage. This data has revealed curious trends in the nature of these plays' popularity. Different cities, theatres, and even actors seemed to favour different texts, calling into question the relationship between their presentation of the classical world and the broader developments that were occurring in American theatre and society.

1.3 Conclusion

Ninety-nine years passed between the first performance of Addison's *Cato* in the winter of 1732 and the premier of Bird's *The Gladiator* in the autumn of 1831. These two plays certainly helped to define the way in which many Americans experienced antiquity on stage. Yet, as this data has shown, they were not the whole story. *Lethe*, *The Roman Father*, *The Grecian Daughter*, *Alexander the Great*, *Brutus*, *Damon and Pythias*, *Virginius* and many more entertained audiences in their droves and, in doing so, formed a tradition of dramatic performances that served as a conduit between American

[40] One such case occurred in 1828, Odell (1928) 341.

audiences and the classical world. They may have been separated by thousands of years and the Atlantic Ocean, but through these plays the great and good of Greece and Rome trod the boards of American theatres in New York, Charleston, Valley Forge and elsewhere.

These plays accompanied audiences along their national journey. As Americans adapted to the pressures of wars, revolutions, and all manner of turmoil, the presentation of the classical world evolved alongside them. The breakout success of *The Gladiator* was a product of this century-long evolution, its writing, performance, and reception informed by the thousand representations of antiquity that came before it. Its success was unquestionable. One could attend New York's Broadway Theatre in 1860 and see much the same repertoire of plays, and perhaps even the same actors, as one had at the Bowery during the 1820s. Figure 1.39 below shows the total numbers of performances received by different plays between the years of 1851 and 1860:

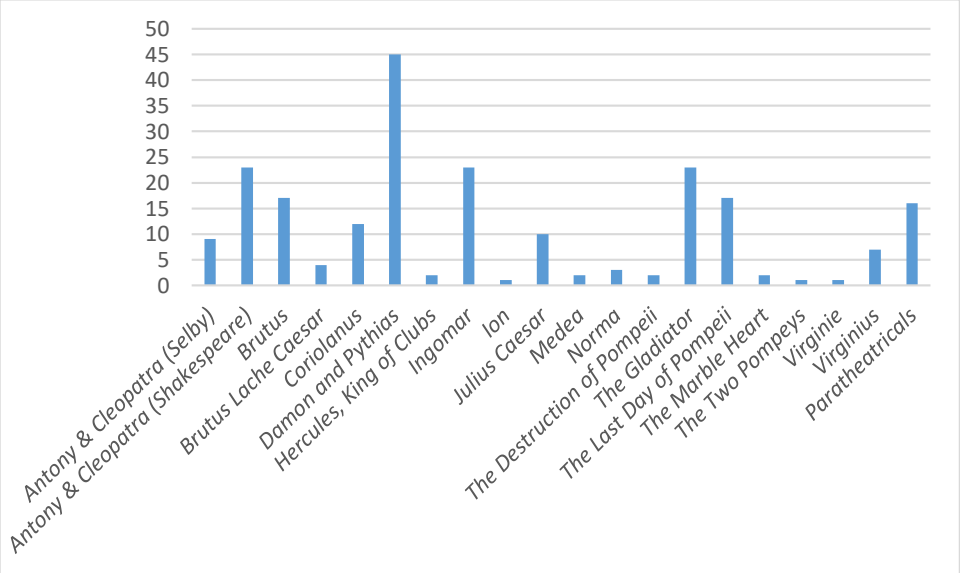


Figure 1.39 – Total number of performances received by different plays, New York, 1851-60.

One could be forgiven for confusing the above graphic with figure 1.33 from earlier in this chapter, which showed the New York performance record during the 1820s. *Brutus*, *Virginius*, and *Damon and Pythias* continue to occupy the stage, albeit with somewhat different frequencies. *The Gladiator* continues to rank among the most popular plays, a feat that is rendered more impressive when one

remembers that sole rights to performance of the piece were held by the now somewhat aged Edwin Forrest. Some newcomers stand out: Charles Selby's comic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1837), Maria Lovell's *Ingomar the Barbarian* (1851), and Louisa Medina's adaptation of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1835), to name a few. To look more closely at Forrest's personal performance record though, his repertoire seems almost unchanged.

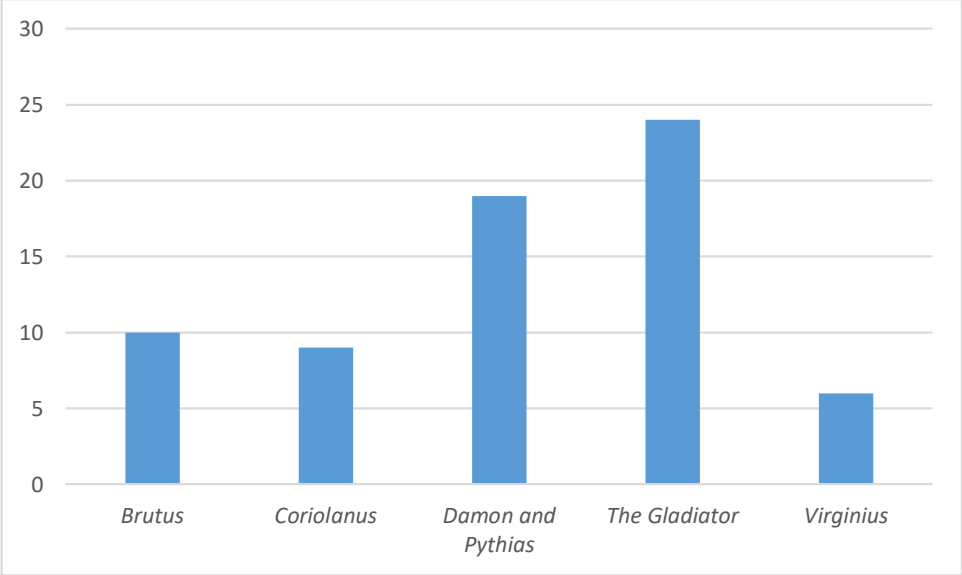


Figure 1.40 – Edwin Forrest's total performances, 1851-60.

Figure 1.40 above shows Forrest's performance record between 1851 and 1860. Barring a condensing of his Shakespearian repertoire down to just *Coriolanus*, thirty years after he first wowed audiences with *The Gladiator* his performance record remains almost identical. Evidently, the repertoire of plays that emerged during the 1820s and 30s as a product of this century-long tradition of representing the ancients had struck a chord.

This distant reading exercise has achieved its goals. It has shown not only that representations of the Graeco-Roman world were a continuous feature of the American performance tradition, but that this tradition was one that was regularly and fluidly evolving and reinventing itself alongside broader developments in American politics, society, and culture. Several watershed moments, in which the audience experience of the classical world was rapidly and radically revised have emerged from this

data and enabled the identification of distinct periods. These periods in the theatre's handling of classical subject matter seem to map onto broader attempts to categorize wider developments in American history. This suggests, firstly, that concepts such as 'the early national period' are not merely an invention of modern academics, but do indeed reflect authentic and distinct developments in American history. More importantly, the congruency between the periods identified by this data and those used to understand wider American history suggests a very real and significant connection between the two; that events inside the playhouse are inextricably connected with those outside, and that the presentation of the classical world on stage must be understood as part of their wider socio-political ecosystem. Building on the findings of this quantitative distant reading exercise, the subsequent four chapters will now look qualitatively at specific periods and individual texts.

Chapter Two

The Colonial Stage, 1732-74

During the forty years after the initial 1732 performance of Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy* (1713) in New York, the American colonies played host to troupes of British-born actors who, having crossed the Atlantic, made a life for themselves by plying their trade across the New World. These itinerant troupes faced various obstacles. Colonial communities wary of the ills that might be occasioned by the intrusion of such outsiders organised to bar these troupes from performing – sometimes through legal action, other times through more direct means.[1] This opposition was compounded by the crudeness of frontier life, which left troupes vulnerable to disease and disaster. Besides these obstacles, the histrionic efforts of these pioneering performers also left much to be desired. Their makeshift theatres included converted tobacco warehouses, sail lofts, and hospitals, and one reviewer complained of a 1770 performance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) that 'poor Cassius was so deficient in his Latin as to call Publius Puppylies, throughout the whole Piece'.[2]

And yet, the show went on. By 1767, their progress was pronounced. This year witnessed the first season of performances that took place in a theatre built expressly for the purpose of staging plays (Philadelphia's Southwark Theatre), the first professional performance starring an American-born actor (a young Mr Grenville), and the first performance of a play written by an American-born playwright (Mr Thomas Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* (1765), which premiered in Philadelphia).[3] Progress was being made, and representations of the ancient world were being deployed in its pursuit.

[1] In 1766 New York's theatre on Chapel Street was attacked by a mob who assaulted audiences members and tore down the theatre, resulting in multiple injuries and one death, Rankin (1965) 109-10.
[2] In 1767 seven members of David Douglass' troupe were killed by fires and travel accidents while moving between settlements, Rankin (1965) 109-10, 123-4, 139; Silverman (1976) 133; Taubman (1967) 38.
[3] These landmarks are discussed in Hughes (1951) 38.

This progress, however, soon found itself at odds with that other principal development of the age: the move towards revolution and independence. When the first Continental Congress convened in Autumn of 1774 to discuss their response to the British navy's blockade of Boston, they resolved to, amongst other things, ban the theatre as an 'extravagance and dissipation' that is to be 'discountenance[d] and discourage[d]'.[4] David Douglass' troupe, the principal acting troupe on the continent at the time, saw the writing on the wall for their ventures in continental North America. On 2nd February 1775 they fled east to the island of Jamaica, opening their first performance there with a prologue specially commissioned for the occasion:

> The Muse alarm'd at the loud tempest's roar,
> Seeks an asylum on this peaceful shore.[5]

This ultimate conflict between the Continental Congress and the theatrical establishment might encourage one to believe that these two developments, the one towards national independence and the other towards dramatic maturity, were diametrically opposed. This chapter will contend otherwise.

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) examined the intellectual framework that enabled the emergence of nationalist sentiment in the New World during the late eighteenth century. He describes the nation-state as 'an imagined political community', explaining 'it is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.[6] The idea of an American nation that emerged in the late eighteenth century was contingent upon the creation of this imagined community across the thirteen colonies. Anderson has identified the emergence of print-

[4] Ford (1904) 79.
[5] This prologue is reprinted in Rankin (1965) 188.
[6] Anderson (2016) 6.

journalism and its subsequent enabling of trans-colonial dialogue as a key factor in the creation of this national community.[7]

This chapter will show how the theatre and specifically its presentation of the Classics was similarly, if not more, significant in facilitating the emergence of this imagined community. Building on Anderson's work, it will examine how theatrical representations of the ancient world were able to connect the otherwise disparate and heterogeneous American colonies into a shared continental culture. After first qualitatively assessing existing interpretations of classical narratives' reception on the colonial American stage, it will take David Garrick's *Lethe, or; Aesop in the Shades* (1740) as a case study. A close reading of this play will show how such representations of the Classics, by appealing to a common culture of classicism that was shared across both the thirteen colonies and their trans-Atlantic metropolis, were uniquely capable of connecting the otherwise disparate American colonies. Finally, this chapter will conclude by further investigating the distinction between professional and amateur student theatrical cultures that was identified in chapter one and its implications for the influence of social class on audiences' experience of antiquity on stage.

2.1 Joseph Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy (1713)* and the purpose of the Classics on stage

Chapter one revealed significant information concerning the popularity (or lack thereof) of Joseph Addison's *Cato*. From Paul Leicester Ford's nineteenth-century biography of George Washington onwards, it has oft been repeated as fact that Addison's play was by far the most popular of the period.[8] Yet, chapter one revealed that, not only was *Cato* not the most performed single play of the period, it was not even the most performed play that was set in the ancient world. That honour instead belonged to David Garrick's *Lethe*.

[7] Anderson (2016) 1-12.

[8] Ford (1899) 1-2 calls *Cato* 'most popular play in America during a large part of Washington's life'. More recent repetitions of this claim can be found in Paul Longmore's *The Invention of George Washington* (1988) and Garry Wills' *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (1984). Longmore (1988) 173 states that 'The Tragedy of *Cato* was the most popular … play in the American colonies throughout the eighteenth century'; Wills (1984) 137 describes *Cato* as 'the most popular [play] in eighteenth-century America'.

This occasions a drastic reassessment of the position of classical material on the colonial American stage. Taking *Cato*'s supposed popularity for granted, Hugh Rankin's *The Theater in Colonial America* (1965) contended that such representations of antiquity were deployed by theatre troupes in order to lend a sense of moral and intellectual legitimacy to their trade.[9] Such legitimacy was necessary to counter the hostility and opposition evinced by certain parts of the populace. Newspapers and periodicals published articles that denounced the playhouse as the 'Devil's synagogue' and other such imaginative declamations.[10] Colonial legislatures passed bans in order to deter troupes from entering their communities.[11] Hostile townsfolk organised to perpetrate campaigns of violence and intimidation against thespian interlopers.[12] The precise factors motivating this opposition are hotly debated, but what matters to this enquiry is that colonial troupes were required to overcome significant local opposition while plying their trade.[13] Within this context, Rankin has suggested that plays such as Joseph Addison's *Cato* with its 'apostrophes of virtue, liberty, and patriotism' were used by theatre troupes 'to illustrate the noble aims of the theater' when they were 'under heavy fire from moralists'.[14]

Rankin's suggestion is understandable when one considers the plot of Addison's play, and the noble sentiments expressed within. Taking Plutarch's *Life of Cato the Younger* as its principal source material, *Cato* depicts the final days of Cato the Younger's resistance to Caesar. It follows Cato's attempt to rally

[9] Rankin (1965) 193.
[10] Cullen (2001b) 30.
[11] By 1774, eleven out of the thirteen colonies had issued laws banning the performance of plays, Bigsby and Wilmeth (2006) 5; Hughes (1951) 11; Rankin (1965) 92-3, 100-1; Saxon (2011) 82-6; Silverman (1976) 66-7.
[12] One such campaign that involved the burning of playbills and an assault upon the theatre building is described in Rankin (1965) 109-10.
[13] The principal debate concerns whether this opposition can be attributed more to religiously-motivated moralism, or mercantile distaste for the theatre as a British import. Examples of arguments in favour of it being a moral opposition can be found in Bigsby and Wilmeth (2006) 1; Brown (2006) 1-3; Cullen (2001b) 30; Henderson (2006) 387; Hughes (1951) 30; Johnson (2014) 16-18; McDermott (2006a) 185; McNamara (1969) 6; Quinn (1951) 1; Rankin (1965) 2-4; Richards (2014) 2; Saxon (2011) 45, 82; Silverman (1976) 66-7; Taubman (1967) 27, 41. Peter Davis has argued against this interpretation in his 1993 article 'Puritan mercantilism and the politics of anti-theatrical legislation in colonial America', instead claiming that opposition came as a result of a desire amongst colonial legislators 'to break their debt-ridden dependence upon British manufactured goods', Davis (2006b) 18.
[14] Rankin (1965) 193.

and organise a force of republican loyalists as Caesar's army bears down ever closer on their position. The looming threat of Caesar prompts mutiny and disloyalty amongst Cato's less stalwart followers and the play concludes with Cato, realising the futility of his cause, falling upon his sword rather than submit to Caesar's tyranny. Throughout the play, Cato remains undeterred in his sense of moral duty and political virtue. An attempted mutiny against Cato fails, not because he subdues them by force, but because the mutinous soldiers, unable to act against one so honourable, willingly give up the mutiny and surrender themselves (act three, scene two).[15] Cato's virtue remains unflappable even when his son is slain, with the bereaved father coolly remarking 'what pity is it That we can die but once to serve our country!' over his son's body (act four, scene two).[16] When Cato's body is discovered by his peers, they close the play by musing upon his unmatched virtues, describing his as 'the greatest soul that ever warmed A Roman breast' (act five, scene one).[17] The play presents Cato as an almost Christ-like figure, uncontaminated by the evils of the world and destined to die as a sacrificial lamb on its behalf.[18] The above instances are but a few examples of Cato's moral flawlessness in a play that Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81) rather succinctly described as 'a succession of just sentiments in elegant language'.[19]

Looking more closely at the play's reception in America during this period, there is certainly evidence to support the idea that the moral excellence exhibited in *Cato* did, as Rankin suggests, serve to offer legitimacy to the theatre in the face of its critics. It is perhaps no coincidence that the first play recorded as being performed in Philadelphia, a bastion of moralistic distaste for leisure, was *Cato*, in 1749.[20] Another performance of the play that took place the next year in New York was praised in the *Weekly Post-Boy* for showing that the theatre 'can prefer a representation of virtue to one of loose

[15] Addison (1806) 44-8.
[16] Ibid. 56.
[17] Ibid. 65.
[18] This has been noted in Brown (1981) 154-6.
[19] Johnson (1905) 412.
[20] Theresa Saxon describes Philadelphia as 'stringently dominated by Quaker distaste for leisure activities and distraction', Saxon (2011) 83. Kenneth Silverman further describes Philadelphia as having created a 'climate of scorn' towards the theatrical profession, Silverman (1976) 59.

character'. This apparent association of *Cato* with virtue may have been amplified by the high standing in which the historical Cato was held within colonial intellectual culture. 'Cato' was frequently deployed as a pseudonym under which opponents of public vice would write, even a 1773 article declaiming the playhouse as a 'Harlot's market place' was written in the guise of 'Cato'.[21]

The example of *Cato* may suggest that representations of the ancient world, by tapping into the moral and intellectual legitimacy offered by the Classics, functioned as an effective response to the accusations levelled against the theatre by its opponents. However, the findings of chapter one do not support this conclusion. If representations of antiquity were a useful tool to assuage such opposition, one might expect to find them most frequently deployed on the stage in regions where opposition to the theatre was fiercest such as Pennsylvania, where the large Quaker population regularly organised and petitioned for bans and boycotts of performances.[22] Inversely, one might expect regions such as South Carolina, where relatively little opposition to the theatre was evinced by the population, to show a diminished interest in seeing the Classics performed on stage.[23]

Yet, the results from chapter one suggested the opposite. Addison's play was shown to be markedly less popular in Pennsylvania than it was in South Carolina. Rankin's argument would expect the opposite to be true: that conservative Philadelphians were treated to performances of noble and virtuous *Cato* in order to assuage their misgivings concerning the playhouse, while carefree South Carolinians, having no such qualms in need of assuaging, would engage more widely with more light-hearted renditions of classical material. Chapter one also showed that *Cato* was afforded a distinctly smaller proportion of performances amongst professional troupes than it was amongst amateur student groups, again undermining the notion that *Cato* was used to offer public legitimacy to the theatre. One would expect professional troupes, who toured the country attempting to gain access to

[21] These instances are quoted in Rankin (1965) 32-3; 178.
[22] Philadelphia's bans are discussed in Hughes (1951) 11; Quinn (1951) 13-4; Rankin (1965) 4-5, 22-3, 67, 122; Saxon (2011) 86; Silverman (1976) 66.
[23] South Carolina's liberality is discussed in Harvey (2010) 15; Johnson (2014) 22; McDermott (2006a) 185; Quinn (1951) 3, 32; Rankin (1965) 101; Taubman (1967) 41.

settlements in order to stage performances and generate revenue, to have greater need of such legitimacy than the more private amateur student groups, who sought more to entertain their peers. And yet, again, the results of the distant reading exercise suggest the opposite.

It is not only quantitative evidence that undermines the notion that representations of antiquity served to legitimise the stage, but qualitative also. In response to the 1749 performance of the play in Philadelphia, the Quaker moralist John Smith recorded in his diary his great 'sorrow that anything of the kind was encouraged'. In 1767 a Philadelphian moralist writing under the name 'Eugenio' further criticised *Cato* for the play's apparent 'countenance of suicide'. A 1760 attempt to stage the play in Boston, whose population had long withheld the predations of the playhouse, was forcibly cancelled due to fear of the 'Vice, Impropriety, [and] Immorality' it would encourage.[24]

Current attempts to understand the reception of the Classics on the colonial stage are, then, evidently flawed. By uncritically taking *Cato*'s supposed extreme popularity as their starting point, subsequent conclusions are based on faulty assumptions concerning popular engagement with the Classics on stage. In order to meaningfully build towards a more nuanced understanding of the ancient world's reception on the colonial stage, it is necessary to move away from this *Cato*-centric approach. Instead, let us look back to the play that chapter one's distant reading exercise revealed to have been the most performed of the period: David Garrick's *Lethe*.

2.2 David Garrick's *Lethe, or Aesop in the Shades* (1740) and the popular accessibility of the Classics

In contrast to the vast swathes of literature concerning Addison's *Cato*, David Garrick's *Lethe* has been almost entirely passed over by modern academia.[25] On the few occasions on which the play has earned the attention of an academic eye, it has largely been written off as a simple 'farcical or low comedy' afterpiece not worthy of further investigation.[26] *Lethe* was Garrick's first published work, yet, despite

[24] These instances are discussed in Hughes (1951) 12; Rankin (1965) 92-3, 115.
[25] Examinations of Addison's play include, but are not limited to, Bryans (2010); Connolly (2014); Donnelly (1985); Ellison (1996); Filipowicz (2010); Freeman (1999); Fuller (1999); Gamez (1988); Halsband (1950); Henderson and Yellin (2014); Kelsall (1966); Litto (1966); Montgomery (1960).
[26] Freeman (1989) 567.

collections of Garrick's works being produced semi-regularly since 1769, it was not until 1980 that one thought to include the piece.[27] To read the play it is understandable why so many commentators, unaware of the play's exceptional popularity in the American colonies, have shown so little interest in *Lethe*.

Lethe is a *pièce à tiroirs*: a series of short sketches tied together by a very loose plot.[28] It was written as an afterpiece: a short play performed after the main play in order to close an evening's entertainment, and thus is only around thirty minutes in length. The premise of its plot is very simple. On the anniversary of Pluto's rape of Proserpine, Pluto permits the goddess to ask one favour of him 'for the benefit of mankind' (lines 6-7).[29] Proserpine has asked Pluto that mortals 'may have free access to the Waters of *Lethe*' (lines 15-16), a river that allows them to forget their worldly troubles if drunk from.[30] The god Mercury has been tasked with conducting mortals to the river Styx, Charon the ferryman with transporting them across, and Aesop, of *Fables* fame, with distributing the waters to the assembled mortals. Once Mercury, Charon, and Aesop have discussed the logistics of the occasion, Charon exits to tend to his ferry, Aesop and Mercury sing a song to invite the mortals to the underworld, and Mercury leaves to guide the mortals. After this introduction, the play takes the form of a series of skits, in which Aesop interviews the mortals one-by-one to learn what has brought them to *Lethe* and which troubles they wish to forget. For the most part, the mortal characters are not named, instead being referred to by the cultural stereotypes or tropes they represent. Some examples of characters that appeared in the original script of *Lethe* include:

> The Poet (lines 83-189) has had his latest play condemned as a failure by the audience before he could receive any payment. He has, as a result, lost his both his income and his reputation and wishes to drink from *Lethe* and forget this disastrous turn of events. Aesop suggests that

[27] Pedicord and Bergmann (1980) is the first collection to include *Lethe*. Pedicord and Bergmann (1980) xi-xii discusses the contents of preceding collections of Garrick's works.
[28] Barton (1948) 38; Holland (1994) 301; Knight (1894) 16; McIntyre (1999) 36; Oman (1958) 26; Winchester Stone Jr and Kahrl (1979) 129.
[29] Garrick (1981) 4.
[30] Ibid. 4.

one 'cannot possibly write better by merely forgetting that you have written before … your next piece will certainly be the worse for it' and instead proposes that he make his audience drink to forget his former work. The Poet breaks the fourth wall with a meta-joke that he is 'afraid *Lethe* will never go down with the audience' and Aesop agrees to provide him with the waters necessary to forget his previous production.[31]

Mr and Mrs Tatoo (lines 346-433) eloped three months prior without their guardians' consent. They have since however grown tired of each other and wish to forget their marriage. Upon further inspection, however, Aesop learns that Mrs. Tatoo, who speaks on behalf of her browbeaten husband for much of the scene, has been given unrealistic and childish expectations of marriage by her friends. Aesop thus suggests that she use Lethe to forget these acquaintances and that her husband use it to forget his wife's foolishness. The two agree, although Mrs. Tatoo warns that the waters ought to be drunk quickly while she is in good humour else she is likely to change her mind.[32]

The Frenchman (lines 434-521) idles penniless in England, posing as a French Marquis, and funds his luxurious lifestyle through loans obtained through his 'flatterie and bonne addresse'. He has fallen in love 'vith the grand fortune of one Englis lady' and wishes for twenty or thirty draughts of Lethe to make his creditors forget the way to his lodgings until he can marry her. Aesop refuses to provide so much of Lethe and instead suggests he drink it himself to forget his extravagance. The Frenchman responds that he would rather live exorbitantly in England than sparingly in his own country. Aesop admits that he cannot fault his logic, and agrees to provide him the waters he requested on the grounds that if his creditors were foolish enough to mistake him for a fine gentlemen then 'their folly must be their punishment'.[33]

[31] Garrick (1981) 6-9.
[32] Ibid. 13-15.
[33] Ibid. 15-17.

> The Drunken Man (lines 639-712) jokes that he wishes to use the waters of Lethe as part of a cocktail with some orange juice and liquor. Aesop is offended by his impertinence and asks the belligerent drunk what has brought him to the underworld. The Drunken Man replies 'Only to demonstrate to you that you are an ass' and proceeds to tease Aesop, before eventually allowing that he is 'a fine old Grecian' and leaving to find a prostitute.[34]

The play continues in this fashion for just under one thousand lines. After all the mortals have been examined, Aesop is re-joined by Charon and Mercury who report that a dispute has erupted between various women concerning how their 'place and precedency' ought to be reflected in the seating arrangements on Charon's ferry (lines 775-81).[35] They decide to conclude their business for the day and Aesop remarks on the futility of reasoning with mortals. Mercury sings a song to lead the mortals home and Aesop ends the play by reading a rhyme instructing the mortals to drink their draught of *Lethe*:

> Tis vice alone disturbs the human breast;
> Care dies with guilt; be virtuous and be blest (lines 824-5)[36]

Given this simplistic structure and seemingly cursory engagement with the Classics, it is perhaps no wonder that the play has received so little attention from theatrical historians or those involved in classical reception studies. Yet, these factors do not undermine the importance of *Lethe* in mediating American engagement with classical material on stage during the colonial period.

While *Lethe* is set in Elysium, the classical elements certainly take a back seat to a social satire of various character types with which contemporary audiences were likely to have been familiar.[37] Pedicord and Bergmann understand Aesop as the first in a long series of characters from Garrick's social satires that criticise contemporary society and serve as a stand-in for himself, acting 'as calm

[34] Ibid. 20-2.
[35] Ibid. 24.
[36] Ibid. 25.
[37] Garrick's social satire is discussed in Holland (1994) 301-2; Weales (1981) 449; Knight (1894) 16; Pedicord and Bergmann (1980) xxviii; Winchester Stone Jr and Kahrl (1979) 129, 203-6.

spectator of the foibles of men'.[38] Yet, *Lethe'*s primary concern with satirising the failings of modern man does not mean that David Garrick was not himself deeply steeped in the classical tradition. Biographies of Garrick recount how, although he did not attend university, he received the full benefit of a classical education at Lichfield Grammar and Edial Boarding schools.[39] During his childhood he is known to have enjoyed performances of Euripides' *Orestes* in translation and to have been a close acquaintance of Samuel Johnson, the notable man of letters.[40] He was clearly not afraid of demonstrating this familiarity with the Classics during his later life. While manager of London's Drury Lane theatre, Garrick responded to a play submitted to him by aspiring playwright James Murphy French that 'If Caesar's criticism upon Terence was just (*Utinam scriptis adjunct foret vis comica* ['If only the force of your words could be added to your comedy']) surely a near imitation of his scenes will not have a proper effect upon a stage where a stronger comic force is expected'.[41]

Although primarily a contemporary social satire, Garrick's familiarity with the Classics finds itself fully reflected in *Lethe.* Garrick confidently discusses numerous figures from classical mythology and religion, such as Charon, Mercury, and Pluto, and demonstrates an understanding of their respective roles and characteristics (lines 17-9).[42] He alludes to various episodes from classical mythology, such as the Rape of Proserpine (lines 5-7), and regularly has his character slip in common Latin phrases such as '*tempora mutandur* [sic]' (line 108).[43] One of the most sophisticated allusions to classical myth in the play occurs in Aesop's scene with the Poet, with the poet claiming that if Lethe could help him

[38] Pedicord and Bergmann (1980) xviii.
[39] Garrick's classical education is discussed in Barton (1948) 17-18, 24-5; Furness (1962) 64; Knight (1894) 2-3, 10-1; Little and Kahrl (1963) xxx; McIntyre (1999) 17-18, 25; Oman (1958) 6; Parsons (1969) 9-10; Winchester Stone Jr and Kahrl (1979) 10.
[40] Garrick's viewing of such performances is discussed in Garrick (1735) 15; McIntyre (1999) 38; Oman (1958) 10. His acquaintance with Samuel Johnson is discussed in Knight (1894) 10-11; Little and Kahrl (1963) xxx; McIntyre (1999) 19; Parsons (1969) 6, 14; Pedicord and Bergmann (1980) xviii; Winchester Stone Jr and Kahrl (1979) 9-10.
[41] Winchester Stone Jr and Kahrl (1979) 128.
[42] Garrick (1981) 4.
[43] Ibid. 4, 7.

forget his doomed performance 'it will be of more real service to me than all the waters of Helicon' (lines 169-70), referring to the mountain where Hesiod's *Theogony* alleges that the muses reside.[44]

Interestingly, almost none of these allusions are explained. It is assumed that the audience will be able to understand and decipher the meaning and significance of all of these references. The play introduces Mercury, Charon, the Rape of Proserpine and much more without offering any explanation as to who or what these characters or events are. The eponymous river Lethe also receives no explicit description of what it is or what the effects of drinking its waters would be. The only clue an ignorant audience member might receive to the nature of Lethe is to infer it from an opening song by Mercury that commands:

> Obey then the summons, to Lethe repair,
> And drink an oblivion to trouble and care. …
> Obey then the summons, to Lethe repair,
> Drink deep of the stream and forget all your care (lines 70-7).[45]

The fact that as integral a story element as the effects of the waters of Lethe, whose acquisition serves to motivate many of the characters and generates so much of the humour, goes unexplained is telling as to the level of classical knowledge that could be expected of audiences.

Besides suggesting the ubiquity of classicism, the play also reflects attitudes towards classical learning in contemporary society. Certain characters are mocked for being ignorant of the Classics. Mrs Tatoo and Mrs Riot, for instance, are each unable to pronounce the names of any of the characters or places that they encounter during their visit to the underworld. Mrs Riot refers to Cerberus, Pluto, and Charon as 'Serbeerus,' 'Plutus,' and 'Scarroon' respectively (lines 323-52).[46] Mrs Tatoo is unsure how

[44] Garrick (1981) 8; Hesiod *Theogony*. 1.
[45] Garrick (1981) 6.
[46] Ibid. 12-13.

to even pronounce the name of the river Lethe, calling it 'Le – Lethaly – Leithily, I think they call it' (lines 365-8).[47]

This is not merely a one-sided 'punching-down' on those uneducated in the Classics. The Poet character is also turned into the butt of jokes as a result of his pretentious and affected love of classicism. Throughout his interactions with Aesop, the Poet makes ever more gauche and obscure references to myths such as the Stone of Sisyphus and the Thirst of Tantalus, to the continued irritation of Aesop who repeatedly asks him to get to the business at hand (lines 102-3).[48] His swooning adoration of Aesop and his fellow ancient writers is made into the source of comedy. This comes to a head when Aesop accuses the Poet of flattery for all the lavish compliments that he is heaping upon Aesop and his peers. The Poet assures Aesop that 'no man loves flattery less than myself', to which Aesop responds 'So it appears, Sir, by your being so ready to give it away' (lines 87-91).[49] That both the uninformed mispronunciation of Mrs Tatoo and Mrs Riot and the gauche ostentation of The Poet are mocked reflects the nuanced position of classical learning as a symbol of learning and status within the English-speaking world at the time.

Lethe is also interesting because of the relationship that it portrays between ancient and modern characters. Addison's *Cato* exalts the wisdom and superiority of the Cato to the point that he is rendered almost perfect and inimitable, acting as the moral standard against which the world is judged. [50] *Lethe* instead situates the wisdom of the ancients, represented by Aesop, in direct dialogue with the contemporary world. Garrick's Aesop gives helpful and pertinent advice to newlyweds that are struggling to make their marriage live up to expectations (lines 346-433), to a writer struggling to make his way in the world (lines 83-109), and to a husband who fears his wife is cuckolding him (lines

[47] Ibid. 13.
[48] Ibid. 7.
[49] Ibid. 6-7.
[50] Brown (1981) 154-6 discusses how in *Cato, A Tragedy* the character of Cato is 'a consistent, infallible, and theoretically emotionless protagonist' whose 'unstinting virtue' provides 'the moral standard against which the whole world is measured'.

713-63).[51] The wisdom offered by Aesop does not relate to the ideals of public duty or to the nature of freedom, as it does in *Cato*'s case, instead it relates to mundane problems and questions that audiences might plausibly face during their day-to-day lives.

While wise, Aesop is also far from infallible. He becomes frustrated and exasperated by the mortals that he encounters, and in some case even accepts the logic of their foolishness (for example, he concedes to the Frenchman's reasoning that it is better to live as a comfortable fraudster in England than as an honest Pauper in France). Aesop himself even becomes the butt of the joke at times, being outsmarted and mocked by the Drunken Man who calls his *Fables* 'foolish old Stories of a Cock and a Bull' (line 690-2). He further makes a meta-joke about the reliance on the *Fables* as a teaching text in contemporary schools. Inviting audiences to laugh about their shared experiences of being compelled to study Aesop's *Fables*, he complains of how 'many a time has my Flesh felt Birch upon your account' and asks Aesop to sympathise with the 'poor innocent lads' that are 'plague[d]' by his works (lines 692-4).[52]

This reflects a classical canon that is very much a part of the world that the audience inhabits. Rather than an austere source of high wisdom to which one ought to aspire, *Lethe* suggests a classical world that is intimately familiar to audiences. It is a world possessed of wisdom, no doubt, but also one that is by no means sacred, and it is one that audiences are perfectly comfortable laughing about.

The considerable popularity that chapter one's distant reading exercise revealed *Lethe* to have enjoyed in the American colonies during this period invites a reappraisal of how the Classics were received by American audiences. Most importantly, it begs the question of why David Garrick's rather unassuming farce enjoyed such popularity in the first place. To answer this question, it is first necessary to understand a little more about the nature of the society within which these theatrical troupes were plying their trade. Two key factors must be understood: the limited cultural and political

[51] Garrick (1981) 6-7, 13-15, 22-3.
[52] Ibid. 22.

infrastructure that connected the colonies with their transatlantic metropolis, and the heterogeneity of the colonies themselves.

For the vast majority of this forty-year period, theatre troupes were entirely dependent on the mother country for supplies, both literary and physical. Not just playscripts, but actors, costumes, and scenery were all imported across the Atlantic from the metropolis at great expense as the thirteen colonies were deemed unable to produce these goods to a suitable quality indigenously.[53] This outright dependency on British imports for dramatic materials posed problems for American managers. It took approximately a month and a half for a ship to travel from London to Baltimore. This distance from the metropolis not only meant that the importation of dramatic resources was a lengthy and unreliable process, but also occasioned what George Winchester Stone Jr has termed a broader cultural 'lag' between the motherland and the colony. In London, trends, fashions, and gossip would often have risen and fallen into obscurity long before even the most chattering of America's urbanite classes would have even heard of them. Winchester Stone Jr suggests that a man visiting North America from London during the late eighteenth century will have 'enjoyed a nostalgic experience' of seeing the popular trends he experienced twenty years being played out anew.[54]

This cultural separation between the land that has produced their entire dramatic corpus and the audiences who must be entertained by selections from that corpus posed a unique difficulty to managers. Texts such as George Colman Snr's *The English Merchant* (1767) may have been possessed of dramatic quality and the weight of a well-regarded playwright's name behind it, but a play about the internecine mercantile contests of London's contemporary guilds is of limited accessibility to American audiences with little to no familiarity with the subject matter. As such, when the piece made its American premiere in New York in 1769, just two years after its London premiere, it evidently did not strike a sufficient chord with audiences as to warrant a repeat performance, and received no

[53] American troupes' reliance on imported scenery, actors, organisational modes, and architectural models are discussed in Henderson (2006) 383, 387; Johnson (2014) 16-17, 25; McDermott (2006b) 6-9; McNamara (1969) 43-5.
[54] Winchester Stone Jr (1976) 338-46.

further performances.[55] Managers seemed to be faced with a problem, how were they to fashion a repertoire that was written in, for, and by the London theatrical scene to be relevant to an American audience?

The second challenge faced by these peripatetic troupes, besides distance from the motherland, was the heterogeneity of the colonies themselves. The diversity of the pre-Revolutionary colonies cannot be overstated. Ethnically, linguistically, economically, religiously, and culturally, each of the thirteen colonies must be understood as a distinct, autonomous entity connected together only by geographical accident and their shared political connection to Britain. The thirteen colonies have variously been called a 'patchwork quilt of Ethnic settlements', an 'invertebrate' society lacking a 'figurative spinal column' to connect its constituent parts, and a 'cultural kaleidoscope of three races and dozens of ethnic and religious groups'.[56] At the outbreak of the Revolution, New England colonies such as Boston might have a population of which approximately 70% were ethnically English that was organised into a unified autonomous farming society in which upwards of 90% of men were fully literate. A Southern colony, such as South Carolina, on the other hand, could not have been more different. The importation of African slaves not only altered the demographic makeup of the colony, but wrought wider economic and social changes, with an educated plantation aristocracy ruling over a population of tenanted independent farmers, of which a third were utterly illiterate.[57] Add to this the fact that major American settlements were separated by upwards of two weeks of travel time by carriage, theatre troupes were faced with a challenge for which their experiences of performing in their relatively compact homeland had left them ill-prepared.

In *Lethe*, American troupes found a play that was uniquely suited to surmounting these two challenges. The character of Aesop and the Classics more broadly provided a corpus of source material that was unique in its ubiquitous recognisability, on both sides of the Atlantic. John Locke's *Some*

[55] This performance is catalogued in Johnson and Burling (2001) 325.
[56] Kammen (1972) 49; Olson (1979) 51; Parillo (2016) 46.
[57] Colonial literacy rates are discussed in Grubb (1990) 451-82.

Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) had recommended Aesop's *Fables* as the best learning tool in the acquisition of literacy, stating they are 'apt to delight and entertain a child' while also 'afford[ing] useful reflection'. He particularly recommended illustrated editions, arguing that the inclusion of pictures will 'entertain him [the student] much better'.[58] This recommendation was taken up wholeheartedly by both British educators and their American colonists. Alongside the New and Old Testaments, copies of Aesop's *Fables*, often illustrated by woodblock prints of the different Fables, were imported en masse and became a staple of American schooling.[59] Figure 2.1 below offers an example of one such illustrated edition:

[58] Locke (1889) 133.

[59] The importation and distribution of the *Fables* is discussed in Jennifer Monaghan (2005) 307. Aesop's wider role in the colonial curriculum is discussed in Bader (1991) 12-14; Hayes (2008) 17; Jennifer Monaghan (2005) 229; Roynon (2013) 180; Shields (1990) 150-60.



Figure 2.1 – Illustration of the fable of the Fisherman and the Fish, taken from Thomas Dilworth's *A New Guide to the English Tongue* (1740), reproduced in Johnson (1904) 50-2.

Even when not studying the *Fables* directly, any child learning to read and write can have expected to encounter elements of the *Fables* while studying one of the growing number of spelling books used during teaching. Spelling books such as Henry Dixon's *The English Instructor* (1728), which proved so popular amongst New Englanders that it was reprinted in Boston in 1736, incorporated the *Fables* into the corpus of material they deployed to bestow literacy upon their students.[60] From the prestigious Boston Latin School to the Negro Charity School of Philadelphia, any American colonist learning to

[60] Such spelling primers are discussed in Beales and Monaghan (2000) 383-5.

read and write can be presumed to have encountered Aesop's *Fables* at some point during their instruction.[61]

This familiarity with the play's titular character presents obvious benefits to managers staging Garrick's *Lethe, or; Aesop in the Shades*. Where audiences could not be relied upon to be familiar with the various tropes, characters, and trends of the English-written dramatic repertoire being plied, the character of Aesop offered a rare piece of cultural common-ground between colony and metropolis. Dramas and comedies that took as their subject the latest political intrigues to strike Westminster, the mercantile practices of London's guilds, or the latest fashions to wash through Mayfair's chattering classes can have scarcely been accessible to a South Carolinian planter four thousand miles away. Yet Americans and Britons alike could share in a deprecating meta-joke about their schoolmasters tormenting them with copies of the *Fables*, such as that which was delivered by *Lethe*'s Old Man character. The classical canon underpinned intellectual culture across the English-speaking world and, by presenting one of the most prominent figures from that canon, Garrick's *Lethe* was able to tap into that commonality.

This cultural accessibility of the Classics to American colonists was further augmented by *Lethe*'s structure as a series of sketches. In contrast to more traditionally structured plays such as Addison's *Cato,* whose rigid five-act structure left little room for modification on the part of individual managers, *Lethe* could easily be adapted in response to the tastes of particular audiences. It is hard to say that there is truly a single canonical version of the play. In both Britain and America, the play was constantly evolving as characters were added, removed, or rewritten during the play's lifetime. Over the course of the eighteenth century the characters of a litigious attorney, a German Jew, and 'Lord Chalkstone' were added to the play, as was a set of new songs in 1749.[62] It seems American theatre troupes made

[61] Wright (2005) 26 and Fradin (1998) 6 discuss the inclusion of the *Fables* in the curriculum at the Boston Latin School. Jennifer Monaghan (2005) 260 describes the use of the *Fables* in Philadelphia's Negro Charity School.
[62] Holland (1994) 302-4 discusses and transcribes some of these additional characters. The evolving nature of Lethe's script is discussed in Burnim (1961) 100; Haywood (1960) 179; Little and Kahrl (1963) xxxi; McIntyre (1999) 37; Oman (1958) 27-8; Parsons (1969) 40; Pedicord and Bergmann (1980) xiv; Winchester Stone and Kahrl (1979) 129, 204-5; Woods (1984) 112-13.

ample use of the flexibility afforded by *Lethe'*s structure. William Dunlap records that during the Hallam company's inaugural 1752 performance of *Lethe* Hallam chose not to include the characters of 'The Tailor' and 'Lord Chalkstone'.[63] Beside its recognisable lead character, *Lethe*'s flexible narrative structure meant the text could easily be adapted to the volatile and diverse tastes of American audiences in the way that more traditionally-structured plays could not.

2.3 Aesop and the American imagined community

These factors created a perfect storm that facilitated the play's popularity. *Lethe* provided a rare bridge between America's British-born theatrical troupes and their American audiences. Yet, in many ways, it also facilitated their separation. Benedict Anderson's influential *Imagined Communities* (1983) traced the development of nationalist sentiment amongst the thirteen colonies that would ultimately declare their independence in 1776. Anderson coined the term 'imagined community' to describe the phenomenon of members of nation states considering themselves to be part of the same national community, despite never having physically met one another. He identified the figure of the printer, emblematised in Benjamin Franklin, as being 'indelibly associated' with the emergence of nationalism in North America.[64] Printed media in the form of publicly disseminated newspapers, Anderson contends, 'created unified fields of exchange and communication' and 'gave a new fixity to language'.[65] Besides offering a common mode of exchange, print media also provided a sense of what Anderson calls 'simultaneity'. By allowing readers to experience the same headlines and news stories, newspapers produced an 'extraordinary mass ceremony' of 'simultaneous consumption' that was 'incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals', connecting otherwise disparate and disconnected readers across geographical boundaries.[66]

[63] Dunlap (1832) 8-9.
[64] Anderson (2016) 49.
[65] Ibid. 38-9.
[66] Ibid. 30.

How the theatre might have the same effect, in collecting people together to simultaneously experience a performance of a play, is obvious. Given the criticisms that have been raised of Anderson's rather idealistic conceiving of the possibilities of early American print culture, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that the theatre was, in fact, more significant in producing this simultaneity. Trish Loughran's *The Republic in Print* (2007) has roundly criticised the 'mundane faith' exhibited in the foundational role of print culture in the creation of American nationhood.[67] She highlights how the vast distances and flimsy postal infrastructure separating the early inhabitants of the American colonies precluded any meaningful trans-colonial dialogue via the medium of print.[68] More than that, these distances occasioned a significant lag in the rate at which news was reported across the colonies, with reports arriving from neighbouring colonies being anywhere from a week to two months old.[69] Given that news items deteriorate in value with age to the point of obsolescence, these endemic delays to America's communications infrastructure left print media as strikingly ill-suited to the kind of nation-building purpose that Anderson ascribes them. Indeed, Loughran argues that the irregular and unreliable rate at which reports were relayed between locales, rather than 'reinforc[ing] a sense of simultaneity', actually worked 'to register the failures of such simultaneity'.[70]

The theatre as a medium of cultural consumption was not subject to those same failings, especially with regards to performances of plays set in the ancient world. Itinerant theatrical troupes travelling from city to city to perform were subject to the same provincial transport infrastructure as postal agents delivering reports from neighbouring settlements. Yet, where a news report's utility is, in part, determined by its recentness, the value of a dramatic text is not time dependent. Whether the journey from Charleston to Philadelphia took a troupe two weeks, or two months, the texts they performed were unaffected. This was especially true of texts representing antiquity, which made no claims to

[67] Loughran (2007) xviii.
[68] Loughran introduces the example of Hugh Finlay, a postal inspector whose *Journal* recorded the trials and tribulations of maintaining the fledgling postal service in the American colonies, to demonstrate the impracticality of circulating print media around the American colonies. Ibid. 9-11.
[69] Ibid. 11.
[70] Ibid. 12.

contemporaneousness. Plays such as Garrick's *Lethe*, by travelling across the colonies and tapping into one of the few ubiquitously accessible bodies of material, could provide a shared cultural experience that connected planters in Charleston with Puritans in Boston.

The role that these plays performed in providing a universal cultural experience connecting colonists through the common language of classicism is reflected, in all places, in print. Newspapers abound with instances of dramatic texts serving as vehicles through which geographically disparate colonists might communicate with each other. In 1773 Jonathan Boucher, an English-born loyalist advocate based in Upper Marlboro, and William Paca, a Patriot leader from Annapolis, took to the Maryland *Gazette* to forcefully debate, of all things, the correct interpretation of Garrick's *Lethe*.[71] This is not unique to *Lethe*. Public figures who exhibited qualities of pride might be compared to Shakespeare's Coriolanus, while those feared as being of dubious loyalty might be accused of being akin to Sempronius, a treacherous and mutinous senator featured in Addison's *Cato*.[72] When hostilities ultimately would erupt, military conflicts were explained in terms of those represented in plays depicting the classical world.[73] A New Yorker might not have been able to expect a Philadelphian to have read the same news stories as they had, but they could certainly expect them to have seen the same plays.

The manner in which *Lethe*'s fluid *pièce à tiroirs* structure allowed the text modified and adapted to suit different audiences is also consistent with modern understandings of the emergence of American literary autonomy. Ezra Tawil's *Literature, American Style* (2018) has proposed a different model of the relationship between American cultural and political independence to that offered by Anderson. Rather than understanding American nationalism purely as the culmination of Anglophobic sentiment, Tawil draws on recent scholarship to demonstrate that it also paradoxically emerged from a desire to

[71] This incident is discussed in Shaffer (2007) 92-3.
[72] In 1791 the Philadelphia *Federal Gazette* compared John Adams to the character of Coriolanus, Philadelphia *Federal Gazette* (08/08/1791) 3. The 1794 Hartford *Gazette* similarly accused Royalists turned Federalists of being akin to the treacherous Sempronius from Addison's *Cato*, *Hartford Gazette* (17/02/1794) 1.
[73] In 1797 the *Philadelphia Gazette* compared a scene from a recreation of the battle of Bunker Hill to a scene from Addison's *Cato*, *Philadelphia Gazette* (04/03/1797) 2.

replicate British cultural and political institutions.[74] In this respect, American literature did not emerge *sui generis* as a culturally autonomous entity. Instead it developed as a style, which added a local accent to British cultural forms.[75] *Lethe*'s structure, by offering troupes a varied assortment of scenes and characters from which they could assemble a performance, was naturally receptive to the taking on of such local accents. It allowed troupes to take a British cultural artefact and tailor it to reflect the specific taste of local audiences. Just as Tawil has argued that Noah Webster's dictionary of American-English worked not to deviate from 'standard English alphabet but to make it serve American purposes', *Lethe* allowed for British dramatic forms to be brought into the service of American tastes.[76]

Dramatic representations of the classical world, then, offered a means of cultural consumption that was able to able to bypass the limited transport infrastructure that precluded print media from providing the cultural simultaneity that Anderson ascribes to it. *Lethe*, in particular, provided a medium for American audiences to exert their own stylistic accent onto a British cultural artefact. As a species of performance, such depictions of the ancient world not only provided a broadly accessible mode of entertainment, but also served to unite colonists in the imagined community of the playhouse.

2.4 Class and the Classics

The evident significance of *Lethe* beyond simply being popular invites the question of why so much academic attention has been heaped upon *Cato*. To understand this, it is necessary to refer back to the findings of chapter one, particularly those concerning the divide between the repertoire performed by professional troupes and that performed by amateur student groups. Professional troupes performed a diverse repertoire that heavily featured *Lethe* and other such light-hearted renditions of the Classics. Amateur student groups, on the other hand, exclusively favoured the more

[74] Tawil (2018) 13-17.
[75] On style, Tawil says 'Like an accent, a style is an overlay; the distinctions it asserts are not substantial, but modal. It offers no new forms, but points to a distinct way of enunciating the old ones'. Ibid. 32.
[76] Ibid. 44.

formalistic interpretations offered in Addison's *Cato* and William Whitehead's *The Roman Father*. Given the elite status of college education at the time, it is easy to read into this difference a class divide, and suppose that, while the *bon ton* preferred *Cato*, the *hoi polloi* were more inclined towards *Lethe*.

This also offers answers as to why so much attention has been heaped upon *Cato*, despite its relatively concentrated popularity. With no quantitative distant reading exercise to inform their investigations, academics have primarily used print and epistolary culture as a means to identify which plays enjoyed the most popularity. Within this bank of evidence, the educated elites of colonial society, who produced periodicals and whose letters have been recorded for posterity in archives, are naturally over-represented. As a result, these sources give a picture of colonial dramatic culture that is reflective of elite theatrical experience, rather than that enjoyed by the colonies at large. George Washington, the son of a wealthy Virginia planter who would study for his surveyor's license at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, regularly alluded to and referenced *Cato* in both his private and political correspondences, often comparing himself to different characters within the play.[77] Any such allusions to *Lethe*, on the other hand, are absent. Relying on such sources for information regarding theatrical culture, it is understandable why Washington's evident fondness for the play might be extrapolated to the colonies at large. It is perhaps notable that Paul Leicester Ford, one of the earliest academics to make grand claims as to *Cato*'s popularity across the American colonies, did so in his 1899 monograph examining George Washington's relationship with the theatre.[78]

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[77] In a 1758 letter to Sally Fairfax George Washington referenced Juba and Marcia, the romantic leads of Addison's *Cato*, by saying he would consider himself 'doubly happy in being the Juba to such a Marcia as you must make'. Washington also seems to reference the line 'Tis not in mortals to command success, but we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it' from *Cato* I.II.44-5 in his 1775 letter to Benedict Arnold, in which he says 'It is not in the power of mortals to command success, but you have done more, you have deserved it'. These and other examples are discussed in Chase (1985) 131; Fitzpatrick (1933) 112; Henderson and Yellin (2004) 87; Longmore (1988) 174; Wills (1984) 8. Miller (2005) xv has thus suggested that *Cato* may have been Washington's favourite play.

[78] In *George Washington and the Theatre* he calls *Cato* the 'most popular play in America' for the bulk of Washington's life, Ford (1899) 1-2. It is notable that more recent claims of *Cato's* nationwide popularity by figures such as Paul Longmore and Garry Wills were also issued in monographs focusing on the life of George Washington, Longmore (1988) 173; Wills (1984) 137.

This invites a re-appraisal of modern academia's understanding of the relationship between social class and theatre during the colonial period. Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow* (1988) influentially argued that it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that such a 'segregation' between 'elite' and 'popular' theatrical entertainment emerged. Prior to this, Levine argues, 'the theatre was a microcosm; it housed both the entire spectrum of the population and the complete range of entertainment'.[79] Such a conclusion is understandable. American cities would not grow large enough to support the theatrical infrastructure necessary for multiple theatres and performances until the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Instead, it was rare for even large settlements to possess a purpose built theatre for the bulk of this period. Chapter one's distant reading exercise did not reveal a single example of more than one dramatic performance occurring in a city on the same night throughout the entire colonial period.[80] As there was no plurality of performance there was arguably no opportunity for different performances to stratify according to class, wealth, and educational boundaries. Instead, a colonial theatrical performance, being the only form of theatrical entertainment occurring in a settlement on a given evening, seems to have 'housed under one roof a microcosm of American society'.[81] This is reflected in the tripartite organisation of seating in theatres, ordinarily being separated into pit, box, and gallery seats according to ticket price.[82] The idea of heterogeneous audiences sharing a homogeneous theatrical experience would somewhat preclude the argument that elite engagement with the classical world on stage was distinct from the popular, after all, as Levine puts it, 'the various classes saw the same plays in the same theaters', albeit from different types of seating.[83]

[79] Levine (1988) 56. Levine further comments that 'the various classes saw the same plays in the same theaters', Levine (2001) 42.
[80] The nearest the American public came to having a multiplicity of performances on a single evening is an occasion in 1765, when Douglass' company found themselves sharing the New York entertainment market with two Italian brothers who produced fireworks displays. Rankin (1965) 128.
[81] Levine (1988) 25.
[82] The organisation of early theatres is discussed in Levine (2001) 42; McNamara (1969) 3, 25-7, 31-4, 48, 55.
[83] Levine (1988) 24.

While it may be true that the professional theatre housed a microcosm of colonial society, however, not all dramatic activity was housed within these professional theatres. This homogeneity was not true of colonial theatre at large. As chapter one showed, outside of the professional playhouses, students at America's fledgling colleges were pursuing a theatrical culture of their own. This culture received the ancient world in a markedly different way to the professional theatre.

The unique theatrical culture fostered in the colleges might also go some way to explaining the anomalous popularity of Addison's *Cato* in the colony of South Carolina that was discussed in chapter one. Charleston, founded as Charles-town in 1670 by exiled Cavaliers living as planters in the West Indies, seems to have fostered a different theatrical clientele to its northern counterparts.[84] The early plantation economy of the South Carolina low country generated a plantation aristocracy that, being wealthy and desirous of cementing their pseudo-nobility, placed great value in and eagerly patronised formal education.[85] This plantation aristocracy regularly congregated in Charleston on social occasions or meetings of the general court in what Bostonian Josiah Quincy, who visited in March 1773, described as a world of 'opulent and lordly planters'.[86] Theatre troupes timed their visits to the city to coincide with such events so as to attract as large a crowd as possible.[87] They could thus expect to attract a more formally-educated audience than they could in northern cities such as New York, where a market economy encouraged a clientele composed more of urban artisans and merchants.[88] It seems reasonable to suggest that the irregularly high frequency of performances of *Cato* in South Carolina is reflective of this increased likelihood that audiences had been inured to the collegiate repertoire, and were thus more marginally interested in *Cato*.

A connection between the colleges and the theatre should come as no surprise. Long before the arrival of the first professional theatre troupe in America, the colleges had already begun to function as a

[84] Phillips (1963) 47.
[85] See Pearson (2001) 305-7.
[86] Ibid. 299.
[87] This tendency of theatre troupes to time their visits to settlements to coincide with pre-existing social events is discussed in Rankin (1965) 37-41, 56, 102, 121, 139, 143, 154, 160-79; Silverman (1976) 60.
[88] Harvey (2010) 80 discusses New York's market economy in the context of its theatrical culture.

space for early experiments with the dramatic medium. As early as 1702 the College of William and Mary in Virginia had staged occasions of public performance and displays of oratory.[89] In 1736 the first recorded instance of a college staging a performance of an entire play was recorded, again at the College of William and Mary. Rather appropriately, the play selected for performance was Addison's *Cato*.[90] This penchant for drama evidenced amongst the early colleges is a natural consequence of their initial purpose as divinity schools for the training of literate and effective religious ministers.[91] In the performance of this purpose colleges often made use of drama, particularly classical tragedy, as a tool for teaching oratory and rhetoric.[92] William Smith, the first Provost of the College of Philadelphia, justified this inclusion in the curriculum on the grounds that 'the improvement of the youth in oratory and correct speaking, has always been considered an essential branch of their education'.[93]

This use of drama as a teaching tool and access to dramatic texts in college libraries seems to have had a significant effect on students. There are numerous instances of college students taking it upon themselves to form societies and groups to perform these dramatic texts for their own pleasure, such as the Linonian Society founded in Yale in 1753.[94] It should prove no surprise then that Thomas Godfrey, the author of *The Prince of Parthia* – a piece that was very much in the mould of plays such as *Cato* – was himself a graduate of the College of Philadelphia.[95] It was in the colleges rather than the professional theatre that the first steps of American theatrical creativity were fostered. This collegiate theatrical tradition, though drawing on the same theatrical tradition and a similar repertoire of dramatic texts as the professional, was distinct in taste and the purpose for which theatre was used, both with regards to its portrayal of the classical world and its theatrical culture at large.

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[89] Rankin (1965) 11.
[90] Hughes (1951) 4; Taubman (1967) 29.
[91] This purpose of the colleges is discussed in Fisher (2020) passim.
[92] The use of drama as a teaching tool is discussed in Davis (2006a) 224; Rankin (1965) 30, 134; Saxon (2011) 87, 94.
[93] Harvey (2010) 15.
[94] The, often illicit, use of drama by the Linonian Society in Yale and similar groups in other institutions is discussed in Johnson (2014) 27-8.
[95] Godfrey's educational background is discussed in Quinn (1951) 17-18.

It is within this collegiate theatrical culture that the first sparks of American-produced drama begin to emerge. Readings of Godfrey's *Prince of Parthia* have noted that Godfrey's neo-classical play borrows many themes and motifs from its European-written forebears, amongst them Addison's *Cato*.[96] The first American-born actor to appear on the professional stage was also, notably, a college man. The young Mr. Antony Grenville, who, in the same year as *The Prince of Parthia*'s premiere, became the first American-born actor to appear on the professional stage, had reneged on his studies at Princeton to join the theatre.[97] These early forays into American written and performed drama were of limited success. Mr. Grenville never attained the stardom of which he no doubt dreamt and Mr. Godfrey's play would not receive a repeat performance until 1915, when the University of Pennsylvania's Zelosophic society staged it as a piece of historical interest.[98] Yet, failings aside, these developments highlight the important position that colleges held in steering colonial culture, and foreshadow how the unique theatrical culture being fostered in the colleges would come to influence the reception of the Classics on stages nationwide during coming decades.

2.5 Conclusion

Representations of the Classics could thus serve to both unite and divide the American colonists. Performances of plays such as Garrick's *Lethe* were able to exploit the Classics' position as cultural common ground, a shared heritage that connected audiences across the thirteen colonies as well as across the Atlantic. This not only entertained Americans but also, in offering a shared mode of trans-continental dialogue, helped facilitate the emergence of an imagined community across the colonies that would make up the future United States. Yet, this body of material also served to divide America's infant society. Within the colleges, the men who would go on to become the future leaders and statesmen of an independent American nation were pursuing a dramatic vision of the ancient world that was at odds with that seen in the professional theatres. These two distinct cultures would be

[96] The influences on *The Prince of Parthia* are discussed in Quinn (1951) 21-30.
[97] Hughes (1951) 38.
[98] This 1915 performance is discussed in Quinn (1951) 17; Taubman (1967) 39.

offered brief pause by the 1774 ban on performance. In foreshadowing the outbreak of hostilities with Britain and, ultimately, the independence of the American colonies, it would merely set the stage for these two visions of the classical world to directly contest one another, as they sought to define how audiences in the new American nation experienced the Classics on stage.

Chapter Three

The Revolutionary and Early-National Stage, 1774-1800

The initial onset of hostilities between the colonists and the crown occasioned a pause in the theatrical culture of the thirteen colonies. However, this pause proved to be only a brief one. By the end of the century, the newly independent American Republic would not only be playing host to a lively dramatic tradition, but even integrating this tradition into its expressions of nationalist sentiment. Presidential birthdays, Fourth of July celebrations, and key battles of the Revolutionary War were all honoured in theatres of the early Republic.[1] These celebrations of American nationhood were sometimes even attended by the sitting President, implicitly condoning this blending of nationalist expression and the once taboo medium of drama.[2] Plays that drew on the classical world for source material found a new purpose within these dramatic assertions of American nationhood. Having once connected colonists with their metropolis through the trans-Atlantic bridge of their shared classical heritage, the Revolutionary and immediately post-Revolutionary stages saw the ancient world deployed as a means to articulate and assert an independent American cultural identity. Audiences, hungering for plays that celebrated their unique cultural and political ideals, but not yet being entirely sure what those ideals were, turned to representations of the Classics to learn what it meant to be American.

This process peaked at the end of the century, with the death of one of the nearest things that the young nation had to a consensus figure: George Washington. Philadelphia had quickly asserted itself as the cultural and political centre of post-Revolutionary America, and the city's New Theatre hosted an evening of funerary performances that made national headlines.[3] On 23rd December 1799 the

[1] This politicisation of the theatre is discussed in Buel Jr (1972) x; Nathans (2003) 6-9; Newman (1997) 179-82; Seilhamer (1968a) 332-3; Strand (1999) 21-5, 34.
[2] The Presidential relationship with the theatre is discussed in Ford (1899) 45; Nathans (2003) 68-9.
[3] Philadelphia's centrality is discussed in Ann Doty (1971) 49; Brooks (2011) 103; Pollock (1933) xiv; Roach (2006) 340; Seilhamer (1968b) 284.

Philadelphia Gazette reported how the stage was surrounded by a colonnade draped in black cloth as the curtain rose to reveal 'a tomb in the centre of the stage, in the Grecian style of architecture' decorated by a portrait of the deceased General, a 'wreath of oaken leaves' and a pyramid, 'in the front of which appeared the American Eagle, weeping tears of blood'. This mournful spectacle was followed by a performance of William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* (1750).[4] This performance was a truly national event. It was reported in newspapers throughout America and imitated by similar performances of *The Roman Father* in Boston and other major urban centres.[5] The play takes inspiration from Livy's account of Rome's conflict with Alba Longa and depicts the efforts of the Roman Senator Horatius to guide his family, and by extension Rome, to success and glory after his sons are selected to fight as Rome's champions. The implications of this performance are clear: Horatius is analogous to Washington, Horatius' sons stand in for Washington's Continental Army, and Rome's defeat of Alba Longa mirrors America's independence from Britain. The events recorded by Livy and portrayed by Whitehead gave American audiences the cultural vocabulary to understand the death of this most significant of American icons.

Within a quarter of a century, from the 1774 ban to Washington's funerary performances, America's theatrical culture, and the position of the Classics within that culture, clearly underwent a drastic change. The theatre had changed from a subversive institution to one that defined and asserted what it meant to be American. The position of the Classics within that culture, which once affirmed the common trans-Atlantic cultural heritage between America and Britain, instead articulated their separation. This chapter will examine the developments that occurred between the outbreak of the Revolutionary War and the close of the century to show how this transformation occurred and investigate its wider effects on America's developing national identity. The political and military

[4] *Philadelphia Gazette* (23/12/1799) 3; *Maryland Herald and Hager's-Town Weekly Advertiser* (09/01/1800) 4; *Massachusetts Mercury* (11/02/1800) 3. This performance is further discussed in Ann Doty (1971) 77; Ford (1899) 60-2; and Nathans (2003) 163.

[5] The Philadelphia performance was reported on in *Maryland Herald and Hager's-Town Weekly Advertiser* (09/01/1800) 4. The Boston performance of *The Roman Father* to commemorate Washington's death is reported on in *Massachusetts Mercury* (11/02/1800) 3.

conflicts of the Revolutionary War and subsequent post-Revolutionary domestic debate over the form and government of the new nation placed unprecedented pressures on American theatres to conform to the ideological expectations of audiences and managers. Chapter one's distant reading exercise showed a rapid reshaping of the theatre's reception of the Classics in the face of these pressures in the years during and immediately after the Revolution. After first introducing these pressures and their relationship to American audiences' reception of classical narratives, this chapter will offer a close reading of William Whitehead's 1750 *The Roman Father*, which chapter one showed to have been the most performed text of the period. Whitehead's play offers an insight into how representations of the classical canon were uniquely able to respond to the novel pressures of America's mercurial nationalism. Contrasting its performance record with that of other texts that represented the contemporary world will further explicate how such texts became classicising mouthpieces for the wider Enlightenment-era ideals of statesmanship and political participation that were taking hold in the new American republic. Finally, this chapter will conclude by demonstrating how this use of the Classics formed part of a wider neo-classical movement across American arts and society that permanently embedded the classical world in American national and political identity.

3.1 The theatre as a pulpit

From 1774 onwards, the theatre was put under far greater pressure from the world outside the playhouse than it had experienced in previous decades. Throughout the Revolutionary War, the writing and staging of satirical and propagandistic plays became a potent tool in the repertoire of both sides.[6] The lines between the theatre and the battleground became so blurred that, when an army messenger interrupted a 1776 British army performance of General Burgoyne's comic afterpiece *The Blockade of Boston* (1776) to deliver news of the Continentals' very real attack on Bunker Hill, he was

[6] In 1775 the British General Burgoyne wrote *The Blockade of Boston*, which depicted General Washington as an incompetent buffoon and then had playbills for a performance delivered to Washington himself. This example is discussed in Brown (2006) 24-7. Other examples and discussions of the play-house becoming implicated in the broader conflict of the Revolution include Bigsby and Wilmeth (2006) 5-6; Brown (2006) 170-1; Seilhamer (1968b) 3.

mistaken for one of the actors and applauded for his convincing performance.[7] This blending of political and dramatic spheres did not end with the British withdrawal. It continued throughout the post-Revolutionary battles to define the form of the new nation. By 1800 an issue of the New York *Spectator* would include 'the Theatre' alongside 'the pulpit' and 'the Senate or Congress' as a venue from which it is acceptable to make a 'public harangue'.[8] Not content to wait upon the arrival of a travelling troupe, civic associations across America embraced the didactic possibilities of theatre and founded their own theatres from which they could disseminate their vision of the new American nation. In 1791 the Boston Tontiners, a wealthy banking group, outlined the mission statement of their theatre at Federal Street:

> A theater, where the actions of great and virtuous men are represented … will not only afford a rational and innocent amusement, but essentially advance the interests of private and political virtue; will have the tendency to polish the manners and habits of society, to disseminate the social affectations, and to improve and refine the literary taste of our rising republic.[9]

Groups such as the Tontiners would not find their monopoly on entertainment as a political mouthpiece unchallenged though. The decision to secede from British dominion by no means commanded the unanimous support of North America's colonial population. These fractures in American politics and society continued and intensified after the Revolution as Americans divided into Federalists and anti-Federalists/Democratic Republicans over issues such as the Articles of

[7] This incident is discussed in Brown (2006) 27; Dunlap (1832) 47; Fliegelman (1993) 91.
[8] New York *Spectator* (10/12/1800) 1.
[9] Nathans (2003) 60. In his *History* Dunlap recalls dreaming of the day 'When the whole character of our literature shall have received the impress of our republican government, when our writers, wherever they may lay the scene or the plot of their works, shall warn mankind of the evils of governments usurped over the people, then our drama will be national and distinct from that of countries not blessed by liberty of thought', Dunlap (1832) 87. Further examples and discussions of this hope that theatre could one day become a school for republicanism can be found in Dunlap (1832) 56; Ellis (1979) 84, 117, 134, 154-6; Grimsted (1968) 2, 22, 1805; McConachie (2006) 131; Nathans (2003) 5, 44-5, 123, 128, 147, 164; Reinhart (2001) 269; Richards (1997) 66; Rourke (1965) 107-8; Seilhamer (1968a) 262-3; (1968b) 252, 258; Strand (1999) 19-21; Wolter (1993) 29-32.

Confederation, the ratification of the Constitution, and America's diplomatic relations with France and Britain. These debates spilled over into the theatre, and performers could find themselves being protested, harangued, and assaulted by crowds that objected to the particular version of American patriotism being presented. Dissatisfied audiences might even split off and form their own theatres that were more compatible with their own vision of America. The Boston Tontiners' 1793 theatre in Federal Street would soon find a rival when the Boston Mechanics Guild formed their own Haymarket theatre in 1796, a process that would be repeated throughout America's early urban centres as the theatre became increasingly accepted as one of the pulpits from which early statesmen might preach.[10]

The fact that *The Roman Father* was selected to memorialise Washington upon his death, rather than any of the hagiographical plays that actually featured the late General, shows that representations of antiquity found a place for itself in this new theatrical culture, and a highly exalted one at that. Yet the question of what exactly that place was and how it got there remains to be answered. To look at a few examples from the Revolution it would seem that the ancient world's prestigious position on this highly politicized stage was assured from before even the first shots were fired.

The already mentioned Valley Forge performance of Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy* (1713) in May of 1778 is perhaps the most famous dramatic performance of an episode of antiquity in American history. The performance was given in the context of the Continental Army's encampment at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-8. Washington's soldiers were described by one observer as 'a skeleton of an army … in a naked, starving condition, out of health, [and] out of spirits'.[11] The apparent goal of this performance was to inspire them, by Cato's example, to continue resisting tyranny no matter how dire their present conditions might be. This performance and the extreme conditions within which it

[10] The split in the Boston theatre is discussed in McConachie (2006) 131; Nathans (2003) 9, 102-6; Strand (1999) 21-5. By the end of the century the theatre was well-accepted as an appropriate venue for political discourse. Further discussions of the establishment of the theatre as a political arena can be found in McConachie (2006) 126-30; Nathans (2003) 8-9, 44-5, 77-81, 106, 136-7; Pollock (1933) 58-63; Seilhamer (1968a) 332-3; Strand (1999) 29-30.
[11] Freedman (2008) 3, 36.

took place have captured the imagination of historians and chroniclers for decades. Henry C. Montgomery describes how: 'At Valley Forge Washington had the play presented to bolster morale … his soldiers packed the playhouse to the doors since the play was, in fact, the very Bible of republican idealism'.[12] Randall Fuller similarly explains that 'For the ragged soldiers in Washington's camp, Addison's tragedy offered a salient version of national destiny characterized by self-sacrifice, republican virtue, and boundless devotion to the principle of liberty'.[13]

This image of tattered Continentals huddling around a humble, open-air stage for moral and ideological succour from one of the stoic heroes of antiquity is made all the more dramatic when contrasted to the wintertime theatrics of the British troops in Philadelphia. Much has been made of the gay abandon with which British troops pursued theatrical entertainments during the war. Their pursuit of leisure reached its pinnacle in the 'Meschianza', an elaborate festival featuring parades, feasts, firework displays, dances, and even a jousting tournament that was also staged in May of 1778.[14] A Hessian officer described the occasion thus: 'Assemblies, Concerts, Comedies, Clubs and the like make us forget that there is any war, save that it is a capital joke'.[15] In light of the Valley Forge *Cato*, the funerary performance of *The Roman Father* at the end of the century then would seem to be nothing new, merely the continuation of a tradition of politicised performances that was inaugurated in conspicuous style two decades earlier.

Despite having often been commented on, the supposed mass evangelization of classical virtue represented by the Valley Forge *Cato* proves rather suspect. Mark Bryans' 2010 article examining the 'paper trail' behind the *Cato* performance and its subsequent mythologizing has convincingly argued that the performance was rather an isolated, exclusive, almost aristocratic affair. Through close examination of the letters and records of the encampment, as well as archaeology of the camp itself,

[12] Montgomery (1960) 210
[13] Fuller (1999) 128.
[14] The Meschianza and the wider British attachment to the theatre is discussed in Bigsby and Wilmeth (2006) 5-6; Brown (2006) passim; Dunlap (1832) 46-54; Fliegelman (1993) 90; Henderson (2006) 388; McConachie (2006) 128; Pollock (1933) 34-6; Seilhamer (1968b) 17-32; Smith (1997) 35.
[15] Brown (2006) 45-6; Nathans (2003) 38.

Bryans has shown that such an open-air performance with the common soldiery in attendance cannot have been possible. He has instead argued that it likely took place in one of the outbuildings near Washington's headquarters and was attended exclusively by Washington's commanding officers and their families. The egalitarian image of soldiers of all ranks looking to *Cato* for inspiration in their shared struggle is replaced by one of genteel entertainment exclusive to Washington's inner circle.[16]

Closer examination of the individuals known to be present at the performance compounds this image. Colonel William Bradford Ford Jr, whose 1778 letter offers the fullest description of the occasion, was himself a Princeton graduate and a highly senior officer. George Noarth, who is recorded as having played the titular Cato in the production, was a graduate of the College of Philadelphia.[17] In fact, only two of the men recorded as being in attendance of the performance are known to have not been graduates of one of America's colleges. They are George Washington, who nonetheless received his surveyor's license from the College of William and Mary, and Major General William Alexander, who attended one of North America's smaller provincial schools and studied law while working in the office of the Secretary for the Provinces of New York and New Jersey.[18] This fact is particularly important when understood in the context of previous chapters' findings concerning the disparity between elite and popular engagement with the Classics and its relationship to America's institutions of higher learning. The Valley Forge *Cato*, being attended almost exclusively by college graduates and their immediate families, does not represent any great shift towards the mass evangelisation of classical virtue through the medium of theatre. Instead, it ought to be understood as a continuation of the collegiate tradition of dabbling in neoclassical histrionics, the main difference being that this particular episode occurred within the campground, rather than the classroom.

[16] Bryans (2010) 123-44.
[17] The educational background of those present at the Valley Forge performance of *Cato* is discussed in Bryans (2010) 132-40.
[18] George Washington's education is discussed in Coolidge (1930) 7; Dix (1978) 304; Federer (2004) 13; Vile (2005) 239. William Alexander's education is discussed in Duer (1847) 2-6.

As opposed to the temptingly clear-cut example presented by the Valley Forge *Cato*, chapter one's distant reading exercise has revealed a far more complex image of theatre during the revolutionary war. It showed how three major strands of performance emerged: those staged by the British military forces, those staged by the Continental military forces, and those staged by Thomas Wall and his troupe of amateurs in Baltimore. Wall's company offered something of a middle ground between these two factionalised spheres of performance. While Wall and his audiences were certainly sympathetic towards the Revolutionary cause, with Wall even occasionally enlisting the histrionic support of soldiers within the Continental Army, he also had the pressures of turning a profit and protecting his bottom line with which to contend.[19]

The figures for Wall's performances discussed in chapter one revealed a theatrical culture in deep flux and a repertoire torn between two versions of the ancient world: one that seemed a continuation of that plied by the travelling professional troupes of the colonial period, and one more reminiscent of that previously seen within the colleges. This quantitative evidence also suggested that theatrical tastes began to shift organically in response to the pressures of the war. The repertoire Wall performed during the first half of his tenure in Baltimore can be shown to be more reminiscent of the professional repertoires seen during the colonial period, with an emphasis on plays such as Garrick's *Lethe* that had proved a mainstay of the pre-1774 travelling troupes. As the war progressed, Wall broadened out his repertoire considerably by diminishing the proportion of stage time dedicated to *Lethe*, and replacing it with plays such as *The Roman Father* and *Cato* that had proved so popular amongst colonial college students. Within Thomas Wall's improvised playhouse, the way that audiences engaged with the ancient world was shifting. Washington and his command, enjoying a cosy rendition of an old favourite within their relatively comfortable lodgings, were oblivious to this shift. In order to understand the change, and why Whitehead's *The Roman Father* was chosen as the

[19] Brown (2006) 147-50.

play to mourn Washington's passing at the end of the century, it is first necessary to look closely at Whitehead's play in order to understand how it fitted into the mercurial tastes of this chaotic era.

3.2 Roman fathers and Grecian daughters: William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* (1750) and the gendering of political virtue

The Roman Father was originally produced in 1750 by William Whitehead. The play is based on a section of book one of Livy's *History of Rome* and depicts the war between Rome and the neighbouring Alba Longa that supposedly dates to the seventh century BC. Whitehead's play appears, at first glance to be a rather faithful adaptation of Livy's account. However, reading the two versions alongside each other, it becomes apparent that Whitehead makes a variety of subtle, but significant, changes in his adaptation.

Livy's version of events is detailed in book one of his *History of Rome*. As Rome and Alba Longa wage war upon each other, their kings become concerned that their Etruscan rivals will take advantage of their weakness and defeat them both. By coincidence, both armies contain a triplet of brothers of roughly equal strength and it is decided that they will fight on behalf of their city, with the winning champions gaining dominion for their city over the other. Both the Romans and the Albans perform rituals and solemn oaths to bind themselves to this contract. The combat initially goes poorly for the Roman champions as two of them are slain, whilst the Alban champions are only wounded. Publius, the remaining Roman champion, retreats to tire the Albans and slays them one by one as their wounds exhaust them. Before he slays the final Alban champion he declares 'Two victims I have given to the shades of my brothers: the third I will offer up to the cause of this war, that Roman may rule Alban!' Publius returns victorious to Rome, wearing one of the vanquished Alban champions' cloak as a trophy. However, Publius' sister was engaged to marry one of the Alban champions and, seeing her brother wearing her betrothed's cloak, cries her dead lover's name. Angered by his sister's grief, Publius accuses her of having 'forgot your brothers, both dead and alive' and slays her. The assembled Romans are horrified by his actions but, given his recent heroism, wish to be lenient and decide upon

a trial. He is ultimately found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. Before the sentence can be carried out his father appeals the decision, asking 'whither can you lead this youth where his own honours will not vindicate him from so foul a punishment?' It is decided that Publius will be acquitted but is required to perform a variety of expiatory sacrifices to redress the 'flagrant murder'.[20]

The version of events that Whitehead portrays is broadly faithful to Livy's account yet he arranges them with a very different focus. *The Roman Father* is oriented around three key characters: Horatius (the eponymous 'Roman father'), his son Publius, and his daughter Horatia. When Rome and Alba Longa choose to settle their costly conflict with a contest of champions, the elderly Horatius is overjoyed when his three sons are selected to represent Rome, and is unfazed even by the prospect of their death if it comes in the service of Rome. Horatius' willingness to sacrifice his loved ones for the glory of Rome is not mirrored in his daughter. Horatia is in love with Curiatius, one of the champions of Alba Longa. She conspires to persuade both Publius and Curiatius to abandon the fight. Her intrigues are unsuccessful though and Publius and Curiatius, despite being great personal friends, refuse to allow personal feelings to interfere with their duty and the contest goes ahead.

As with Livy's account, Whitehead shows the battle as initially going poorly for the Roman champions, with Publius' two brothers being slain. With defeat imminent, Publius's resolve seems to fail him and he appears to flee the field of battle. Horatius is horrified at his son's cowardice and threatens to kill him himself as punishment for such dishonourable conduct. It soon becomes apparent though that Publius' flight was a ruse to tire the Alban champions and he is able to dispatch all three single-handedly. When Publius returns triumphantly Horatia becomes hysterical upon learning of the death of her lover and so curses Publius, wishing destruction upon Rome.

Horatius attempts to have Horatia restrained to prevent further treason but, grief-stricken, she continues to blaspheme against the name of Rome. Unable to allow such an assault on Rome, Publius eventually feels compelled to slay Horatia as he is duty-bound to slay the enemies of Rome. When

[20] The episode is recounted in Livy *History of Rome* 1.23-6.

news of her death travels it provokes a hostile reaction from some. Valerius, a young Roman patrician who secretly loves Horatia, is horrified by the hero's apparent brutality. He dismisses the reasons that compelled Publius to slay her and uses his 'winning eloquence' to fire the passions of the mob against Publius (act five, scene two).[21] In the play's final scene, Publius is placed on trial but, much to the assembled mob's surprise, Horatius interjects to speak on behalf of his son:

> Horatius: That sword which saved his Country
>
> Was never drawn but in his Country's Service.
>
> Some of you must remember, …
>
> With what dire Curses this unhappy Girl -
>
> I will not call her mine – pursu'd us all,
>
> And dar'd insult the Majesty of *Rome*.
>
> …
>
> 'Twas for that,
>
> For that he kill'd her; 'twas not him she injur'd,
>
> 'Twas in your Cause he kill'd her, not his own;
>
> And must he die for that? If 'tis a Crime
>
> To vindicate your Honour, he indeed
>
> Has been most guilty; 'twas for that he Fought. (act five, scene two)[22]

Horatius assures the mob that, although he 'fondly loved' Horatia, her death was necessary to defend Rome from enemies both within and without. He warns the crowd of the consequences of revenging themselves upon Publius, suggesting that 'the time may come, When you again shall want his sword' (act five, scene two).[23] He reminds the Roman people that it was they who originally charged Publius to dispatch Rome's enemies and tells them that Roman law is supreme, no matter how hard-hearted

[21] Whitehead (1750) 73.
[22] Ibid. 77-8.
[23] Ibid. 79.

it may seem. The crowd accepts Horatius' arguments, absolves Publius of any crimes, and marvels at the lessons they can learn from Horatius' example:

> Tullus: Learn hence, ye *Romans*, on how sure a Base
> The Patriot builds his Happiness; no Stroke,
> No keenest, deadliest, Shaft of adverse Fate
> Can make his generous Bosom quite despa[i]r,
> But that alone by which his Country falls.
> Grief may to Grief in endless Round succeed,
> And Nature suffer when our Children bleed:
> Yet still superior must that Hero prove
> Whose first, best Passion is his COUNTRY'S LOVE' (act five, scene two)[24]

Livy's and Whitehead's version of the episode are both broadly similar in terms of the basic sequence of events they portray. In both instances, the cities of Rome and Alba Longa resolve to settle their dispute through a contest of champions, the lone surviving Roman champion defeats his enemies, returns triumphantly to Rome, and slays his sister in a dispute over her deceased lover. In both cases, the episode concludes with the champion being acquitted of charges relating to his sister's death. While the general sequences of events are identical in both Livy's and Whitehead's versions, the two accounts diverge in terms of their themes and focus.

One notable change is that Livy dedicates considerable attention to detailing the minutiae of the religious rituals preceding the contest of champions and the legalistic procedures of Publius' trial, whilst Whitehead almost completely disregards these aspects of the story to instead focus on the personal qualities and relationships within Horatius' family. Whitehead even has the actual contest of champions occur off-stage and has the developments be narrated to Horatius, giving Horatius the opportunity to vocalise his thoughts on his sons' conduct. One of the effects of this is to condense

[24] Ibid. 82-3.

Livy's account of warring states down into a family drama of characters clashing over their rival goals and differing interpretations of virtue. It also has the effect of side-lining the prominence of Rome's King Tullus, who is relegated to a minor character whose main role is to comment on others' actions.

By focusing on the character drama surrounding Horatius' family, Whitehead is able to develop one of the central themes of the play, the importance of valuing the public good over one's private interest. This is a virtue of which Horatius and Publius become embodiments. Livy touches on this theme as well. When the Roman and Alban champions join combat Livy describes how 'Neither side thought of its own danger, but of the nation's sovereignty or servitude' (1.25.3). Yet, this section, in which the champions eschew care for their personal safety and think only of their duty, is anomalous. The characters in Livy's account are more broadly motivated by their personal desires and unrestrained passions, rather than their duty to Rome. Publius is described as a 'fiery youth' when he slays his sister, an act he performs because he is 'enraged' that he must listen to her lamentations 'in the hour of his own victory'.[25] His father, Horatius, is similarly motivated by personal and emotional desires rather than any sense of duty to Rome or the public good. When he appeals the sentence at Publius' trial, Livy has Horatius appeal not to any sense of justice, but rather reminds them of the glory of Publius' recent victory and begs them not to 'bereave [him] of all his children'.[26] Publius is eventually acquitted, but more 'because they admired his bravery rather than because they regarded his cause as a just one'.[27] Both Horatius and Publius alike place their own personal desires above the public good of Rome.

This comes in sharp contrast to Whitehead's version of events. Throughout the play Publius and Horatius show concern for one thing and one thing only: their duty to Rome. All other concerns and bonds are abrogated. When Publius is asked whether his bonds of fellowship with Curiatius will affect him during their fight he replies 'All private duties are subordinate To what we owe the public' (act

[25] Livy *History of Rome* 1.26.3.
[26] Ibid. 1.26.9.
[27] Ibid. 1.26.12.

two, scene one).[28] This sets the tone for his and Horatius' characters throughout the play. When Horatius learns that his sons have been selected to fight as Rome's champions he rejoices even at the possibility that they will die in this service, claiming he could ' behold them bleeding at [his] Feet, And thank the Gods with Tears' if 'from their glorious Death *Rome's* Freedom spring' (act two, scene one).[29] His devotion to the public good does not end at celebrating the death of a child if it is in service to Rome. When Publius feigns flight, Horatius, thinking his cowardice genuine, even resolves to disregard all personal love for him and 'hunt the Villain thro' the World' in order to execute him for this dishonour (act four, scene one).[30]

In Whitehead's version Publius' killing of Horatia is transformed from an outburst of anger at her mistimed grief to a painful act of duty. Rather than simply grieving, as she does in Livy, Whitehead's Horatia issues 'dire blasphemies' (act five, scene one), cursing the gods of Rome and praying that she could 'prove the *Helen* to destroy This curs'd unsocial State' (act four, scene two).[31] Publius is not personally enraged as he is in Livy, he warns his sister 'I am calm, and can forgive thy Folly' (act four, scene two) but advises her that if she continues he will be mandated to punish her treason.[32] When his warnings go unheeded he is forced to kill her, despite his great personal love for her.

Horatius' performance at Publius' trial compounds the zeal with which the play's characters pursue their duty to Rome. Unlike Livy's Horatius, who essentially argues that ordinary legal procedures be abrogated in light of the exceptional circumstances surrounding Horatia's death, Whitehead's Horatius urges almost the opposite. The love-stricken Valerius urges that the 'pedant rules' (act four, scene two) that would legitimize Horatia's killing be disregarded in the light of the exceptional brutality with which Publius dispatched her.[33] Horatius reminds the mob that Roman law 'however hard is just' and that for Rome to allow his daughter's actions would only provoke future danger (act five, scene

[28] Whitehead (1750) 23-4.
[29] Ibid. 17-8.
[30] Ibid. 48.
[31] Ibid. 61, 66.
[32] Ibid. 59.
[33] Ibid. 59.

two).[34] He acknowledges his love for his daughter and grief for her death, but argues that these exceptional circumstances do not alter the fact that her killing was concomitant with Publius' duty to defeat Rome's enemies. Livy's Horatius urges the law be waived on account of his love for his child, Whitehead's Horatius waives his love for his child on account of the law. The promise Horatius issues at the start of the play, that he would gladly sacrifice his children for the good of Rome, is vindicated.

The models of duty and sacrifice that Horatius and Publius represent are intensified by their contrast to the characters that fail to embody them. Unlike Livy's Horatia who barely appears except to grieve and die, Whitehead pays consistent attention to her actions and development. Throughout the play, Horatia's primary concern is the safety of Curiatius and she is horrified by the willingness of her brother and lover to die for their respective states. She even makes use of secret letters and other such intrigues to try and convince Curiatius to eschew his duty and abandon the fight. She criticises and rails against the apparent inhumanity with which Publius performs his duty, claiming his love of country has robbed him of his 'soft, endearing sense' (act four, scene two).[35] Eventually, her love for Curiatius consumes her and, when he dies, she loses her capacity for rationality, becoming as 'mad as the *Cumaean* Maid' (act four, scene two).[36] Her madness and death is presented as the unfortunate conclusion of allowing one's personal desires to eclipse one's sense of public duty. At the end of her life she realises that, though Publius may have seemed cruel, his acts were virtuous.

One of Whitehead's most significant departures from Livy's version of events is the character of Valerius, the Roman patrician who secretly loves Horatia, conspires to rid himself of his rival, Curiatius by riling up a mob upon learning of Horatia's death. Absent from Livy's version, Valerius was introduced to the canon surrounding this episode by the seventeenth-century French playwright Pierre Corneille, whose play *Horace* (1640) similarly dramatized this episode. Whitehead's decision to

[34] Ibid. 79.
[35] Ibid. 60.
[36] Ibid. 63.

retain this alteration of Corneille's version speaks volumes about his thematic intentions.[37] Valerius, like Horatia, demonstrates a complete lack of interest in the public good or his duty as a citizen. Instead, his sole motivation throughout the play is his love for Horatia, just as Horatia's sole motivation is her love for Curiatius. He describes how his love for Horatia softens his will, claiming his 'whole soul [is] dissolv'd in Tenderness' for her (act one, scene one).[38] When Rome and Alba declare a truce while they decide upon champions, Valerius' first concern is not for the future of Rome, but rather that the truce will reduce the likelihood that Curiatius will die during the regular course of the war. He laments that 'While War continued, I had Gleams of Hope, Some lucky Chance might rid me of my Rival' (act one, scene one).[39] Like Horatia, he objects to the apparent heartlessness with which Publius and Horatius perform their civic duty and criticises 'the pedant rules of dull discretion' that mandated her killing (act four, scene two).[40] When Valerius learns of Horatia's death he swears vengeance upon Publius, not out of a sense of justice but because 'The thought delights [his] Soul!' (act five, scene one).[41] This truth is not lost on Horatius, who accuses him of being motivated by 'private Passion, and a mean Revenge' (act five, scene two).[42] Valerius consistently fails to live up to the models of duty and sacrifice provided by Publius and Horatius, and almost manages to have Publius, Rome's hero, executed unlawfully.

Beyond transforming Livy's characters into models of civic virtue to be imitated and avoided, he also sharply genders the qualities that define them as such. The flaws exhibited by Horatia that warrant her execution are firmly placed within the feminine sphere. When she is overcome by grief upon seeing Publius enter Rome triumphantly, Publius specifically identifies her lamentations as 'womanish' (act four, scene two).[43] When Valerius learns of Horatia's death he rails against how it is unreasonable

[37] The relationship between Corneille's *Horace* and Whitehead's *The Roman Father* is discussed in Ann Doty (1971) 11.
[38] Ibid. 13.
[39] Ibid. 11.
[40] Ibid. 63.
[41] Ibid. 68.
[42] Ibid. 79.
[43] Ibid. 60.

for it to 'become a Crime Ev'n for the softer Sex to let their Anguish Transport their Souls beyond the Bounds of Reason,' clearly implying that it can only be expected for women to become unreasonable in such circumstances (act four, scene two).[44]

Valerius' inability to place public good over personal desire is similarly located within the feminine sphere, despite Valerius himself being male. The language he uses to describe his love for Horatia is similar to that which she uses to describe her own love for Curiatius. Just as Horatia describes a 'softer passion' with which Curiatius fills her heart (act one, scene one), Valerius bemoans how his 'whole soul [is] dissolv'd in Tenderness' for her (act one, scene one).[45] The methods he uses to try and secure his love are similarly feminine in nature. Echoing the secret correspondences and other such intrigues that Horatia employs in her attempts to cancel the contest of champions and secure her love, Valerius makes use of 'deep-wrought schemes' and other such subterfuges in order to try and win Horatia's love (act one, scene one).[46] This is in sharp contrast to other male characters such as Horatius and Publius, who make use of martial prowess and public declamation to achieve their aims. By identifying the flaws that undermine Horatia's and Valerius' capacity for effective public service as feminine, their ineligibility and unsuitability for political participation is made synonymous with femininity.

Whitehead manages to thematically alter Livy's account while largely staying with the confines of the events that he describes. Whitehead's focusing in on the relationships and virtues of Horatius and his children transforms the episode from Livy's account of Roman triumph and Publius' forgiven cruelty into a familial clash of ideals as Horatia and Valerius struggle against the virtuous, though uncompromising, models of civic participation that Horatius and Publius represent. The ideal of self-sacrificing duty, which Livy presents in just one section of his version, is made the defining theme of the play. Publius and Horatius become ideal models of this virtue and their examples are sharpened by their contrast to Horatia and Valerius. Almost every element of Whitehead's changes to Livy's

[44] Ibid. 63.
[45] Ibid. 2, 13.
[46] Ibid. 11.

version serve to emphasise the importance of valuing the public good above all else and warn against the danger of abandoning this goal in favour of pursuing one's personal interests.

The extension of these virtues is not an individual innovation on Whitehead's part. It is cohesive with the Enlightenment ideal of the disinterested and paternalistic statesman, to whom citizens might look up and see disregarding their own personal interests in order to govern in the best interests of the nation. These values have their origin in Plato and Aristotle's ideas of the patriotic philosopher king governing hierarchical society but were 'rediscovered' and developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Enlightenment philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes.[47] Their amplification within the text of Whitehead's *The Roman Father* serves as a conduit through which audiences might engage with this ideal.

Despite the barrier of the Atlantic, these ideas gained tremendous traction throughout English-speaking North America as colonists inherited the political traditions of their British forebears. Mark Kann has demonstrated the importance of British texts such as Lord Bolingbroke's *The Idea of a Patriot King* (1740), which idealized the paternalistic, patriarchal governorship of a patriot king who ruled as a 'common father,' in influencing American social and political thought. Kann has shown how this idea, sans the emphasis on kingship, entered the American political lexicon through the emphasis on fatherhood in political language, with statesmen and public officials from the 1770s onwards being referred to as 'civic fathers' and 'fathers of their country.'[48] One of the fundamental qualities that qualified one for this role of civic fatherhood was the willingness to sacrifice personal desire for the national benefit. As Tamara Thornton summarises in her study of Boston's civic elite, 'public virtue, the ability to place the public good before private gain, was the operative criterion' for civic leadership.[49] This model of paternalistic leadership served as an operating ideal throughout the

[47] Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) understood political power as a social contract amongst the governed that was best maintained through the rule of an absolute sovereign.
[48] Kann (1999) 97.
[49] Thornton (1989) 17.

debates and conventions to design and ratify the constitution, and its ancient progenitors were frequently looked to as examples.[50]

Since this model of a civic father figure developed out of the ancient ideal of the philosopher king, it is only natural that the stories of the ancient world proved uniquely able to represent models of it on stage. The shared classical ideological basis of this broader Western ideal ensured that the piece was thematically appropriate on both sides of the Atlantic. The French playwright Pierre Corneille had already adapted Livy's account into his play *Horace* (1640), which similarly used the story to explore neoclassical and romanticist models of virtue, and plays such as Addison's *Cato* had already provided English-speaking audiences with one dramatic model of patriotic self-sacrifice. In Livy's account, Whitehead found a seed of these ideas through the patriotic devotion exhibited by Publius during the battle. Extracting and expanding ideas found in Corneille's earlier adaptation, Whitehead developed this seed, creating in Horatius the model example of classical statesmanship that audiences expected to see of an ancient *pater patriae*.

American audiences, it seems, were not oblivious to the values that Horatius embodied. Prologues for the performance discussed the multiplicity of clashing ideals presented by *The Roman Father* and invited audiences to join in exalting the superior worth of those exhibited by Publius and Horatius. For example, one 1783 prologue written for a performance in Annapolis examines the 'varied passions, Honor, Duty, Love' that motivated Whitehead's characters and praised how Horatius, in sending his son to fight and accepting the necessity of his daughter's death, 'nobly … withstood' his 'humble passions … And conquered nature for his country's good'.[51] *The Roman Father* was being used to teach audiences the importance of these ideals of paternalistic, disinterested leadership.

The Roman Father is not the only play using the ancient world as a setting to explore the relationship between gender and statesmanship that enjoyed popularity in post-Revolutionary America. Chapter

[50] The classical foundations of the American constitution are discussed in Bederman (2011) passim.
[51] This prologue is reprinted in Seilhamer (1968a) 91-2.

one's distant reading exercise revealed Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* (1772) to have been a close second to *The Roman Father* in terms of the number of performances it received, both during and after the Revolution. Despite taking a completely unrelated aspect of the classical canon for its subject matter, Murphy's play explored similar themes of virtuous statesmanship and gendered ideals of political participation. Yet, where *The Roman Father* concerned itself with the male ideal of political participation, *The Grecian Daughter* approached the same themes from a female perspective.

Unlike *The Roman Father,* Murphy took certain liberties in crafting a relatively novel narrative, rather than directly adapting one from a classical text. This is not to say that the version of the ancient world Murphy presents is wholly original, rather it is the product of the wider neoclassical zeitgeist prevalent throughout Enlightenment literature and reflects contemporary expectations of the ancient world. With its themes of dutiful sacrifice and patriotic resistance to tyranny, the play is practically indistinguishable from the other plays of the era that had taken a particular classical source as their foundation.

Set on the island of Sicily, the play details a power struggle between Euphrasia (the eponymous Grecian daughter), her father Evander, and the tyrant Dionysius. Evander is the rightful ruler of Sicily but has been deposed and imprisoned by Dionysius. Evander's ally, Timoleon, promises to send support, but Dionysius intends to cruelly starve Evander to death in his dungeons before any help can arrive. Dionysius has offered safety and security to her and her children if she collaborates but she has instead resolved to help her father overthrow Dionysius and take back his rightful place (act one, scene one).[52] Evander is being guarded by two soldiers who realise Dionysius' cruelty but fear the consequences of defying him. Euphrasia begs them to be allowed access to her father, promising she will wait at the entrance till death takes her if they refuse. When they express fear of the consequences she questions their courage, asking 'Is that the voice of manhood?' and commanding them to 'Respect the gods, and know no other fear'. Inspired by her 'unexampled goodness' they permit her to visit

[52] Murphy (1772) 7.

Evander (act two, scene one).[53] When Euphrasia sees her father she nourishes him from her own breast and gives him 'new life' so that he survives until Timoleon's arrival (act two, scene two).[54] In the third act, Timoleon arrives and begins a lengthy conflict for control of the island (act three, scene one).[55] Ultimately, Dionyius is sent into a rage at the realisation that Timoleon's forces have the upper hand and, against his counsellor's advice, resolves to kill Evander in order to satisfy his anger (act five, scene three).[56] When he goes to kill Evander, Euphrasia stands between them and pleads

> I have provok'd your vengeance; through this bosom
> Open a passage; first on me, on me
> Exhaust your fury (act five, scene three)[57]

Her sacrifice is not required though, as the assault of Timoleon's forces interrupts the scene and Dionysius is slain. As the dust settles, Evander closes the play by delivering a speech that, echoing the closing of *The Roman Father*, praises Euphrasia for her support and guidance, inviting the audience to marvel at her virtues:

> Watch over all her ways; conduct and guide
> The goodnese you inspir'd, that she may prove
> If e'er distress like mine invade the land,
> A parent to her people; stretch the ray
> Of filial piety to times unborn,
> That men may hear her unexampled virtue,
> And learn to emulate THE GRECIAN DAUGHTER! (act five, scene three)[58]

[53] Ibid. 18, 24.
[54] Ibid. 40.
[55] Ibid. 29.
[56] Ibid. 69.
[57] Ibid. 69-70.
[58] Ibid. 72.

The thematic similarities between *The Roman Father* and *The Grecian Daughter* are obvious. Euphrasia demonstrates the same willingness to sacrifice her own interests, and even life, for the public good as both Horatius and Publius do in *The Roman Father*. Just as Horatius' actions render him a *pater patriae* to the citizens of Rome, Euphrasia is declared a 'parent to her people' by her father (act five, scene three).[59] As Horatius was willing to sacrifice his children for the good of Rome, Euphrasia also endangers her children's lives by waiving the guarantee of safety that Dionysius promised to her and her children should she collaborate with his rule. Both Horatius and Euphrasia have foils against which their devotion to the public good is measured. Just like *The* Roman Father's Horatia and Valerius, *The Grecian Daughter*'s Dionysius is controlled by his emotions and cares only for satisfying his personal desires. Both plays even end with an exhortation to marvel at the virtues of their titular characters.

Yet, just as *The Roman Father* genders its presentation of the virtues that equip one for civic participation, the model of virtue that Euphrasia represents is a specifically feminine one. Euphrasia does not express her virtue or perform her civic duty in the same masculine manner as Publius or Horatius do in *The Roman Father*. Euphrasia does not sacrifice her safety by fighting courageously in battle, like Publius, or manfully suppress all grief by publicly defending her daughter's killer in court, like Horatius. Instead, she takes an altogether more liminal role. Euphrasia exerts little agency on the various combats and conflict, both military and political, that accompany Timoleon's arrival and drive the final three acts of the play. Instead her sole role in the play is to support and encourage the male characters to achieve ever greater feats of virtue and courage. When her father is at the point of death and near to forsaking hope, she supports him through the uniquely female act of breastfeeding. When the courage of the two soldiers guarding her father fails and they prepare to forsake what they know to be just out of fear, her pious devotion to her father and 'exalted virtue' reminds them of their manly duty and inspires them to courage. Her virtue is not expressed through direct civic participation, but rather through supporting the endeavours of her male counterparts.

[59] Ibid. 72.

This is in line with the wider ideological development of the notion of 'republican womanhood' in the United States. This idea stressed the importance of women, not as political actors in and of themselves, but rather as sources of support and encouragement for their male counterparts. As Mark Kann notes: 'Women's roles as the wives of citizens and mothers of future citizens were given new prominence in the 1780s and 1790s. Some founders felt that female influence on male family members was the single-most important determinant of the nation's future. They gradually developed the doctrine of "republican womanhood," which called on domestic women to take responsibility for breeding, teaching, and sustaining good citizenship in America'.[60] In *The Grecian Daughter* American audiences found a perfect model of this feminine ideal, just as they would find in *The Roman Father*'s Horatius the masculine equivalent. There is even evidence the piece was marketed specifically towards women. An advert addressed 'To the ladies' in a 1784 copy of the New York *Independent Journal* suggested *The Grecian Daughter* as being a good text 'for Winter Evenings Amusements' that female readers might enjoy.[61] Audiences will have found in these two plays, then, the ideal models of how they were expected to behave, all taught to them in classical garb.

Whitehead's *The Roman Father* and wider representations of the classical world that occupied that American stage were, thus, entirely appropriate to the broader socio-political doctrines and ideologies that were emerging in the United States from the outbreak of the Revolution. In Horatius and Publius, it presents two ideal models of civic virtue. Publius is willing to sacrifice all that he holds dear to fulfil his duty to Rome. Horatius disregards the feelings of love he holds for his daughter and advocates that adherence to the law and public good be valued above all personal connections of love or companionship. A seed of these ideas existed in Livy's text, and wider contemporary conceptions of the ideal statesman were overtly informed by ancient models. The modifications that Whitehead implemented served to make the events described by Livy better reflect contemporary British

[60] Kann (1999) 47. Attitudes towards the role of women in the early American Republic are further discussed in Kerber (1976) 187-205; Kerber (1998) passim.
[61] New York *Independent Journal* (21/01/1784) 4.

audiences' expectations of classical virtue. This neoclassical ideal had long taken root on both sides of the Atlantic, and as such Whitehead's Britishness did not incur any ideological incompatibility among American audiences as both British and American ideals of civic virtue drew on the classical world as their foundation. Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* took this trend even further and presented a model of classical virtue that did not even have an episode from the classical world as its inspiration. Eighteenth century audiences throughout the western world had certain expectations of the values and ideals that they would find presented in the classical texts. Texts such as *The Roman Father* presented audiences with a version of the ancient world that met these expectations, even if the original classical text from which it drew its inspiration did not.

3.3 No American father?

It is clear that plays such as *The Roman Father*, despite taking millennia-old materials as their inspiration, were ideologically compatible with the concerns of American audiences of the late eighteenth century. They served as a medium through which Enlightenment ideals of civic duty and republican virtue could be disseminated to audiences throughout the young United States. Yet, the question still remains: why couch these lessons in ancient terms at all? It may be true that contemporary ideals of statesmanship were derived from the ancients, but surely plays that drew from more recent materials would be more relevant to American audiences? Why perform a play depicting episodes from the seventh century B.C. when there was a glut of dramatic events that had occurred within the memory of playwrights and audiences to depict? Why was there no American Father, to match Horatius' Roman one?

The use of the ancient world as a setting becomes even more intriguing when one considers its apparent incompatibility with the demands for an independent American drama that were issued in the latter decades of the eighteenth century. For many, America's political separation from Europe necessitated an equivalent cultural one. In 1790 Noah Webster argued that 'an old civilized nation cannot, with propriety, be the model for an infant nation, either in manners or fashions, in literature,

or in government'.[62] This call to break free from pre-existing cultural precedents was also issued within the theatre. In 1794 Thomas Paine penned a prologue inciting his audience to 'indignant rise' against 'alien vices' and 'foreign brogues and foreign manners' that 'Come shameless to pollute COLUMBIA'S shore'.[63] In the same year, performance of Kelly's *The School for Wives* (1773) was criticised in the Philadelphia *General Advertiser* as not being 'a mirror for an American audience', a fault that it found 'common to most transatlantic productions'. An article appearing in a 1798 edition of *The Weekly Magazine* further claimed of plays dealing with non-American subject matter that 'the tragedies are pompous, and, to the majority of theatrical spectators, totally unmeaning. Kings and nobles, of some remote age, and acting upon maxims foreign to the experience of men of the present times and of middling classes, speaking a language as unintelligible as Greek'.[64] In an article years later that appeared in the *American Quarterly Review* in 1827 the author described what these calls for independent drama meant: 'By a national drama, we mean, not merely a class of dramatic productions written by Americans, but one appealing directly to the national feeling— founded upon domestic incidents— illustrating or satirizing domestic manners, and above all, displaying a generous chivalry in the maintenance and vindication of those great and illustrious peculiarities of situation and character by which we are distinguished from all other nations'.[65] Independent drama would seem to necessitate plays written by American playwrights, for American audiences, set in American locations, and depicting American characters. Where do English-written plays about Greeks and Romans fit into this desire, and why stage one to mark Washington's funeral?

In light of this apparent hostility, it is even more pressing to ask why plays drawing on the ancient world as a setting, especially those that boasted English authorship, would be staged when there was a relative glut of American-written plays dealing with American settings that were available to

[62] Webster (1790) 85.
[63] This prologue is reprinted in Nathans (2003) 82.
[64] These examples are discussed in Nathans (2003) 82; Pollock (1933) 56; Wolter (1993) 35. The demand for independent American literature is more widely discussed in Bigsby and Wilmeth (2006) 3-4, 11; Ellen Gainor (1999) 7; Havens (1973) 13, 45; Nathans (2003) 10; Pollock (1933) 45; Seilhamer (1968b) 227-8; Smith (1997) 42; Wolter (1993) 11-13.
[65] *American Quarterly Review* (1827) 339.

managers. Plays such as John Leacock's *The Fall of British Tyranny* (1776), Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *The Battle of Bunker Hill* (1776), William Dunlap's *The Father* (1789), Anthony Pasquin's *The Federal Oath* (1798), John Daly Burk's *Bunker Hill; or the Death of General Warren* (1797), and Robert Munford's *The Patriots* (1798) provided ample repast for audiences craving such 'all-American' drama.[66] The most notable of these domestically-set examples is Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787), which, boasting of its 'native themes' in its prologue, contrasted plain honest Americans with effete Europeans, and is credited with generating the 'stage yankee' character archetype. It was praised for its American origins and themes in contemporary reviews and has been credited by modern academics as 'the genesis of a native tradition in American comedy'.[67] The use of the ancient world as a setting would thus seem utterly superfluous in light of the variety of plays available that would satisfy the demand for independent American drama.

William Dunlap's *André* (1798) provides a useful case study to understand the niche that classically-inspired plays fulfilled within this context. The play has been routinely praised for its literary merit, being called 'one of the best plays of the early American stage' by modern commentators.[68] It depicts the events surrounding the real-world execution of the British Major André on the orders of General George Washington. The play begins after André has been arrested for spying due to his involvement in the treason of Benedict Arnold, the punishment for which is hanging. *André* focuses on the conflict between General Washington and Captain Bland over Major André's fate. That André is guilty is never in doubt, he admits it himself. The conflict concerns his sentencing. Both American and British soldiers alike maintained great admiration for the honour and decency of André; he even saved the life of

[66] These plays are discussed in Bigsby and Wilmeth (2006) 10; Brown (2006) 19-21; Davis (2006) 241-2; Ellis (1979) 151; McConachie (2006) 135; Nathans (2003) 115; Reinhart (2001) 268; Richards (1997) xiii; Seilhamer (1968a) 360; (1968b) 8-12; Shaffer (2007) 152-4; Strand (1999) 25-33.
[67] The prologue for *The Contrast* in reprinted in Seilhamer (1968a) 227-8. The relationship between *The Contrast* and the 'stage Yankee' archetype is discussed in Bigsby and Wilmeth (2006) 10; Buckley (2006) 453; Ellis (1979) 128; Havens (1973) 15; Rourke (1965) 116-17; Vaughn (1981) 36. An example of contemporary praise for *The Contrast*'s native themes is reprinted in Seilhamer (1968b) 233. Modern academic praise of *The Contrast*'s popularity can be found in Ellis (1979) 128; McConachie (2006) 130-1; Richards (1997) 4; Rourke (1965) 115; Seilhamer (1968a) 215; Shaffer (2007) 105; Tanselle (1967) 52; Vaughn (1981) 28.
[68] Davies (2006a) 245.

Captain Bland on one occasion. Because of this, Captain Bland urges leniency to General Washington. Washington, despite his personal fondness for André and a personal desire to be merciful, warns that such leniency would only encourage further treason. When André begs to 'die a soldier's death' (act two, scene one) and be executed by firing squad, Washington insists on a rigid application of the legally-mandated hanging.[69] It is consistently acknowledged that Washington would prefer to be merciful, he even conceals tears at one point, but he abrogates this personal desire and dutifully applies the law as honour dictates (act five, scene two).[70] The conflict between Captain Bland, who urges the law to be ignored on the grounds of André's popularity, and General Washington, who follows to law above his own desire no matter how harsh it proves, reaches a climax when Bland, disgusted by Washington's lack of clemency, throws his revolutionary cockade to the floor and storms off:

> Bland: Thus from my helm
>
> I tear, what once I proudly thought, the badge
>
> Of virtuous fellowship. [*Tears the cockade from his helmet*.]
>
> My sword I keep. [*Puts on his helmet*.] (act three, scene one)[71]

André handles the events surrounding André's execution with nuance and subtlety. Although Washington's willingness to subordinate his personal fondness for André in favour of the broader interests of the nation is shown to ultimately be the more virtuous route, his harsh but firm adherence to his duty is challenged and questioned by Bland's urgings of leniency. This is by no means a simple tale of good and bad. As Joseph Ellis says of the play: it contrasts 'two different versions of virtue, two different national ideals, one on the wane and the other on the rise, neither palpably ridiculous'.[72]

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[69] Dunlap (1887) 21.
[70] Ibid. 67.
[71] Ibid. 34.
[72] Ellis (1979) 143.

And it was precisely this nuance that caused *André* so much trouble. The play was a complete failure. Its second performance generated less than half as much income as its opening night and the play received only three performances before being shelved.[73] One of the main difficulties that *André* faced was that the material it depicted was so fresh in the minds and dear in the hearts of audience members that it was impossible to avoid giving offence to some party through depicting it. Dunlap tried to assuage these dangers by insisting in his advertising material that he had been fully informed by 'authentic documents' while writing, but this was not enough.[74] The play provoked significant hostility and criticism, in particular for its scene in which Bland discarded his Revolutionary cockade, which caused audience members to boo and hiss, thinking the play an insult 'to the country and its defenders'.[75] Dunlap was forced to issue an apology for 'offend[ing] the veterans of the American army who were present' and to edit out the offending scene.[76] This was not sufficient though, and Dunlap was compelled to continue editing and editing the play to excise it of any nuance. Eventually, it was rebranded as *The Glory of Columbia*, a spectacular musical piece no longer resembling the original play that was broken out to accompany fireworks on Fourth of July celebrations. As Dunlap bitterly described it, it became 'a holy-day drama … occasionally murdered for the amusement of holy-day fools'.[77] When the play was printed in 1798, Dunlap reflected on his difficulties in writing the piece:

> In exhibiting a stage representation of a real transaction, the particulars of which are fresh in the minds of many of the audience, an author has this peculiar difficulty to struggle with, that those who know the events expect to see them *all* recorded; and any deviation from what they remember to be fact, appears to them as a fault in the poet; they are

[73] *André*'s failure is discussed in Davis (2006a) 245; Ellis (1979) 150; Grimsted (1968) 8-18; McConachie (2006) 134; Richards (1997) 61; Vaughn (1981) 43.
[74] Quinn (1930) 83. Dunlap's prologue for this performance also referenced the danger of
'Daring, so soon, in mimic scenes to shew,
What each remembers as a real woe', Dunlap (1887) xxxv.
[75] Dunlap (1832) 222-3. The backlash that *André* received is discussed in Brown (2006) 169; Dennis (2002) 218; Nathans (2003) 159, 260; Reinhart (2001) 278; Richards (1997) 59.
[76] Reinhart (2001) 280. Dunlap's editing down of *André* into *The Glory of Columbia* is discussed in Brown (2006) 169; Dennis (2002) 218; Ellis (1979) 151; Grimsted (1968) 18; McConachie (2006) 134; Nathans (2003) 160; Quinn (1930) 82; Reinhart (2001) 279-80; Richardson (2006) 263; Rourke (1965) 88.
[77] Dunlap (1832) 223.

> disappointed, their expectations are not fulfilled, and the writer is more or less condemned.[78]

André was not unique in struggling to depict recent events in an inoffensive manner. A 1794 performance of David Garrick's *Miss in her Teens* (1747), a comic farce in which multiple suitors compete for the affections of a young lady, also fell victim to audience outrage. Garrick's piece was interpreted as a statement on contemporary Anglo-American relations when an actor portraying the character of a British army officer had the temerity to appear wearing a British army officer's uniform. This sight caused considerable offence amongst some sections of the audience and almost occasioned a riot, disrupting the performance.[79] Even the most seemingly inoffensive play that dealt with contemporary events was liable to affront. John Daly Burk's *Bunker-Hill, or The Death of General Warren* (1797) was patriotic melodrama of the most obvious kind, yet even that was attacked by Federalists who interpreted its overly villainous depiction of the British, the play's villains, as a partisan statement on the recent Jay Treaty and its support for Anglo-American diplomatic closeness.[80] No play that dealt with recent events, it seems, was able to escape giving offence to some interested party.

This is where the ancient world found its niche. Americans needed plays that could be a mirror to their national character and values that had inspired their independence. *André* had tried to contrast the different models of virtue to show the ultimate superiority of the Enlightenment ideal of the paternalistic, disinterested statesman. Yet, the mere act of showing that model being questioned

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[78] Richards (1997) 64. In his *History* he further reflected on what an 'unfortunate' subject for the stage the play was 'at a period so near the time of the event dramatized', Dunlap (1832) 221.

[79] It seems that the British uniform of Captain Flash so offended supporters of the French Jacobins in the audience that they booed and hissed until the actor was compelled to remove the offending costume. When he did so, proponents of the Anglo-French alliance interpreted this as a slight upon England and vowed vengeance against him for the insult. The episode is discussed in Dunlap (1832) 111.

[80] In a letter to John Hodgkinson, the manager of the Old American Company, John Williamson, the manager of the Federal Street Theatre in Boston, accused the play of pandering to the 'Jacobin spirit in the lower ranks' and called it the 'utter disgrace of Boston theatricals, Strand (1999) 29-30. In his *History* Dunlap recalled the 'deplorable' tragedy as being 'most execrable of the Grubstreet kind', Dunlap (1832) 161. There are numerous other examples of plays drawing on recent material being interpreted as a partisan political message. In preparation for a performance of John O'Keeffe's *Darby's Return* Dunlap had to edit the play to remove any criticisms of France that could be interpreted as a partisan statement on Franco-American relations, Reinhart (2001) 271-2. A 1798 production of Shakespeare's *King John* was interpreted by the *Massachusetts Mercury* as being a pro-Federalist piece due to its depiction of Gallic character, Nathans (2003) 157-8.

evoked controversy enough to damn the play. The very presence of contemporary imagery, such as a character wearing a British uniform, was enough to provoke hostility. Even Tyler's *The Contrast*, praised as one of the few dramatic success stories of this period, was shelved after a relatively brief run, having failed to embed itself in the American repertoire with any real permanence.[81] In plays such as *The Roman Father* American audiences found exactly what they were looking for. Whitehead portrayed the very same ideals as Dunlap yet did so without causing any offence. Both plays showed a model of duty-bound civic virtue being tested and challenged by calls for personal acts of mercy and humanity, and both showed the superior virtue of a disinterested dedication to the public good. Yet a slight on Horatius was not as incendiary as one on Washington. Horatia's cursing the name of Rome did not insult veterans in the same way as a discarding of the Revolutionary cockade. Publius' killing of Horatia was not as sore a subject as Washington's execution of Major André. Despite the vast amount of performances that *The Roman Father* and *The Grecian Daughter* received, this thesis has not been able to identify a single incident in which they occasioned political controversy or accusations of partisanship. As recent history could not be used to explore contemporary ideals of statesmanship and virtue, American audiences turned to the very world that had inspired that neoclassical ideology.[82] For this reason, it is perfectly understandable that when marking Washington's death, the theatre in Philadelphia declined Dunlap's potentially-divisive script in favour of the more innocuous *Roman Father*.

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[81] Heather Nathans has highlighted the limited number of performances that the play actually received (only being performed four times in nine years in Philadelphia) and calculated it can't have been seen by more than three thousand people, Nathans (2003) 85. George Seilhamer has pointed to the three-year delay between the play's first performance and its publication as a sign of a lack of demand, Seilhamer (1968b) 234. G. Thomas Tanselle has also questioned the extent to which Tyler can actually be credited with originating the stage Yankee archetype, Tyler (1967) 56.

[82] It is interesting to note that there is a certain degree of continuity between American and British uses of antiquity on stage in this instance. Joseph Addison's *Cato* was produced during a similarly politically divisive time in British political history, with Whig and Tory quarrels over the Spanish War of Succession intruding into performance culture in much the same way as American Post-Revolutionary political divisions. Discussions of Addison's play in its British context have commented on how, in falling back on the politically inclusive themes of classical virtue and civic duty, was able to navigate these tumultuous waters and successfully appeal to audiences on both sides of the political spectrum: Litto (1966) 434-5. For a more comprehensive discussion of the reception of Greek tragedy in particular on British stages, see Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh's *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660-1914* (2005).

3.4 *The Roman Father* and the iconographic language of American nationalism

The decision to use the ancient world as a medium through which to examine and disseminate contemporary ideals of statesmanship forms part of a wider trend relating to the incorporation of classical imagery into modes of nationalist expression, both in and out of the playhouse. Events such as the funerary *Roman Father* went further. By the end of the century such depictions of antiquity had embedded the classics in Americans' perceptions of both themselves and the wider world.

The use of classical imagery to mark occasions of national significance did not originate in the funerary *Roman Father*. Examples abound of Americans donning classical garb to mark national achievements, quite literally in some cases: Dr Joseph Warren's 1775 oration on the anniversary of the Boston massacre was delivered wearing a full Roman-style toga.[83] In the sphere of architecture, figures such as Charles Wilson Peale and Charles Bulfinch had erected imitations of Roman triumphal arches in 1784 and 1789 respectively to celebrate American independence.[84] Even the Capitol building in Washington D.C., the centre of American government, was deliberately styled after classical models.[85] The theatre was not excluded from this trend, and nor was the funerary *Roman Father* the only example. In 1793, to mark the ten-year anniversary of the British evacuation of New York, the John Street theatre invited the French ambassador to a special evening's performance to mark the occasion. To celebrate this most auspicious anniversary the theatre's manager chose not to stage any of the American-written plays that directly dramatized and celebrated the event, but rather Murphy's *Grecian Daughter*.[86] Advertising materials for performances of *The Roman Father* increasingly affixed subtitles such as 'The Triumph of Patriotism', 'Liberty Triumphant', or 'The Deliverer of His Country', emphasising the patriotic content of the piece.[87] The 1799 performance of *The Roman Father* to mark

[83] This incident is discussed in Forman (2011) 227; Haliburton (1857) 43; Sellers (1994) 22; Shalev (2009) 114.
[84] Tunnard and Reed (1956) 50-1; Handlin (1985) 40.
[85] Allen (2001) 19.
[86] The celebrations are discussed in Dunlap (1832) 106.
[87] Boston *Columbian Centinel* (20/1/1798) 3; Boston *Columbian Centinel* (26/05/1798) 3; New York *Daily Advertiser* (03/07/1799) 3; *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* (23/12/1799) 2.

Washington's funeral is thus far from anomalous. It develops out of this wider trend of incorporating classical imagery into nationalist celebration within the playhouse.

More than simply employing classical iconography, the funerary *Roman Father* also provided audiences with a classical lens through which to judge and understand Washington's life. Besides combining ideological compatibility with inoffensiveness, *The Roman Father* offered audiences a broadly equivalent analogue for Washington's life, with the stern paternalism of Horatius as his sons do battle against Curiatius roughly paralleling Washington's strict command of the Continental army during their war against Britain. There is even a rough similarity between Publius having formerly been friends with Curiatius and the Revolutionaries having formerly considered themselves British citizens. Washington had previously served alongside the British army as a Major in the Virginia Militia during the Seven Years' War.[88] A 1783 prologue for Whitehead's play delivered in Annapolis invited this comparison. Comparing its Maryland audience to the heroes of *The Roman Father*, it addressed them as:

> Ye brave asserters of your country's cause
>
> Ye gallant champions to protect the laws,
>
> Children of Freedom, from oppression rais'd[89]

This Annapolis performance, the funerary performance, and other such occasions in which performances of the Classics were used to celebrate national events, invited audiences to use the Classics as a medium through which to understand their own national story.

This developed out of Americans' long-standing use of the ancient world as a model through which to understand the events of their own time. From the outbreak of the war to the end of the century Americans had regularly used dramatic depictions of the ancient world as a means to explicate and

[88] This aspect of Washington's career is discussed in Fred Anderson's *George Washington Remembers: Reflections on the French and Indian War* (2004).
[89] This prologue is reprinted in Winchester Stone Jr (1976) 342-3.

understand contemporary events. In 1778 the *Continental Journal* printed 'A New Epilogue to *Cato*' that compared the contemporary war with Britain to the events of the play, calling King George a 'British Caesar' and comparing Washington to Cato.[90] A 1783 letter from 'a gentlemen in Scotland' to his son, an officer in the Continental Army, promised 'that if I had been where I had access, would have joined the standard and taken arms into my hands in defence of liberty, with the spirit sentiment of the soldier in the tragedy of the *Roman Father*'.[91] A prologue for *The Roman Father* from the same year seems to actively court the comparison between Horatius and Washington, inviting audiences to understand *The Roman Father* in light of their own 'Columbian Father'.[92] Washington's eventual successor as President, John Adams, was compared to Coriolanus for having 'apostatized from his avowed principles' in a 1791 *Federal Gazette*.[93] An article that appeared in the *Hartford Gazette* in 1791 likewise compared Royalists turned Federalists to Sempronius from Addison's *Cato*.[94] Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* is similarly drawn upon to explain and criticise France's adoption of Consuls in an 1800 issue of the *Centinel of Liberty*: 'The new appointment of Consuls in France is a poor affectation of terms taken from the Roman republic. The name, however, is not the most auspicious. Our Shakespeare very pointedly says, in his Coriolanus – "They have chosen a Consul that will take from them their liberties!"'[95] The funerary *Roman Father*'s invitation to understand Washington's achievements in the light of Horatius', or vice versa, developed out of this tradition of understanding contemporary events through the lens provided by plays depicting the Classics.

This is not to say that representations of the ancient world on stage were used simply as a passive measuring stick, a static model against which to understand contemporary events. Instead, plays inspired by the classical corpus proved a living body of material that were able to embed themselves in the American psyche. Towards the end of the century representations of the ancient world were

[90] Boston *Continental Journal, and Weekly Advertiser* (30/04/1778) 4.
[91] Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer* (27/12/1783) 2.
[92] Seilhamer (1968a) 90-1.
[93] Philadelphia *Federal Gazette* (08/08/1791) 3.
[94] *Hartford Gazette* (17/02/1794) 1.
[95] Georgetown *Centinel of Liberty* (31/01/1800) 3.

able to effect not just how American audiences understood the world around them, but how they understood themselves. Plays such as *The Roman Father* formed a key part of this process.

The principle of *translatio studii*, the westward movement of civilization that had informed the colonial American world view, seemed to have been unequivocally confirmed by the Continentals' victory in the Revolution and national Independence. The institution of the theatre became fully implicated in proclaiming the United States' new role as the bearer of civilization's torch. One prologue by Thomas Paine that was read in Boston's Federal Street theatre in 1794 proudly traced 'learning's dawning ray' from Greece, to Rome, through the dark ages, to Britain, before finally coming to America. Paine confidently predicts, now that 'Apollo seeks this liberal plain, and brings the Thespian goddess in his train', that in America:

> A Sophocles shall swell his chasten'd lyre;
>
> A Terence rise in native charms serene;
>
> A Sheridan display the perfect scene:
>
> And Athens, Rome, Augusta, blush to see
>
> Their virtues, beauty, grace, all shine – combin'd in thee[96]

Americans did more than embrace the mantle of civilization bequeathed to them by the ancients, they embraced the ancients themselves. As American theatre managers, needing to perform material that reflected American values, performed British neoclassical plays in lieu of American plays depicting contemporary events, they facilitated the ancient world's incorporation into America's developing national mythology and identity. By the end of the century, with American audiences having repeatedly been directed towards the ancients to understand what it meant to be American, the lines between ancient and modern had become blurred. A commentator in a 1793 New York *Daily Advertiser* commented on how American audiences, when watching a performance of *The Grecian*

[96] Seilhamer (1968b) 232-4. Other examples of Americans gladly taking up the mantle as inheritors of classical civilization are discussed in Ellis (1979) 134; Richards (1995) 59; Seilhamer (1968a) 262, 363-4; Shaffer (2007) 152' Dunlap (1832) 86.

Daughter, become so fiercely invested in the play that 'they are borne away by the tide of sentiment, and are too little under the cool influence of reason, to distinguish ACTOR, from the *man*'. The result being that, on one occasion, 'Mr. Hodgkinson, tho' perhaps he never *acted* better, scarcely met with any praise. The audience, animated with glowing and heroic sentiments of liberty, turned from Dionysius with abhorrence; while they overwhelmed Euphrasia with vociferous and reiterated plaudits'.[97]

This blurring of ancient and modern went beyond being unable to distinguish between actor and character. In 1796 the Charleston Theatre staged an original work titled 'The Apotheosis of Franklin' to mourn the late Benjamin Franklin. A description of the event survives. The performance opened with a depiction of the tomb of Franklin in Philadelphia adorned with two statues, one of the Genius of the United States holding an eagle and a shield inscribed *Unitale populoque Americano* and one of the Goddess of Prudence holding a tablet inscribed *Prudentia deserit eam*. The scene after this takes place in a cavern on the banks of the River Styx. Charon arrives by boat to ferry Franklin across to the Elysian Fields. When they arrive and Elysium is revealed, the Goddess of Fame descends to proclaim the virtues of Franklin, before he is then conducted by a personification of philosophy to meet the Greek cynic philosopher Diogenes, who introduces him to the wise and learned men of history. Finally, a temple was shown, filled with statues of the other philosophers, poets and patriots who had preceded Franklin to Elysium. As the curtain fell a statue of Franklin was placed on a vacant pedestal.[98] In this peculiar display the classical and modern worlds were shown as being part of one continuous mythology. The very concept of a 'Genius of the United States' is itself highly classicizing, being derived from Roman *genii*, a deified abstraction of concept or place.[99] Franklin's 'Apotheosis' is in certain regards reminiscent of David Garrick's *Lethe; or, Aesop in the Shades* (1740), which also depicted interactions between classical and modern characters in the realm of Elysium. The popularity of

[97] New York *Daily Advertiser* (31/12/1793) 4.
[98] The event is described in Seilhamer (1968a) 287-91.
[99] Dwight (1860) passim describes the function and role of *genii* in Graeco-Roman mythology and religion.

Garrick's play no doubt laid some of the intellectual framework that enabled audiences to process and understand the interplay between classical and modern depicted in Franklin's *Apotheosis*, rather than viewing it as outlandish and bizarre. Unlike Garrick's *Lethe* though, *Apotheosis* goes beyond simply showing the two worlds in dialogue. By taking his place in Elysium alongside Diogenes, Franklin's contribution to learning, and more broadly the intellectual mission of American civilization, is shown to be a continuation of their classical forebears.[100] The two worlds are shown to be a part of the same story. The civilization of America is a continuation of the ancients.

This theatrical incorporation of the ancients into America's national story had effects outside the playhouse. As America began to develop a pantheon of national heroes around which to generate a national identity, classical characters from popular plays, began to be included alongside American ones. One such example of this is a travelling display of wax-works that toured America throughout the 1790s. Wax facsimiles displayed some of the key figures around which America was beginning to formulate a national mythology. One such travelling waxwork showed the sitting President and Vice-President, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, alongside George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, the Genius of America, and the late General Butler. They even included an image of Major André 'before his execution', as a formative, though painful, part of their national story. Amongst these representations of the great and the good of America's burgeoning national pantheon was also displayed 'the character of the Grecian Daughter, rescuing her Father from prison'.[101] This waxwork collection travelled from Charleston, South Carolina to Portland, Maine, from 1794 to 1805, and on each occasion Euphrasia, a character invented to embody the neoclassical ideal of republican

[100] This incorporation of the ancients into the American national story is reflected throughout a variety of other mediums across American history. The interior friezes and frescos of the Library of Congress' Jefferson building, for example, venerate the various ancient philosophers and thinkers whose work the Library is viewed as continuing.

[101] Advertisements for this waxwork display can be found in Harrisburg *Oracle of Dauphin* (19/05/1800) 3; Salem *Impartial Register* (30/11/1801) 1; Portland *Gazette* (29/03/1802) 4; *Connecticut Journal* (02/09/1802) 3; *New-England Palladium* (05/24/1803) 1; *Salem Gazette* (20/09/1803) 4; *Portsmouth Oracle* (10/12/1803) 4; *New-Hampshire Gazette* (13/12/1803) 4; New York *Mercantile Advertiser* (04/01/1804) 2; New York *American Citizen* (18/01/1804) 1; New York *Chronicle Express* (07/05/1804) 3; New York *Morning Chronicle* (11/05/1804) 2; New York C*ommercial Advertiser* (15/05/1804) 2; New York *American Citizen* (03/06/1804) 1; Brattleboro *Reporter* (26/01/1805) 3; Walpole *Political Observatory* (02/02/1805) 3.

womanhood by the British playwright Arthur Murphy, was seated alongside George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. The classical world, as it was seen and disseminated on stage, had become part of America's national pantheon.

Viewed in this context, the funerary *Roman Father* is doing far more than decorating a nationalist celebration in classical garb or inviting audiences to compare Washington to Horatius. Washington had by this stage already cultivated a highly classicised public image. The resignation of his Generalship in 1783 had strongly evoked the image of the Roman General Cincinnatus returning to his plough, a comparison Washington actively courted.[102] By marking the death of their *pater patriae* with a performance of *The Roman Father* the story of Horatius, like that of Cincinnatus, was incorporated into the personal mythology surrounding the late General. Boston's Federal Street theatre even went so far as to follow their funerary performance of *The Roman Father* with a monody on the death of Washington, delivered in the costume of the Genius of America, that titled Washington 'The Saviour of His Country', the very same title accorded to Horatius in *The Roman Father*.[103] With plays drawing on their own history, such as Dunlap's *André*, proving too divisive to create a consensus, American theatre managers had turned to depictions of the ancient world as a means to generate a shared understanding of their national story. In doing so they had not only expressed American values in classical terms, they had made the ancient world an integral part of what it meant to be American.

3.5 'T'other side of the gutter'

If the United States' political class could retroactively incorporate classical civilization into their country's national mythology, that same body of material could also be used to warn American citizens against the values that they ought to shun in future. Supporters of the pro-administration Federalist party, with their austere vision of disinterested paternalistic statesmen, by no means held a monopoly on performance spaces. Philadelphia's New Theatre on Chestnut Street, paid for through subscriptions

[102] Washington's cultivation of the Cincinnatus myth is discussed in Garry Wills' *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (1984).
[103] This performance is discussed in *Massachusetts Mercury* (11/02/1800) 3.

of wealthy investors, soon found its grip on Philadelphia's entertainment scene contested by Rickett's Amphitheatre and Circus, which, having opened in 1793, deployed equestrian displays and other such spectacular circus acts to attract audiences.[104] Evidently affronted by the competition offered by Mr. Rickett's Amphitheatre, in 1795 Thomas Wignell of the New Theatre went so far as to pen a satirical poem titled 'T'other side of the gutter' that attacked Rickett and the base spectacles being offered in his circus.[105] These poetic barbs were not, however, sufficient to dissuade Mr. Rickett, and his Amphitheatre would remain active until being destroyed by a fire in 1799.[106]

Spectacular entertainments such as those offered by Rickett did more than affront the sensibilities of Philadelphia's respectable patrons of the arts. To those who dreamt the theatre might become a school for patriots, they posed an existential threat to the future of American civilization. While the principle of *translatio studii* may have mandated that North America currently be on the receiving end of civilization's westward journey, such a world view also mandated that the light of learning that was currently settling American shores would one day leave them. America was destined to one day become stagnant and decadent and eventually decline and fall, just as Greece and Rome had done long ago and Britain was in the process of doing. The theatre, reflecting the tastes of the American people, was the canary in the coalmine for American civilization's inevitable collapse into inglorious decadence. Those who dreamt of a didactic theatre, serving as a school for republican virtue, were soon to be disappointed. By the end of the century the theatres founded by groups such as the Boston Tontiners and Philadelphia Dramatic Association were on the verge of bankruptcy. In 1795 the managers of Philadelphia's New Theatre on Chestnut Street were forced to apply for a loan of $43,600 to refinance the debt-stricken institution, only to then renege on their repayments and be repossessed by the Sheriff of Philadelphia in 1799. In the same year Boston's Federal Street Theatre was forced to sell its chandeliers to pay off its debts. By 1805, William Dunlap, burdened with the debt of New York's

[104] The founding of the New Theatre on Chestnut Street is discussed in Nathans (2003) 69-70.
[105] This poem is discussed in Nathans (2003) 103; Pollock (1933) 58.
[106] The life of Rickett's Amphitheatre and Pantheon is discussed in Moy (1978) 186-202.

Park Theatre, declared bankruptcy. [107] Faced with impending financial ruin the proprietors of these institutions abandoned their vision of a virtuous, republican, didactic theatre in favour of ever broader and broader spectacle. Managers such as Dunlap turned to paratheatrical performers such as jugglers, dancers, and tightrope walkers to boost sagging ticket sales.[108] One such performer titled the 'Antipodean Whirligig' who would 'whirl round on his head at the rate of 250 times in a minute, without the assistance of his hands – and fireworks attached to different parts of his body' proved particularly popular, until he dislocated his neck and died while performing.[109]

Such degradations of the stage were roundly criticised and, horrified at this encroachment of base spectacle into their school for patriots, concerned playwrights and commentators turned their pens to the task of dissuading their fellow citizens from this most perilous path. Just as antiquity had provided audiences with models that they might emulate, it also furnished them with exemplars to avoid. The most notable example of classical material being used in this way is Mercy Warren's *The Sack of Rome* (1790). The play depicts the sack of Emperor Valentinian III's Rome by the Vandal King Genseric in A.D. 455. Warren's preface describes how the play was written with the moral mission to rehabilitate the stage:

> Theatrical amusements may, sometimes, have been prostituted to the purposes of vice; yet, in an age of taste and refinement, lessons of morality, and the consequences of deviation, may perhaps, be as successfully enforced from the stage, as by modes of instruction, less censured by the severe; while, at the same time, the exhibition of great historical events, opens a field of contemplation to the reflecting and philosophic mind.[110]

[107] These and other such examples are discussed in Brown (2006) 157-8; Ellis (1979) 145-56; Grimsted (1968) 1-18; Nathans (2003) 88-9, 106, 119-20, 153-4; Seilhamer (1968b) 211; Vaughn (1981) 40.
[108] These paratheatricals are discussed in Ellis (1979) 150; McNamara (1969) 118; Nathans (2003) 66, 103-4; Pollock (1933) 52.
[109] The Antipodean Whirligig is discussed in Grimsted (1968) 19-20; Wood (1855) 78-9.
[110] Warren (1980) pref.

Warren attributes the fall of Rome to the decadence, ignorance, and irreligion of Rome's leadership. Her preface explains that 'at that period, the character of man was sunk to the lowest stage of depravity. Debilitated by the habits of every species of luxury'.[111] She further explains how the story of their failures to uphold civilization will teach Americans 'to shun the luxurious vices … which have frequently corrupted, distracted, and ruined the best constituted republics'.[112] Warren was partly informed by her reading of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), but Warren did not passively re-present what she read in Gibbon.[113] She also took for inspiration letters from her son Winslow who lived in London during the Revolutionary War and described to her the trappings of British high society. From these descriptions she further informed her depiction of a once great civilization being degraded by decadence, internal corruption and licentious leaders.[114] Just as *The Roman Father* projected contemporary ideals of statesmanship onto early Roman history, *The Sack of Rome* understood the collapse of the later Roman Empire according to contemporary fears of decline. The ancient world provided playwrights and audiences with the dramatic vocabulary to articulate both the rise and fall of empires.

Such warnings, however, would largely go unheeded. Warren failed to find an audience for her *Sack of Rome*, and the play was never performed.[115] By the end of the century one could be forgiven for mistaking the displays of American performers for those of Howe's British at their Meschianza in 1778. One would assume that as the model of instructive, republican theatre was undermined, so too would the depictions of classical virtue that had proved so integral to it. The performance of *The Roman Father* to mark Washington's death could simultaneously represent the high point and the last gasp of the Classics' distinguished position on the American stage.

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[111] Ibid. pref.
[112] Ibid. pref.
[113] Richards (1995) 36-7.
[114] Ibid. 17-18.
[115] Warren's struggles to get the piece performed are discussed in Richards (1995) 108.

These mercurial theatrical tastes would not end the tradition of representing antiquity though. Rather, the classical corpus, ever versatile, was able to adapt and find a new place for itself in this theatrical culture, and early developments into that new role can be identified towards the end of the eighteenth century. As a setting, the ancient world was able to parlay its displays of virtue into displays of grandeur capable of wowing the ever more demanding crowds. Circuses such as Rickett's Amphitheatre and Pantheon in Philadelphia, the very name of which contain an allusion to the ancient world, would offer equestrian displays in imitation of the chariot races of ancient Rome from 1795 onwards.[116] Displays of the classical pantheon of gods would provide an outlet for companies to make use of their ever more extravagant systems of scenery, aerial wires, and audio engineering.[117] And as news of excavations at Pompeii spread across the western world, grand displays the eruption of Vesuvius in miniatures would excite the sensibilities of audiences throughout America.[118] Chapter one showed a gradual growth in the popularity of these paratheatrical deployments of the classical world towards the end of the century.

Even plays that had previously conformed to the expectations of theatre as a school for republican virtue found spectacle infringing upon them. In the last five years of the eighteenth century adverts for performances of *The Roman Father* began to brag, not about the impeccable model of civic duty presented by Horatius, but rather of the grandeur with which they would displays Publius' triumphal entry into Rome.[119] The parades and processions of the ancient world in general, especially the Roman triumphs, received an elevated position in the playbills of the plays for which they were suitable. One advertisement for a performance of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* described at length the grandeur with

[116] Rickett's amphitheatre is discussed in Nathans (2003) 103-4; Pollock (1933) 58-9.
[117] Displays of Neptune and Amphitrite riding a shell chariot drawn by sea-horses proved particularly popular, Ford (1899) 33; McNamara (1969) 99-100.
[118] One 1793 display promised 'A View of the Bay of Naples, bordering on Portici and Tore Del Grece. VIEW OF VESUVIUS. Terrific explosion!! Forked lightnings rend the sky; the burning lava impetuously flows down the side of the mountain and the whole country becomes AWFULLY ILLUMINATED', Buckley (2006) 449.
[119] Adverts emphasised a 'Grand Ovation' during the 'entry of Publius Horatius into Rome, after his victory over the Curiatia' in the fifth act, examples include the Boston *Polar Star* (31/10/1796) 3; New York *Daily Advertiser* (03/07/1799) 3; Philadelphia *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* (23/12/1799) 2. A 1789 performance of *Cymon and Silvia* similarly featured a 'grand procession' of horsemen and chariots, Ford (1899) 41.

which they would depict Coriolanus' triumphal procession, which was to include, amongst other things: incense bearers, soldiers with Roman Eagles and regimental standards, a choir complete with drummers and trumpeters, Roman priests bearing lit torches, a bier 'laden with Spoils', virgins 'strewing flowers', and Coriolanus himself, borne in a car being drawn by two white horses'. The whole procession was accompanied by 'a full band of Instrumental Music, and a Grand Chorus'.[120]

The shifting focus from the virtue to the grandeur of the ancient world would come to fruition over the next century in line with the increasing democratization of American culture that would accompany Thomas Jefferson's election to the presidency in 1800. Voices like Warren's, using the decadence and licentiousness of imperial Rome as a warning against the type of behaviour that could endanger American civilization, would gradually lose what popular relevancy they exerted. Meanwhile, profit-hungry theatre managers were using the same classical world in their spectacular displays that encouraged the very behaviour that Warren was warning against. Beyond simply being ironic, this testifies to the multifaceted and complex nature of the ancient world's reception on the American stage. Audiences and managers were not passive recipients of the classical canon. Managers and playwrights generated their own particular interpretation of the classical material that they received and projected the expectations and desires of themselves and their intended audiences onto it.

3.6 Conclusion

By the end of the eighteenth century, representations of the ancient world had become an invaluable item in America's growing iconographic toolbox of nationalist self-expression. Pressured to stage productions that mirrored the sentiments and character of their audience, but finding representations of their own history insufficient to the task, managers turned to the ancient world. Plays such as *The Roman Father* presented audiences with models of patriotic virtue and civic duty that were almost identical to those presented by American-written plays such as Dunlap's *André*, yet did so without

[120] This occasion is discussed in McNamara (1969) 140-1.

employing the inflammatory and divisive imagery that so damned *André*. Because contemporary Enlightenment ideals of statesmanship were informed by readings of the classical corpus, representations of the ancient world were perfectly suited towards exploring these values. This use of representations of the classical world as a proxy through which to explore 'American values' had significant repercussions for America's developing national identity, and audiences were by no means passive receptors of classical material. Pulling the Classics into the eighteenth century, plays such as *The Roman Father* did not so much adapt Livy to the stage as much as they used the stories contained within Livy as a medium through which to explore contemporary neoclassical ideals of leadership. Just as the moderns did not passively receive classical material, the ancients were similarly able to exert their own influence. Pushed forward by the weight of broader neoclassicism across the English-speaking world, by the end of the century the events, imagery, and characters of these plays had become embedded in America's developing national identity. The two spheres, ancient and modern, had blended. By supposedly taking up the mantle of civilization that was travelling westwards from its origins in Greece, theatrical representations of American nationalism incorporated the ancients into their own national mythology.

This aspirational vision of antiquity on stage was not unanimous though. As the didactic vision of the theatres as a 'school for republican virtue' expounded by Federalist-leaning groups such as the Boston Tontiners eroded towards the end of the century, so too did the version of the ancient world it presented. Growing bored of pious heroes and chaste maidens, audiences hungered for excitement, display, and spectacle. The arenas, triumphal processions, and natural disasters of the ancient world provided profit-hungry managers with ample source material to satisfy this hunger. Washington's funerary performances would simultaneously mark the high point and swansong of this didactic vision of the ancient world. While its incorporation of the classical world into American national iconography would leave a lasting legacy, those who still dreamt that the theatre could be a school for republican virtue were in for a rude awakening as the nineteenth century approached.

Chapter Four

The Democratic Stage, 1800-19

The decades that followed in the wake of Washington's death are commonly glossed over in theatrical histories. The first twenty years of the nineteenth century are seen as little more than a placeholder period, separating the patriotic idealism of the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary theatre of the late eighteenth century from the bombastic melodrama of the working-class theatre of the 1820s and 30s.[1] This would seem especially true of representations of the ancient world. Sarah Chinn has even gone so far as to describe there as being a 'significant lull' in theatrical engagement with classical material between the 'two specific historical moments' of 'the years just before, during, and after the Revolution' and 'the mid-1820s to early 1830s'.[2] Yet, as was shown in chapter one, the ancient world maintained a significant stage presence during this period. It may not have had the political visibility of the funerary performances of Whitehead's *The Roman Father* (1750), or the later runaway popularity of Bird's *The Gladiator* (1831), but audiences continued to interact with the Classics on stage in novel and intriguing ways. One of the most notable developments identified in chapter one was the rise of what were termed paratheatricals. These skits, pantomimes, dance routines, and acrobatics displays had existed on the peripheries of the traditional theatre during the later eighteenth century, but after the turn of the century they came to occupy it front and centre. These strongmen dressed as Hercules, replicas of Vesuvius, and gladiatorial re-enactments have been largely written off by commentators, both contemporary and modern, as ludicrous sideshows of little literary or academic import. However, they represent a radical revision of the American experience of the

[1] Glenn Hughes writes off the developments of this period as being 'limited to concerts, variety acts, and fireworks', Hughes (1951) 90-1. In his discussion of the period up to 1825, Arthur Quinn identifies James Nelson Barker and John Howard Payne, both of whom were primarily active during the 1820s, as the only dramatic figures of note, Quinn (1951) 136.
[2] Chinn (2017a) 172-3.

ancient world on stage and an important step in the crafting of a uniquely American vision of the Classics.

Chapter one showed a remarkably quick contraction in the popularity of plays representing antiquity that had characterised the Revolutionary and immediately post-Revolutionary periods. Joseph Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy* (1713), William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* (1750), and Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* (1772), all but disappeared from the stage within the space of a few years. In their place, two separate categories of classically-inspired drama emerged. First were the paratheatricals. These were not full plays, but rather brief displays that were performed at the beginning of an evening's performance to get audiences excited, during an intermission period to keep their interest, or at the end of the evening to ensure that they left in a good mood. They are as far from a traditional five-act play as one can imagine. The second category of drama identified by chapter one seems to be a continuation of the dramatic traditions of the previous period. While *The Roman Father* may have shrunk in popularity at the turn of the century, its legacy of a didactic vision of the ancients seems to have lived on in Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander the Great; or, The Rival Queens* (1677). A traditional five-act tragedy written by an esteemed English playwright, *Alexander* used the characters and events of the ancient world as a medium to investigate ideals of personal and civic virtue.

These two dramatic traditions make for strange bedfellows and seem to offer two distinct, even contradictory, approaches to representing the ancient world on stage. This chapter will examine how these two strands engaged with the classical material from which they drew their inspiration, the vision of the ancient world they transmitted to audiences, and how that vision was modified to suit American sensibilities. It will show that, despite seeming incompatible, these two modes of classical engagement had more in common than first seems, and that they formed part of one cohesive dramatic tradition that developed out of the theatre of the Revolution and fed directly into the broader social and political culture of Democratic America.

4.1 The late *Roman Father*

One does not need to look far beyond the walls of the playhouse to understand why plays such as *The Roman Father*, with its panegyric upon the rule of disinterested, paternalistic elites, contracted in popularity after the turn of the century. The election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800 marked the decline of the Federalist model of hierarchical civic participation headed by a virtuous, paternalistic national father figure and the ascendancy of the Democratic-Republican faction's vision of political power. The Jeffersonian vision of government emphasised a more radically egalitarian approach to civic participation and, to quote Lance Banning, 'taught that power was a monster and governing was wrong'.[3] The move from Federalist republicanism to Jeffersonian liberalism was mirrored by the wider emergence of a class of urban labourers as a major economic and demographic force.[4] This new class brought with it what Sarah Chinn has called 'an urban workingmen's culture' that developed during the opening twenty years of the nineteenth century.[5]

These wider economic and demographic changes were felt within the playhouse. Encouraged by the increasing affordability of ticket prices, members of this emerging urban working class patronized the playhouse in ever greater numbers. Elite patrons retained managerial control of the theatres, but found their cultural hegemony increasingly undermined, especially in the rapidly transforming and increasingly prominent New York City.[6] William Dunlap complained how the increasing presence of 'boys, vulgar brawlers, drunkards, rioters, thoughtless and vicious persons of both sexes' were serving to drive 'the wise, the good, even the mere worldlings, who fear for their reputation' away from the theatre.[7] In 1818 one fashionable Boston patron complained how 'scarcely a night of performance

[3] Banning (1978) 273.
[4] These shifts are discussed in Richardson (2006) 263.
[5] Chinn (2017a) 14.
[6] Glenn Hughes calls it 'indisputable' that 'theatrical leadership passed from Philadelphia to New York' during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Hughes (1951) 90. The growing influence of urban working-class patrons over the theatre is discussed in Chinn (2017a) 1-2, 6, 12; Lewis (2007) 4-5; Nathans (2003) 166-7.
[7] Dunlap (1832) 70.

passes, in which the respectable part of the audience is not disturbed in some manner. … Profane and vulgar language is frequently overheard, and by those disposed to direct their attention to the upper part of the house a row is not unfrequently [sic] witnessed'.[8] Describing his travels in early nineteenth-century America, Alexis de Tocqueville remarked how 'the pit often lays down the law for the boxes'.[9]

Understood within this context, the shift in the classical repertoire that was shown in chapter one begins to make sense. If the various proliferations and disappearances of cultural artefacts and genres are, as Moretti contends, the product of the 'pressures of cultural selection' placed on them by the society in which they inhabit, then the decline in popularity of *The Roman Father* in the face of these changes is not only understandable, but expected.[10] A stoic *pater patriae* ('father of his country') who governs in the best interests of his child-like citizens is a difficult sell to a democratic-leaning audience comprised of urban workingmen enjoying the fresh benefits of political enfranchisement. The vision of the ancient world put forward in *The Roman Father, The Grecian Daughter*, and *Cato* simply did not accord with the worldview of this new type of audience. A closer look at what few performances these plays received after the turn of the century reinforces this connection.

The last extant performance of *The Roman Father* in New York was staged by William Dunlap in 1805. The advertisements for this performance placed uncommon emphasis on the ideological 'gravity' of the play, describing how the 'splendid example' of disinterested leadership offered by Horatius would encourage the patriot to 'become more ardent, and the soldier more inspired'.[11] These claims were evidently unsuccessful in drawing sufficient audiences, as the play was never performed in the city again. Dunlap responded to this failure by abandoning such edifying entertainments, and turning instead towards what he termed the 'common' entertainments that attracted the more 'vulgar'

[8] This is reprinted in Monod (2016) 20.
[9] De Tocqueville (1969) 490.
[10] Moretti (2007) 70-2.
[11] New York *Morning Chronicle* (20/11/1805) 3.

elements of society.[12] A month later he had learnt his lesson, and would close the year by resorting to an extravagant depiction of the eruption of Vesuvius in order to attract audiences.[13]

What few performances Addison's *Cato* received during these two decades further reinforces this image of the marginalisation of these more ideologically didactic plays. The play had never dominated popular culture to the extent that many modern academics claim, but after the turn of the century it all but vanished from the professional stage. Chapter one showed the play received only four performances during these two decades. Of these four, only two were staged within professional, public-facing theatres: one in Philadelphia in 1801 and the other in New York in 1810.[14] The other two were each staged by amateurs for the benefit of exclusive learned societies: one for the Boston Fraternal Library Association in 1806 and one for the Albany Literary Society in 1807.[15] The Boston performance was not even of the play in its entirety, but rather only of Cato's closing soliloquy.

This shift in performance context was accompanied by a returned emphasis on the play's pedagogical value that had characterised much of its pre-Revolutionary popularity. The Boston Library Association's 1806 rendition of Cato's soliloquy was, in the words of an invitation to the performance placed in the Boston *Repertory*, staged by the association in order 'to display a specimen of their proficiency in elocution'.[16] The Albany Literary Society's 1807 performance was, likewise, described by an article in the Albany *Guardian* as being hosted in order to allow some of the 'young gentlemen of the city' to showcase the 'talents of the rising generation'.[17] In contrast to the increasing vulgarity of professional audiences, reviews of these amateur performances stressed the respectability and decorum with which those in attendance conducted themselves. The Albany *Guardian* reported of the

[12] Dunlap (1832) 232.
[13] An advertisement placed in the New York *Commercial Advertiser* on Christmas Eve of 1805 bragged of the 'Splendid View' of the mountain that would conclude the evening's entertainments, New York *Commercial Advertiser* (24/12/1805) 2.
[14] These performances are advertised in the Philadelphia *Gazette of the United States* (26/03/1801) 3 and the New York *Evening Post* (18/12/1810) 2 respectively.
[15] These performances are described in the Boston *Repertory* (25/03/1806) 3 and Albany *Guardian* (26/12/1807) 23 respectively.
[16] Boston *Repertory* (25/03/1806) 3.
[17] Albany *Guardian* (26/12/1807) 23.

performance by the Albany Literary Society that 'the greatest order and decorum were observed, and the whole conducted in a becoming manner' as befitted their 'polite and respectable audience'.[18] With *Cato* retreating back into learned society and *The Roman Father*'s popularity contracting it would seem the dramatic developments of the late eighteenth century were reversing. The didactic vision of the ancient world put forward by idealistic managers and patrons during the late eighteenth century, failing to find a willing audience, was withdrawing out of the professional theatre and back into the pedagogic, amateur sphere.

This relationship between the changing theatrical landscape and the broader economic, political, and demographic shifts is further demonstrated when one considers the case study of Philadelphia. In his collection of *Theatrical Ramblings* of the nineteenth century, Charles Durang records a description of the Philadelphia stage as it appeared in 1819. In contrast to other urban centres, he remarks, in Philadelphia: 'The houses were well attended. The audiences were of the most respectable citizens of the town. The orderly conduct of its inhabitants was like the harmony of a well regulated family'.[19] It will be recalled from chapter one that, in Philadelphia, *The Roman Father* and *The Grecian Daughter*, staples of the post-Revolutionary stage, retained their popularity to a far greater than in other cities. In contrast, their decline was the most pronounced in New York, the city at the forefront of broader political, economic, and demographic changes.[20] Given the scale of the data involved, this disparity is difficult to chalk up to coincidence. In Philadelphia, the wider cultural environment had remained relatively consistent. So too did the version of the ancient world presented on stage. In New York, the wider cultural environment had drastically changed. Plays like *The Roman Father*, with their emphasis on self-sacrificing, austere, paternalistic leadership, swiftly disappeared from the stage. The personal ideals, political models, and classical parallels of *The Roman Father* had ceased to accord with those

[18] Albany *Guardian* (23/01/1808) 39.
[19] Durang (1987) 15.
[20] *The Roman Father* accounted for only 2.5% of performances in New York between 1800 and 1819, as was shown in chapter one. This is in contrast to Philadelphia where it accounted for 12.5%. The broader hegemony of the New York theatre during this period is discussed in Hughes (1951) 90.

of the broader American public. As these ideals disappeared from their audience, so too did they disappear from the stage.

4.2 Amazing ancients

The entertainments that grew in popularity to replace post-Revolutionary classical theatre could not have been more different. Chapter one charted the rise of paratheatricals. This term covers any routine or display performed at a theatre that served to entertain its audiences, while not in of itself being a fully-fledged play with a designated script and playwright. In these performances, the ancients amazed, rather than inspired. Rather than admiring the austere dedication of Cato or the self-sacrificing virtue of Horatius, democratic audiences were wowed by spectacular acts of Herculean strength, recreations of the destruction of Pompeii, and displays of gladiatorial combat.[21]

The shift away from high tragedy towards broad spectacle occurred in the context of what learned contemporaries generally considered to be a decline in the quality of the American stage. Compelled by financial necessity and a scarcity of formally-trained actors, theatre managers resorted to spectacles of all varieties to draw in crowds.[22] William Dunlap, who took up management of New York's Park Theatre in 1798, found himself reluctantly at the forefront of this development. Describing himself in the third person, Dunlap bemoaned his lot:

> Instead of having an unembarrassed mind whose entire powers could be directed to that which should be the object of such an institution, he was tempted to seek resources for the supply of the treasury and the fulfillment of his moneyed engagements. Instead of studying to gain the approbation of the wise, pressing necessities turned his thoughts to the common methods of attracting the vulgar.[23]

[21] Examples of such performances can be found in New York *Mercantile Advertiser* (02/06/1800) 2; Alexandria *Times* (15/12/1800) 3; Norfolk *American Beacon* (20/04/1818) 3.
[22] The scarcity of trained actors is discussed in Wood (1855) 66-7.
[23] Dunlap (1832) 232.

Directly tying this decline in dramatic taste to the wider demographic changes of his audience, he cautioned that when 'the wise and good desert the theatre' managers will have no choice but to pander to 'the idle and vicious by such entertainments as suits their ignorance or depravity'.[24] These economic concerns were exacerbated by personnel shortages that limited the capability of theatre troupes to stage traditionally-structured drama. William Wood records how the Philadelphia stage was so starved of capable actors at the start of the century that they were forced to resort to 'producing the greatest possible novelties' in order to 'conceal [their] deficiencies' of personnel.[25]

The decline in dramatic quality was noted by those few 'respectable' patrons who persisted in attending. Writing under the pseudonym of Jonathan Oldstyle, Washington Irving lambasted what he perceived as the decline of the New York stage. He complained of the rowdiness that had taken hold of the theatre and how his most recent visit had been ruined by his overly talkative neighbour who made him unable to follow the performance: 'Had there been any thing of a plot to the play, this might have been a serious inconvenience; but as the piece was entirely innocent of every thing of the kind, it was not of so much importance'. He contrasts this present state of disrepair to 'old times', when 'people went to the theatre for the sake of the play and acting'.[26] The trend away from traditional drama towards paratheatricals that was identified in chapter one was not isolated to material representing the ancient world, it formed part of a broader shift towards spectacle that was gripping American performance culture.

This parallel between representations of the ancient world and wider theatre represents a significant break from previous years. In plays like *The Roman Father* managers had found a way of innocuously communicating political ideals to their fractious and sensitive audiences. Antiquity had offered a unique means of navigating the tumultuous waters of pre-1800 theatre. Through the staging of plays such as *The Roman Father*, post-Revolutionary managers were able to stage material that was

[24] This is discussed in Monod (2016) 19-20.
[25] Wood (1855) 66-7.
[26] The Jonathan Oldstyle letter is reprinted in Dunlap (1832) 303-5.

ideologically appropriate to their audiences without touching on any contemporary imagery that could prove inflammatory. There was nothing exclusive about the amazing ancients of the democratic stage. Instead, the Classics were but one of many bodies of material that might be drawn on in managers' struggles to draw a profit. A performer was just as likely to leap into the mouth of a replica Vesuvius as they were to leap into the mouth of a replica whale.[27] In the realm of the paratheatrical, the only thing that mattered was whether or not they could attract a crowd, and the ancient world was but one of many tools that managers had in their toolbox.

One of the best documented of all these performances is the 'grand heroic pantomime' of *Hercules and Omphale*, which chapter one found to have been performed upwards of ten times between 1800 and 1820. The piece was extensively described in an 1802 advertisement in the *Philadelphia Gazette*. It seems to bear little similarity to its namesake myth. The story of Heracles and Omphale is recounted in a variety of ancient sources including Ovid's *Heroides* and Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. It features a comic inversion of sexual roles, in which Hercules spends a year dressed in women's clothing and performing feminine tasks (such as spinning and weaving) in service to Omphale, who in turn exchanges her ordinary female clothing for Heracles' iconic club and lion-skin cloak.[28] The episode raises challenging questions about attitudes to gender and sexuality in antiquity and has regularly been examined within modern academic circles.[29] By the start of the nineteenth century, the episode had become a popular subject in other cultural mediums. Artists such as John Paul Rubens, François Lemoyne, and Louis-Jean-François Lagrenée represented the episode on canvas, all emphasising the inversion of gender roles and Hercules' sexual subservience.[30]

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[27] In 1818 the New York *Mercantile Advertiser* records a representation of a great storm that culminated in a Harlequin character being 'swallowed by a whale', New York *Mercantile Advertiser* (14/07/1818) 3. This performance is also described in the New York *National Advocate* (15/07/1818) 3; New York *Columbian* (16/07/1818) 3; New York *Mercantile Advertiser* (16/07/1818) 3.

[28] The myth is recounted in Appollodorus *Library* 2.6.2-3; Ovid *Heroides* 9.53-118; Sophocles *Trachiniae* 248-80.

[29] The implications of the episode for understandings of gender in antiquity are discussed in Hicks (1992) 77-84; Welch (2004) 61-90; Wilson-Chevalier (1993) 34-48.

[30] Rubens' 1602 *Hercules and Omphale* shows a domineering, semi-nude Omphale playfully tugging at Hercules' ear while he struggles with a sewing task. Lemoyne's 1724 *Hercules and Omphale* shows Omphale

The *Hercules and Omphale* shown in American theatres bears no similarity to any other representation of the myth. The emasculation element is completely absent. Instead, Omphale, who sits in her palace 'surrounded by virgins', is beset by a variety of princely suitors who 'come in Superb Chariots drawn by horses' in order to demand her hand in marriage. Omphale's curiosity is piqued when Hercules arrives, gives gifts that are 'well received', and takes his leave. Omphale rejects her princely suitors and pursues Hercules. While following Hercules, she is kidnapped and taken into the cave of the three-headed giant, Cacus. Hercules battles and slays Cacus but, while distracted, the Prince of Mycene kidnaps Omphale and takes her away to his fortress. The pantomime culminates in a grand spectacle in which Hercules assaults the walls of Mycene 'with battering rams, Catapults, &c.' and mounts the wall himself by climbing upon a ramp made when his 'soldiers form the tortoise with their shields'. Hercules then tears the gates down with his bare hands, throws the Prince of Mycene into the sea and carries Omphale off in triumph to their wedding. The performance ends with the pair marrying in the temple of Juno while a group of Cupids dance around them.[31]

The sexually domineering Omphale has been replaced by a helpless maiden beset by suitors, the emasculated Hercules is back to his usual form as the muscleman of antiquity, the scheming princes present an unequivocally evil villain to be overcome, and the three-headed Cacus provides an exciting monster with which Hercules can do battle. All the sexual ambiguity of the myth's classical versions has been removed and the story has become one of heroic heroes, villainous villains, and virginal virgins. To add extra excitement the managers incorporated an element from the wider mythology surrounding Hercules in the form of Cacus, the fire-breathing giant who Hercules slew as retribution

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with her arm around Hercules as he works at spinning. Lagrenée's 1781 *Hercules and Omphale* shows Hercules seated before Omphale who leans on his trademark lionskin cloak. These works are discussed in Levey (1993) 58 and Rosenthal (2005) 139-41.

[31] A full description of the performance can be found in an advertisement for the piece published in *Philadelphia Gazette* (22/02/1802) 2. It is further described in advertising material found in Baltimore *Republican; or, Anti-Democrat* (01/12/1802) 3; Philadelphia *Gazette of the United States* (02/03/1802) 3; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (14/09/1802) 3; Philadelphia *Gazette of the United States* (24/02/1802) 3; *Philadelphia Gazette* (27/12/1802) 2; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (28/12/1802) 3; Philadelphia *Gazette of the United States* (28/12/1802) 3; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (22/01/1803) 3; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (24/01/1814) 2.

for terrorising the Aventine, as one further exciting obstacle Hercules must overcome.[32] They even took the liberty of giving Cacus two extra heads to add to his fearsomeness. For all intents and purposes, *Hercules and Omphale* represents a wholly original story. There is no mention of any cross-dressing and Hercules' strength appears unambiguous. With its emphasis on raw excitement, one-dimensional characters, and virginal maidens beset by predacious villains, it is tempting to read *Hercules and Omphale* as an early entry into the genre of melodrama, a style of theatre that would come to define American entertainment by the mid-nineteenth century.[33]

Audiences do not seem to have been particularly troubled by these revisions, and the piece enjoyed several repeat performances. In order to understand why, it is necessary to understand the level of awareness that audiences might be expected to have of the myth. The various classical sources underpinning the Hercules myth continued to form part of the literary and intellectual culture of the young nation's educated elites. Throughout these two decades, copies of ancient writers such as Virgil and Diodorus Siculus were continuously sold in their original Greek and Latin by book importers across the nation, often described as 'rare and valuable'.[34] The ability to translate such texts persisted as a requisite for entrance to institutes of higher learning, and learned journals and periodicals continued to publish extended essays and articles by local literati that discussed their finer points, much as they had done in decades past.[35]

[32] Hercules' slaying of Cacus is discussed in Virgil *Aeneid* 190-279; Livy *History of Rome* 1.7.3-15; Propertius *Elegies* 4.9; Ovid *Fasti* 1.543-86.
[33] The emergence of melodrama is discussed in Grimsted (1968) 208-10.
[34] Examples of such can be found in *Boston Commercial Gazette* (05/09/1816) 4; *Boston Daily Advertiser* (25/12/1816) 3; *Boston Patriot* (28/08/1816) 3; *Boston Patriot* (04/09/1816) 4; New York *Commercial Advertiser* (18/11/1819) 1; Portland *Eastern Argus* (02/02/1809) 4; Boston *New-England Palladium* (27/08/1816) 3; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (17/11/1807) 2; Philadelphia *United States' Gazette* (13/11/1807) 1.
[35] The entrance exam for Bowdoin College in Maine continued to require, amongst other things, that prospective students 'write Latin grammatically' and 'be well acquainted with … the Aeneid of Virgil', Portland *Eastern Argus* (29/08/1820) 1. An example of a literary journal hosting learned discussions of the classical canon can be found in the *Merrimack Magazine and Ladies' Literary Cabinet* (12/04/1806) 138, in which the writer discusses the influence of epics such as Virgil *Aeneid* on Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Yet, outside this continued elite engagement with the classical texts underpinning these myths, a proliferation of translations was broadening the accessibility of these texts to American society at large. Caroline Winterer has identified what she calls a 'vernacular classical tradition' of translations that emerged outside the traditional boundaries of the colleges and other such institutes.[36] Translations of more popular works, such as the *Aeneid*, were sold at increasingly affordable prices by booksellers and printers.[37] Excerpts of these translations were sometimes even re-printed and discussed in popular newspapers and magazines.[38] Articles discussing ancient authors might offer summaries of their contents in plain English or even collate the collected wisdom of various authors into a comprehensive summary of a single subject, as one 1819 author in the New York *Weekly Visitor* did for the twelve labours of Hercules.[39] Even the urban working-class mechanic types that occupied the playhouses in increasing numbers can thus reasonably be expected to possess at least some awareness of the basic events of the myth of Hercules and Omphale.

The character of Cacus, who appears in *Hercules and Omphale* as a three-headed giant, shows how such a vernacular engagement with the Classics served to condense classical myths down to their core, most recognisable elements. Within the classical canon, Cacus is most notably related in Virgil's *Aeneid.* In book VIII, the Arcadian King Evander tells Aeneas how Cacus, the son of Vulcan, was a fire-breathing giant who lived in a cave on the Aventine and stole cattle by leading them to his cave backwards so as to confuse those following their trail. Hercules ultimately brought Cacus to justice and slew him.[40]

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[36] Winterer (2007) 26-31.
[37] In 1808 the 'Literary Intelligence' section of the Boston *Times* announced the importation of a new translation of book thirteen of the *Aeneid*, Boston *Times* (23/04/1808) 80.
[38] Examples of translations of classical texts relating to the Hercules myth being published in public newspapers include the *Boston Mirror* (07/10/1809) 1, which published extended translations and discussions of various of Virgil's works and the Philadelphia *Gazette of the United States* (19/01/1802) 2, which published a translation of Diodorus Siculus' account of the Law of Charondas.
[39] New York *Weekly Visitor and Ladies' Museum* (25/09/1819) 341.
[40] Virgil *Aeneid* 8.184-218.

Looking through references to Cacus in the newspaper record of these two decades, his character is often introduced as a point of comparison for contemporary events. Some of these comparisons deploy the myth in great detail. For example, a discussion of the eighteen-century Scottish poet James Macpherson in an 1817 issue of the New York *Columbian* accused the poet of stealing material from the Irish poetic corpus and disguising his theft by changing the names of characters and scenes, just 'as Cacus drew his stolen cattle backwards to his den to prevent their tracks being seen'.[41] In 1821 the *Washington Gazette*, attacking the monopolisation of key governmental posts by leading Virginians, accused the 'Richmond Club' of 'resembl[ing] the den of … Cacus'. The article, like that which appeared in the 1817 New York *Columbian,* also evoked Cacus' *modus operandi* of leading cattle home backwards, claiming that the 'Virginia Junto' also 'resemble Cacus … in dragging things backwards to baffle pursuit'.[42]

More often than not, though, such details were lost. Cacus and his cave are, for the most part, simply used as points of comparison to illustrate a subject's barbarity. Reporting on the overthrow and trial of Collot D'Herbois, an architect of the Revolutionary Terror in France, a 1799 issue of the Philadelphia *Gazette of the United States* remarked that 'Cacus has been dragged from his cave'.[43] Describing a recent visit to New York, an 1818 article in the *Vermont Intelligencer* joked that his lodgings there were 'about as genteel, convenient and cleanly [sic] as the cave of Cacus'.[44] Noting the popularity of cigars within London society, one letter in the New York *Morning Chronicle* joked that one cannot enter the theatre there without seeing 'every mouth, Cacus-like, emiting [sic] forth clouds of smoke and combustion'.[45] Commenting on local controversies that had been playing out in the newspapers in North-West Vermont, the *Middlebury Mercury* said of those who make anonymous accusations in the newspapers that he should be dragged 'forth like Cacus from the midst of his fire and smoke, to

[41] New York *Columbian* (23/05/1817) 2.
[42] *Washington Gazette* (25/05/1821) 2.
[43] Philadelphia *Gazette of the United States* (08/04/1799) 3.
[44] *Vermont Intelligencer* (23/11/1818) 2.
[45] New York *Morning Chronicle* (23/06/1806) 2.

light and punishment'.[46] A poem published in an 1817 copy of the *Vermont Intelligencer* that ruminated on the nature of courage and virtue included the stanza:

> A bully bold in bar-room broils,
>
> Not Hercules so brave,
>
> Until resisted – then recoils
>
> Like Cacus to his cave.[47]

An 1806 article in the Massachusetts *Norfolk Repository* that listed all the various gods and demigods of the Roman Pantheon with brief descriptions of each gave readers everything that they would have needed to know to navigate such uses of the mythical cattle thief:

> *Cacus*, son of *Vulcan*, and a noted robber, killed by *Hercules*.[48]

Given this wider context, the insertion of Cacus into the story of *Hercules and Omphale* becomes more understandable. Cacus was commonly deployed in the early nineteenth-century American vernacular as a by-word for thievery and barbarism, as an opposite number to the strength and heroism of Hercules. It is thus unsurprising that a manager, looking to add a little more excitement to an already revisionist representation of Hercules' labours, might see in the fire-breathing kleptomaniac giant of Cacus one more villain that his Hercules might best. Pushed forward in time by the weight of his own recognisability, Cacus had become embedded in the wider Hercules mythos. Theatre managers, pulling the character forward in time, inserted Cacus into their own representations of the classical strongman, blending together different aspects of the Hercules mythology in a way that was nonetheless recognisable and accessible to American audiences.

What little evidence survives of other such paratheatricals suggests that the fluid and revisionist approach to the classical canon shown by *Hercules and Omphale* was the rule rather than the

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[46] *Middlebury Mercury* (18/07/1804) 1. The Washington D.C. *Spirit of 'Seventy-Six* (27/02/1810) 2 reprints this section of the letter.
[47] *Vermont Intelligencer* (28/07/1817) 4. This poem was reprinted in *Spooner's Vermont Journal* (11/08/1817) 4.
[48] *Norfolk Repository* (30/09/1806) 376.

exception. An 1818 performance titled *The Exercise of Hercules* featured an Indian performer named Sena Sama juggling a cannonball, throwing it 'in every direction with as much convenience as a child would a marble'. It was accompanied by a display of *East Indian Sports*, in which Sena Sama used some form of blow-gun to shoot birds out of a tree while balancing said tree on his forehead.[49] Excepting the presence of extreme strength, Sena Sama's Herculean act bears no similarity to any episode of the mythology surrounding Hercules.

Compared to the theatre of the late eighteenth century, these paratheatricals offer a starkly different way of representing classical source material on stage. In *The Roman Father*, William Whitehead built on the themes present in Livy's account of an episode from Rome's early history to present audiences with a model of civic virtue. This model was then incorporated into American Federalists' ideal of the virtuous statesman. In contrast, in *Hercules and Omphale* a challenging episode from classical mythology is stripped of almost all elements but the names of its two lead characters and transformed into a grand heroic spectacle featuring grand battles, extravagant sets, and recognisable monsters. Seemingly unbound by convention, these spectacular side shows treat the stories and characters of the ancient world as a series of recognizable brands to revise, remove, and reconstruct as they see fit. Economic and demographic changes of the early nineteenth century had provoked changes in the composition of theatre audiences.[50] The classical world shown on stage had to be rewritten to reflect the tastes and interests of this new, democratic audience. The result of this was a version of the ancient world that was spectacular, changeable, easily marketable, and distinctly American.

[49] Norfolk *American Beacon* (02/05/1818) 2. The performances of Sena Sama are also described in *Alexandria Herald* (02/03/1818) 3; Norfolk *American Beacon* (20/04/1818) 3; *City of Washington Gazette* (24/02/1818) 3; Norfolk *American Beacon* (27/04/1818) 2.
[50] See Chinn (2017b) 14-15.

4.3 Nathaniel Lee, *Alexander the Great, or The Rival Queens* (1677) and the spectacularisation of the ancient world

Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander the Great*, the most performed single play of the period, would seem to do just the opposite to these paratheatricals. Positively antiquated by 1800, the play was over a century old and had been performed on American stages since 1768.[51] It was a traditionally-structured five-act Restoration tragedy, written by a widely respected English playwright, and represented events recorded in widely-familiar classical sources. During the decade and a half after the Revolution, when Roman fathers and Grecian daughters ruled the stage, *Alexander* had enjoyed a reasonably high level of popularity, being the fourth most popular play that represented the Classics. If the *Hercules and Omphale*s and other paratheatricals of the democratic stage were a radical revision of late eighteenth-century theatre's version of the ancient world, it would seem that *Alexander* represents a continuation of it. In discussing *Alexander*, this chapter will first outline its plot and its philosophical similarities to plays such as *The Roman Father* that had previously dominated American stages, then examine the reasons for *Alexander*'s popularity in democratic-era America and its relationship to broader developments in American society and literature, before going on to discuss how the play evolved and was modified within its American context.

Taking Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Histories of Alexander the Great*, and a contemporary French language romantic novel as inspiration, Lee shows audiences the last days of the life of Alexander the Great.[52] Alexander has defeated the Persian King Darius and now rules over a huge, multi-national empire stretching from Macedonia to India. Falling in love with the chaste and pious Statira, the daughter of the conquered Darius, Alexander has left his first wife, the seductive and domineering Roxana, and married Statira. Alexander's dedication to Statira has, however, proven fleeting, and he has recently been seduced once more into Roxana's bed. The play is set in Babylon,

[51] This first performance is recorded in *The Pennsylvania Journal* (29/12/1768).
[52] The French novel in question was titled *Cassandre,* written by Gauthier de Costes, seigneur de la Calprenède and translated into English by Charles Cotterell in 1661. Lee's sources are discussed in more detail in Stroup and Cooke (1954) 213-14; Vernon (1970) xx.

Statira's home. At the play's opening Alexander has left Roxana's bed once more and now travels to Babylon to resume his marriage to Statira. Unbeknownst to him, however, Statira has heard of his infidelity and intends to divorce him. To complicate matters further, Alexander is being pursued to Babylon by Roxana, who intends to seduce him once again and win him back from Statira for good. This love triangle between Alexander and his 'Rival Queens' serves as the play's central conflict. After a series of intrigues, conflicts and conspiracies, Alexander successfully wins back Statira's heart and stages a grand banquet to celebrate. His joy is cut short though, as the vengeful Roxana murders Statira out of jealousy.

This primary conflict is orbited by three further narrative strands. The first is a wholly unrelated love triangle involving Alexander's son Lysimachus, Alexander's 'favourite' Hephestion, and the Persian princess Parisatis, who is Statira's sister. There is no parallel for this love triangle in the ancient texts, instead Lee seems to have taken it almost entirely from the French novel. Lysimachus and Parisatis wish to marry, but Parisatis' hand has already been promised to Hephestion by Alexander as thanks for his military service. Lysimachus warns Alexander that he would sooner rebel against his own father than abandon his love for Parisatis and Alexander has him thrown to a lion as punishment. Lysimachus is able to slay the lion with his bare hands and Alexander is so impressed by this feat that he grants Lysimachus a full pardon, brings Lysimachus to his feast as a guest of honour, and gifts Lysimachus a set of golden armour as a reward for his courage. Alexander overturns his previous ruling concerning Parisatis' marriage to Hephestion and says he will give Parisatis' hand to whomever serves him best in future conflicts.

Besides this secondary love triangle, audiences must also contend with a third narrative concerning the venerable Clytus, Alexander's dutiful and long-serving master of horse. It is here that the presence of the ancient sources is most keenly felt, with Lee lifting the episode from Plutarch and Quintus Curtius Rufus and changing its timing so it occurs on the same day as Alexander's death, rather than

several years before.[53] Clytus has been one of Alexander's most long-standing and steadfast supporters but finds his dedication to Alexander eroded over the course of the play. As Alexander has enjoyed greater and greater military success he has begun to forsake the austere Macedonian values that enabled his greatness in favour of the decadent and luxurious ways of the conquered Persians. Seeing the chaos that Alexander invites into his household through his romantic intransience disillusions Clytus further. At the banquet that Alexander stages to celebrate Statira forgiving him, Clytus is driven to drink and, intoxicated, accuses Alexander of having been emasculated and being made unfit to rule. Alexander responds by angrily slaying Clytus with a javelin, only to instantly regret this rash act and mourn for his friend.

The play's final, and arguably most significant, narrative concerns a conspiracy against Alexander by a group of his generals who have grown dissatisfied with his rule. Led by Cassander, these generals bemoan Alexander's adoption of the manners of the conquered Persians, particularly their habit of worshipping him as a divinity. Those Macedonians who refuse to worship Alexander as a god have been humiliated, assaulted, and in some cases executed by the increasingly irrational King. Cassander's conspirators ultimately poison Alexander's wine at his feast before fleeing the city. Shortly after discovering Statira's body, Alexander succumbs to the poison and slowly dies. The play ends with the now pardoned Lysimachus vowing revenge upon his killers.

The sheer number of narrative strands renders the play a rather convoluted experience, and this lack of narrative clarity has served as the focus for much of what little academic analysis the play has received.[54] Convolution aside, the above summary would seem to place *Alexander* firmly in the dramatic sphere of *The Roman Father*. Both tragedies use the texts of the ancient historians as the inspiration for stories that follow the lives of important people in important places and examine the

[53] The episode is described in Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 13, 50-1; Quintus Curtius Rufus *Histories of Alexander the Great* 8.1.22-52.

[54] Thomas Stroup and Arthur Cooke have commented on the 'swiftness of action' and the 'rapid movement of the play', Stroup and Cooke (1954) 215. William Archer has complained that the play falls apart because Lee fails to provide any causal connection between the play's different sub-plots, Vernon (1970) xxiv.

intersection between the duties of leadership and leaders' personal relationships.[55] This is in sharp contrast to *Hercules and Omphale*, which de-contextualises recognisable classical characters from their associated myths and transports them to an unrelated melodramatic spectacle. The idea that *Alexander* represents a continuation of the late eighteenth-century tradition of didactic dramatisations of antiquity is supported when one examines the play's ideas concerning ideal modes of government, the gendering of political participation, and the necessity of disinterested leadership.

Despite its monarchic subject matter, *Alexander* was perfectly compatible with the republican ideology of eighteenth-century America. Lee's plays had long caused controversy in England through their overt critiques of Toryism and monarchic absolutism. His *Lucius Junius Brutus* (1680) was even banned from production in England on account of its explicit criticism of monarchy and praise of republican government.[56] *Alexander* was no different. It shows the consequences of an entire state being dependent upon the whims of a single man. Alexander is shown to be adored by his obsequious subjects, who proclaim him the son of Jupiter and 'kiss the earth with adoration' of him (act four, scene two).[57] Alexander's ego is so inflated by such flattery that he comes to believe it himself, regularly describing himself as god-like.[58] The venerable Clytus comments on the danger of allowing one man such unchecked power, warning that 'When Gods grow hot, where is the difference / 'Twixt them and Devils?' (act four, scene two).[59] Clytus' warning is fully vindicated throughout the play as Alexander's unchecked power proves dangerous to both himself and others.

The danger of such unchecked power being invested in one man is ultimately felt by Clytus himself, who is slain by Alexander after Clytus criticises his romantic intransience and slavish devotion to

[55] In the case of *The Roman Father* Livy provides the inspiration for a story following a respected Roman patriarch who finds his affection for his family in conflict with his duty to his city. In the case of *Alexander* Plutarch and Quintus Curtius Rufus provide the inspiration for a story following the leader of a great empire who finds his court thrown into disarray by his changeable romantic affections.
[56] These aspects of Lee's life and literature are discussed in Backscheider (1993) 106; Stroup and Cooke (1954) 5, 14; Vernon (1970) xix-xx.
[57] Lee (1677) 48.
[58] When reminiscing upon his defeat of Darius at the battle of Granicus, Alexander recalls how he himself 'appear'd the leading God' in the charge that routed Darius (act two, scene one), Ibid. 18.
[59] Ibid. 47.

Persian fashions. Alexander's warning after killing Clytus leaves no doubt as to the danger of allowing such power to be given to a single man: 'let bold subjects learn by thy sad Fate, / To tempt the patience of a man above 'em' (act four, scene two).[60] Besides taking Clytus' life, Alexander's absolute power also robs his subjects of their individual agency. Lysimachus and Hephestion are powerless to do anything other than beg Alexander to 'have but a moments [sic] patience' when he takes a weapon to kill Clytus (act four, scene two).[61] When Clytus is dead and Alexander regretful, all they can do is attempt to falsely reassure him of the righteousness of the murder (act four, scene two), suggesting that when men hear of how Clytus criticised Alexander the killing would seem justified.[62] When listing their grievances against Alexander, Cassander's conspirators similarly recall with disgust how they have been unable to prevent Alexander' brutalities, comparing themselves to the Trojans watching Achilles defile Hector's body from their walls (act one, scene one).[63] By serving under an absolute monarch they have been robbed of their capacity to function as independent actors.

Late eighteenth-century audiences had been well aware of the relevance of Lee's critique of absolute monarchy to their own situation. A 1797 review of a performance at Boston's Haymarket Theatre explicitly praised this quality of the play, describing it as an 'admirable satire on monarchy, and therefore well calculated for representation in a Republican government'.[64] Lee's critique of monarchy was originally written in response to the unique historical moment of the Restoration of Charles II. This message had found a new pertinence in a nation that had just declared independence from one of his successors.

The play further proved compatible with wider American political and social philosophy concerning the importance of disinterested leadership and the gendered separation of public and domestic spheres. The play's opening scene emphatically introduces this theme as soon as the curtain rises. The

[60] Ibid. 51.
[61] Ibid. 50.
[62] Ibid. 51-2.
[63] Ibid. 7-8.
[64] Boston *Polar Star* (19/01/1797) 3.

first scene the audience see is the duel between Lysimachus and Hephestion over the hand of Parisatis. Clytus breaks up their fight, rebukes them for allowing romance to interfere with duty, and accuses them of being 'unmann'd by their love' (act one, scene one). He proceeds to explicitly identify the masculine sphere of warfare as distinct from the feminine sphere of romance, instructing that the 'whining, smiling, coz'ning Sex [ought] Weigh not one thought of any Man of War' (act one, scene one).[65]

The emasculating power of love is personified by Roxana, Alexander's jilted first wife, who serves as an archetypal *femme fatal*. Reflecting on her upbringing, Roxana remembers how she and her 'she-companions' learned the 'little arts / Of coining looks, laying snares for Lovers' so that they might 'Master men' (act three, scene one).[66] Alexander has been firmly compromised by Roxana's seductions. Remembering being seduced by Roxana, he recalls how 'that subtle Creature in my Riot, / My reason gone, seduc'd me to her Bed' and compares her to the witch Circe (act two, scene one).[67] The theme of Alexander's emasculation by Roxana comes to a head in the banquet scene, in which Clytus berates him and compares him to his father, claiming '*Philip* fought men, but *Alexander* women', the statement that earns his death (act four, scene one).[68]

In this, *Alexander* is consistent with the broader gendering of masculine and feminine spheres that developed during the Enlightenment and were discussed in chapter three. This dichotomy between public and domestic spheres is found in the contrast between private interest and civic responsibility that characterised late eighteenth-century representations of the Classics. The fact that this theme is also present in *Alexander* further suggests that the play's popularity during the early nineteenth century represents a continuation of post-Revolutionary didactic approach to representing the ancients found in plays such as *The Roman Father*.

[65] Lee (1677) 2.
[66] Ibid. 27.
[67] Ibid. 23.
[68] Ibid. 48-9.

One of the consequences of Alexander's emasculation is the removal of his masculine sense of reason. Incapable of emotional self-management, he acts almost solely at the behest of his feelings. This causes him to be extremely inconstant and earns him the epithet of 'faithless Alexander'.[69] This failing serves as his undoing. The titular conflict of the play, the rivalry of Roxana and Statira, derives from his inability to control his romantic attractions. He first marries Roxana, then falls in love with Statira and marries her, forsaking Roxana. He is then, once more, seduced by Roxana, only to decide, once again, to forsake her and return to Statira. The chaos depicted in *Alexander* culminating in Alexander's death derives from his fickleness and inability to control his romantic attractions.

This fickleness is not restricted to his love life. In all aspects of his life, Alexander is shown as incapable of rational, consistent thought and instead is wholly motivated by his fleeting passions. Driven to anger he slays Clytus, only to instantly regret the death of his dear friend (act four, scene two). When he enacts Statira's dying wish and pardons Roxana he does so only with the warning to 'Fly with thy pardon, lest I call it back' (act five, scene one).[70] Alexander's changeability is most pronounced in his interactions with his lovesick son Lysimachus. Upon Alexander's arrival in Babylon, Lysimachus petitions his father to reconsider his decision to grant Parisatis' hand to Hephestion, warning that he would sooner disobey orders than abandon his love for Parisatis. Alexander initially threatens Lysimachus with 'Bolts of Fury' but is persuaded to let his son's disobedience slide (act two, scene one).[71] He soon changes this decision though. When Alexander learns of Statira's plans to divorce him he is utterly distraught and Lysimachus, seeing how his father 'feels the Torments, the sharpest pangs of Love', supposes Alexander may be more sympathetic to his own plight (act two, scene one).[72] He is, however, fatally wrong. Alexander has been rendered such an emotional wreck by the news that he responds rashly to Lysimachus' request and orders him to be thrown to a lion, much to the horror

[69] Lamenting Alexander's infidelity, Statira refers to him as her 'dear precious faithless Alexander' (act one, scene one), Lee (1677) 11. When Roxana and Statira confront each other Statira, initially unwilling to contest Alexander's heart, tells Roxana to 'Go seize my faithless Alexander's hand' (act three, scene one), Ibid. 30.
[70] Ibid. 59.
[71] Ibid. 21.
[72] Ibid. 24.

of his wider court. Even when Alexander repeals Lysimachus' death sentence, he does not do so because of calm reflection upon the cruelty and injustice of his sentence, he does so because he cannot resist the grief of Parisatis. When she tearfully begs Alexander to repeal the sentence, he bemoans how 'Her watry [sic] eyes assault my very Soul, / They shake my best resolve' (act four, scene one).[73] At no point does Alexander choose a course of action based on reason, justice, or duty, he executes and pardons, loves and loathes, rejoices and reprimands based solely on whether he is moved to anger or grief.

No-one is more aware of his emotional unsuitability for leadership than Alexander himself. Incapable of managing the inner turmoil that comes with ruling, he frequently bemoans his lot, dreaming of one day eschewing the burden of leadership and living a life free of responsibility. When faced with managing the twin demands of managing both his love life and his empire he laments 'Why was I born a Prince, Proclaim'd a God?' and claims that:

> Alex: By all the Gods, I will to the wilds remove,
> Stretch'd like a *Sylvan* God on Grass lye down,
> And quite forget that e're I wore a Crown (act three, scene one)[74]

Alexander's inconstancy and inability to manage his passions make him unsuited for both love and leadership. Symbolically 'unmann'd' by his seduction at the hands of Roxana, Alexander has become a slave to his passions. Incapable of rational thought he slavishly pursues eastern fashions, angrily assaults and humiliates his sceptical generals, rashly sentences his son to death, and drunkenly slays Clytus. Alexander's consistent weakness makes it hard to take seriously Lysimachus' closing vow over Alexander's body to 'revenge the greatest, best of Kings' (act five, scene one). The Alexander the audience has seen has been anything but.[75]

[73] Ibid. 38.
[74] Ibid. 25-6.
[75] Ibid. 64.

In this sense *Alexander* is thematically consistent with plays such as *The Roman Father*, which similarly sought to warn against the dangers of interested leadership. This did not go over the heads of late eighteenth century audiences. The same review that celebrated the play's critique of monarchy also praised the way in which Alexander's actor 'did ample justice to the *hair brain'd flights*, the military *furor*, and the Olympian pomp of the Macedonian madman. He looked the Hero, and he spoke the Tyrant; sometimes capricious, sometimes generous, sometimes terrible, always extravagant'. This comes in contrast to 'the blunt and patriotic sentiments of worthy Clytus'.[76] It seems that in both themes and ideology, *Alexander* was a play very much in the style of *The Roman Father, The Grecian Daughter,* and *Cato*. Reviews from the late eighteenth century show that audiences actively engaged with *Alexander*'s messages concerning proper modes of governance and civic participation. In the late eighteenth century *Alexander* had certainly used the ancient world as a medium through which to preach the civic ideals of the Enlightenment in the same way as Whitehead's *The Roman Father* and Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter*. The question remains, what happened at the turn of the century to occasion its sudden rise in popularity?

The similarities with late eighteenth-century theatre make *Alexander*'s early nineteenth-century popularity even more unusual. Despite its ideological compatibility with the plays of Murphy and Whitehead, *Alexander* did not, like *The Roman Father* and *The Grecian Daughter*, contract in popularity after the turn of the century. Instead, Lee's text possessed a variety of unique features that differentiated it from its former contemporaries. His characteristic literary style, choice of setting, and representation of the dangers of luxury all tapped into concerns specific to post-1800 audiences and enabled it to flourish in Democratic America.

The move towards spectacle was not the only development that characterised early nineteenth-century entertainment culture. In *The Soul of Pleasure: Sentiment and Sensation in Nineteenth-Century Mass Entertainment* (2016), David Monod demonstrated the emergence of increasingly

[76] Massachusetts *Polar Star* (19/01/1797) 3.

sentimental narratives in American mass-entertainment during the early nineteenth century. He has shown how attention shifted away from representations of the clash of different ethical positions, with characters serving as abstractions of those ethical positions, and towards exploring 'the inner turmoil, ideas, or emotions of the characters'.[77]

While *Alexander* cannot truly be categorized as a sentimental tragedy, as the genre did not fully exist at its time of writing, it certainly exhibited some of its qualities. Unlike the relatively stately, even stilted, dialogue of Whitehead and Murphy, Lee was praised by his contemporaries for the intense passion he was able to infuse into his literature. Joseph Addison described Lee's verse as possessing 'infinite fire'.[78] Lee's penchant for the passionate is felt keenly in his *Alexander*. John Dryden described the play's language as 'tempestuous and blustering; heaven and earth were coming together at every word'.[79] Lee uses this skill for tempestuous language to enhance his portrayal of Alexander as being a slave to his passions. When Alexander learns of Statira's decision to take him back he bursts into a lengthy speech exclaiming his uncontrollable joy:

> Alex: O the killing joy!
>
> O extasie! My heart will burst my breast,
>
> To leap into thy bosom (act three, scene one)[80]

Unlike Addison's Cato, who unflinchingly (some would say inhumanly) adheres to the ethical position he represents, Lee's Alexander is wracked by inner turmoil and shares his emotional conflicts with the audiences. This congruency between the intense emotionality of Lee's *Alexander* and the broader taste for literary sentimentalism of the early nineteenth century goes some way to explaining the

[77] Monod (2016) 18.
[78] Stroup and Cooke (1954) 4. Lee was ultimately deemed insane and committed to Bedlam Hospital, Paul Vernon has suggested that Lee's own madness may have contributed to the 'intense passion' he was able to bring to his characters, Vernon (1970) xviii.
[79] Vernon (1970) xxv.
[80] Lee (1677) 36.

sudden growth in popularity that chapter one identified the play as experiencing within its American context.[81]

Alexander was also uniquely relevant to America's wider diplomatic/political situation in the early nineteenth century. By 1820 the original thirteen colonies that comprised the United States had drastically changed in size and power. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 nearly doubled the size of the young nation and the moderate military success of the war of 1812 reassured its citizens of their military capability. As Sarah Chinn says, 'the United States was beginning to resemble the Roman Empire more than the early Roman republic'.[82] The nation's leaders were aware of their increasingly imperial tendencies, and feared the consequences. In 1819 John Adams highlighted his fears for the future of the young nation when he asked of Thomas Jefferson: 'Will you tell me how to prevent riches from producing luxury? Will you tell me how to prevent luxury from producing effeminacy, intoxication, extravagance, vice, and folly?'[83]

Alexander, by presenting a once great empire that has been corrupted by vice and effeminacy, taps into these fears in a way that the more optimistic *The Roman Father* does not. Lee regularly reminds us that the emasculated, irrational Alexander presented in the play was not always so. The feminine Alexander that audiences see in the play is regularly contrasted to his former, masculine self. In the opening scene, Clytus, remarking on the present turmoil in Alexander's house, recalls his King's former glories and bemoans how he has now been brought low by love:

> Clyt: Not so he lov'd when he at *Issus* fought;
>
> And join'd in mighty Duel great *Darius*
>
> …

[81] It also happens to have been perfectly timed to reflect changing acting styles in America. Gary Richardson has described how the actors that came to America from 1810 onwards were inclined towards a more romantic acting style than had come before them. *Alexander*'s emphasis on emotional turmoil and suffering will have been perfectly suited to the talents of this new wave of actors. Richardson (2006) 254-5.
[82] Chinn (2017a) 182.
[83] This episode is recounted in Malamud (2009) 18.

> 'Twas not the shaft of Love that did the feat,
>
> *Cupid* had nothing there to do, but now
>
> Two Wives he takes (act one, scene one)[84]

The cause of this transition from glorious conqueror to embattled adulterer is clearly identified: his initial seduction by Roxana that led to him first marrying her in the first place. Roxana recalls the 'Chastity, and God-like temper' (act three, scene one) with which Alexander had conducted himself when they first met, fully justifying his appellation 'the Great'.[85] When he succumbed to Roxana's charms he became, in Roxana's words, 'Bow'd to my bosom, and my Captive there' (act four, scene one) and, robbed of his masculine reason, was rendered a slave to his passions.[86] When Clytus witnesses Alexander's emotional turmoil after learning of Statira's divorce and subsequent unreasonable cruelty in sentencing Lysimachus to death, he remarks on the chaos engulfing the court that 'This comes of Love, and Women, 'tis all madness' (act two, scene one).[87]

Rendered unreasonable by his passions, Alexander has been made vulnerable to other corruptions that have accompanied his success, in particular the luxuries of the east. The idea of the east, in particular Persia, as being decadent and corrupted by luxury is a consistent theme in the historiography of Alexander and wider classical literature.[88] This is fully reflected in Lee's plays. Much to the chagrin of his Macedonian soldiers, Alexander has embraced the cultures and traditions of the conquered Persians: He wears Persian robes, hosts Persian banquets, and adopts the Persian style of having subjects bow in reverence to him as if he were divine.[89] Alexander's enjoyment of eastern luxuries is contrasted to the harsh martial sphere he once occupied, again represented by Clytus.

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[84] Lee (1677) 3.
[85] Ibid. 27.
[86] Ibid. 42.
[87] Ibid. 25.
[88] As Dawn Gilley says in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Alexander the Great* (2018), within the classical canon 'Alexander became the perfect example of how the East can corrupt', Gilley (2018) 307.
[89] Polypercon recalls with disgust seeing Alexander's subjects arriving to his court in 'Persian Robes' before giving 'sacred reverence' to their King (act one, scene one), Lee (1677) 8. Clytus complains of how Alexander 'loves the *Persian* mode' (act two, scene one), Ibid. 16. At Alexander's banquet Clytus further complains of Alexander's obsessions with the 'fashions of the East' (act four, scene one), Ibid. 37.

When Alexander introduces his troupe of Indian dancers at his banquet, Clytus declaims it as 'Musick for Boys', saying to instead 'Give [him] the crys of Matrons in sack'd Towns' (act four, scene one).[90] When Alexander arrives in Babylon, Clytus alone refuses to bow in worship of him.[91] When Clytus is offered luxurious Persian robes at Alexander's banquet he refuses to abandon the 'sacred … Customs' of his country, saying he would 'rot in *Macedonian* rags, / Rather than shine in fashions of the East' (act four, scene one).[92] When Alexander kills Clytus the last remnant of the qualities that made him great is killed and doom soon follows.

Alexander's apparent preference for Persian over Macedonian styles is one of the prime motivators of the conspiracy against him. In the first act Cassander and his conspirators meet to discuss their grievances against Alexander and denounce the 'fat eastern slave[s]' that 'lick his feet' (act one, scene one).[93] Their dissatisfaction with Alexander has been further exacerbated by the cruelty and anger Alexander has shown them when they critiqued his adoption of Persian styles. Cassander and Polypercon each recall incidents in which Alexander has violently assaulted them when they laughed at the Persians worshipping him as if he were a god.[94] Alexander's weakness has not only caused his romantic downfall, culminating in the death of Statira, but also his political downfall, culminating in his own death.

In contrast to the most popular plays of the late eighteenth century, *Alexander* offered a notably more pessimistic representation of the same ideals. In Whitehead's *The Roman Father* and Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter*, which were discussed in chapter three, audiences had been presented with positive models of civic participation and paternal/maternal virtue to emulate:

[90] Ibid. 47-8.
[91] Lee's stage directions for the scene read 'Enter Alexander, all kneel but Clytus' (act two, scene one), Ibid. 16.
[92] Ibid. 37.
[93] Ibid. 7.
[94] Cassander recalls how when he 'mock'd the *Persians* that ador'd' Alexander, Alexander 'strook [him] on the Face, and by the Hair/ He swung me to his Guards to be chastis'd' (act one, scene one), Ibid. 6. Polypercon describes how, when he 'laugh'd aloud' at seeing Alexander's subjects bow in worship of him, 'the King leapt up / And spurn'd me to the Earth' (act one, scene one), Ibid. 8.

Whitehead's play had shown them two men in the public sphere, Horatius and his son Publius, who set aside their personal desires and enact their civic duty. Horatia, being a woman and thus suited to domesticity, is unable to control her personal affections when placed in the public sphere and so, grief-stricken, curses the name of Rome. This tests Horatius and Publius, who both have great affection for her, but realise that the law requires enemies of Rome be killed. Setting aside personal affection, Publius kills Horatia and Horatius defends the justice of this action in court. They are contrasted to Valerius, another Roman who was secretly in love with Horatia and has allowed love to overcome his reason, who incites a mob and unsuccessfully attempts to extract emotional retribution on Horatia's killer. By refusing to allow themselves to be emotionally compromised, Horatius retained his masculinity and was able to lead Rome on the correct course.

Murphy's play had featured a similarly positive example but from the female perspective. With her father overthrown and imprisoned by the tyrant Dionysius, Euphrasia risked her safety to perform her civic duty. Her duty did not consist of overthrowing Dionysius herself for the good of Syracuse, but rather supporting and sustaining her father so that he might do the actual overthrowing, even at one point going so far as to breastfeed him when he is starving in order to nurse him back to health. By adhering to her domestic role, even in troubled times, Euphrasia is able to support her father as he accomplishes his own civic duty and overthrows Dionysius.

In Lee's play these virtues have already failed. Alexander has allowed public and domestic spheres to blend and so has invited ruination upon his virtue and broader empire. Cowed by Roxana's seduction, he has been robbed of all reason and acts solely at the behest of his whims. Love's corruption does not end at Alexander, Lysimachus and Hephestion have also allowed their love of Parisatis to interfere with their duty to Alexander. The only holdouts of masculine virtue shown in the play is Clytus. Even he eventually succumbs to disillusionment and drink, incurring his own death through his insults of Alexander. Ultimately Alexander himself is slain at the hands of the formerly loyal generals that he had wronged in his inconstancy and corruption.

Whitehead and Murphy show audiences models to which they can aspire and reassure them of the positive outcomes of successfully emulating them. Lee shows how a failure to live up these virtues can occasion a complete civic breakdown. It presents a more pessimistic interpretation of the themes seen in the plays of the late eighteenth century. This is more relevant to an America increasingly unsure about its path in the world. Some performances seem to have, perhaps inadvertently, courted a comparison between the state of Alexander's empire and their own situation. William Wood records a performance from the start of the century in which American soldiers stood in for Macedonian troops.[95] *The Roman Father* had shown a hopeful nation examples that it might live up to, *Alexander* presented an anxious nation with a warning of things to come.

4.4 Alexandrian extravagance

Based on this it would seem that *Alexander* and the spectacular paratheatricals with which it shared the stage formed two distinct dramatic traditions. Spectators to paratheatricals saw an optimistic, unworried version of the ancient world in which strapping heroes with recognisable names defeated unabashedly evil villains. Audiences to *Alexander* saw in the Classics a dire warning, a fallen world in which the ideals of the Enlightenment had failed, leaders had been corrupted, and their state brought low. And yet, despite seeming diametrically opposed to each other, a closer look at how *Alexander* was performed to audiences in the early nineteenth century suggests that, by putting their own unique stamp on the play, American managers made these two traditions into unlikely bedfellows.

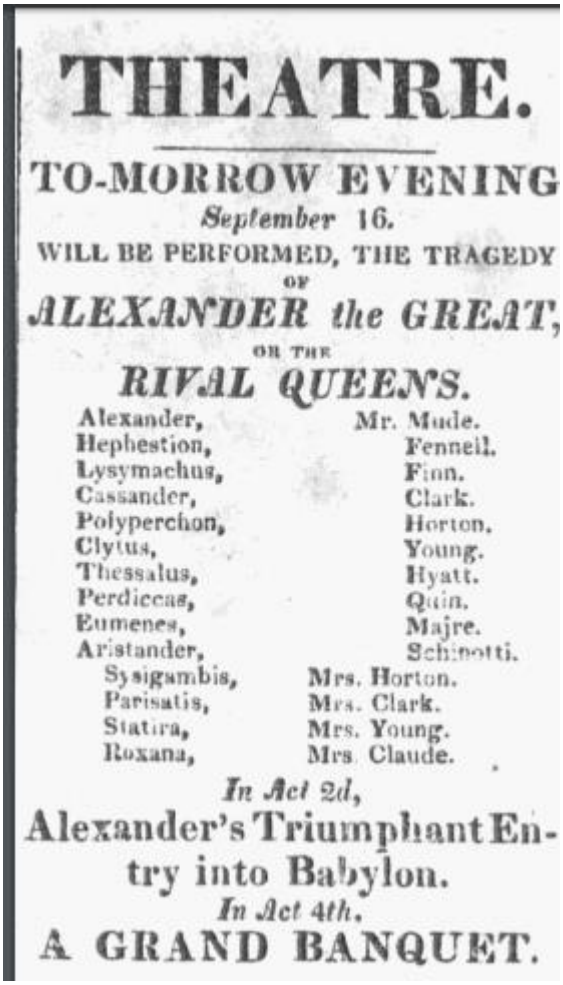
Lee's original script, written in 1677, already included various opportunities to incorporate spectacular elements and Lee himself has been described by critics as a 'master of spectacular stage effects'.[96] In the various editions of the play that were produced over the course of its life, this element of the script would be the one most developed. Most significantly perhaps, in 1795 the British actor J.P. Kemble expanded Alexander's entry into Babylon in the second act into a grand triumphal procession that

[95] Wood (1855) 79-80.
[96] Alexander's banquet in the fourth act is described by Lee as including 'an Entertainment of Indian singers and dancers', 47. Lee's mastery of stage effects is discussed in Stroup and Cooke (1954) 2.

made use of 'Amazons, elephants, cars, bridges, [and] battles'.[97] For all its critiques of monarchic extravagance, by the start of the nineteenth *Alexander* was incorporating its fair share of the spectacular.

The triumphal procession developed by Kemble became one of the key features of American performances of *Alexander* during the early nineteenth century. Advertising materials for performances of the play frequently highlight the scene of Alexander's entrance into Babylon in the second act. Descriptions of the legions of soldiers, slaves, booty, and live exotic animals that would take part in Alexander's procession take up much of the advertising space for performances. An 1803 performance in Boston's Federal Street theatre dedicated well over half their advertising space to describing the spectacle. It bragged of groups of soldiers bearing banners proclaiming Alexander the 'Conqueror of Persia', a live elephant bearing a 'Castle' (by which they presumably mean some form of fortified howdah), a second live elephant bearing some of Alexander's spoils, a group of Amazons, and Alexander in a 'Magnificent Car, / Drawn by Slaves', all of which passed through 'A Grand Triumphal Arch'.[98] The advert below, placed in the Norfolk *American Beacon* in September of 1818, demonstrates the emphasis placed on the spectacular elements of such performances, with descriptions of the 'Triumphal entry' during the second act and 'Grand Banquet' of the fourth act being printed in the same size font as the play's title:

[97] Vernon (1970) xv-xvi.
[98] Boston *Republican Gazetteer* (19/02/1803) 3.



THEATRE.

TO-MORROW EVENING
September 16.
WILL BE PERFORMED, THE TRAGEDY
OF
ALEXANDER the GREAT,
OR THE
RIVAL QUEENS.

Alexander,	Mr. Mude.
Hephestion,	Fennell.
Lysymachus,	Finn.
Cassander,	Clark.
Polyperchon,	Horton.
Clytus,	Young.
Thessalus,	Hyatt.
Perdiccas,	Quin.
Eumenes,	Majre.
Aristander,	Schinotti.
Sysigambis,	Mrs. Horton.
Parisatis,	Mrs. Clark.
Statira,	Mrs. Young.
Roxana,	Mrs. Claude.

In Act 2d,
Alexander's Triumphant Entry into Babylon.
In Act 4th,
A GRAND BANQUET.

Figure 4.1 – Newspaper advertisement, Norfolk *American Beacon* (15/09/1818) 3.

Over the course of these two decades Alexander's procession would also play host to 'Living Camels, Just arrived from the coast of Africa', displays of horsemanship, and a variety of triumphal musical pieces.[99] The inclusion of exotic animals and equestrian displays into the procession suggests *Alexander* was embracing spectacle in a manner that was similar to the paratheatrical performances and that anticipates the circuses that were beginning to spread across the country.[100]

[99] New York *Evening Post* (08/05/1802) 2; New York *Columbian* (28/08/1812) 2. An 1820 performance in Salem, Massachusetts accompanied Alexander's entry into Babylon with a chorus of 'See the Conquering Hero Comes', *Essex Register* (19/07/1820) 3. Other examples of advertising materials highlighting the spectacular procession in the second act include Charleston *City Gazette* (19/04/1819) 3; Norfolk *American Beacon* (15/09/1818) 3; Washington *Daily National Intelligencer* (23/07/1814) 3; *Providence Gazette* (27/08/1803) 3; *Boston Commercial Gazette* (23/12/1805) 3.

[100] Robert Lewis' *From Travelling Show to Vaudeville* (2007) examines the role of foreign animals in American entertainment. He has identified the early nineteenth century as a period of transition between the travelling menageries of the eighteenth century, which were seen as 'educational and edifying', and the circuses of the 1830s, which were adjudged 'frivolous dissipation', Lewis (2007) 108.

Alexander's entry into Babylon was not the only scene that proved susceptible to significant embellishment. Alexander's banquet during the fourth act is described by Lee as including 'an Entertainment of Indian singers and dancers' (act four, scene one).[101] This scene provided a useful opportunity for musical interlude, which were usually relegated to paratheatrical side-shows during intermissions, to be incorporated into the drama. An 1802 performance in New York boasted that a visiting singer from Philadelphia would perform his 'very celebrated grand Bravura song, called, *Love and War*'.[102] Advertisements for an 1814 performance in Washington D.C. announced that a Miss Abercrombie would perform her 'Persian Dance' during the scene.[103] An 1801 Maryland performance incorporated an excerpt from the opera of *Artaxerxes* into the scene.[104] The types of paratheatrical and spectacular performances that normally proved incompatible with regular drama, and so were relegated to being performed during the interlude, found ample opportunity for inclusion in *Alexander*.[105]

Apparently unsatisfied with the capacity for spectacular displays within Lee's script, managers turned to the wider historical canon surrounding Alexander for further inspiration. Performances in New York and Baltimore were preceded by a 'grand heroic spectacle' titled *The Siege of Oxydrace*, which dramatized Alexander's earlier battle with Prince Porus of India. *Siege* featured a mock battle in which Alexander's army drew up before the walls of Oxydrace, formed a tortoise with their shields and assaulted the city's walls with ladders and battering rams. Alexander's heroism was unambiguous, as was the villainy of Porus, who is described as being contemptuous in his defiance. The display culminated in Alexander personally mounting the walls and defeating Porus in single combat.[106]

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[101] Lee (1677) 47.
[102] *New-York Gazette* (10/05/1802) 3.
[103] Washington D.C. *Daily National Intelligencer* (23/07/1814) 3.
[104] Baltimore *Federal Gazette* (08/06/1801) 3.
[105] Further examples of the banquet as a piece of spectacle can be found in Baltimore F*ederal Gazette* (08/06/1801) 3; New York *Evening Post* (08/05/1802) 2; *New-York Gazette* (10/05/1802) 3; New York *American Citizen* (03/01/1803) 3; Boston *Republican Gazetteer* (19/02/1803) 3; *Boston Commercial Gazette* (16/12/1805) 3; Washington D.C. *Daily National Intelligencer* (23/07/1814) 3; Norfolk *American Beacon* (15/09/1818) 3; Charleston *City Gazette* (21/04/1817) 3; *Essex Register* (19/07/1820) 3.
[106] Descriptions of *The Siege of Oxydrace* can be found in Maryland *Federal Gazette* (08/06/1801) 3; New York *Evening Post* (08/05/1802) 2.

American managers were drawing on the wider historical canon surrounding Alexander in order to modify the play to better suit the needs and tastes of their audiences.

The *Siege of Oxydrace* essentially amounts to a full-fledged paratheatrical side-show in the style of *Hercules and Omphale* that has been attached to a more traditionally-structured play. The narrative thrusts of *Siege* and *Hercules* are almost identical. In both cases a larger-than-life martial figure arrives at a fortress with his army, leads his army in various manoeuvrings (including, in both cases, a Tortoise shield formation, battering rams, and siege ladders), and finally defeats his enemy in single combat on the fortress' battlements. The clashing moral abstractions of late eighteenth century drama, in which personifications of different ideologies clash to demonstrate the superiority of one particularly ideology, are long gone. Instead, an unambiguously heroic protagonist assaults an unambiguously villainous antagonist who cowers behind his walls. If *Hercules and Omphale* offers an infant example of melodrama in theatre, *The Siege of Oxydrace* represents its incorporation into traditional drama. The genre that would define nineteenth-century entertainment is, through the medium of *Alexander*, moving out of the dramatic fringes and onto the main stage.

Alongside its incorporation of spectacular paratheatricals into performances, *Alexander* even began to adopt a similarly flexible approach to how faithfully its representation of the classical world would be. David Grimsted records a review of *Alexander* from 1811 that complains of how little care was being paid to ensuring the accuracy of the costumes, with Macedonians appearing in costumes that more resembled those of the Western Mediterranean.[107] This is highly reminiscent of the way in which *Hercules and Omphale*, by fluidly inserting the character of Cacus into a wholly separate section of the Hercules mythology, drew on a vernacular corpus of recognisable characters. As with *Hercules and Omphale*, it was less important that *Alexander* be an accurate representation of the ancient world than that it be an entertaining one. Despite its grounding in classical sources, when faced with the spectacle-hungry audiences of Democratic America, *Alexander* was following in the footsteps of the

[107] Grimsted (1968) 83.

paratheatrical and adopting an increasingly laissez-faire approach to its representation of the ancient world.

In *Alexander*, audiences seemed to be able to have their cake and eat it too. They could watch a traditionally structured play with a timely and pertinent message about civic responsibility and personal corruption, while simultaneously revelling in the thrill of a great battle, the excitement of an equestrian display, the wonder of seeing exotic animals for the first time, and the joy of a song and dance routine.

It is not merely the case that elements of the spectacular began to intrude upon *Alexander*. Just as *Alexander* could play host to the types of spectacle that one would ordinarily expect to find in a paratheatrical sideshow, such paratheatricals could find aspects of traditional drama intruding upon them through the medium of *Alexander*. A few years after its foundation in 1809, New York's Olympic Circus began to offer short extracts of traditional drama alongside the usual equestrian, gymnastic, and dance performances that made up the standard circus repertory. One of the first examples of this blended entertainment was an 1812 performance of a modified version of *Alexander*, sandwiched between the usual dance routines and equestrian displays.[108] The banquet scene from the fourth act seems to have been particularly easy to offer as a standalone entertainment, with an 1803 New York performance offering the piece as an interlude between performances of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1605) and John Fawcett's *Obi, or Three Finger'd Jack* (1800).[109]

These two seemingly distinct traditions became so entwined that they even began to share the same wardrobe. A review of an 1802 performance of *Hercules and Omphale* in Philadelphia mentions that the pantomime had begun to share stage effects and decorations with *Alexander*. It states that 'the decorations so liberally bestowed upon the tragedy of Alexander the Great are interwoven with much scenery and magnificent spectacle', of which 'the shower of fire deserves to be particularly

[108] The Olympic Circus and its forays into traditional drama are discussed in Quinn (1951) 135. The performance of *Alexander* is discussed in New York *Columbian* (28/08/1812) 2.
[109] New York *American Citizen* (03/01/1803) 3.

mentioned'. [110] This cross-pollination between traditional drama and paratheatricals reached a stage that the two traditions had become visibly entwined.[111] Late eighteenth-century performances of plays such as *The Roman Father* had seemed to pull the Classics forward into the modern day as a means to explore ideals of statesmanship. In these early nineteenth- century performances, on the other hand, the Classics seem to have been pushed forward into all manner of spectacular manifestations by the sheer weight of their own vernacular recognisability.

4.5 Conclusion

The lack of academic attention paid to these two decades is unfortunate. Far from being bereft of theatrical representations of antiquity, these years saw perhaps the most transformative deployment of the ancient world on American stages to date and visibly laid the foundations for theatrical innovations that would be made in subsequent decades. Chapter one's distant reading exercise identified the shift in performance habits that occurred during this period. A close reading of *Alexander* and periodized analysis of its place in the broader entertainment landscape have demonstrated the significance of this shift. Managers and performers, constrained and compelled by the novel limitations and pressures of the American theatrical scene, became ever more innovative in adapting their imported British theatrical fare to reflect the demands of a changing United States. In doing so, they created a version of the ancient world that was increasingly unrecognisable from that seen a few short decades before, and, in the case of *Alexander*, turned a staid two-hundred-year-old script into the basis for a spectacular variety show. Lee's script may have been a British text, but the experience that audiences enjoyed during its performance was unmistakably American.

[110] Oldschool (1802) 57.

[111] It is worth remembering from chapter one that *The Roman Father* and *The Grecian Daughter* had retained their popularity best in Philadelphia, a city which at the time was losing its place at the forefront of the American dramatic scene. It was also observed that *Alexander the Great* enjoyed the lowest popularity in Philadelphia of any major city. In contrast, the play proved immensely popular in New York, the city that was on the forefront of American dramatic developments and had embraced the spectacular to an extent not seen by other cities, further supporting the notion of a blended tradition.

Chapter Five

The Jacksonian Stage, 1820-31

During the 1820s, the ideal of the disinterested, paternalistic statesman governing in the best interests of the common good was not just being questioned – it was being whole-heartedly rejected. The 1828 landslide election victory of Andrew Jackson, a soldier-turned-politician of modest beginnings and questionable literacy, is emblematic of a decade characterised by populist politics, nativist sentiment, and a rejection of established political institutions.[1] The very study of the Classics found itself under attack, with its privileged position in the education system criticised as being elitist and un-democratic.[2] And yet, far from retreating from the stage, dramatic adaptations of the Classics would adapt to these changes, develop a newfound relevance to the United States' peculiar circumstances, and come to dominate the stage. This process is emblematised in a play that would define the way Americans engaged with the ancient world on stage for decades to come: Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* (1831).

When audiences braved the torrential rain to attend the premiere of *The Gladiator* in New York's Park Theatre on September 26th 1831, they did not simply witness a play. Unbeknownst to them, they were witnessing the fulfilment of a process almost a century in the making. Ninety-nine years had passed since, in December of 1732, a travelling company of English actors had erected a makeshift stage in a building on Nassau Street and delivered a performance of Joseph Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy* (1713).[3] This performance had been the first recorded attempt to represent the ancient world on stage in

[1] Given a choice between Jackson and John Quincy Adams, or 'the plowman and the professor' as John William Ward labels them, America's newly enfranchised working classes chose the plowman, in what Ward calls 'a rejection of the intellectual', Ward (1962) 64-5. Jackson's election is discussed in Brands (2005) 473; Cave (1964) I; Meacham (2008) 219; Remini (1963) 13; Remini (1988) 307.
[2] This is discussed in Wolverton (1969) 13.
[3] This first performance is described in Johnson and Burling (2001) 109.

English-speaking North America. Now, almost a century later and only a few blocks away from the site of that first performance, a packed house of around 2,000 people were bearing witness to one of the most significant milestones in American dramatic history.[4]

The Gladiator was more than just a play: it was a sensation. The play would be performed upwards of 1,000 times over the course of the next few decades.[5] It would cross the Atlantic, and earn the assent of English critics.[6] It would realise the aspirations of idealists such as William Dunlap, who had dreamt of the day that American audiences would flock to enjoy drama written by one of their own native sons. Most importantly for this study, it offered a vision of the ancient world that could not have been produced in any other place or time, or by any other people. It presented a classical world that was uniquely and unmistakably American.

The Gladiator's success was informed and enabled by the tumultuous changes of the 1820s. Ongoing urbanisation, the development of a more commercially-oriented economy, and an increasing emphasis on class and ethnic identity within public discourse invited a re-appraisal of the classical parallels to which Americans appealed. As Margaret Malamud states, 'To supporters of Andrew Jackson, Republican Rome now offered a *negative* model of aristocratic domination'.[7] This changing environment demanded a new repertoire of plays depicting the ancient world. Chapter one revealed the composition of this new repertoire: Payne's *Brutus; or, The Fall of Tarquin* (1820) and two English imports, Knowles' *Virginius; or, The Liberation of Rome* (1820) and Banim's *Damon and Pythias* (1821), would become mainstays of stages across the United States. Economic shifts in the organisation of theatres would mean that American audiences would instead flock to see their own countrymen perform these roles, rather than the usual fare of companies populated by English-trained actors. One

[4] *The Gladiator*'s is described in Chinn (2017a) 201; Foust (1919) 39-40; Grimsted (1968) 145; McConachie (1992) 78; Odell (1928) 547.
[5] *The Gladiator*'s extreme popularity is discussed in Buffington (2000) 90; Dormon Jr (1967) 260; Foust (1919) 39, 48-9, 167-8; Malamud (2009) 40; Nathans (2009) 175; Odell (1928) 547; Quinn (1951) 237; Richards (1997) 167; Volo and Volo (2000) 317.
[6] In 1836 Bird was given honorary membership to the London Society of Dramatic Authors, although, as will be seen, approbation of his work was far from unanimous, Foust (1919) 64.
[7] Malamud (2009) 18.

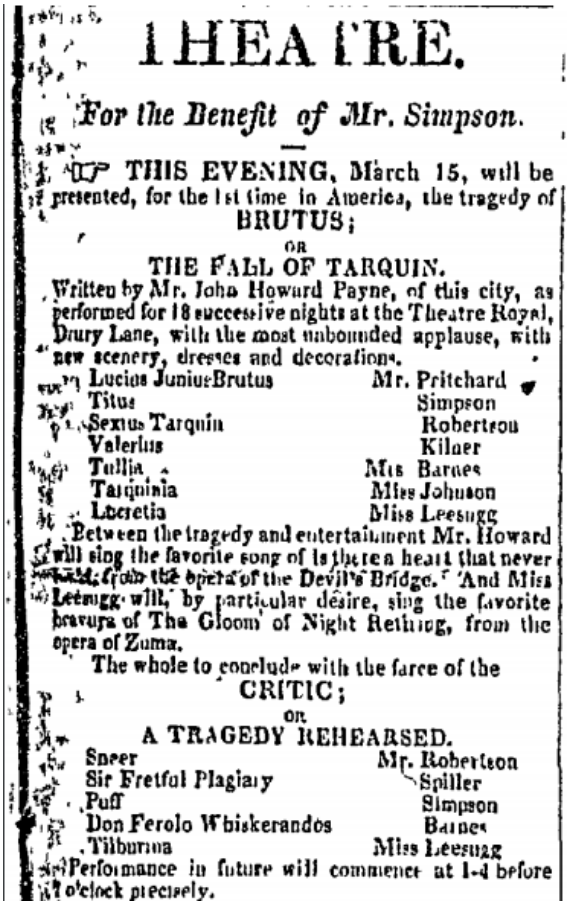
such actor, a Mr Edwin Forrest, would accrue sufficient celebrity and capital to commission his own plays, reflective of his and his audiences' vision of how an independent American literature ought to look. Most prominent among which was *The Gladiator*, which Arthur Quinn calls 'the flowering of romantic tragedy in America'.[8]

This chapter will examine these plays, their performance, and their reception by audiences in order to understand how the classical corpus of stories adapted to reflect the sensibilities of this radically changed United States. After first examining the breakout success of Payne's *Brutus* towards the start of the decade, it will investigate the economic changes that occurred within the theatre during this decade. Taking Knowles' *Virginius* and Banim's *Damon and Pythias* as examples, this chapter will demonstrate how these economic changes fundamentally affected audiences' experiences of the ancient world on stage. This will culminate in a close study of Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator*. This close reading will examine its relationship to other texts in the growing corpus of American-written dramatic literature in order to show how it was able to produce a vision of the ancient world that was specific to the cultural, political, and demographic circumstances of the United States. Before this, though, it is necessary to introduce that other, more critically neglected, success story of American-written literature: John Howard Payne's *Brutus, or the Fall of Tarquin* (1818).

5.1 John Howard Payne's *Brutus, or the Fall of Tarquin* (1818) a trans-Atlantic vision of the Classics

Brutus was written in 1818 by John Howard Payne, a native New Yorker. As its title suggests, it depicts the overthrow of Tarquin, the last King of Rome, by Lucius Junius Brutus during the late sixth century B.C. Chapter one showed how, after premiering in New York on 15th March 1819, *Brutus* enjoyed a consistent and respectable popularity across future decades. George Odell goes so far as to title it 'the inevitable *Brutus*' for the frequency with which it was performed.[9]

[8] Quinn (1951) 219.
[9] Odell (1928) 13.



THEATRE.

For the Benefit of Mr. Simpson.

☞ THIS EVENING, March 15, will be presented, for the 1st time in America, the tragedy of

BRUTUS;

OR

THE FALL OF TARQUIN.

Written by Mr. John Howard Payne, of this city, as performed for 18 successive nights at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, with the most unbounded applause, with new scenery, dresses and decorations.

Lucius Junius Brutus	Mr. Pritchard
Titus	Simpson
Sextus Tarquin	Robertson
Valerius	Kilner
Tullia	Mrs Barnes
Tarquinia	Miss Johnson
Lucretia	Miss Leesugg

Between the tragedy and entertainment Mr. Howard will sing the favorite song of Is there a heart that never [illegible] from the opera of the Devil's Bridge. And Miss Leesugg will, by particular desire, sing the favorite bravura of The Gloom of Night Retiring, from the opera of Zuma.

The whole to conclude with the farce of the

CRITIC;

OR

A TRAGEDY REHEARSED.

Sneer	Mr. Robertson
Sir Fretful Plagiary	Spiller
Puff	Simpson
Don Ferolo Whiskerandos	Barnes
Tilburina	Miss Leesugg

Performance in future will commence at 1-4 before 7 o'clock precisely.

Figure 5.1 – Newspaper advertisement, New York *National Advocate* (15/03/1819) 4.

The above advertisement for *Brutus*' premiere in New York may have failed to notice the irony of a play portraying the overthrow of a Roman tyrant premiering on the Ides of March, but it wasted no time boasting of the playwright's native credentials, attaching the appellation 'of this city' to his name.[10] Advertisements for the piece over the coming decades similarly praise Payne as being 'our young countryman' or an 'embodiment of American genius'. Chapter one's distant reading exercise identified no fewer than twenty instances in which an advertisement in some way mentions Payne's native status.[11] All of this calls into question the importance of *The Gladiator*'s success a decade later.

[10] The play's premiere is advertised in the New York *National Advocate* (15/03/1819) 4; New York *Columbian* (15/03/1819) 3; *New-York Daily Advertiser* (15/03/1819) 2.

[11] New York *National Advocate* (15/03/1819) 4; New York *Columbian* (15/03/1819) 3; *New-York Daily Advertiser* (15/03/1819) 2; New York *American* (26/12/1820) 3. Other examples of American newspapers celebrating or emphasising Payne's native status include the Boston *Kaleidoscope* (09/01/1819) 23; the *Connecticut Gazette* (20/01/1819) 3; the New York *Columbian* (27/01/1819) 2; the *Boston Daily Advertiser* (27/01/1819) 2; the Boston *Repertory* (28/01/1819) 4; the Boston *Weekly Messenger* (28/01/1819) 241; the *New-York Daily Advertiser* (30/01/1819) 2; the *Rhode-Island American* (02/02/1819) 3; the *Alexandria Gazette*

If *Brutus*, as these advertisements seem to suggests, represents some great nativity of American drama, then surely *The Gladiator*'s achievement was simply to build on *Brutus'* success?

These advertisements, however, fail to convey the intrinsically international nature of *Brutus'* writing and production. *Brutus* may have appeared for the first time in the United States on 15th March 1819, but its actual premiere had occurred months earlier in London's Drury Lane theatre. This is because Payne wrote the play while living as an expatriate to be performed by the renowned British actor, Edmund Kean. Like so many plays with which it shared the stage, *Brutus* was imported across the Atlantic. In subjecting the play, its language, and its themes to close scrutiny it is possible to understand how the presentation of the ancient world was adapting to reflect early nineteenth century concerns. More than this, by examining *Brutus* within both its British and American cultural contexts it is possible to, as Paul Giles would put it, 'map out the cross-cultural force fields' that influenced its production.[12] This will demonstrate how *Brutus* was able to function as a trans-Atlantic play, straddling the indiscrete boundaries between American and British literature, and also throw *The Gladiator*'s significance, in offering a uniquely American interpretation of the ancient world, into sharper relief.

Brutus deploys a typical five-act structure to depict the overthrow of Tarquinius Superbus, the last King of Rome, by Lucius Junius Brutus in 509 B.C. The play follows the same broad series of events that Livy describes in books one and two of his *History of Rome*. Tarquinius Superbus and his wife Tullia have overthrown King Servius Tullius and established themselves as Rome's rulers. Lucius Junius, a patrician whose brother and father have been slain by Tarquin, feigns madness and stupidity to escape Tarquin's ire. This earns him the nickname 'Brutus', meaning dull, stupid, or brutish. He is given the

(09/02/1819) 2; the *Boston Intelligencer* (20/02/1819) 1; the New York *National Advocate* (11/03/1819) 2; the *New-York Daily Advertiser* (15/03/1819) 2; New York *National Advocate* (17/03/1819) 2; the New York *National Advocate* (29/04/1819) 2; the *Rhode-Island American* (14/05/1819) 1; *Bermuda Gazette* (12/06/1819) 8; the Boston *New-England Galaxy* (05/11/1819) 14; the Boston *Independent Chronicle* (06/11/1819) 2; the *Alexandria Gazette* (10/11/1819) 2; the Norfolk *American Beacon* (13/11/1819) 3; the New York *American* (26/12/1820) 3.

[12] Giles (2001) 12.

opportunity to take his revenge when Tarquin's son Sextus rapes Lucretia, the pious wife of the noble and respected Collatinus. Brutus exploits outrage at Lucretia's rape to incite rebellion amongst the Roman populace, who seize Tarquin's palace and elect Brutus as Consul of their revolutionary government. Brutus' final test comes when his own son is arrested for attempting to help Tarquin's daughter flee the city. Struggling to maintain composure, Brutus sentences his son to death before collapsing from emotional exhaustion.

Payne's play has attracted reasonable academic attention, being discussed in the works of Arthur Hobson Quinn, David Grimsted, Glenn Hughes, and Bruce McConachie. Much of these discussions, however, have been focused on the character of Payne himself, qualitative analyses of *Brutus*, and the relationship of his text to other works in the Anglophone literary corpus.[13] Sarah Chinn's *Spectacular Men* (2017) has offered one of the first dedicated close readings of the text in decades. She understands *Brutus* as radically departing from the conventions of preceding plays to offer an interpretation of the ancient world that directly taps into the anxieties of an increasingly democratic America. With the political franchise expanding dramatically and indiscriminately (amongst the white male population), demagoguery and ochlocracy were becoming ever more pertinent threats to American political virtue.[14]

The generation that had framed the constitution increasingly doubted the imitability of classical paradigms. In an 1819 letter to John Adams, Thomas Jefferson began to wonder 'what was that government which the virtues of Cicero were so zealous to restore, and the ambition of Caesar to subvert: certainly not good government since they never had it from the rape of the Sabines to the ravages of the Caesars'.[15] These negative comparisons increasingly found their way into public

[13] David Grimsted's *Melodrama Unveiled* (1968) wrote off Payne's corpus as being 'facile adaptations' of popular drama, Grimsted (1968) 166. Bruce McConachie's *Melodramatic Formations* (1992) discusses the relationship between *Brutus'* plot and that of *The Gladiator*, McConachie (1992) 98. Glenn Hughes' *A History of the American Theatre* (1951) offers a brief biography of Payne, Hughes (1951) 103. Arthur Quinn's *A History of the American Drama* (1951) discusses Payne's trans-Atlantic reputation and his relationship to earlier plays, Quinn (1951) 163-86.

[14] The expanding franchise and its relationship to Jackson's election is discussed in Ratcliffe (2013) 248-54.

[15] This is reprinted in Malamud (2009) 21.

discourse. While Jackson's Democrat supporters may have emphasised his humble, agrarian roots as the 'farmer of Tennessee' to cast him as a new American Cincinnatus, his Whiggish opponents saw him more as a new Caesar.[16] Noah Webster accused Jackson's supporters of being so 'servile' they would have allowed him to 'assume the imperial purple' if he had wished.[17] Jackson's supporters, in fairness, probably could have done more to resist these accusations. When Commodore Jesse Elliot, an enthusiastic admirer of Jackson, came into possession of a Roman sarcophagus from Palestine that he believed to have belonged to a Roman Emperor, Elliot offered it to Jackson in the hope it might one day serve as his tomb.[18] The theatre needed a repertoire of plays that engaged with this increasingly pertinent threat. *Brutus*, in Chinn's words, 'takes on just this challenge'.[19]

Her discussion of *Brutus* primarily rests on a comparison between Payne's text and Joseph Addison's *Cato, A Tragedy*, the play that she identifies as having emblematised the representation of the ancient world on stage during the early republic.[20] She identifies several significant differences between *Brutus* and *Cato*. These differences would seem to suggest that Payne radically broke with the established conventions of representing the ancient world on stage inherited from the English stage and presented a vision of the ancient world that was specifically adapted to reflect America's socio-political situation.

While both plays' titular characters exhibit the qualities of disinterested leadership in the defence of political virtue, the plays differ in the provenance whence the threats to political virtue come. In *Cato*'s case these threats come from the top down, from malicious actors who explicitly seek to subvert liberty for their own benefit: the ever-approaching threat of Caesar who wishes to establish himself as a tyrant and the rapacious Senator Sempronius who seeks to betray Cato's noble cause for personal

[16] This is discussed in Ward (1962) 41-4.
[17] Malamud (2009) 19-20.
[18] This episode is discussed in Ward (1962) 116, Stevenson (1914) 2.
[19] Contrasting attitudes of the late eighteenth century with those of the early 1820s, Chinn says that 'If the anxieties of Enlightenment-era Rome focused on fears that the nation would fall into disrepair through habituation toward tyranny, playwrights of the 1820s and 1830s worried more about the threat of the crowd and the challenge to virtuous men of a fickle and impressible public'. Chinn (2017a) 183.
[20] Chinn (2017a) 28-9, 171-8.

gain. In *Brutus'* case, however, it is the Roman people themselves that pose a threat to their own political liberty. After Sextus' rape of Lucretia is revealed and Brutus leads the outraged populace in revolt against King Tarquin he is faced with an unexpected challenge. The people desire to bestow upon him the very kingly power that they are seeking to strip from Tarquin:

> 1st Roman: Live, Brutus!
>
> 2nd Roman: Valient [sic] Brutus!
>
> 3rd Roman: Down with Tarquin!
>
> 1st Roman: We will have a Brutus!
>
> 3rd Roman: Let's to the Capitol and shout for Brutus. (act three, scene four)[21]

One of the key personal challenges that Brutus experiences through the play is, in Chinn's words, 'the refusal of the sort of immense power the people seem to want to give him'.[22] American audiences were not oblivious to this theme in the play. Reviews from Boston to New Orleans went on record to praise the 'disinterested patriotism' that Brutus exhibits in the face of the 'rabble of Rome'.[23] Given American apprehensions about an unruly and easily manipulated population, particularly in Payne's native New York, *Brutus* would, in exploring these anxieties, seem to satisfy William Dunlap's definition of 'independent American drama' as being 'not merely a class of dramatic productions written by Americans, but one appealing directly to the national feeling … in the maintenance and vindication of those great and illustrious peculiarities of situation and character by which we are distinguished from all other nations'.[24]

Yet, it is worth remembering that these apprehensions were hardly unique to the United States. Before travelling to London, Payne had spent time in Paris during France's tumultuous 1810s, in which time the successors of Napoleon and the Bourbons had variously employed their own brands of

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[21] Payne (1818) 32.
[22] Chinn (2017a) 186.
[23] Boston *New-England Galaxy* (05/11/1819) 14; New Orleans T*imes-Picayune* (10/04/1839) 2.
[24] Dunlap (1832) 86.

classicising imagery in their bids for popular support and political control. During his eight months there, he had, in his own words, 'lived under seven different governments … having seen the King dethroned and the Emperor restored-the Emperor dethroned and the King restored'.[25] The ochlocratic concerns exhibited by *Brutus* were fairly ubiquitous throughout the post-Enlightenment Western world. This is evidenced by the fact that the *Alexandria Gazette* chose to reprint the epilogue to *Brutus* delivered at London's Drury Lane theatre 'because of its application as well to the fashions here as in England'.[26]

In reading *Brutus* it is also important to remember that the representation of the ancient world on American stages did not skip straight from *Cato* in the late eighteenth century to *Brutus* during the 1820s. Preceding chapters have demonstrated the continuity of this tradition of representing the ancients on stage that existed during these interceding years. Imported English dramatisations of classical history were held up as paradigms through which to understand contemporary events, as was the case with William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* (1750), or were modified to reflect American tastes and sensibilities, as was the case with Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander the Great; or, The Rival Queens* (1677). It is necessary to understand *Brutus* in the context of these plays in order to examine the extent to which it presented a distinctly American version of the ancient world.

It is difficult to read *Brutus* and not feel a pang of déjà vu. Thematically and structurally, the play is highly reminiscent of Whitehead's *The Roman Father*, which similarly drew on an episode from Livy's accounts of early Roman history in order to present a panegyric upon the virtues of disinterested leadership. Some of the aspects of *Brutus* that Chinn considers to be a radical departure from the *Cato* tradition of representing the ancient world on stage become less radical when considered in the light of Whitehead's *The Roman Father*.

[25] This letter, dated to the 28th October 1816, is reprinted in Anonymous (1889) 520.
[26] *Alexandria Gazette* (09/02/1819) 2.

One such departure that appears between *Cato* and *Brutus* is in their presentation of paternal sacrifice. Both plays feature the symbolic sacrifice of a son by their titular character, but *Brutus* seems to invert the active and passive roles in that sacrifice. In Cato's case, his son Marcus dies while fighting against an attempted mutiny against Cato and his republican cause. Cato accepts the necessity of his son's sacrifice and muses: 'What a pity it is / That we can die but once to serve our country' (act four, scene two).[27] Brutus, on the other hand, is personally responsible for the death of his son, Titus. After Titus has been captured while trying to help his lover, Tarquin's daughter Tarquinia, escape Rome, Brutus sets aside his love for his son and sentences Titus to death, declaring 'Justice is satisfied and Rome is free!' (act five, scene three).[28] Chinn understands the difference between the two as follows:

> Brutus manifests the same kind of disinterestedness as Cato, who declared that there was nothing greater than to have a son die in the prosecution of his duty as a citizen. Brutus goes further, though. He does not just witness the death of his son – he orders it. Brutus must separate his own personal feelings from his duty as consul.[29]

Understanding this in the context of the findings of chapter three, however, it becomes apparent that this story difference does not represent any great innovation on the part of Payne. Whitehead's play had featured a similar motif, with Horatius being forced to set aside his love for his daughter and condone her execution as just, exhibiting the same qualities of disinterested leadership that seems innovative in Brutus. Whitehead's Horatius and Payne's Brutus use very similar language to express their cognate ideals during their children's respective trials. During the trial of Publius, Whitehead's Horatius argues that, while he would personally prefer that Publius had spared Horatia, her crimes against Rome mandated her death and thus Publius is innocent of any wrongdoing:

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[27] Addison (1806) 56.
[28] Payne (1818) 53.
[29] Chinn (2017a) 186.

Horatius: 'tis not for myself, …

'tis for my country's service

I would preserve her champion. (act five, scene two)[30]

Payne's Brutus similarly extricates his personal desires from his civic duty, except in his case it is to condemn his son, rather than acquit him:

Brutus: We try the crime; the motive Heaven will judge.

My honour he hath stabbed – I pardon that;

He hath done more – he hath betrayed his country. (Act four, scene one)[31]

These two acts, while in practice opposite, are ideologically compatible. In both cases a father, placed in a position of political power, sets aside their personal fondness for their offspring in favour of the public good. The notion that a leader ought to value the public over the personal good continued to be relevant in Jackson's America, as it had in Washington's, and so it is understandable that stories from Rome's earliest history continued to be used to propound this idea.

The way in which *Brutus* represents the complex interplay between romantic love and civic duty, while significantly departing from *Cato*'s representation, is similarly coherent with the plays discussed in previous chapters. In contrast to *Cato*, which suggests that romantic love and civic duty naturally complement each other and that romantic love can actually encourage dutifulness, in *Brutus*, these two spheres are shown to be fundamentally incompatible.[32] Titus' love for Tarquinia, the daughter of King Tarquin, is regularly shown to interfere with his patriotic dedication to Rome. In Titus' first scene with Tarquinia he extolls the all-consuming nature of his love for her:

Titus: neither name nor nature nor the voice

Of my lost father could he wake to reason,

[30] Whitehead (1750) 79.
[31] Payne (1818) 46.
[32] It will be recalled from the discussion of *Cato* in previous chapters that Juba, the Numidian prince, is inspired to emulate Roman virtue through his love for Marcia, Cato's daughter.

> Not all the wrongs that tyranny could pile
>
> On my afflicted head – not all the praise
>
> That patriot gratitude could shower upon me
>
> Can shake the faithful purpose of my soul
>
> To sever it from love and my Tarquinia. (act one, scene three)[33]

Brutus himself acknowledges that Titus' love has blinded his sense of duty, lamenting that 'Could I once burst the chains which now enthral him, / My son would prove the pillar of his country' (act two, scene two).[34] Ultimately, Titus' love for Tarquinia leads to him betraying his father and the fledgling republic by attempting to help her flee the city. Love has not only interfered with his sense of duty, but turned him into a traitor.

While antithetical to *Cato*, this representation of the relationship between love and duty is perfectly compatible with plays identified as influential through the macroscopic data presented in chapter one. In Whitehead's *The Roman Father*, it is Horatia's love for one of Rome's enemies that turns her loyalty against Rome and warrants her death. In Lee's *Alexander the Great*, it is Alexander's inability to manage his feelings for Roxana and Statira that brings about his downfall. Again, *Brutus* is doing little to thematically distinguish itself from the existing repertoire of imported English plays.

Another apparent innovation that Chinn identifies in Brutus is the intense emotionality of its titular character, whose impassioned harangue over the corpse of Lucretia she describes as 'a far cry from the principled stoicism of Cato'.[35] Brutus is indeed a far cry from Cato's emotionless, almost inhuman, composure. Where Cato remains unflinchingly stoic, even in the face of his son's death, Brutus sacrifices his dignity to feign madness and escape Tarquin's punishment, is prone to fits of anger, struggles to maintain his self-control when faced with his son's crimes, and concludes the play by

[33] Payne (1818) 11.
[34] Ibid. 17.
[35] Chinn (2017a) 185.

collapsing from emotional exhaustion. When he hears of Sextus' rape of Lucretia, he unleashes a furious tirade upon the prince:

> Brutus: [with a burst of frenzy]
>
> The furies curse you, then, lash you with snakes.
>
> When forth you walk, may the red, flaming sun
>
> Strike you with livid plagues,
>
> Vipers that die not, slowly gnaw your heart!
>
> May earth be to you but one wilderness!
>
> May mankind shun you. May you hate yourself -
>
> For death pray hourly, yet be in tortures
>
> Millions of years expiring! (Act three, scene one)[36]

This would indeed seem like a drastic break when compared to *Cato*. However, as was shown in the previous chapter, there was a precedent for such emotionality in representations of the Classics imported from the English stage. During the first few decades of the nineteenth century, literary sentimentalism had found its American stage avatar in Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander.* Brutus' intense emotionality is highly reminiscent of Alexander's. Brutus and Alexander even employ the same imagery of their heart bursting to express their emotional turmoil during the scenes in which they sentence their son to death and are taken back by their lover respectively:

> Brutus: My heart is bursting (act five, scene three)[37]

> Alexander: My heart will burst (act three, scene one)[38]

In his preface for the published edition of *Brutus*, Payne admitted to having read Lee's plays for inspiration and, at times in *Brutus*, he seems to emulate the elemental language for which Lee was

[36] Payne (1818) 26.
[37] Ibid. 50.
[38] Lee (1677) 36.

notorious.[39] Just as Lee's Roxana compares her wrath to the wind, announcing 'Away, be gone, and give a whirlwind room' (act three, scene one), Payne's Brutus similarly invokes the elements when he calls forth lightning to embody the revenge he will seek upon Tarquin:[40] 'Brutus: Launch forth thy thunders, Capitolian Jove! / … Yet lightnings! Lay his trophies like dust!' (act three, scene one).[41]

It seems that, although advertising materials for the play's first performances in the United States placed great emphasis on Payne's native-born status, this was not reflected in his work. Payne wrote *Brutus* while living in London, to be produced in London theatres, and to be performed by Edmund Kean. *Brutus*, both stylistically and thematically, did little to distinguish itself from the imported English texts that preceded it. Arthur Quinn has highlighted this fact, claiming that Payne 'wrote mostly on foreign themes' and seeing him as 'the representative of foreign influence in our playwriting'.[42] Jeffrey Richards similarly comments that Payne primarily wrote 'plays that appealed to British taste'.[43] In his personal copy of *American Theatre* William Dunlap, that great proponent of American literary independence, had, tellingly, crossed out the entries describing Payne's plays and noted 'not American plays'.[44] English newspapers such as the London *Times* seemed to agree with Dunlap, demonstrating a complete obliviousness to *Brutus'* American-origins, they treated the play exactly as they would any English-written product. Some even claimed the play as English product, praising Payne for adding 'so striking a performance to the stock of English theatre'.[45]

Rather than a wholly American or British play, it might be wiser to see *Brutus* as a trans-Atlantic play, that was stylistically and thematically appealing to audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. The New York *National Advocate* hit upon an apt description of the piece, calling it 'an American play through

[39] Arthur Quinn discusses how Payne particularly studied Lee's *Lucius Junius Brutus* (1681), which was banned after three performances, for inspiration, Quinn (1951) 171.
[40] Lee (1677) 26.
[41] Payne (1818) 22.
[42] Quinn (1951) 163.
[43] Richards (1997) xx.
[44] This is described in Grimsted (1968) 165-6.
[45] This review is reprinted in the New York *National Advocate* (12/03/1819) 2. Another example of an English review of the play being seemingly oblivious to its pseudo-American origins can be found re-printed in the *Boston Intelligencer* (20/02/1819) 1.

the ordeal of British taste'.[46] While it may have been written by a native New-Yorker, *Brutus* functioned on the American stage in much the same way as imports from the English stage had for decades. It was certainly an important stepping stone towards Dunlap's goal of a uniquely American dramatic literature that reflects 'those great and illustrious peculiarities of situation and character by which we are distinguished from all other nations', but it does not represent the fulfilment of that vision. It would take a revolution in the way that theatres, and popular culture at large, were organised to finally achieve that goal. This revolution would be highly individualistic, radically populist, almost proto-capitalist, and unmistakably American in its effects: the rise of the 'star-system'.

5.2 The star-system

There is one name that epitomises the star-system and its effects on the theatre: Edwin Forrest. Born in Philadelphia in 1806, Forrest began his first foray onto the stage at the age of eleven as a bit player in Philadelphia's South Street theatre. Finding the theatres of the eastern seaboard overcrowded with formally trained actors, he soon joined a troupe of travelling players who plied their trade in the southern and western frontiers.[47] During his time on the frontier he met a variety of unusual characters, especially among the Choctaw American Indians, that his upbringing in urban Philadelphia had scarcely prepared him for.[48] Free from the confines of traditional theatrical training, Forrest developed a stage persona informed by his studies of these unique people. In 1826 he returned east, performed *Othello* in New York's Bowery Theatre, and became a sensation.[49]

Building on his character studies of Push-ma-ta-ha, one of the Choctaw's chiefs, Forrest developed an acting style that utilised his own powerful, barrel-chested physique. The result was an exaggerated, hyper-masculine, chest-beating style of performance that some critics characterised as a rant. One

[46] New York *National Advocate* (12/03/1819) 2.
[47] Forrest's time on the frontier is discussed in Coyle and Damaser (1968) xii; Foust (1919) 36;
[48] Forrest's relationship with the Choctaws is discussed in Coyle and Damaser (1968) 50; Donald Grose (1985) 184; Rebhorn (2007) 460.
[49] This is discussed in Wilson and Fiske (1888) 504. The immense popularity of Forrest is discussed in Barrett (1881) 47; Chinn (2017a) 22; Donald Grose (1985) 184-5; Foley (2012) 6; Martin (1999) 73; McConachie (1992) 70-1; Volo and Volo (2000) 317.

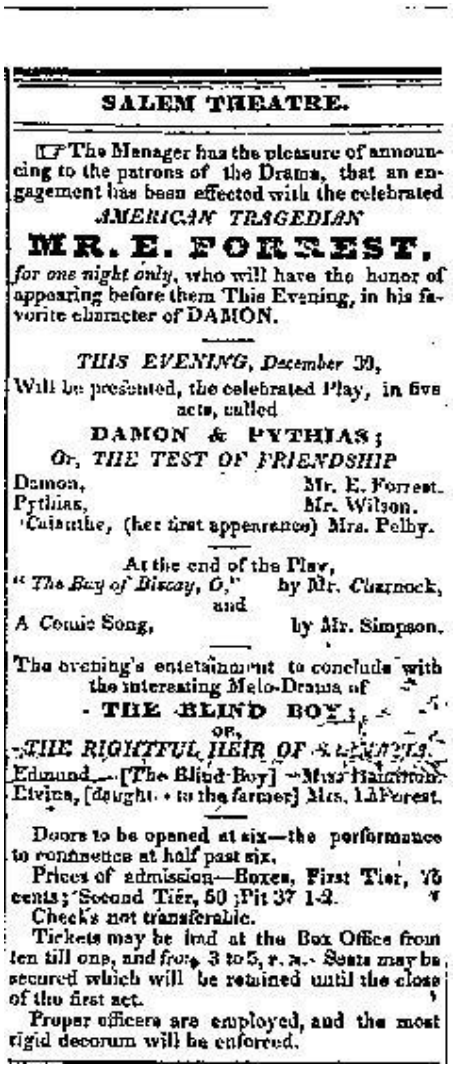
columnist joked 'We may call it the muscular school, the brawny art, the biceps aesthetics, the tragic calves, the bovine drama, rant, roar and rigmarole'.[50] While Forrest may have loathed the gaudy and spectacular sets of what he termed the 'scene-painter's drama', he certainly seems to have brought an element of the spectacular in himself.

Consciously rejecting conventional (i.e. English) acting techniques, Forrest revelled in the development of a distinctly American style of performance. Commenting on his meteoric success, the *New-York Mirror* wrote 'Disdaining to copy even the most celebrated and perfect models, the incessant flashes of excellence which enlighten his path all emanate from the fire of genius within. His beauties are all his own. He never borrows, but trades upon his own capital, which is daily increasing in almost geometrical progression'.[51] Regardless of the role he was performing, Forrest's exuberant, passionate, roaring acting style remained the same. Writing in 1827, the New York *Mirror* states that, no matter which character Forrest plays, 'he still appears before us the same individual, and only changed in so far as he is acted upon by new modifications of circumstances. This we consider a great merit'.[52] The appeal of Edwin Forrest was not necessarily his performance of a particular character, but of himself.

Forrest's rise is emblematic of wider developments in the economic organisation of theatres during the 1820s. Thomas Cooper, George Cooke, Charles Macready, and other actors built up a degree of celebrity that they levied to draw in audiences. Each of them pursued their own dramatic styles. In contrast to Forrest's convention-breaking style of performance, his main rival, the English-born actor Charles Macready, would deliver performances in a more formalised, restrained, 'European' style.[53] Bruce McConachie describes star actors as 'protocapitalists' who generated capital from their recognisability and links their rise to the wider emergence of laissez-faire capitalism in the United

[50] This is reprinted in Monod (2016) 90.
[51] This is reprinted in McConachie (1992) 84. Forrest's style is discussed in Chinn (2017a) 191; Coyle and Damaser (1968) 50; Donald Grose (1985) 184-5; Grimsted (1968) 70; Martin (1999) 75; Monod (2016) 90; Rebhorn (2007) 460; Richards (1997) xv.
[52] This is reprinted in Odell (1928) 335.
[53] Forrest's rivalry with Charles Macready is discussed in Richards (1997) 169.

States.[54] Their prominence is reflected in advertisements and discussions of performances. A discussion of a recent round of performances at New York's Park Theatre in 1823 published in the *National Advocate* states in no uncertain terms that 'The principal attraction of the Theatre is [Thomas] Cooper'.[55] Advertising materials reflect this increased emphasis placed upon star actors.



SALEM THEATRE.

☞ The Manager has the pleasure of announcing to the patrons of the Drama, that an engagement has been effected with the celebrated

AMERICAN TRAGEDIAN

MR. E. FORREST,

for one night only, who will have the honor of appearing before them This Evening, in his favorite character of DAMON.

THIS EVENING, December 30,

Will be presented, the celebrated Play, in five acts, called

DAMON & PYTHIAS;

Or, THE TEST OF FRIENDSHIP

Damon, Mr. E. Forrest.
Pythias, Mr. Wilson.
Calanthe, (her first appearance) Mrs. Pelby.

At the end of the Play,
"*The Bay of Biscay, O,*" by Mr. Charnock,
and
A Comic Song, by Mr. Simpson.

The evening's entertainment to conclude with the interesting Melo-Drama of

THE BLIND BOY;

OR,

THE RIGHTFUL HEIR OF [illegible]

Edmund, [The Blind Boy] Miss Hamilton.
Elvina, [daughter to the farmer] Mrs. LaForest.

Doors to be opened at six—the performance to commence at half past six.

Prices of admission—Boxes, First Tier, 75 cents; Second Tier, 50; Pit 37 1-2.

Checks not transferable.

Tickets may be had at the Box Office from ten till one, and from 3 to 5, P. M. Seats may be secured which will be retained until the close of the first act.

Proper officers are employed, and the most rigid decorum will be enforced.

Figure 5.2 – Newspaper advertisement, *Salem Gazette* (30/12/1828) 3.

In the above advertisement for an 1828 performance of *Damon and Pythias* taken from the *Salem Gazette*, which is unfortunately of a quite limited graphical quality, Edwin Forrest is billed above, and in larger print than, the play in which he is appearing.[56] This becomes the rule, rather than the

[54] McConachie (1992) 3, 74-80.
[55] Odell (1928) 92.
[56] This is taken from the *Salem Gazette* (30/12/1828) 3.

exception, and advertisements commonly preface the play being performed by announcing the actor who is appearing in it. Another advertisement for an 1836 performance of *Virginius* in the Park Theatre similarly placed more emphasis on Forrest than on the play:

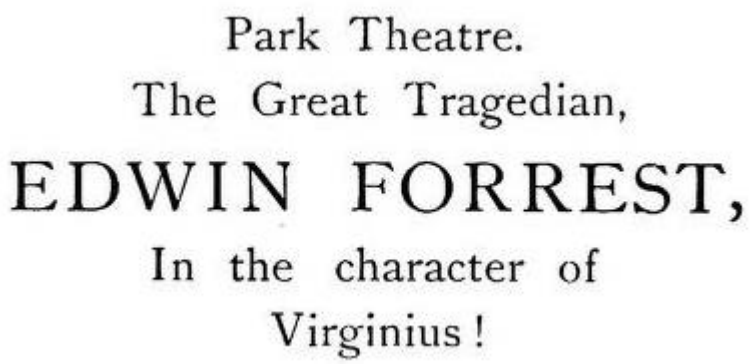

Park Theatre.
The Great Tragedian,
EDWIN FORREST,
In the character of
Virginius!

Figure 5.3 – Advertisement from New York City, New York, dated 1836, reproduced in Harrison (1889) 13.

Note that this advertisement, reprinted in Gabriel Harrison's biography of Forrest, describes the event as being 'Edwin Forrest, In the character of Virginius', rather than as a performance of Virginius starring Edwin Forrest. Another of Forrest's performances in 1828, this time in Baltimore, warned that the evening's performance is 'Positively the Last Night but Three of Mr. E. Forrest's Engagement' before listing the play in which he will be appearing.[57] As William Coyle and Harvey Damaser put it, 'the actor rather than the play became the attraction for the audience'.[58]

This development was not welcomed by all. Theatre managers resented seeing their profit margins eaten into by the costs of contracting in-demand stars. Meanwhile, the companies of stock actors that were attached to theatres found themselves reduced to bit players whose sole purpose was to support the performance of the star. Forrest and other stars were notoriously egotistical and difficult to work with, and supporting actors were actually discouraged from demonstrating any histrionic flair, lest they distract from the star. During *The Gladiator*'s premiere in 1831 one critic complimented the manager for having cast the less capable actors as supporting characters that are killed so that their

[57] *Baltimore Patriot* (11/02/1828) 3.
[58] Coyle and Damaser (1968) xi.

'deaths do not draw to an unnecessary extent upon the sympathies of the audiences' and distract from the performance being given by Forrest.[59]

Yet, for all the problems with the star-system, it enabled theatres to compete in an increasingly overcrowded and varied entertainment industry. In major urban centres such as New York, where pleasure-seekers had the choice of circuses, pleasure gardens, museums, pleasure boat excursions, and hot-air balloon rides, theatres could no longer simply contract a man to spin on his head with fireworks attached to his feet and expect to draw in a crowd. The celebrity that was associated with star actors gave theatres a unique tool to attract customers, and to host a performance with no star actor was to guarantee performing to an empty house.[60]

The star-system not only allowed the theatre to flourish economically, by embracing the histrionic idiosyncrasies of the various star actors it unleashed the latent dramatic potential of the American theatre industry. While secondary actors may have been relegated in importance, the diverse performance styles of the various star actors enabled the same play to be performed and received in equally diverse ways. Edwin Forrest may have been bombastic and exuberant, but Thomas Cooper was delicate and refined, with his biographer praising 'his fine-cut features, his noble form, his dignity of manner and grace of action, his melodious yet powerful voice'.[61] There were as many interpretations of the Classics as there were actors to interpret them.

Each of these star actors attracted different kinds of audiences. Forrest's exuberant all-American performances proved particularly popular amongst urban white working-class wage-labourers. Clement Foust describes how, in New York's working-class Bowery district, some of Forrest's lines 'became a catch phrase with boys in the street'.[62] Charles Macready's more dignified, European style of performance, on the other hand, proved more capable of attracting the well-to-do or, as George

[59] This comment is reprinted in McConachie (1992) 78.
[60] George Odell describes how, when theatres failed to contract a suitably attractive star, 'The result was inevitable. The stock actors played to empty benches', Odell (1928) 1.
[61] Ireland (1888) ix.
[62] Foust (1919) 48-9.

Odell describes them, 'the best taste of the city'.[63] Rivalries between the two were not uncommon, Forrest and Macready's rivalry was personal and political, as well as theatrical, and famously culminated in the deadly Astor Place riots 1849 that resulted in the deaths of between twenty-two and thirty-one people.[64]

As well as affecting the composition of the audiences, the star-actor could change the experience of the play. Edwin Forrest and Thomas Cooper may have been performing the same script when they starred as the lead in *Brutus*, but they offered drastically different interpretations of the character. When reporting on an 1823 performance of Brutus with Cooper in the titular role, the New York *Mirror* described: 'The trembling restlessness of the hands – the toying with his robes – the firm pressure of the lip, that would conceal the emotions he cannot restrain – and the flinging forth the arms in the "agony of grief," as he excuses his weakness'.[65] This description of Cooper in the role is corroborated by an earlier review from 1819, which claims 'Cooper moved and spoke with dignity – His fine, clear, and silver-toned voice, transported the audience – melted alarmed, soothed and terrified them – and in his expressive and manly countenance were blended the tenderness of the father with the sternness of the patriot'.[66]

Forrest's vision of the character, it seems, could not have been more different. Describing his version of Brutus' speech over the body of Lucretia in act three, scene four the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* says 'The burst of frenzy on the violator of his kinswoman's honor was – we scarce know what term to use – it was tremendous'.[67] Not all agreed Forrest's zealous style was suitable for the role though. In 1828 the *Baltimore Patriot* complained that 'when Sextus informed him of his outrage on Lucretia,

[63] Odell (1928) 279.
[64] The Astor Place riots and the rivalry between Forrest and Macready are discussed in in Bank (2006) 115; Chinn (2017a) 211; Cliff (2007) 228, 241; Coyle and Damaser (1968) xii; Hughes (1951) 150-1; McConachie (1992) 89-90; Richards (1997) 169.
[65] They are describing act three, scene one, in which Brutus views the statue of Tarquin of the Capitoline hill and implores the gods to strike him down. This is reprinted in Odell (1928) 94.
[66] New York *Evening Post* (04/11/1819) 2.
[67] New Orleans T*imes-Picayune* (10/04/1839) 2. Other descriptions of Cooper in the role can be found in the New York *National Advocate* (05/11/1819) 3 and the *Boston Intelligencer* (25/11/1820) 2.

he became a raving madman, and exerted his voice so furiously that it became hoarse and disagreeable during the rest of the performance. Now we think this to be a bad conception of the part. Brutus is a high-minded Roman, and, as such, above the ravings and foibles of mere passion'.[68] While *Brutus* may have had dubious claims to being an exclusively American text, this did not preclude stars such as Forrest from giving a distinctly American interpretation of it.

Star actors brought their distinct histrionic styles to all the roles they performed and plays set in the ancient world, particularly those introduced in chapter one, formed an important part of their repertoire. Payne's *Brutus*, Knowles' *Virginius*¸ and Banim's *Damon and Pythias* all formed part of the standard repertoire that star actors would deploy when contracted by a manager. In September 1823 the New York National Advocate called Brutus, Virginius, and Damon the 'great Roman characters' when describing Cooper's recent season in the Park Theatre in which he gave all three.[69] A series of performances that Cooper gave in Baltimore during the autumn of 1826 seem emblematic of the standard repertoire performed: on the first night he gave Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606), on the second Hotspur in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part 1* (1597), on the third Duke Aranza in John Tobin's comedy of *The Honeymoon* (1805), on the fourth Virginius in *Virginius*, on the fifth Leon in John Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and have a Wife* (1624), on the sixth Damon in *Damon and Pythias*, and to conclude he once more gave Virginius in *Virginius*.[70] Out of these seven performances two are given to Shakespeare, two to comedies, and three to representations of the Classics.

The data discussed in chapter one revealed that this series of performances was not anomalous. Alongside *Brutus*, both *Virginius* and *Damon and Pythias* enjoyed considerable popularity in the United States throughout the 1820s. These two plays, like *Brutus*, examined themes that were highly

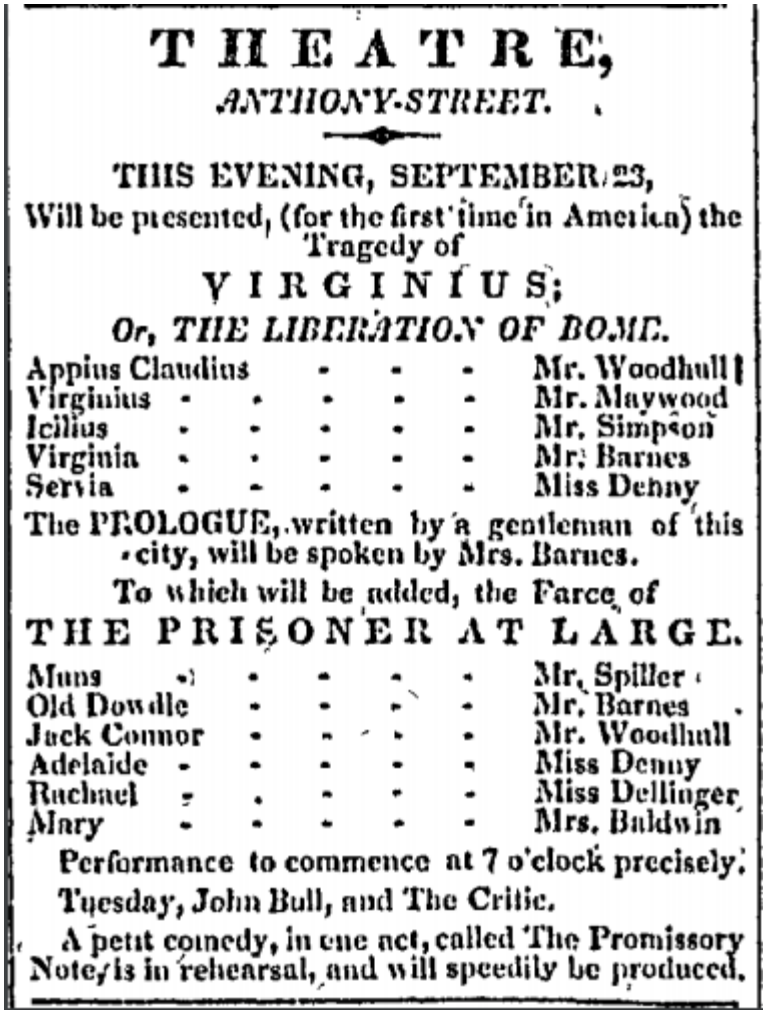
[68] *Baltimore Patriot* (13/02/1828) 3.
[69] This is reprinted in Odell (1928) 92.
[70] These can be found in *Baltimore Patriot* (25/10/1826) 2; (27/10/1826) 3; (28/10/1826) 3; (30/10/1826) 2; (02/11/1826) 2; (04/11/1826) 3; (06/11/1826) 3.

pertinent to the concerns of American audiences, albeit they each approached them from different positions. They also offered ample scope for star actors to leave their mark on the titular roles.

5.3 The star-system and the Classics in James Sheridan Knowles' *Virginius; or, The Liberation of Rome* (1820) and John Banim's *Damon and Pythias* (1821)

Virginius, like *Brutus*, drew on Livy's *History of Rome* to present a story of family turmoil and overthrow of tyranny taken from the earliest chapters of Rome's history.[71] Having previously enjoyed success with *Caius Gracchus* (1815), the London-based James Sheridan Knowles turned his attention to Rome once more and produced *Virginius* to be performed by William Charles Macready in London's Covent Garden theatre in 1820.[72] Unlike his *Caius Gracchus*, which attracted only minor American popularity, *Virginius* proved an abiding success in the United States. On 23rd September of that same year, an advert placed in the New York *American* proudly boasted that, that evening, *Virginius* 'will be performed, (for the first time in America)':

[71] Livy's version of events can be found in Livy *History of Rome* 3.44-58.
[72] Howe (1922) 304.



THEATRE,
ANTHONY-STREET.

THIS EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23,
Will be presented, (for the first time in America) the Tragedy of
VIRGINIUS;
Or, THE LIBERATION OF ROME.

Appius Claudius	Mr. Woodhull
Virginius	Mr. Maywood
Icilius	Mr. Simpson
Virginia	Mr. Barnes
Servia	Miss Denny

The PROLOGUE, written by a gentleman of this city, will be spoken by Mrs. Barnes.

To which will be added, the Farce of
THE PRISONER AT LARGE.

Muns	Mr. Spiller
Old Dowdle	Mr. Barnes
Jack Connor	Mr. Woodhull
Adelaide	Miss Denny
Rachael	Miss Dellinger
Mary	Mrs. Baldwin

Performance to commence at 7 o'clock precisely.
Tuesday, John Bull, and The Critic.
A petit comedy, in one act, called The Promissory Note, is in rehearsal, and will speedily be produced.

Figure 5.4 – Newspaper advertisement, New York *American* (23/09/1820) 3.

The play is set during the rule of the decemvirate, a ten-man body that has seized control of the Roman republic by manipulating the electorate. The decemvirs, led by Appius, rule in a corrupt and selfish manner but maintain popular support amongst the electorate through effective oratory and pandering to the conceits of the mob. The titular Virginius, a widowed Centurion, and his friend, the aged Dentatus, are amongst the few men who openly decry their corruption. Appius sets his eyes upon Virginia, Virginius' virginal daughter who is already betrothed to be wed, and is overcome by lust. Appius hatches a plan with his client, Claudius, to claim that Virginia is actually the estranged daughter of one of Claudius' slaves and therefore a slave herself. Appius and Claudius attempt to seize Virginia but are stopped by a crowd of citizens who realise the injustice of the act. Appius convenes a kangaroo court to rule that Virginia is indeed Claudius' slave but, before Appius can seize her, Virginius,

wishing to guard his daughter's chastity, slays her. This act is compounded by news that Appius has had the venerable Dentatus murdered for his opposition to the decemvirate, inciting a popular revolt against the decemvirate. The decemvirs are ultimately imprisoned and Virginius, mad with grief at his daughter's death, kills Appius in his prison cell.

There are obvious similarities between this story and that presented in Payne's *Brutus*. They each share themes of threatened female chastity, Virginia in the case of *Virginius* and Lucretia in the case of *Brutus*. They are both demonstrative of the danger of tyrants' unchecked powers, the rule of the Decemvirs in the case of *Virginius* and of King Tarquin in the case of *Brutus*. Knowles' play acknowledges the similarities between the two episodes of Roman history, declaring Virginia to be 'A second, but / Unstained Lucretia' in act four, scene two of the play.[73]

Virginius, like *Brutus*, also explores the dangers of popular rule and the fickleness of the mob. The populace are described as being 'like a herd of tame oxen … with most beast-like docility' (act one, scene two) while placated, and a 'ferment' (act four, scene two) when angered.[74] They are denounced as a 'fickle crowd, that change with every change' (act five, scene two).[75] Virginius derides politicians that court public affections and act as 'men of the people', instead seeming to favour a more disinterested, paternalistic model of leadership: 'I am not pleas'd when a Patrician bends / His head to a Plebeian's girdle! … / I'd rather he should stand aloof, and wear / His shoulder high' (act one, scene one).[76]

Populist politicians such as Appius are shown to be selfish and disingenuous. Appius reassures the citizenry that 'we hold / Our power but for your good. Your gift it was' (act one, scene one) and receives their enthusiastic support.[77] Appius' supporters even threaten Dentatus for criticising Appius, warning him that 'he does nothing but insult the people' (act one, scene one) by speaking against the

[73] Knowles (1826) 61.
[74] Ibid. 53.
[75] Ibid. 64.
[76] Ibid. 13.
[77] Ibid. 14.

decemvirs.[78] Yet, a few scenes later, Appius revels in the absurd power that he and the other decemvirs have been able to accrue:

> App. at our feet array
>
> the wealth, and power, and dignity of Rome
>
> In absolute subjection! Tyranny!
>
> How godlike is thy port! (act two, scene three)[79]

Despite their claims to be championing the rights and interests of the people, the Decemvirs are only really interested in manipulating the people in order to concentrate ever more power into their own hands.

The pertinence of this idea to the United States during the 1820s is obvious. Jackson's opponents regularly accused him of manipulating the electorate and warned of the backroom cabal of cronies, the so-called 'Kitchen Cabinet', with whom he was collaborating to control the nation.[80] These fears would later come to a head during the bank crisis of 1832, during which Jackson exercised his Presidential veto to block Congressional efforts to re-charter the Bank of the United States. During his address concerning this veto, Jackson claimed he was acting to prevent the 'concentration of power in the hands of a few men irresponsible to the people'.[81] His opponents, on the other hand, accused him of exploiting class warfare for political gain, describing his address as 'the very slang of the leveller and demagogue'.[82] During the 1832 election, Jackson's opponents would identify themselves with Rome's *optimates* who sought to protect the Republic's political institutions from the demagoguery and populism of Caesar. While visiting the tomb of Cicero in Rome, R.S. Browning wrote to Henry Clay, Jackson's main opponent in the 1832 Presidential election, to express his hope that, unlike their Roman forebears, the American people would 'prove to the world that they are not deluded by the

[78] Ibid. 16.
[79] Ibid. 28.
[80] Opposition to Jackson's 'Kitchen Cabinet' is discussed in Latner (1978) 367-88.
[81] Jackson's address is reprinted in Gilbart (1837) 22. This is discussed in Perkins (1987) 531-50.
[82] Latner (2002) 112.

success of a military chieftain'.[83] *Virginius*, with its manipulable crowds and deceptive demagogues, would seem to offer a rather cynical, somewhat Whiggish, interpretation of the circumstances faced by contemporary Americans.

In contrast to *Virginius*, Banim's *Damon and Pythias* offers a vision of the ancient world more sympathetic to democratic populists such as Jackson. Like *Virginius, Damon and Pythias* was written to be performed by William Charles Macready in London's Covent Garden theatre.[84] After its London premiere on 28th May 1821, the play reached American shores in less than half a year. It was performed in New York's Park Theatre on 10th September of the same year and received an American edition printed by Philadelphia's Mifflin and Parry company in 1829.[85]

The play, which chapter one showed to have enjoyed a similar degree of popularity as Knowles' *Virginius*, is set in Syracuse during Dionysius I's seizure of power. As its title suggests, it relates the Greek legend of the friendship between Damon and Pythias that is examined by a variety of classical authors including Cicero and Diodorus Siculus.[86] Banim himself records that he primarily used Pliny's account to supply him with the 'raw materials' of the story.[87]

The Syracuse depicted in the play is shown to be ruled by a corrupt, effeminate, and ineffective Senate. Dionysius intends to exploit their weakness and seize power in a military coup. The only potential thorn in his side is Damon; a charismatic and popular citizen who incites the citizens against him. Regardless, he stages his coup and compels the Senate to disband and crown him as King. Damon interrupts proceedings and condemns the cowardice of the senators, causing Dionysius to have him arrested and sentenced to death. Damon accepts this sentence, but asks leave to go and visit his family on his estate before his execution. Dionysius accepts on the condition that his friend Pythias act as collateral and warns that he will execute Pythias in Damon's place if he fails to return within six hours.

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[83] Miles (1968) 361.
[84] Murray (1857) 79.
[85] Odell (1928) 7.
[86] Cicero *On Duties* 3.45 and Diodorus Siculus *Historical Library* 10.4.
[87] Murray (1857) 77.

Damon leaves and bids a teary farewell to his wife and child, but is waylaid in returning by the death of his horse. Back in Syracuse, Pythias willingly prepares to be executed in place of his friend and is led to the scaffold as the end of Damon's six hours draws near. Just as Pythias is about to be executed Damon appears, embraces Pythias, and reveals that he had to steal a horse to replace his dead one. As Damon readies himself to be executed, Dionysius, moved by their friendship, agrees to pardon him. The play concludes with Dionysius extolling the beauty of their friendship and how it has inspired him to imitate their virtue.

Like *Virginius, Damon and Pythias* examines the nature of populist leaders and political tyranny. Except, where *Virginius* warns against demagogues, populists and false men-of-the-people manipulating the populace and subverting established political institutions, in *Damon and Pythias* it is the titular heroes that bear the label of demagogue. Dionysius labels Damon a 'scolding demagogue' (act one, scene one) who uses 'pithy sentences' to frustrate Dionysius' efforts to control the senate.[88] Dionysius exhibits no such qualities. Instead of demagoguery, it is the weakness and effeminacy of Syracuse's political institutions that enables Dionysius to seize power. Pythias bemoans 'the coward senate' (act two, scene two) for kowtowing to Dionysius' demands, while Damon complains that Syracuse has become 'degenerate, / Corrupted, and voluptuous':

> Dam: When highly-born and meanly minded nobles
> Would barter freedom for a great man's feast,
> And sell their country for a smile? (act one, scene two)[89]

This is a key difference between *Virginius* and *Damon and Pythias*. In *Virginius* the fickleness of the people and their susceptibility to demagogues makes tyranny inevitable unless they are held in check by paternalistic political institutions. In *Damon and Pythias* those political institutions inevitably become subject to inertia, decadence, and corruption. The only solution for honest citizens is to

[88] Banim (1829) 4.
[89] Ibid. 8.

retreat into the personal bonds of masculine fellowship and, through fraternal bonds, inspire political virtue from the ground up.[90] It is not the venerable political institutions of Syracuse, but the manly brotherhood of Damon and Pythias that finds a solution to the political crisis by inspiring Dionysius to emulate their fraternal virtue.[91] Dionysius concludes the play by remarking on how he will seek to imitate them:

> Dion: I myself, by the continued light
>
> Of your example, may at last essay
>
> To tread such wond'rous ways of virtue with you (act five, scene two)[92]

As with *Virginius*, there is a clear pertinence of this message to the circumstances faced by the play's American audiences. Damon's opposition to Syracuse's established political institutions and its effeminate, elite Senate finds an apt parallel in Jackson's adversarial relationship with the United States' own paternalistic political institutions.[93]

Just as Damon and Pythias' fraternal bond enabled them to triumph in the face of Dionysius' oppression, the white working-class men who formed the core of Jackson's support placed great emphasis on a shared sense of brotherhood. The frontier culture that Jackson associated himself with was, in the words of Donald B. Cole, 'held together by male institutions, notably an aggressive code of honor, networks of friendships, and' fraternal organisations.[94] Jackson's electoral success can be partly

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[90] Damon remarks on the superiority of private to public life in times of political corruption:

> I have wish'd myself,
> That to the blest retreats of private life
> My lot had been awarded; - every hour
> Makes one more sick and weary with the sense
> Of this same hopeless service of a state,
> Where there is not of virtue left
> To feed the flarings of our liberty. (act one, scene two), Ibid. 11.

This is rather reminiscent of the line from Addison's *Cato* that 'When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway, the post of honor is a private station' (act four, scene four), Addison (1806) 57.

[91] The love the two men share for each other is unmistakeable, Damon refers to Pythias as 'my halved heart' (act one, scene two), Banim (1829) 10.

[92] Ibid. 63.

[93] Jackson famously clashed with Chief Justice John Marshall and the Supreme Court over issues such as the 1832 Bank Crisis. This rivalry is discussed in Boller and George (1989) 53; Perkins (1987) 531-50.

[94] Cole (2003).

ascribed to the support he received from fraternal organisations such as Tammany Hall, which mobilised support for him within New York City.[95] *Damon and Pythias'* depiction of a popular, anti-establishment agitator buoyed by the bonds of masculine brotherhood in his struggles against a corrupt political establishment is apt to Jackson's America.

Both *Virginius* and *Damon and Pythias* are highly pertinent to the anxiety over the increasing democratisation of the 1820s, but each has starkly different solutions to these anxieties: one paternalistic, the other populist. *Virginius* follows very much in the ideological tradition of *The Roman Father* and *The Grecian Daughter*, emphasising the importance of disinterested leadership and filial loyalty for the maintenance of civic virtue.[96] *Damon and Pythias* rejects this tradition, instead advocating that civic virtue is maintained by the masculine honour and brotherhood of ordinary citizens.[97] In these two plays the ancient world is being used to offer two distinctly different interpretations of the problems facing 1820s American society.

These ideological divisions are reflected in how the different star actors that dominated the American stage engaged with these texts. In chapter one the performance frequencies of these plays were broken down according to both the venues in which they were performed and the star actor that

[95] Tammany Hall's support for Jackson is discussed in Golway (2014) 8-9.

[96] Audiences seemed to be aware of this connection. Several years later in 1839, the New York *Morning Herald* reported on the news of a Philadelphia shop-keeper killing his daughter to protect her chastity from a seducer and looked to historical precedent to understand these actions. It read 'a sister was killed by the survivor of the Horatii and the Curatii fight; Virginius killed his daughter to save her from violation; and lastly, in modern times, we have the sacrifice of the beautiful Miss Wood. … the Roman killed his for the glory of his country. The man of modern days kills his for the glory of his shop'. New York *Morning Herald* (03/10/1839) 2. Virginius even found his way into waxwork displays of national heroes to emulate, in much the same way that Euphrasia from *The Grecian Daughter* had, *New-England Palladium* (03/05/1803) 4.

[97] This theme seems to have been received and embraced by American audiences. An open letter 'To the Democratic Members of the General Assembly' that was published in the *Richmond Enquirer*, evidently dismayed at their partisan bickering, implored the divided politicians to emulate Damon and Pythias' example of manly brotherhood: 'I address you, as friends of your country – as men, whatever be your party bias, ready to stand in the breach of her dearest rights, whether made on the right hand or the left. Damon should not throw the mantle of forbearance over the faults of Pythias, nor Pythias over those of Damon, when country is at stake'. *Richmond Enquirer* (02/02/1839) 3. Other examples of the example of Damon and Pythias being used in similar ways includes *Richmond Enquirer* (12/03/1840) 2; *New York Daily Times* (08/01/1853) 4; (19/10/1853) 2. These instances of *Damon and Pythias* being discussed in periodical media are particularly notable given the increasing prominence of working-class readers as an audience for print media, as is discussed in Sclater (2001) and Brown (2019) 64-77.

performed them. This data showed that, barring occasional forays into the opera, there was very little to distinguish the repertoires being performed in different theatres. New York's Park Theatre may have attempted to cultivate a more respectable image for itself in contrast to the Bowery, which swiftly becoming associated with working-class audiences and democratic politics, yet both theatres offered almost identical repertoires and similar levels of luxury.[98]

Where a division in repertoires did emerge, however, was with regards to the star actors. Chapter one compared the performance frequencies of the two best documented star actors, Edwin Forrest and Thomas Cooper, and showed that Forrest heavily favoured performing *Damon and Pythias* while Cooper favoured *Virginius*.[99] This difference becomes understandable when one considers the relationships of these two actors to America's emerging class consciousness.

The aggressive machismo of Forrest's acting style made him a firm favourite amongst the populations of white working-class men that were emerging in America's urban centres. The development of industrial capitalist economies, especially in the north-east, broke down the traditional structures of live-in apprentices bonded to artisanal master-craftsmen. They were replaced with systems of wage-earning labourers that competed for manual jobs within a commercial economy.[100] Removed from the paternalistic economic bonds of master and apprentice, these wage-labourers responded to their novel economic status by emphasising white working-class brotherhood in the face of industrial

[98] Rosemarie Bank points out that, while both contemporary and modern commentators tend to identify the Park theatre with the elite 'bon-ton' and the Bowery with the working-classes (see Grimsted [1968] 83-4; Lewis [2007] 14; McConachie [1992] 120; Odell [1928] 544; Quinn [1951] 200) there is very little to distinguish the two in terms of repertoire or luxury. All of New York's theatres were similarly squalid, with every single theatre sharing their blocks with at least one brothel, and 34% of the city's brothels being situated within two and a half blocks of theatres, Bank (2006) 52. The lack of distinction between the houses is further discussed in Bank (2006) 115-17.

[99] It will be recalled that (excluding performances of *The Gladiator*) *Damon and Pythias* accounted for 50% of Forrest's performances while *Virginius* only accounted for 27.5%. In contrast, *Damon and Pythias* accounted for only 40% of Cooper's performances while *Virginius* accounted for 37%.

[100] Rosemarie Bank cites figures showing that from 1820 onwards the percentage of master craftsmen in the work force dropped from over 34% to approximately 16% while the percentage of wage-labourers rose from 38.6% to 55%, Bank (2006) 77.

exploitation.[101] Theatres continued to be a multi-class space, occupied by both educated patriciate and wage-labourer. However, a combination of lowering ticket prices and rising disposable income allowed this new working-class to attend the theatre in ever-greater numbers, feeding into the broader emergence of a split in what Lawrence Levine categorizes as 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' entertainments.[102] This class of theatre-going white urbanite is emblematised by the so-called 'Bowery B'hoys' who inhabited lower Manhattan. Conspicuously dressed, fiercely nativist, and reliably rowdy, these wage-labourers-cum-street-thugs were notoriously outspoken in support of their twin heroes: Edwin Forrest and Andrew Jackson.[103]

Forrest, for his part, actively courted their adoration. Styling himself as a home-grown man-of-the-people, he championed the native honour of the American workingman and publicly feuded with foreign-born actors who were deemed 'aristocratic' in their bearing.[104] Forrest was lauded by the nativist working-class for this. Years later, after he lost an embarrassing and highly publicised divorce case, he was greeted at his next performance by a theatre filled to overflowing, a standing ovation, and a huge banner on which was printed 'THIS IS THE PEOPLE'S VERDICT'.[105] Forrest was even considered as a nominee for political office by the New York Democrats, a prospect that terrified patriciate New Yorkers.[106] This courting of popular adoration ensured that Forrest consistently

[101] The continued elite patronage of theatres is discussed in McConachie (1992) 14-5. The emergence of white working-class identity is discussed in Bank (2006) 46, 81-2; Chinn (2017a) 12-14 Malamud (2009) 5; McConachie (1992) 57, 95-6; Watts (1986) 127.

[102] Bruce McConachie has used the changes in ticket prices and the weighting of pit, box, and gallery seats to show how theatres shifted towards a model of working-class patronisation, McConachie (1992) 9-11. The increasing important of working-class audiences in the theatres during the 1820s is also discussed in Bank (2006) 51; Chinn (2017a) 18, 173; Chinn (2017b) 8; Martin (1999) 90; Monod (2016) 4; Quinn (1951) 199. Forrest's popularity amongst working-class audiences is discussed in McConachie (1992) xii, 92; Nathans (2009) 184; Richards (1997) xv.

[103] Rosemarie Bank offers an extensive description of the Bowery B'hoys with their characteristic hairstyle (cropped as short as possible with the exception of their front locks, which grew to considerable length and were then styled into rolls using bear fat), dress (a school-boy shirt designed to expose the breadth of their neck worn under a black frock coat that extended below the knee), and headgear (a broad-brimmed hat that was polished to a shine and then worn pitched forward), Bank (2006) 85-6. Their love for Forrest is discussed in McConachie (1992) 92; Nathans (2009) 184; Richards (1997) xv.

[104] The most notable of these is Forrest's rivalry with the English actor Charles Macready, which culminated in the Astor Place Riot of 1849. This rivalry is discussed in Bank (2006) 115; Chinn (2017a) 211; Coyle and Damaser (1968) xii; Hughes (1951) 150-1; McConachie (1992) 89-90; Richards (1997) 169.

[105] This incident is discussed in McConachie (1992) 69.

[106] Forrest's consideration for political office is discussed in Martin (1999) 96; McConachie (1992) 92.

attracted Democratic-leaning audiences and has led Bruce McConachie to label Forrest 'the Andrew Jackson of his profession'.[107] Given all of this, it is perfectly understandable why *Damon and Pythias*, with its themes of manly camaraderie in the face of elite corruption, was a more frequently used vehicle for Forrest than *Virginius*.

In contrast, more classically-trained, European-styled actors such as Thomas Cooper and Charles Macready seem to have primarily attracted the educated, patriciate, elite sections of society against whom Forrest and his enthusiasts were railing. George Odell comments in his *Annals of the New York Stage* (1928) that Macready's appearance is sure to attract 'the best taste of the city'.[108] It is therefore no wonder that the data from chapter one revealed a leaning towards *Virginius*, with its emphasis on the fickleness of the mob and importance of established political institutions, over *Damon and Pythias* within the performance repertoire of Thomas Cooper.

They may have been performing the same text, but they were not performing them the same way. Empowered by the star-system to develop their individual acting styles, star-actors were able to mold these roles in their own image to better reflect the expectations and desires of the audiences they had cultivated. Portrayed by Forrest, Damon was transformed into a barely-contained frenzy of manly passion. Reviews discuss how even Forrest's broad frame struggles 'to restrain those maddening ebullitions of conflicting passions, which illustrate the great design of heightening power of the sentiments of honor and friendship'.[109] Forrest brought his impressive physicality to bear in the role. Gabriel Harrison describes the experience of seeing Forrest in the role, praising how 'his grand and massy figure' was utilised to great effect and that, in the fifth act when he returns to Syracuse, he would arrive with 'his dress bespattered with mud, his bruised head with blood trickling down over

[107] McConachie (1992) 92. Forrest's alignment with Jacksonianism is further discussed in Malamud (2009) 28; Martin (1999) 96.
[108] Odell (1928) 279. Contemporary newspapers reflect the more respectable nature of the audiences that Cooper is able to attract. They praise the 'excellent house' he draws in and praise 'how cordially our audience can admire his performances', Odell (1928) 89, 94.
[109] *Baltimore Patriot* (01/11/1826) 2.

his face'.[110] As a unique touch he would, during the scene in which Damon and Pythias are reunited at the gallows in act five, actually leap three feet into the air to land in Pythias' arms, where the two entered into a brotherly embrace.[111] A photograph survives of Forrest in costume for the role of Damon:

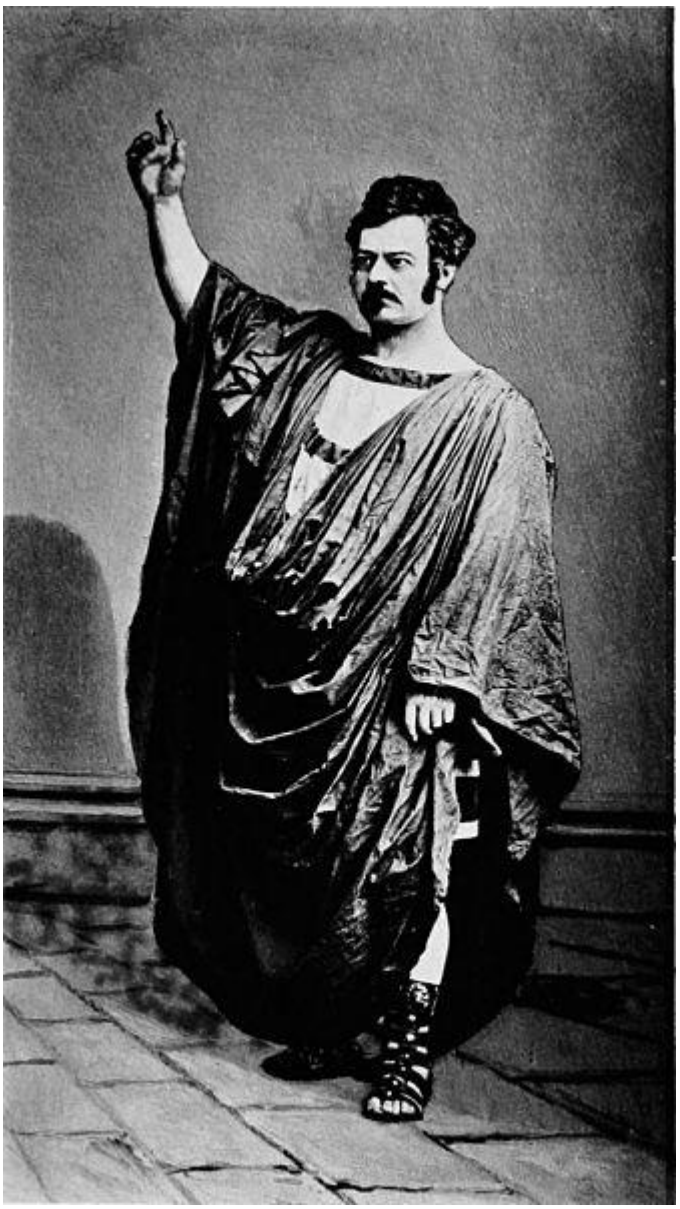


Figure 5.5 – 'Forrest as Damon', reproduced in Harrison (1889) 130.

[110] Harrison (1889) 132.
[111] Barrett (1881) 124.

In contrast to the wild passions of Forrest, Cooper's Damon appears distinctly more reserved. Discussions of Cooper's acting style praise the 'elegance of his demeanor, and the richness of his mellow-toned voice', and the 'conscious magnanimity' that Cooper is able to bring to the role.[112] Gabriel Harrison praises Cooper's 'fine voice and good elocution' that enabled him to invest the character of Damon with an unparalleled 'dignity and classicness'.[113]

The two actors' Virginiuses were similarly varied. Cooper was praised for his 'stately' bearing and the 'peculiar high tone' that he was able to inject into the character.[114] Forrest's version was described as 'a plain, honest soldier' who was 'without any of the strut and pompous manner with which most actors invest the character'.[115] His Virginius seems to have been as physical as his Damon. One account describes how, in the third act, upon learning that his daughter had been taken as a slave, Forrest would seemingly change in colour (whether to paleness from shock or redness from anger is unclear) and animate every muscle in his body: 'The twitching of his fingers, the contraction of the muscles in his arms and legs and his very toes that protruded through his sandals seemed grasping at the stage in his efforts to keep calm'. The delivery of his next lines were compared to 'the heaving of the mountain top before it bursts asunder and sends forth its impetuous volcanic fury'.[116] Some reviewers questioned whether this generally more subdued role was really appropriate to Forrest's heavily physical style. One review criticised Forrest's 'heavy tendency to extravagance and overacting'.[117]

As Damon, Forrest was able to use the exuberant virility and unrestrained passion of his acting style to enhance the play's theme of manly brotherhood. As Virginius, Cooper was able to bring his more restrained style to bear to portray a more dignified and aloof version of the character, enhancing the play's theme of the importance of disinterested leadership in the face of popular tumult. By offering their own individual interpretation of these roles, star actors were able to develop the themes that

[112] Quoted in Odell (1928) 90, 561.
[113] Harrison (1889) 130-1.
[114] *Baltimore Patriot* (01/11/1826) 2; Odell (1928) 561
[115] Harrison (1889) 15.
[116] Ibid. 18.
[117] Odell (1928) 269.

they and their audiences found relevant. Yet, the capital that these actors were able to accrue through their fame would soon allow them to go further than simply make their mark on an imported British play. Rather than injecting his own exuberance into existing roles, by the end of the 1820s Forrest would be able to commission wholly new characters to serve as vehicles for his vision of American masculinity in the democratic age.

5.4 Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* (1831) and the creation of a distinctly American interpretation of the Classics

Forrest, like William Dunlap before him, firmly believed that America must one day throw off the cultural shackles of Europe and develop a dramatic literature that was uniquely and unmistakably American.[118] Unlike Dunlap, whose efforts to stage plays on native themes performed to empty houses, Forrest had a resource guaranteed to draw crowds: himself. His success and fame ensured he had enough financial capital to effectively patronise American playwrights and, as long as he was the one performing them, enough star power to attract audiences.

In 1829 he offered his first cash prize for a play that might serve as an appropriate vehicle for himself. Contemporary commentators and admirers of Forrest praised his magnanimity, patriotism, and generosity at his willingness to support American playwrights out of his own pocket.[119] Modern commentators have rather more cynically pointed out these prizes were a financially shrewd move on Forrest's part, and that the returns he gained from performing these plays were well in excess of the comparatively paltry sums he offered for their writing.[120] The most profitable of all these plays was *The Gladiator*. *The Gladiator* was Forrest's most popular vehicle. Performed over one thousand times

[118] This is discussed in Barrett (1881) 48; Chinn (2017a) 201.

[119] Forrest's nineteenth century biographer describes the 'heavy monetary losses' that Forrest incurred through this patronage while Clement Foust praises the 'splendid chance' that Forrest offered native playwrights 'to win their spurs', Barrett (1881) 48; Foust (1919) 36.

[120] It is notable that many of the playwrights who Forrest patronised ultimately ended up suffering from money troubles, with one, John Augustus Stone, ultimately committing suicide as a result of his financial difficulties, Foust (1919) 60; Hughes (1951) 134-5; Richards (1997) 169. The imbalance between Forrest's prizes and his own profits are discussed in Chinn (2017a) 200; Coyle and Damaser (1968) xii; Martin (1999) 91-2; Volo and Volo (2000) 316.

over the course of his career, chapter one showed the play to have been an instant and enduring success.[121] It was written by Robert Montgomery Bird, a doctor from Philadelphia, in return for a prize of $1000 and tells the story of Rome's most famous rebel: Spartacus.[122]

The play's story loosely follows the versions of events presented in ancient accounts and follows the course of Spartacus' revolt from its inception to its bloody conclusion. Spartacus and his brother have been snatched from their native Thrace, separated, and enslaved. Impressed by his virility, Spartacus' masters persuade him to fight as a gladiator by offering to buy his wife and child so they might be reunited. Spartacus reluctantly slays several opponents in the pit until he is told he will fight against a fellow Thracian. When his opponent is revealed he is shocked to find himself face-to-face with his own brother, Phasarius. The two embrace, resolve against killing each other, and lead their fellow gladiators in a daring revolt. The photograph below shows Forrest in costume for the role:

[121] *The Gladiator*'s popularity is discussed in Chinn (2017a) 201; Foust (1919) 39, 167-8; Illard (1975) 15-16; Malamud (2009) 40; Nathans (2009) 175; Odell (1928) 547; Quinn (1951) 237; Richards (1997) 167; Volo and Volo (2000) 317.
[122] The prize for *The Gladiator* is discussed in Foust (1919) 39; Richards (1997) 166.



Figure 5.6 – 'Forrest as Spartacus'. New York Public Library, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, no. 99113.

A short time lapse reveals that Spartacus' revolt has been successful and defeated several Roman armies in the field, but is suffering from internal division. A contingent of German slaves, finding their goals incompatible with Spartacus', break out on their own. Despite this, Spartacus continues winning victories and even takes the Roman general Crassus' orphaned niece, Julia, hostage. This causes a division between Spartacus and Phasarius, as Phasarius wishes to claim Julia as his own prisoner and march on Rome. Spartacus, on the other hand, is moved to pity by her orphanhood and wishes to

show mercy by ransoming her back to Crassus. Enraged, Phasarius takes a significant portion of the army in a doomed effort to attack the city of Rome itself. Phasarius' army is destroyed and Phasarius apologetically returns to Spartacus. Realising the futility of his situation, Spartacus resolves to assault Crassus' camp in order to allow the women and children time to escape. This is not enough and Spartacus' wife and child are slain while trying to flee. Frenzied, Spartacus suicidally charges into the heart of Crassus' camp and is cut down. The play closes with Spartacus seeing a vision of his home and family before succumbing to his wounds.

Born to a respectable family in New Castle, Delaware, Bird received as comprehensive an education as could be found in the United States. After receiving his preliminary schooling at the New Castle Academy and being an active patron of the New Castle Library Company, Bird proceeded to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania and began his own medical practice.[123] The heavily Classics-oriented education then prevalent in the U.S. evidently had an effect on Bird. Throughout his diaries and notebooks, he can often be found to be considering the themes and lessons of the classical authors. On 27th August, 1831, Bird wrote in his diary on the subject of Suetonius' *Lives* and pessimistically compared his achievements thus far in life to those of 'the mightiest Julius'.[124] His notes in preparation for *The Gladiator* reveal the great efforts he undertook in researching for the play. Besides consulting the ancient accounts of the Spartacus revolt given in Plutarch, Florus, Eutropius, Tacitus, Velleius Paterculus, Appian, and Sallust, Bird also studied the more recent discussions of the episode found in Adam Ferguson's *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (1783) and Nathaniel Hooke's *Roman History, from the Building of Rome to the Ruin of the Commonwealth* (1738-71).[125] Informed by these accounts, Bird crafted a play that was uniquely suited to Edwin Forrest and the white-working class audiences to whom he performed.

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[123] Bird's early life and education is discussed in Foust (1919) 1-16.

[124] This episode is reprinted in Foust (1919) 50. Bird's love of the classical texts is further discussed in Quinn (1951) 223, who calls him 'one of the most scholarly … men of his time' who 'read creatively and not merely to forget'.

[125] A discussion of Bird's engagement with these sources can be found in Foust (1919) 72; Illard (1975) 16-17; Quinn (1951) 230.

One might be tempted to presume that given the centrality of slavery and its injustices to Bird's story, the play would be liable to being interpreted in an abolitionist light, and thus inappropriate towards audiences living in a nation that itself practices slavery. Walt Whitman, upon viewing the play, commented that it is 'as full of "abolitionism" as an egg is of meat'.[126] Bird himself prophesied that if '*The Gladiator* were produced in a slave state, the managers, plays, and perhaps myself in the bargain would be rewarded with the Penitentiary'.[127] It is understandable why Bird might have feared his play would alienate audiences sympathetic towards the institution of slavery, only one month before *The Gladiator*'s premiere the Nat Turner slave revolt had erupted in Virginia and ended in the deaths of 55 to 65 people at the hands of rebel slaves.[128]

Yet, his fears were seemingly unwarranted. As Margaret Malamud has pointed out, abolitionism was still 'a minority position' during the 1830s, and little abolitionist sentiment was read into the play.[129] The play was performed throughout the south well into the 1840s free of incident. Excepting the occasional barring of black audience members from a performance, white audiences made little connection between the injustice of Spartacus' situation and their own peculiar institution.[130] Just as slave-holders viewing performances of *Cato* in the 1770s seemed oblivious to the implications of Juba and Marcia's interracial romance, *The Gladiator*'s classical setting seemed to occasion a certain degree of cognitive dissonance amongst audiences of the 1830s. The very texts that Bird had studied as research for *The Gladiator* are indicative of why such a dissonance existed. The histories produced by

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[126] Whitman's comments are discussed in Illard (1975) 15; McConachie (1992) 117.

[127] Bird's fears about how the play would be received by southern audiences are discussed in Foust (1919) 51, 169; McConachie (1992) 117; Nathans (2009) 175-6.

[128] Bird himself was aware of the potential similarities between Turner's and Spartacus' slave revolts, commenting that 'If they had had a Spartacus among them to organize the half a million of Virginia, the hundreds of thousands in the [other] states, and lead them on in the Crusade of Massacre, what a blessed example might they not give to the world of the excellence of slavery!', Malamud (2009) 44

[129] Malamud (2009) 44. It would not be until the 1840s and 50s, when charismatic abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and anti-slavery texts such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would come to the fore, that abolitionism would become a more mainstream political movement, Gatewood Jr (1981) 340-4; Goldner (2001) 71-84; Kaufman (2006) 18.

[130] Rosemarie Bank identifies an incident from 1839 in which black theatre-goers were barred from an attendance of *The Gladiator*, (2006) 96. The wider obliviousness to any potential anti-slavery message within the play is discussed in Dormon Jr (1967) 277-8; Malamud (2009) 44-5; Nathans (2009) 175-6.

Adam Ferguson and Nathaniel Hooke during the late eighteenth century scarcely touch on the condition or treatment of Roman slaves. Ferguson's account of Spartacus' revolt covers little over two pages, and is mostly understood in terms of its relationship to broader Roman cultural and political developments.[131] Hooke's history of early Rome almost exclusively describes slavery in commercial terms, describing slaves in terms of their economic status and types of mechanic labour they performed.[132] The subject of the *latifundia*, the profitable large-scale slave estates that modern observers see as resembling the slave plantations of the antebellum south, is not touched upon in either.[133]

It is thus unsurprising that, instead of reading Spartacus' slave revolt as a revolt against the institution of slavery, *The Gladiator*'s white audiences instead seemed to connect it with their own class-based economic exploitation at the hands of political and economic elites. *The Gladiator*'s resonance amongst democratic-leaning, working-class audiences has been well documented. Sarah Chinn has described how 'the play's themes of rebellion by the downtrodden led by a virtuous, fearless, eloquent, physically tough man of the people' ensured that it 'became a particular favorite of the workingmen who made up a large proportion of theatrical audiences'.[134] Margaret Malamud understands the play as 'a metaphoric use of slavery by white men to describe their political oppression by other whites'.[135] Jeffrey Richards describes Bird's Spartacus as being cast in the mold of the 'American democrat, the oppressed underdog who through thirst for individual freedom and love of family risks all in taking on a tyrannical government'.[136] Bruce McConachie similarly reads in

[131] Ferguson frames the revolt as arising from the cultural degradation of the Romans, describing how 'the Romans were more intoxicated than any populace in modern Europe now are with the baiting of bulls, or the running of horses, probably because they were more deeply affected, and more violently moved', Ferguson (1834) 145-7.
[132] Throughout Hooke discusses slaves synonymously with Romans of low economic status, Hooke (1821) 207, 212-7, 268, 409, 441. He describes slaves as being 'people of mean trades' and discusses them in terms of the 'sordid and mechanic arts' to which they were committed, in contrast to the 'more honest labour' that was reserved 'to the freeman and citizens', Hooke (1821) 41, 134, 184.
[133] Such a comparison is made in Berry (1943) 156-8.
[134] Chinn (2017a) 201.
[135] Malamud (2009) 40-1.
[136] Richards (1997) 168.

Spartacus' calls for freedom a demand, not to abolish the institution of slavery, but 'to support an issue dear to the heart of fervent Jacksonians: the people's assault on aristocratic privilege'.[137] It is not difficult to see why the play struck such a chord in Jackson's America.

The play presents three key ideas to the audience: the power of raw, un-tempered masculinity; the importance of fraternal camaraderie in the face of oppression; and the necessity of whole-heartedly rejecting corrupted political institutions. As has already been seen, these were ideas fundamental to democratic-leaning audiences. Given Forrest's emulation of Jackson, it is unsurprising to find them so at the fore of a play custom designed for himself.

Forrest's rough masculinity was integral to his stage persona, and Bird's characterisation of Spartacus provides the perfect vehicle for this masculinity. Spartacus' manly prowess remains unquestionable throughout the play. Even before he appears on stage, the audience hear descriptions of how he is 'the most desperate, unconquerable, and, indeed, skilful barbarian in the province', 'A Titan', 'a Hercules, A Mars!', and one of the greatest swordsmen that has ever been seen (act one, scene one).[138] This theme continues throughout the play, and Spartacus continues to stand as a man among men until his death. Besides the several feats of martial prowess that Spartacus accomplishes on stage, he delivers several miniature orations glorying in his success, taunts the effeminacy of his Roman adversaries, and ultimately requires the combined efforts of two Roman armies to finally cut him down.[139] Even his opponent, Crassus, has to concede that Spartacus 'has won more honour / Than even the braggart Pompey' (act five, scene seven).[140] This version of Spartacus is highly appropriate to Forrest's acting style, and it is recorded by his biographer that he performed the role 'stripped to the

[137] McConachie (1992) 114-16.
[138] Bird (1919a) 314.
[139] Examples of Spartacus using language that glories in his seemingly unconquerable masculinity include act three, scene four, during which Spartacus, having taken the Roman camp, announces 'Victory! Ha! Ha! / Romans are sheep' and 'When last we met I was a slave: and now / In a consul's camp I stand a conqueror!' Bird (1919a) 378.
[140] Ibid. 438

waist, his great muscles flexed and bulging, his veins swollen, his jaws and neck rigid, his breath obstructed'.[141]

Yet, it is important to note that, as one might expect given the U.S.'s broader engagement with literary sentimentalism during the early nineteenth century, Spartacus indomitable masculinity is accompanied by an intense emotionality. Andrew Jackson, who emblematised American masculinity during these years, off-set his implacable will with a sense of tenderness and sensibility that served to 'soften the hard outlines of the man of iron'.[142] He is known to have been easily moved to tears and was described by one of his eulogists as having 'joined a heart capable of the purest and most devoted love, rich in the tenderest affections' to his 'indomitable will'.[143] Spartacus similarly blends indomitability with tenderness. This becomes particularly apparent during his interactions with Julia, the niece of Crassus, in act four. During this episode, in which he is moved to show pity to the niece of his enemy, he shows that 'The heart that throbs beneath his bloody mail, / Can melt to pity quickly' (act four, scene one).[144] This tenderness does not undermine his masculinity, but rather is incorporated into it. When Phasarius criticises the mercy Spartacus is showing Julia, Spartacus replies by questioning Phasarius' masculinity: 'Art thou a man to plot a wrong and sorrow / (Art thou *a man!*) against a feeble orphan?' (act four, scene on).[145] Edwin Forrest, a great admirer and imitator of Andrew Jackson, similarly cast himself as being the archetypal American male. The role of Spartacus gave him the opportunity to explore these aspects of that characterisation.

In line with the democratic emphasis of fraternal honour, *The Gladiator* also places considerable emphasis on the necessity of fraternal bonds when faced with an oppressive force. Spartacus regularly uses fraternal language to describe his fellow slaves. When faced with fighting a Carthaginian in the arena, Spartacus proposes they ought to 'drop swords … As brothers' (act two, scene three).[146]

[141] This description can be found in Foust (1919) 48.
[142] Ward (1962) 192.
[143] This is taken from George Bancroft's eulogy, which can be found in Derby (1845) 268.
[144] Bird (1919a) 385.
[145] Ibid. 389.
[146] Ibid. 343.

Regardless of their nationality, revolting slaves in Spartacus' army are given a fraternal appellation. For example, Crixus, the leader of the German contingent, is referred to as 'brother Crixus' (act three, scene two).[147] Spartacus' revolt begins when he and his biological brother, Phasarius, reunite in the arena, embrace, and unite in the face of their common enemy. The revolt fails when these bonds break, his army fractures, and Phasarius tells Spartacus that 'thou art / No longer brother of mine' (act four, scene one).[148] Bonded, even lowly slaves can take on the might of Rome. Without these bonds, they are doomed to be divided and defeated. The chord that this theme struck amongst democratic audiences is demonstrated by fact that, during the scene in which Spartacus and Phasarius are reunited and embrace, Forrest's audiences would regularly 'burst into riot and interrupt the action'.[149]

Finally, just as Jackson's rough populism was characterised by his political assault on governmental institutions such as the Supreme Court, Spartacus' rebellion is framed as a revolt against Rome's elitist political oppression. The Rome presented in *The Gladiator* is corrupt beyond the point of redemption. In contrast to the oppressed slaves whom they exploit, Rome's citizens are shown to have been corrupted and effeminised by the wealth and luxury that they have accrued through their conquests. The play opens with Phasarius, Spartacus' brother, remarking upon this fact, telling a fellow slave that 'There is not a man in Rome, that Rome could now look to for service' (act one, scene one).[150] The play's antagonist, Crassus, agrees with this assessment and bemoans how all love of honour or virtue has been replaced by a hunger for money: 'what is honour, With empty pockets, in this thievish world?' (act two, scene one).[151] The citizens of Rome are described as having become 'bauble-brained' and 'like to children' (act two, scene one).[152] When given a choice in elections, they ask 'not if their

[147] Ibid. 364.
[148] Ibid. 389.
[149] The effect of this scene is described in Foust (1919) 48-9.
[150] Bird (1919a) 301.
[151] Ibid. 330.
[152] Ibid. 328.

candidate have honour, / Or honesty, or proper qualities; / But, with an eager grin, *What is his wealth?*' (act two, scene one).[153]

Spartacus initially attempts to adhere to the rules of this corrupted world. In return for the promise of his and his family's freedom he reluctantly agrees to collaborate with his Roman masters and slay fellow slaves in the arena. This is soon revealed as a futile endeavour as his masters push him to further and further compromise his honour. He initially refuses to comply with any of his master's commands but, in exchange for being reunited with his wife and child, agrees to humbly accept his lot as a slave and obey their commands (act one, scene one).[154] He is then compelled to slay an unarmed Gaul to whom his honour would ordinarily dictate he show mercy (act two, scene three).[155] During his next fight, Spartacus reluctantly agrees to fight one of his own countrymen, a fellow Thracian. Spartacus is ultimately faced with the prospect of slaying his own brother for the amusement of the crowd. By participating in Rome's corrupted civilization, Spartacus' honour and virtue is further and further undermined, to the point that his masters would even have him kill his own kin.

Spartacus' revolt is not just one against his lot as a slave, but against the corrupt trappings of Roman civilization. Instead of compromising with his corrupt masters and accepting that path to freedom that they offer, he chooses to find freedom by embracing his Thracian roots, rejecting all of Rome's institutions, and venerating barbarism over civilization:

> Spart: I thank the gods I am barbarian;
> For I can better teach the grace-begot
> And heaven-supported masters of the earth,
> How a mere dweller of a desert rock
> Can bow their crown'd heads to his chariot wheels. (act four, scene three)[156]

[153] Ibid. 328.
[154] Ibid. 321-3.
[155] Ibid. 345.
[156] Ibid. 399. He expresses similar principles in act two, scene three: 'Spart: This is / The boastful excellence of Rome! I thank the Gods / There are Barbarians', Ibid. 342.

This path is materially futile – Spartacus and his army are killed to a man – but in wholeheartedly rejecting Rome's corrupt civilization he is able to recapture his personal pride and honour. At the play's close he wins his spiritual freedom, and is treated to an Arcadian vision of his Thracian home:

> Spart: There are green alleys in our mountains yet. -
>
> Set forth the sails. – We'll be in Thrace anon. (act five, scene six)[157]

This is an innovation on Bird's part. The notion that in death Spartacus won a form of spiritual victory over the materially corrupted Romans is, understandably, absent from the classical sources Bird consulted in researching *The Gladiator*. In describing Spartacus final demise, Adam Ferguson's *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* states simply that 'after much bloodshed, [Spartacus] being mangled with wounds, and still almost alone in the midst of his enemies, he continued to fight till he was killed; and the victory of course declared for his enemy'.[158] It is an alteration that is very telling of the times in which Bird lived.

Spartacus' embracing of his barbarian roots and the inevitable doom that it occasions in *The Gladiator* taps directly into the increasing primitivism of the 1820s and 30s. Jackson made great use of his frontier origins in the crafting of his public persona, casting himself as a rough, natural man uncorrupted by the luxurious trappings of civilization. In an address to the militia of New Orleans in 1814, he complimented the 'inhabitants of an opulent and commercial town' for having 'shaken off the habits, which are created by wealth' in their service during the war of 1812. Jackson's supporter, Senator Hugh Lawson White, argued Jackson's clarity of mind derived from him having been 'educated in Nature's school'. On the other side of the aisle, John Quincy Adams attacked Jackson as being 'a barbarian who could not write a sentence of grammar'.[159] Spartacus' venerating of barbarism over civilization offers a mirror to the wider primitivism that was sweeping Jackson's America. Clement

[157] Ibid. 440.
[158] Ferguson (1834) 146.
[159] The above quotes are reprinted in Ward (1962) 25, 31, 83-4.

Foust, Forrest's biographer, exclaims how positively audiences responded to this embodiment 'of man in his primitive virtue and glory rather than in the refinements of society'.[160]

In these themes, *The Gladiator* engages with some of the ideas presented in earlier plays set in the ancient world but also develops them to reflect Edwin Forrest's stage persona and the expectations of the audiences he cultivated. Fortunately, the unique circumstances of *The Gladiator*'s writing provide an insight into how the emerging cult of celebrity surrounding Edwin Forrest was able to influence the way in which it engaged with and presented the ancient world. It is important to remember that *The Gladiator* was not the first play to win one of Forrest's prizes nor, technically, was it Forrest's first choice for the prize it did win. Instead, the play came about as the result of a literary negotiation between Forrest and Bird to produce a script that adequately showcased Forrest's talents and fed into his emerging stage persona. By studying its relationship with these plays, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of how the star-system and Forrest's stage persona influenced the way in which American audiences engaged with the ancient world on stage.

Before premiering *The Gladiator* Forrest had, in 1828, offered his first $500 dollar prize for a play in 'which the hero or principal character shall be an original of this country', i.e. an American Indian.[161] The winner of this first prize was John Augustus Stone's *Metamora; or, the Last of the Wampanoags* (1829), which depicted a conflict between American Indians and Puritan settlers in seventeenth century New England. The play was first performed in New York's Park Theatre on 15th December 1829 and proved an enduring success with Metamora becoming one of Forrest's most famous roles alongside Spartacus.[162] Robert Montgomery Bird won Forrest's next prize in 1830, yet he did not do so with *The Gladiator*. His first submission was *Pelopidas; or, the Fall of the Polemarchs* (1919), which Bird was already working on when the prize was announced. The play depicted the overthrow of a Spartan-backed tyranny by the Theban patriot, Pelopidas, and was considered by Bird to be his finest

[160] Foust (1919) 66.
[161] This advert, placed in *The Critic* on 22nd November 1828, is reprinted in Foust (1919) 36.
[162] The popularity of *Metamora* is discussed in Coyle and Damaser (1968) 51; Donald Grose (1985) 181-5; Foust (1919) 60; Martin (1999) 73; Odell (1928) 449; Rebhorn (2007) 455-60.

work. *Pelopidas* was never performed, however. Forrest doubted that the character of Pelopidas would serve as an appropriate vehicle for his histrionic talents and so never graced the stage with the character.[163] He requested Bird to direct his literary talents towards producing a play that would serve as a more suitable vehicle for himself. That play would ultimately become *The Gladiator*.

An awareness of these two plays greatly enhances any reading of *The Gladiator*. Metamora was Forrest's first custom-written role and has been described by B. Donald Grose as the character that 'made Forrest into a star'.[164] By representing a native character written to suit his specific talents, Forrest was given an opportunity to employ the distinctive acting style that he had developed through his character studies of Choctaw Indians on the frontier and develop his stage persona. *Pelopidas*, on the other hand, presented Forrest with a character that was unsuitable to this stage persona and so was rejected. By reading *Pelopidas* comparatively with *The Gladiator*, it is possible to identify the ways in which Forrest's stage persona could influence the way in which the ancient world was presented. Through an understanding of these three plays it is possible to comprehensively demonstrate how the rise of the star-system, the cult of celebrity surrounding Forrest, and his stage persona that emerged out of the specific cultural circumstances of the American frontier allowed for the development of a uniquely American vision of the ancient world.

Given *Pelopidas*' subject matter (a democratic coup in the Greek city of Thebes led by a popular martial hero) it ought to have been the perfect material for man-of-the-people Edwin Forrest.[165] Yet, upon reading the play, it is not difficult to see why the egocentric Forrest felt the play unsuitable for his talents. While Pelopidas may be the titular character, he does not dominate action in the same way that Spartacus does. Of the 351 lines delivered in *Pelopidas'* fifth act, where Pelopidas slays the

[163] Forrest's refusal of *Pelopidas* and directing of Bird to write *The Gladiator* is discussed in Foust (1919) 37-9; Quinn (1951) 225-9; Reed (2009) 153; Richards (1997) 166.
[164] Donald Grose (1985) 185.
[165] The play is based on material related in Plutarch *Life of Pelopidas* 5-12.

oppressive oligarchs and rescues his wife and son from a conniving suitor, the eponymous character delivers just 63 of them.

What lines Pelopidas does deliver would have afforded Forrest little opportunity to display the gregarious exuberance and fearsome martial prowess that he was so suited to. The play depicts two combat scenes involving Pelopidas. In one, he and his conspirators hack Thebes' unarmed Spartan governors to death while they drink and dine (act five, scene three).[166] In another, he stabs Leontidas, a Theban collaborator with the Spartans, to death while he lies on the ground (act five, scene four).[167] In both of these combats Pelopidas is at a clear advantage to his enemies and has little opportunity for the superhuman heroics that Forrest was so well suited to. There is a third combat included in the play that might have been appropriate for Forrest's persona: in act four, scene three Pelopidas, having been captured by his enemies, takes a small dagger, breaks out from his prison, slays upwards of one hundred enemy soldiers in the street, and escapes to find his men. This scene could have afforded Forrest the opportunity to demonstrate the rip-roaring, odds-defying masculinity for which he was famous, except for the fact that it takes place off-stage and is related to the audience by his wife, who watches from a window.

Besides being given few opportunities to engage in heroic escapades, Pelopidas is not even particularly integral to the endeavour of his compatriots. His followers certainly acknowledge his bravery and courage, describing his 'flashing eye, and warrior tread' (act one, scene one).[168] Yet, when they learn that Pelopidas has been captured by their enemies, they reassure each other that:

> Melon: Our leader's but a man;
>
> A great and valiant one, in truth; but not

[166] Bird (1919b) 288.
[167] Ibid. 294.
[168] Ibid. 177.

So necessary to our enterprise,

We needs must drop it, when his arm is wanting (act four, scene one)[169]

Pelopidas' eventual escape from prison, while impressive, is not wholly necessary for the plan to succeed. This relative unimportance of the titular character, being so casually discarded by a supporting character, seems at odds with the star-system's absolute focus on the lead actor.

One final nail in the coffin for *Pelopidas*' suitability as a vehicle for Forrest is a disdain for the ordinary populace of Thebes that the play subtly evinces. Despite the fact that Pelopidas and his conspirators are leading a democratic coup, they show little respect or love for the common folk. Pelopidas criticises the Theban people as having been 'passive and cowering' in the face of their oppressors, while his ally, Philidas, describes them as 'the disorderly base rabble' (act two, scene two).[170] While the Theban people do eventually rise up and join Pelopidas' revolt against their oppressors, this all happens off-stage and is simply described to the audience.[171] At no point does Pelopidas actually engage with or show any great love for the Theban people, and their off-stage uprising appears incidental to Pelopidas' personal success. This seems somewhat at odds with Forrest's status as a self-styled man of the people.

A critique of the play that Forrest sent to Bird confirms these observations. He rejects the play for production on the grounds that the time dedicated to dialogue delivered by secondary characters is 'much too long', complains that by as late as the third act 'there is yet no action', and generally argues that there ought to be 'a little more incident', more 'bustling', and 'more action'.[172] All in all, it is, as Arthur Quinn says, 'easy to see why Forrest did not produce the play'.[173]

[169] Ibid. 256.
[170] Ibid. 211.
[171] For example, in act five, scene four Melon, one of the democratic conspirators, describes to Pelopidas how 'The citizens have stormed the Citadel, / And put the garrison to the sword', Ibid. 295.
[172] These comments are reprinted in Foust (1919) 37-8.
[173] Quinn (1951) 229.

If *Pelopidas* did everything an Edwin Forrest vehicle shouldn't do, then *Metamora* did everything that it should. *Metamora* has already been the subject of much scrutiny, particularly its relationship to contemporary Indian Removal policies being enacted by the Jackson government.[174] In its depiction of the doomed interactions between American Indians and white settlers, the play tapped into the contemporary fascination with the very pertinent trope of the 'vanishing redman'.[175] Several American playwrights had sought to represent this theme, with varying degrees of success.[176] Stone's *Metamora* was the most successful of these plays and neatly emblematised how this trope of the 'vanishing redman' was represented on stage.[177] Two key qualities underpin the characterisation of Metamora. These have been described by Rosemarie Bank as his 'defiance of authority and limitation' and his 'acknowledgement of defeat'.[178]

B. Donald Grose describes Metamora as fluctuating between two different Native stereotypes: the 'noble savage', who acts as 'a stoic victim of the forces of history and a member of a race doomed to extinction by the onward thrust of progress', and the 'red devil', who, 'unwilling to go gently into oblivion', violently rails against his demise.[179] At the play's beginning Metamora embodies the noble savage, refusing to participate in white civilization and tacitly accepting its encroachments. He initially shows kindness to the white colonists, particularly the young maiden Oceana who he describes as a 'tender flower' (act one, scene one).[180] In the play's opening scene he gifts Oceana a white eagle feather with promise he will never hurt its bearer. But this kindness is accompanied by a warning that he is capable of violence should it be required:

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[174] *Metamora*'s relationship to contemporary Indian policy is discussed in Bank (2006) 73; Donald Grose (1985) 190-1; Martin (1999) 75; Rebhorn (2007) 474-5.
[175] The 'vanishing redman' trope is discussed in Bank (2006) 6; Coyle and Damaser (1968) 50; Donald Grose (1985) 186-7; Martin (1999) 85.
[176] Some examples include Robert Rogers' *Ponteach* (1766), James Nelson Barker's *The Indian Princess* (1827), and George William Custis' *The Indian Prophecy* (1827).
[177] Coyle and Damaser (1968) 51 states that '*Metamora* is generally regarded as the best of the Indian plays'.
[178] Bank (2006) 66.
[179] Donald Grose (1985) 187.
[180] Stone (1968) 60.

> Met: Metamora has been the friend of the white man; yet if the flint be smitten too hard it will show that in its heart is fire. The Wampanoag will not wrong his white brother who comes from the land first touched by the rising sun; but he owns no master, save that One who holds the sun in his right hand, who rides on a dark storm, and who cannot die (act one, scene one)[181]

As the cordial relations between Indians and whites become increasingly untenable, Metamora's warning comes to fruition. The English colonists become increasingly suspicious that Metamora may be plotting against them, especially when he, out of kindness, offers shelter to a man banished by the colonists for 'deeds unchristian' (act one, scene three).[182] When hostility ultimately erupts between the two groups, Metamora fully embraces the stereotype of the 'red devil' in the third act and advocates extreme cruelty to white settlers:

> Met: Go into the white man's dwelling and drag him to me that my eye can look upon his torture and his scalp may tell Metamora's triumph to his tribe. (act three, scene four)[183]

> Met: He must die! Drag him away to the fire of the sacrifice that my ear may drink the music of his dying groans. (act three, scene four)[184]

Both the 'noble savage' and the 'red devil' are inherently pessimistic responses to the incursion of white civilization upon Indian lands. Metamora demonstrates complete awareness of the futility of his struggles in what Bank calls his 'acknowledgement of defeat'.[185] He describes how 'the race of the red

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[181] Ibid. 60.
[182] Metamora justifies his kindness to this man on the grounds that 'Met: If my rarest enemy had crept unarmed into my wigwam and his heart was sore, I would not have driven him from my fire nor forbidden him to lie down upon my mat. Why then should the Wampanoag shut out the man of peace when he came with tears in his eyes and his limbs torn by the sharp thorns of the thicket?' (act two, scene three), Ibid. 69.
[183] Ibid. 76.
[184] Ibid. 76.
[185] Bank (2006) 66.

man has fallen away like the trees of the forest before the axes of the palefaces' (act three, scene two) and pessimistically predicts the future of his people:[186]

> Met: When our fires are no longer red, on the high places of our fathers; when the bones of our kindred make fruitful the fields of the stranger, which he has planted amidst the ashes of our wigwams; when we are hunted back like wounded elk far toward the going down of the sun, our hatchets broken, our bows unstrung and war whoop hushed; then will the stranger spare, for we will be too small for his eye to see. (act two, scene one)[187]

With the eventual demise of his civilization seemingly inevitable, rather than submitting and accepting his demise Metamora chooses to fight violently against it, regardless of the futility. He compares his people's lot to that of an animal being hunted, and asks, when faced with the hunter's spear, would they rather be 'The tiger that turns on it in his wrath, or the lamb that sinks down and trembles?' (act four, scene three).[188] By refusing to compromise his independence and choosing to die untamed and unbowed, Metamora is able to transcend the corporeal demise of his people: 'We are destroyed – not vanquished; we are no more, yet we are forever' (act five, scene five).[189]

Examining these qualities of Stone's Metamora, it is hard not to be reminded of Bird's Spartacus. *Metamora*'s prologue may have boasted that 'Not from the records of Imperial Rome, / Or classic Greece … / Our bard hath drawn the story of his play', yet both characters embody almost identical traits.[190] Like Metamora, Spartacus fluctuates between gentleness and savagery. Just as Metamora is initially peaceful towards the European settlers, showing kindness to Oceana and ultimately honouring his promise not to harm whomever bears the eagle feather that he gifted her (act three, scene four), Spartacus similarly demonstrates his peaceful side.[191] Most notably, when he is given a tremendous

[186] Stone (1968) 73.
[187] Ibid. 64.
[188] Ibid. 84.
[189] Ibid. 91.
[190] Ibid. 56.
[191] Ibid. 76-7.

boon in capturing Julia, Crassus' niece, Spartacus finds himself unable to exploit this advantage out of pity for the orphaned girl:

> Spart: Smite my hard heart! A poor and feeble child
>
> Left struggling fatherless in the world, and I
>
> Consent to wrong her! (act four, scene one)[192]

As with Metamora, this kindness is juxtaposed against the intense cruelty he is capable of demonstrating. In *The Gladiator*'s final act, having lost his own family, Spartacus embraces the same species of unrepentant savagery and commands his men to 'Spare not one life; / Shed blood, and laugh; and if ye meet a woman / Hiding her babe in her scared bosom, slay her, / Slay both' (act five, scene four).[193] The two characters directly echo each other when representatives of Roman and English civilization comment on their cruelty:

> Jov: Art thou a savage?
>
> Spart: Ay; or if you will,
>
> A beast, whose nature not being fierce, the hunters
>
> Have toil'd and goaded into fury. (act five, scene four)[194]

> Oceana: Fiends and murderers!
>
> Met: The white man has made us such. (act three, scene four)[195]

In both cases, the two characters accept the insults heaped upon them, but remind their accuser that they have only become so through the actions of their 'civilized' opponents.

There also seem to be certain parallels between the 'vanishing redman' trope of *Metamora* and the inherent pessimism of *The Gladiator*. In both cases, Forrest's character finds his idyllic, harmonious,

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[192] Bird (1919a) 388.
[193] Ibid. 435.
[194] Ibid. 425.
[195] Stone (1968) 76.

'barbarian' life uprooted by contact with 'civilization'. When faced with the futility of their cause and the inevitability of their demise, they choose to fight on to the bitter end, rather than submitting. In doing so, they both retain their honour, and so attain a spiritual victory through their material defeat.

These two key traits, the titular character's untameable duality and the futility of his cause, so fundamental to both *Metamora* and *The Gladiator*, are both notably absent in *Pelopidas*. Pelopidas is never provoked into the unbridled, unrepentant savagery that Metamora and Spartacus are. While difficult, his cause is not impossible and is, in fact, ultimately successful. Where *Metamora* and *The Gladiator* show the doomed fate of the free-spirited barbarian when faced with the inevitable intrusion of 'civilization', whether it be Roman or European, *Pelopidas* offers a story of political drama and the overthrow of a tyrant. By redesigning *Pelopidas* into *The Gladiator*, Bird seems to have brought his vision of the ancient world into line with Stone's depiction of the early United States.

This thematic similarity between *Metamora* and *The Gladiator* does not seem to have been an accident. The premiere of Metamora was a defining moment in Forrest's career. In performing a character personally designed for him and his unique acting style that had been informed by close character studies of American Indians on the frontier, Forrest seems to have been able to consolidate and entrench his stage persona. In his 1877 biography of Forrest, William Alger commented on how the role allowed Forrest to fully embody his histrionic potential:

> The attributes unnoticed by careless observers were distinctly shown - the sudden muscular movements, the repressed emotion, the peculiar mode of breathing, the deep and vigorous gutturals flung out from the muscular base of the abdomen, and the straight or slightly inward-pointing line of the footfall.[196]

After rejecting *Pelopidas* Forrest did not simply request Bird to submit a new play that was more suitable, he directly supervised and guided Bird while writing *The Gladiator* to ensure that Bird's

[196] This is reprinted in Donald Grose (1985) 186.

second attempt fully reflected this stage persona. Throughout *The Gladiator*'s writing process, Forrest and Bird regularly met and corresponded to discuss how the play was progressing.[197] Forrest seems to have used this as an opportunity to make recommendations and suggestions to Bird so as ensure that the role was appropriate to his stage persona. For example, on the draft of a section of act four, scene three in which Spartacus talks about stepping on the 'regal necks' of his opponents, Bird commented 'Improve this idea, alluding to Bonaparte'.[198]

The character of Metamora was one that was exclusive to the New World. Its representation of the inevitable disappearance of the American Indian developed out of the unique cultural circumstances of 1820s America. Forrest's performance of the character, informed by close character studies of Choctaw Indians, was, likewise, unique to 1820s America's peculiar circumstances. The performance helped define Forrest's entire stage persona. B. Donald Grose has commented that all of Forrest's signature roles, including Spartacus, were 'extensions of his stage Indian, Metamora transplanted to another time and place, but still the proud, doomed individual'.[199] By guiding Bird to write Spartacus to reflect this persona, Forrest moulded the character of Spartacus in Metamora's image and created a vision of Rome inspired by the cultural experiences of his American audiences. He not only provided himself with a profitable vehicle, but created a vision of the ancient world that could only have emerged out of the unique political, cultural and demographic circumstances of the United States of America.

5.5 Conclusion

Evidence of how uniquely and exclusively American the vision of the ancient world presented by *The Gladiator* was, would come in 1836, when Forrest sallied forth on his first trans-Atlantic tour. For the first time, the United States was sending one of its accomplished, lauded, and, most importantly,

[197] For example, during May 1831 Forrest and Bird corresponded to discuss when would be best to premiere the play, with Forrest expressing concern over what effect the 'cooler weather' of an Autumn premiere would have on his performance. This letter is reprinted in Foust (1919) 38-9.
[198] This is reprinted in McConachie (1992) 85.
[199] Donald Grose (1985) 185.

native-born actors eastwards across the Atlantic to perform before English audiences, rather than the other way around. The principle of *translatio studii*, the belief that arts and learning travelled westwards with the sun, that had guided the efforts of so many early American cultural pioneers, seemed to have been finally vindicated. On the 17th October 1836 denizens of the Old World flocked to London's Theatre Royal to see the cultural fruits of the New World as Edwin Forrest gave his English premiere in his most famous role: Spartacus.

And yet, for all the excitement, audiences were disappointed. Not in Forrest, for reviewers couldn't deny the potency of his delivery. The lead man was met with a hearty applause and the London *Times* published an extensive review that praised him as having a 'novel and a much more spirited style of playing than any other tragic actor now on our stage'. It was the play with which audiences struggled to engage. While reviewers allowed that there were 'some scenes of stirring interest', they did not 'think as highly of the poet as the player' and criticised the dialogue as being 'generally characterized by a rough, passionate strain, in which gracefulness is sacrificed to force'.[200] Henry Wilkoff, who was present at the premiere, records how, when Forrest ended his evening by thanking the audience for the praise they had shown the tragedy, he caused a slight dissent amongst the crowd, who made it clear it was the actor, not the play, that they were applauding. By crying out 'Shakespeare! Shakespeare!' they called for him to redirect his histrionic efforts towards their own native bard.[201] Forrest obliged their request, and performed roles written by English playwrights in his subsequent engagements, though he confided in a letter to his mother that he did not think the audience had 'treated *The Gladiator* and Dr Bird fairly'.[202]

This could be seen as a rather negative indictment of the progress of American art. For all the success and accolades that Bird's play had enjoyed in the United States, it was rejected by those most esteemed critics in the motherland. Yet, this marks the degree of independence that American drama

[200] These quotes come from a review printed in the London *Times* printed on 18/10/1836 that are reprinted in Barrett (1881) 54-5.
[201] This is recorded in Barrett (1881) 55-6.
[202] This is reprinted in Foust (1919) 64.

had attained. Over the coming decades countless thousands of Americans, from California to Massachusetts, would come in their droves to cheer on Forrest's Spartacus as he railed against the might of Rome. Viewing the play through their unique cultural, political, and demographic lenses, they read themselves into his championing of the downtrodden, his disdain for elite authority, and his quest to reclaim a pristine Arcadia from the clutches of 'civilization'. This experience was exclusively theirs. While Payne's *Brutus* could play to both sides of the Atlantic, *The Gladiator* was a completely alien experience to British audiences. By engaging with themes that were peculiar to American audiences, such as the doomed contact between native savage and the forces of civilization, Bird produced a play that foreign audiences lacked the cultural apparatus with which to meaningfully engage. Roughly a century after the first performance of *Cato* in 1732, the United States of America had produced a vision of the ancient world that was exclusively, uniquely, and unmistakably American.

Conclusion

When that debut performance of Addison's *Cato* was issued on a now-forgotten date sometime in December of 1732 in a makeshift theatre on New York's Nassau, its performers had little idea that they were inaugurating a new episode in American self-expression. The grand spectacle of the premiere of Bird's *Gladiator*, ninety-nine years and only a few blocks away, stands in sharp contrast to those humble origins. *The Gladiator* set the tone for the ancient world's reception on American stages for decades to come. Alongside Bird's success came a flurry of American-written plays that represented events from antiquity. David Paul Brown's *Sertorius; or, The Roman Patriot* (1830) depicted the Roman General Sertorius' doomed Spanish revolt against the power of Rome. Jonas Phillips' *Camillus; or, The Self-Exiled Patriot* (1831) adapted the latter days of the austere Roman patrician Camillus, who entered into self-imposed exile when disgusted by the baseness of the Roman populace, only to return and save his city from invasion. John J. Bailey's *Waldimar* (1831) showed audiences the overthrow of Waldimar, the stern and vindictive tyrant of fourth-century Thessalonica, by Claudius, an honourable and popular soldier. Richard Penn Smith's *Caius Marius* (1832) followed the low-born populist Caius Marius' political rivalry with the patrician Sulla that culminated in Marius being stripped of his popular support and committing suicide. As their subjects imply, these plays engaged with much the same themes of resistance to elite governance and the capriciousness of popular support that had been seen in *The Gladiator*.[1] They were all performed before American audiences, yet Bird's play outshone them all.

Chapter one concluded by jumping decades ahead from the premiere of *The Gladiator*, and showing the lay of the dramatic land during the 1850s. Helene Foley's *Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the*

[1] Sarah Chinn describes *The Gladiator* and these three other plays as all exploring 'the same questions of liberty and tyranny', their heroes all being 'caught between the Scylla of decadent elites and the Charybdis of the mobocracy', Chinn (2017a) 29. Camillus, Sertorius, and Caius Marius are all discussed in greater detail in Ibid. 188-200.

American Stage (2012) has investigated American attempts to perform Greek tragedy during this period. She has found that attempts to directly stage translations of Greek tragic plays such as *Antigone* or *Oedipus* often met with failure when attempted on the commercial stage, but success when staged in college environments.[2] Yet the data revealed in the conclusion to chapter one shows that this does not mean that representations of antiquity were absent from popular American stages during this period. In fact, it revealed a theatrical landscape that, with few exceptions, remained largely unchanged from that experienced in 1831. The few new plays that intruded into this repertoire over the course of these two decades were also in very much the same vein as Bird's *Gladiator*. Maria Lovell's *Ingomar the Barbarian* (1851), which chapter one showed to have been the most successful of these new additions to the repertoire, illustrates this perfectly. Adapting the German playwright Friedrich Halm's *Der Son der Wildnis* (1842), Lovell's play depicts the tumultuous interactions between the civilized Greek colonists of Messalia (modern day Marseilles) and the local barbarian tribe. It focuses in on the relationship between the dutiful Greek maiden Parthenia and the free-spirited barbarian chief Ingomar. After initially railing against the intrusion of a civilization that he deems corrupt and effete, Ingomar finds his wild heart soothed by Parthenia's unspoiled virtue, and ultimately sacrifices himself to enslavement in order to preserve her. There are obvious parallels between Lovell's Ingomar and Bird's Spartacus, each serving as avatars of an unbridled primitive masculinity that is softened by the tender heart of a pious woman, Parthenia in the case of Ingomar, and Marcia in the case of Spartacus. One can also very easily read in *Ingomar*'s depiction of a small, outwardly civilized group (the Greeks) attempting to exert control over a free-spirited and tumultuous mass (the barbarians) the same emergent anxieties over class and elitism that were similarly being played out in texts such as Knowles' *Virginius* and Payne's *Brutus*.[3] Even accounting for new additions such as *Ingomar,* a young working-class wage-labourer from lower Manhattan could go to the Bowery Theatre during the 1850s and experience the Classics in much the same way as his father would have

[2] Foley (2012) 29-34.

[3] One could also very easily read into *Ingomar* the same anxieties over coloniser and colonised that had previously been explored in John Augustus Stone's *Metamora, or; The Last of the Wampanoags* (1829).

two decades prior. A century after the 1732 premiere of Addison's *Cato*, theatre managers during the 1820s and 30s had evidently found a vision of the classical world that struck a long-lasting chord with American audiences.

The Gladiator would only disappear from the stage when its patron, Edwin Forrest, passed away. Forrest's biographer records how in December of 1872, a day before he was scheduled to again appear in the character of Virginius, a bout of pneumonia took him, and this 'last engagement was brought to an abrupt and melancholy end'.[4] Only with Forrest's departure did the various prize plays he had commissioned disappear from the theatre and *The Gladiator*, the first dramatic representation of the Classics to make the journey eastwards rather than westwards across the Atlantic, finally left the stage. This was not the end of the story of the Classics' reception on the American stage, and representations of antiquity have continued to occupy American theatres to the present day.

As has been shown over the course of this thesis, *The Gladiator*'s success did not emerge in a vacuum. From that first performance of *Cato* onwards, American playwrights, performers, and audiences were engaged in a century-long dialogue with the Classics, in which the ancient and contemporary worlds exerted a formative influence upon each other at various levels. The organic relationship between antiquity and modernity was constantly being reformulated and renegotiated alongside the emergence and development of the American nation. The result of this was a dramatic vision of the ancient world that was uniquely reflective of their specific cultural conditions: an interpretation of the Classics that was truly American.

During the decades leading up to the 1774 meeting of the Continental Congress, the colonial communities that littered America's eastern seaboard can hardly have been called culturally cohesive. With lengthy travels across unreliable roads and dangerous seas separating them, even the inherently circulable medium of print struggled to provide these disparate peoples with any sense of cultural simultaneity. Into these most unsuitable of conditions entered pioneering companies of itinerant

[4] Barratt (1881) 129.

actors, trained by their experiences touring the provincial circuits of their native Britain. In chapter two it was shown how, when print culture's penetration was primarily limited to their immediate local environment, these troupes performed the same dramatic texts up and down across the eastern seaboard of North America, from Charleston to Boston. During these travels, representations of the Classics provided a body of material that was unique in its almost ubiquitous accessibility and familiarity across these heterogeneous communities. More than any other text, David Garrick's *Lethe; or, Aesop in the Shades* (1740) was able to exploit the character of Aesop's position as an almost foundational figure in the American educational imagination. Deploying him at the centre of a flexible satire of contemporary social mores, *Lethe* offered a versatile text that could be adapted to the particular tastes and circumstances of its immediate audience. Far earlier than many modern observers realise, the decades also saw the beginning of American performance culture's stratification into popular and elite culture, with the colonies' nascent educational institutes fostering an amateur tradition distinct from that seen in the professional theatres. These two traditions briefly intersected towards the end of this period in the form of Thomas Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* (1765), a play professionally performed before a public audience but with a playwright who was very much a product of North America's cloistered educational institutions. While this first attempt at American-written dramatization of the classical world may have proved abortive, it neatly heralded the developments of the latter decades of this century, during which these two strands of performance would increasingly intersect.

Chapter three of this thesis has shown how the pressures of revolution and of nation building encouraged a more overt relationship between classical themes and the political sphere. After first being deployed on stage while the battles between redcoats and patriots were being waged, depictions of the ancient world found themselves caught in the middle of the equally fractious debates between the Federalists and their opponents concerning the future direction of American nationalism. While American-born playwrights such as Mercy Warren produced texts depicting the classical world, it was to English-written scripts that professional theatres continued to turn. When attempts to

perform events from recent American history incited too much controversy to be commercially viable, as was the case with William Dunlap's *André* (1798), managers turned to the Classics as a non-controversial lens through which to produce material relevant to the ideological questions of the day. William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* (1750) and Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* (1772) have been discussed as two notable instances of this. The use of the classical world as a proxy space through which to explore questions of American national and political character had the effect of retroactively incorporating characters and figures from these texts into the young nation's burgeoning national mythology. This process is emblematised in the performances of *The Roman Father* to mark Washington's death at the end of the century.

American managers were not content with simply incorporating the characters from these British-written representations of the classical world into their own national self-image. Chapter four showed how, after the turn of the century, they became increasingly confident in manipulating and modifying the material bequeathed to them in order to reflect and cater to the increasingly anarchic tastes and their volatile audiences. As democratic audiences craved ever grander spectacles, the Classics were only too happy to oblige, as they often have as a body of material throughout the history of popular culture. Pantomimic, melodramatic formulations such as *Hercules and Omphale*, with their free-form revisionist approach to classical mythology, reflect a dramatic industry that was increasingly willing to adapt and experiment with the stories of the ancient world to suit the tastes of their audiences. This willingness to experiment with the manner in which they depicted the ancient world came to a head in North American theatres' presentation of Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander the Great; or, The Rival Queens* (1677). Decades before, American managers had shown themselves willing to exploit the natural adaptability of Garrick's *Lethe* and pick and choose which scenes to present before particular audiences. When performing Lee's *Alexander*, they went far further: wholesale inserting new scenes, songs, and spectacles to create an American version of a British text that was idiosyncratic to their own particular circumstances.

Chapter five showed how this progress towards a distinctly American vision of the classical world reached its conclusion within the context of Andrew Jackson's tumultuous rise to power during the 1820s. This decade was bookended by the trans-Atlantic success of John Howard Payne's expatriate drama *Brutus; or, The Fall of Tarquin* (1818) at its beginning, and the runaway success of Robert Montgomery Bird's *Gladiator* at its end. The monumental shifts in the popular classical repertoire that occurred during this period must, perhaps more than at any other period examined by this thesis, be understood in terms of their relationships to the broader shifts occurring in American politics and society. Mass enfranchisement and the subsequent growth of populist politics, demographic changes and increasing urbanisation, as well as the shift away from an artisan-led workshop economy towards a more commercial wage-based economy all served to render the American cultural landscape increasingly unrecognisable from that of its British metropolis. The increasing peculiarity of the American condition was reflected in the selection of a repertoire that responded to the issues and anxieties faced by audiences. Out of the corpus of British-written plays, American managers selected texts such as James Sheridan Knowles' *Virginius; or, The Liberation of Rome* (1820) and John Banim's *Damon and Pythias* (1821) that were pertinent to the concerns of their audiences. Newly empowered star actors brought their own stage personas to bear on these texts, and amplified elements that reflected the particular demographic of audiences that they cultivated. Out of this milieu Edwin Forrest, who had honed his stage persona on the western frontier and become a favourite of the novel species of American workingman, emerged as the natural standard bearer for a vision of the classical world that was peculiar to the unique conditions of American audiences. Commissioning a text to fit his uniquely American manner of performance, Forrest helped generate a vision of the Classics that was original and distinct to his country of birth. The culmination of a century of progress, this vision of antiquity would remain on the stage as long as Forrest himself.

These findings attest to the enduring power of the classical past to reflect and construct authority and identity in the media that represents it. During these ninety-nine years, American audiences engaged with multiple different ancient pasts, from the shores of Elysium to the palaces of Babylon. Each of

these pasts brought with them their own competing traditions, and each performed a different role within the discourses surrounding the emergence of the American nation. This has all been enabled by the novel methodology outlined in this thesis' introduction. The macroscopic distant reading approach adapted from Franco Moretti, a periodized diachronic study of immediate historical trends, and the traditional methods of close reading that are so favoured in literary criticism, have been united into one holistic and comprehensive approach. This has served to reveal the character of American engagement with the classical world through theatre. Chapter one's large-scale statistical analysis has allowed for the charting of broad trends over the course of this century, the separation of this century into distinct and identifiable historical periods, and the identification of significant and emblematic texts within each of those periods. Chapters two to five have subsequently situated these performance trends within their immediate historic context, investigating the relationship between these shifts in the manner in which the Classics were received on stage and the wider developments of the age. Finally, by embedding close readings of particularly significant texts within these diachronic chapters, this thesis has recovered and shed critical light on several previously forgotten plays. These close analyses have shown how the broad statistical trends identified within chapter one were actuated, and manifestly altered the way in which the Classics were received by audiences in American theatres. This holistic approach has allowed a comprehensive investigation of the research questions outlined in this thesis' introduction.

The first goal stated in this thesis' introduction was to move beyond the reliance on individual case studies that has characterised much scholarship on the subject to date. These isolated analyses of individual texts and performances, while intelligently executed, have served to atomise texts, disconnecting them from the wider context that they inhabited. The results from chapter one have not only provided a picture of the long-term developments in the repertoire of plays performed during this century, but also ensured that subsequent discussion is able to understand individual plays and performances as part of the wider cultural landscape that they inhabited. Besides dispelling commonly-held myths about the popular significance of Addison's *Cato*, chapter two explored the

implications of the differing performance contexts occupied by Addison's *Cato* and Garrick's *Lethe*. Through this, it demonstrated how the social class and educational background of different audience demographics were reflected in the manner in which they experienced the Classics on stage. This further informed discussions of how political and demographic changes fuelled and reflected developments in the repertoire of plays representing the Graeco-Roman world in subsequent chapters. In chapter five, this was developed into an examination of how the differing constituencies from which different actors drew audiences served to further structure the manner in which different categories of audience experienced antiquity. The contrast between Edwin Forrest and Thomas Cooper showed how, by attracting certain audiences and pursuing different styles of performance, the same text might have been given different emphases, altering the way in which the material was received.

Throughout the century under discussion, these performances provided a conduit between American audiences and their classical forebears. This was at no point a one-way exchange. Rather, it was a dialogue, in which both parties exerted a formative influence upon each other, and which was organically being reformulated and renegotiated alongside the development of the American nation. These representations of antiquity embedded themselves in the emerging identity of their audiences. In chapter three it was seen how representations of events and characters from antiquity became enmeshed in the wider personal mythology surrounding the young nation's founding figures. The character of Horatius as portrayed in William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* became another facet of the neoclassical iconography surrounding George Washington. Travelling waxwork displays of figures from the young United States' national story featured Euphrasia, from Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter*, alongside Benjamin Franklin as a character worthy of patriotic emulation. Upon his death, Franklin himself was shown in a display of his 'apotheosis' to ascend to Elysium and take his seat alongside Diogenes and the other learned men of antiquity.

As well as being incorporated into the emerging political iconography of the young nation, the classical world itself was re-imagined to reflect contemporary expectations. Chapter four showed how, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, the characters and events of antiquity were radically revised to suit the tastes of their audiences. The story of Hercules and Omphale was re-imagined as a melodramatic spectacle, in which an unquestionably heroic Hercules rescued the acquiescent Omphale from the predations of a dastardly villain. Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander the Great* was rewritten to better incorporate the type of spectacular side-shows that audiences so craved, even when those spectacles seemed to contradict the themes of both the play, and the source material from which it drew. Chapter five's examination of Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* demonstrated how the play embodied both of these forces. On the one hand, it presented an interpretation of classical masculinity that was ineffably coloured by the persona of its lead actor and his experiences on the American frontier. On the other, it tapped into and informed contemporary anxieties over class and debates over the relative merits of populist versus more paternalistic modes of governance that were playing out in wider American society. *The Gladiator*, and other plays like it, reflect the constant interplay that occurred between these two worlds. Both equally malleable, the classical past and American present were in a constant process of redefinition in light of each other, with the theatre acting as a bridge between these two worlds.

The classical tradition rather than other more contemporary bodies of material was particularly well-suited to this role. Firstly, the events and characters of antiquity were possessed of a popular recognisability that few other bodies could equal. During the formative years of the colonial period, which were explored in chapter two, the Classics possessed a unique omnipresence across the thirteen colonies. The figure of Aesop in particular proved an almost unavoidable presence within Anglophone North America, his *Fables* being employed as a teaching tool throughout early educational texts and institutions. Garrick's *Lethe*, by unceremoniously deploying Aesop in a light-hearted satire of contemporary society, was able to exploit this recognisability. Similarly, in chapter four it was seen how during the first two decades of the nineteenth century paratheatrical representations of the

Classics also exploited the recognisability of classical source material. In pantomimes and performances such as *The Exercise of Hercules* and *Hercules and Omphale*, otherwise generic displays of grandeur and spectacle were dressed up in classical garb. These performances, often bearing little resemblance to their namesake myths, condensed the stories of antiquity down to their most recognisable elements. In doing so, they offered interpretations of the Classics that were as much informed by what audiences could be expected to recognise as they were by the classical material from which they took inspiration.

It was not simply their recognisability that motivated the staging of representations of classical material. One of the questions raised in this thesis' introduction was why antiquity in particular, rather than other more contemporary periods of history, might be chosen for representation. Chapter three's contrast of the relative performance histories of William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* and William Dunlap's *André* has suggested the unique dramatic possibilities offered by the classical world. Dunlap's attempt to use the relatively recent episode of George Washington's hanging of Major André as a setting to explore contemporary ideals of disinterested statesmanship and paternalistic governance ultimately failed on account of the controversy it occasioned through dramatizing such sensitive material. Whitehead's adaptation of the conflict between the Horatii and the Curiatii, on the other hand, was able to navigate the same questions as Dunlap's play, but by doing so through the medium of antiquity, was able to escape the partisan bickering that beset *André*. Deployed within the context of a nation that was still formulating a popular consensus over their own national mythology, such representations of the classical world offered managers and audiences a safe space in which to explore questions concerning their own identity and ideology.

Finally, this thesis has sought to situate this theatrical engagement with antiquity within the broader reception of the Classics in wider American society and the Enlightenment-era Atlantic world at large. Throughout this century, theatrical representations of the ancient world formed part of a complex matrix of classical engagement that cut across all aspects of cultural expression in North America and

the wider Western world. The performances of Whitehead's *The Roman Father* that were issued in observance of George Washington's funeral were but one of many instances in which Washington's personal mythology appealed to classical paradigms. Such uses of the Classics were endemic to political expression in these formative decades of American nationhood. Joseph Warren's 1775 oration on the Boston massacre was, quite literally, dressed in classical garb. Similarly, the design and building of Washington D.C. during the early nineteenth century deployed the architectural language of neoclassicism in its expression of American nationhood. These theatrical engagements with the classical world formed part of a wider tapestry in which the Classics were woven into the broader fabric of American identity.

This mode of classical engagement was not unique to the United States. Mark Bradley's *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire* (2010) has shown how the Classics were deployed within the British Museum as articulation of British imperial hegemony.[5] Just as the Trustees of the British Museum would utilise ancient artefacts as a means to assert ownership of the classical past, American playwrights and managers would deploy the classical world on stage in order to commandeer this classical heritage and advocate for their own claim to be the rightful inheritors to ancient civilization. The engagement with antiquity on the American stage is thus a single element fitting into the broader reception of the Classics on both sides of the Atlantic. This occurred across a variety of contexts and mediums in the service of radically different ideologies, in each case being organically reflective of the circumstances in which they occurred. As an early form of mass entertainment that traversed boundaries of class, education, and geography, the texts introduced throughout this thesis, being mostly British-written texts appropriated into American contexts, formed a key part of this complex, ocean-spanning cultural ecosystem.

Reflective of its holistic methodology, this thesis has produced results across several fields of inquiry. Yet, it is far from the end for the study of the Classics' reception on the American stage. One of the

[5] Bradley (2010) 2-9.

most notable takeaways from chapter one must be the sheer variety of classical representations occupying American stages during this time period. Within these pages Garrick's *Lethe*, Whitehead's *Roman Father*, Lee's *Alexander*, Payne's *Brutus*, and Bird's *Gladiator* have all been subjected to close discussion. Besides these emblematic texts, the Appendix at the rear of this thesis offers synopses of the upwards of fifty different texts that were performed during this period. This goes some way to capturing the diverse medley of offerings enjoyed by American audiences, and hints at the scope for continued investigation that remains.

These findings also invite questions outside the remit of this thesis. How did the representation of the ancient world continue to develop over the remainder of the nineteenth century? How did the formats and constraints of alternative forms of popular media, such as print, differently transfigure the way in which the Classics were received? Perhaps most notably, how were the Classics received on stage in the New World outside of the Anglophone theatrical tradition pursued within the United States? While the fledgling nation was exploring its relationships with the Classics through the theatre, African-Americans were pursuing their own distinct performance culture within the United States that existed largely outside the remit of the conventional, implicitly white, playhouse. Furthermore, outside the English-speaking communities discussed in this thesis, there existed the rich dramatic tradition pursued across the French-, Spanish-, and Portuguese-speaking communities of the New World. This wider New World engagement with the classical world on stage offers fertile ground for further study, and as recently as this year Rosa Andújar and Konstantinos Nikoloutsos' *Greeks and Romans on the Latin American Stage* (2020) has offered the first English-language treatment of the Classics' reception on the Latin American stage. Bringing together case studies from Chile to the Caribbean, their volume demonstrates the breadth of material about which English-language scholarship has hitherto been ignorant. Future studies ought to see this multiplicity of performance traditions examined outside of their ethnic, linguistic and geographical silos, and understood as being part of a broader hemisphere-spanning cultural ecosystem.

At the beginning of this thesis, Simon Goldhill's criticism of modern reception studies' over-reliance on the case study in 'The Limits of the Case Study: Exemplarity and the Reception of Classical Literature' (2017) was introduced. In this article, Goldhill criticised how such isolated case studies were ignorant of the 'circulation, dissemination, [and] prevalence' of the artefact they examined, and called for the discipline to move 'beyond the case study'.[6] Mark Bradley, part of this thesis' supervisory team, has made similar calls in the edited volume *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire* (2010). Bradley argued that such studies of 'isolated instances of classical reception' needed to be integrated 'comprehensively into the wider rhythms and patterns' of their contemporary history, claiming that 'the challenge that remains … is to develop a methodology' that enables such an approach.[7] This thesis has taken on this challenge and done exactly that. By reconciling quantitative and qualitative literary analysis into a single holistic approach it has offered a comprehensive methodology through which the complex matrix that is the reception of antiquity can be decoded. It has shown that the use of data does not have to be a source of tension, but can radically enhance existing modes of inquiry. The application of this approach to the reception of the Classics on the American stage has not only broken important ground within the field, but also offered a tantalising glimpse of future possibilities. Perhaps most fundamentally this thesis has shown that the foundational role that dramatic representations of antiquity played in the emergence of American national culture and character is undeniable.

[6] Goldhill (2017) 425-7.
[7] Bradley (2010) 19.

Appendix: Synopses of Plays Mentioned

Author: Joseph Addison
Title: *Cato, A Tragedy*
Year Released: 1713
Synopsis: Set during Caesar's Civil War, this play details the last days of resistance of Cato the Younger's republican faction who, after Pompey's defeat at the battle of Pharsalus, have retreated to Utica in North Africa. The play culminates in Cato choosing to commit suicide rather than surrender to Caesar.

Author: Thomas Arne
Title: *Artaxerxes*
Year Released: 1762
Synopsis: Set in the Persian Royal court, Mandane, the daughter of King Xerxes, and Arbaces, the son of the General Artabanes, are in love, but Xerxes has forbidden their marriage and banished Arbaces. Offended by his son's treatment, Artabanes poisons Xerxes and attempts to poison Xerxes' son, Artaxerxes. However, Artaxerxes offers his poisoned chalice to Arbaces and Artabanes, wishing to save his son, confesses his crime to Artaxerxes, and accepts his punishment.

Author: John J. Bailey
Title: *Waldimar*
Year Released: 1831
Synopsis: Waldimar sits as the stern and vindictive tyrant of fourth-century Thessalonica and a clash between his troops and a group of indignant citizens results in a massacre of the protestors. Waldimar's rule is opposed by Claudius, an honourable and popular soldier who is also in love with Waldimar's daughter. Claudius ultimately succeeds in overthrowing and slaying Waldimar and winning the hand of his daughter.

Author: John Banim
Title: *Damon and Pythias*
Year Released: 1821
Synopsis: Damon and Pythias are a pair of close friends who are well respected within Syracuse, which is ruled by the tyrant Dionysius. Damon is ultimately arrested by Dionysius and sentenced to execution, but is given leave to visit his family on the condition that Pythias be imprisoned in his stead and executed should Damon fail to return on time. Damon, waylaid by the death of his horse, returns just in time and the two embrace before Damon takes his place to be executed. This proves unnecessary, however, as Dionysius has been inspired by their friendship and pardons him.

Author: Robert Montgomery Bird
Title: *The Gladiator*
Year Released: 1831
Synopsis: Spartacus, a Thracian gladiator, leads a slave revolt against Rome alongside his brother Pharsalus. After initial success the slave army is fractured due to a feud between Spartacus and Pharsalus. The divided slave army is defeated by the Romans and Spartacus' wife and child, as well as Pharsalus, are killed. Spartacus, enraged, assaults the Roman army and is killed.

Author: Robert Montgomery Bird
Title: *Pelopidas; or, The Fall of the Polemarchs*
Year Released: 1919[1]
Synopsis: Sparta has seized political control of the city of Thebes and installed the Polemarchs, a tyrannical government of Theban collaborators, to rule the city in their stead. One Theban, Pelopidas, plots with a group of like-minded patriots to overthrow their ruling oligarchy, and ultimately succeed in slaying the Polemarchs and freeing Thebes.

Author: David Paul Brown
Title: *Sertorius; or, The Roman Patriot*
Year Released: 1830
Synopsis: Sertorius is the popular general and proconsul of Spain whose successes have made him a popular hero in Spain. Sertorius finds himself caught between the fickle allegiance of the people, who urge he declare independence from Rome, and his soldierly duty to Rome. Sertorius struggles to maintain the loyalty of the people, who prove capricious and manipulable, and is ultimately forced into a military conflict with Rome. This rebellion is prematurely cut short, however, when conspirators within his court assassinate him.

Author: Colley Cibber
Title: *Damon and Phillida*
Year Released: 1729
Synopsis: Damon is a handsome male shepherd in the utopic Arcadia and falls in love with Phillida, he is however fickle and unwilling to commit to marrying Phillida. Phillida's apparent availability attracts the attention of two boorish shepherds but ultimately Damon decides to marry her.

Author: John Dryden
Title: *All for Love*
Year Released: 1677
Synopsis: From their base in Alexandria, Antony and Cleopatra attempt to wage war for control of Rome against Octavian. After a crushing naval defeat at the battle of Actium, Cleopatra is persuaded to abandon her love Antony and flee the city. When Antony learns this he commits suicide, only for Cleopatra to have a change of heart and return. Discovering the dying Antony, she commits suicide herself.

Author: John Dryden
Title: *Amphitryon; or, The Two Sosias*
Year Released: 1690
Synopsis: Amphitryon, and his slave Sosia are returning from war to their home in Thebes. Unbeknownst to them, Jupiter has disguised himself as Amphitryon and is sleeping with Amphitryon's wife, Alcmena. After various comedic misunderstandings, Amphitryon and Alcmena greatly offend each other and are at the brink of splitting up. Jupiter redresses the situation by confessing his deception and uniting the husband and wife.

Author: David Garrick
Title: *Lethe; or, Aesop in the Shades*
Year Released: 1740
Synopsis: Mercury brings a message to Aesop and Charon that Pluto has decided to allow mortals to drink from the river Lethe, a river in the underworld that affects memory. Aesop deals with the various mortals, including characters such as 'Poet,' 'Old Man,' and 'French person' and hilarity ensues.

[1] The play was not publicly disseminated until being included in Clement Foust's *The Life of Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird* (1919).

Author: David Garrick
Title: *Cymon*
Year Released: 1767
Synopsis: A loosely classical five-act opera set in the utopic Arcadia that features characters from the classical pantheon such as Hymen, the Greek god of marriage, alongside figures from other mythologies, such as the wizard Merlin from Arthurian legend. Cymon loves a young shepherdess named Sylvia, but has been held captive. Fortunately, through the intercession of the wizard Merlin, they are united and able to pursue their romance.

Author: David Garrick
Title: *Harlequin's Invasion*
Year Released: 1759
Synopsis: The god Mercury appears before a group of common folk to warn them that Harlequin, a mischievous trickster, has intruded upon their realm and must be banished. Harlequin employs various tricks and magic tricks to evade capture until Mercury reappears and banishes Harlequin.

Author: Thomas Godfrey
Title: *The Prince of Parthia*
Year Released: 1765
Synopsis: Arsaces is a militarily successful Parthian Prince who has attracted the jealousy of his younger brother Vardanes. Vardanes attempts to frame Arsaces for treason. Vardanes plot is discovered and Arsaces kills him. However, Arsaces' lover, Evanthe, commits suicide, believing Arsaces dead. Learning of Evanthe's death, Arsaces commits suicide.

Author: James Sheridan Knowles
Title: *Caius Gracchus*
Year Released: 1815
Synopsis: Caius is a popular speaker in Rome who has earned popularity amongst its lower classes, to the chagrin of Rome's patricians, who fear he will undermine their privileges. They conspire to rob Caius of this support, by having proxies propose even more populist policies than those proposed by Caius. Caius ultimately commits suicide after his supporters are violently defeated during a confrontation in the forum.

Author: James Sheridan Knowles
Title: *Virginius; or, The Liberation of Rome*
Year Released: 1820
Synopsis: Virginius is an upstanding patrician and father during the reign of the first decemvirate in Rome, whom Virginius dismisses as tyrannical and self-interested. One of the decemvirs becomes enamoured with Virginius' daughter and kidnaps her, claiming she is his slave and prompting a court case. With the decemvirs stacking the court case against Virginius, he slays her to protect her chastity, before also killing the rapacious decemvir.

Author: Nathaniel Lee
Title: *Theodosius; or, The Force of Love*
Year Released: 1680
Synopsis: Theodosius II is Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire but, ruling an effeminate and inactive court, finds himself unable to emulate the heroics of earlier Romans in the face of his enemies. This attracts the ire of his General Marcian, whose criticism of Theodosius borders onto disrespect. The two feud and even fight one another in a duel. Ultimately, Theodosius accepts his unsuitability for leadership and resigns in favour of Marcian.

Author: Nathaniel Lee
Title: *Alexander the Great; or, The Rival Queens*
Year Released: 1677
Synopsis: Alexander the Great finds himself in a love triangle with his two wives and has stoked revolution amongst his Macedonian generals by seeming to favour Persian culture over that of his homeland. These crises come to a head when his first wife murders his second, and his discontented generals succeed in poisoning Alexander.

Author: Maria Lovell
Title: *Ingomar the Barbarian*
Year Released: 1851
Synopsis: In the Greek colony of Messalia, the young maiden Parthenia goes to meet with a group of local barbarians who have kidnapped her father, and offers to become the prisoner of their chief, Ingomar, if he will free her father. Ingomar accepts and the two swiftly fall in love, with Ingomar agreeing to free Parthenia and return to Messalia with her. However, unable to adapt to civilized life, he decides to sell himself into slavery to pay off debts accrued by Parthenia's father.

Author: Thomas Henry Lister
Title: *Epicharis: A Historical Tragedy*
Year Released: 1829
Synopsis: Dissatisfied with Nero's tyrannical rule and encouraged by the honourable freedwoman Epicharis, a group of conspirators plot to assassinate and overthrow the Emperor. Despite Epicharis' encouragement, the conspirators are hesitant and vacillating, resulting in the discovery and failure of their conspiracy. Epicharis is captured and tortured for information, but remains resolute and commits suicide rather than give away of her fellow conspirators.

Author: Philip Massinger
Title: *The Roman Actor*
Year Released: 1626
Synopsis: Under the tyrannical reign of the Emperor Domitian, an acting troupe has been given the dubious honour of gaining the Emperor's patronage and residing in his court. They attempt to use their art to induce sanity in the Emperor's court, staging plays with messages relevant to contemporary events. They are unsuccessful though, and Domitian kills the leader of the troupe.

Author: Louisa Medina
Title: *The Last Days of Pompeii*
Year Released: 1835
Synopsis: Two Greek lovers living in Pompeii, Glaucus and Ione, find their engagement threatened when an Egyptian sorcerer named Arbaces schemes to win Ione's heart by framing Glaucus for murder. Arbaces' scheme is successful, and Glaucus is sentenced to be fed to lions alongside a Christian named Olinthus. Their execution is interrupted by the eruption of Vesuvius. Glaucus' innocence is revealed and he escapes to Athens with Ione, where they live as Christians.

Author: Arthur Murphy
Title: *The Grecian Daughter*
Year Released: 1772
Synopsis: On Syracuse, the tyrant Dionysius has overthrown and imprisoned Evander, the rightful ruler. Evander's daughter, Euphrasia, has remained on the island and seeks to abet her father's escape. Euphrasia manages to save her father from starvation in Dionysius' dungeon long enough for his allies to arrive, overthrow Dionysius, and restore Evander to his rightful role.

Author: Kane O'Hara
Title: *Midas*
Year Released: 1760
Synopsis: This burletta recounts a tale from book eleven of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which Apollo disguises himself a shepherd and charms a farmer's daughters with his music, earning the ire of her suitors, Midas and Damaetus. Midas conspires to host a music contest between Apollo and Pan, a local music god, with himself as judge. After Midas unfairly judges Pan to be the winner, Apollo reveals his identity and awards Midas ass' ears for his poor judgement, before returning to Olympus.

Author: John Howard Payne
Title: *Brutus: or, The Fall of Tarquin*
Year Released: 1818
Synopsis: During the tyrannical rule of King Tarquinius Superbus, the noble Lucius Junius feigns madness to seem harmless and escape the King's ire. Using his madness as a cover, he successfully organises a popular insurrection that expels the King and his court. Brutus' triumph is cut short when he learns that his own son conspired to help members of Tarquin's court escape, and so Brutus closes the play by sentencing his own son to death.

Author: Ambrose Philips
Title: *The Distrest Mother*
Year Released: 1712
Synopsis: Following the Trojan War, Andromache and Astyanax, the late Hector's wife and son, are held prisoner in Greece by Pyrrhus. Pyrrhus is pressured to put Astyanax to death, but Andromache offers to marry him if he will spare Astyanax. Pyrrhus agrees, but this enrages his Greek allies, who kill him.

Author: Jonas B. Phillips
Title: *Camillus*
Year Released: 1833
Synopsis: Camillus is a successful but austere Roman soldier of high status whose stern nature renders him unpopular, despite his successes. Disgusted by the baseness of Rome's citizens, Camillus enters self-imposed exile. Rome's enemies take advantage of his absence and successfully invade, prompting Camillus to return from exile and save Rome but, in doing so, die.

Author: Jean Racine
Title: *Andromaque*
Year Released: 1667
Synopsis: Adapting Euripides' *Andromache*, Andromache and Astyanax, the wife and son of the late Hector, are being held prisoner by Achilles' son, Pyrrhus. Orestes travels to Pyrrhus to persuade him to put Astyanax to death and prevent him seeking revenge for his father's defeat. Andromache agrees to marry Pyrrhus in order to protect her son, but Pyrrhus' allies, unhappy that Astyanax is being spared, kill Pyrrhus.

Author: Rutherford, ?
Title: *Leonidas the Spartan; or, The Straits of Thermopylae*
Year Released: 1829
Synopsis: Little is known about this play, other than George Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* attests to a small number of performances and attributes it to a Mr Rutherford. Given the title, it can be presumed to depict the battle of Thermopylae.[2]

[2] This piece is briefly discussed in Odell (1928) 451.

Author: William Shakespeare
Title: *Antony and Cleopatra*
Year Released: 1607
Synopsis: From their base in Alexandria, Antony and Cleopatra attempt to wage war for control of Rome against Octavian. After a crushing naval defeat at the battle of Actium, Cleopatra fakes her suicide to stoke Antony's love for her. Instead, Antony kills himself upon learning of her death and Cleopatra, learning this, actually commits suicide.

Author: William Shakespeare
Title: *Coriolanus*
Year Released: 1608
Synopsis: The Roman general Caius Marcius gains fame by conquering the rival Volscian city of Corioli, earning the agnomen Coriolanus. Coriolanus' political rivals arrange a popular uprising against him and have him exiled. Coriolanus allies with the enemy Volscians and leads an army back to Rome for revenge but his family dissuade him from attacking, prompting the Volscians to kill him.

Author: William Shakespeare
Title: *Julius Caesar*
Year Released: 1599
Synopsis: Caesar's increasing political power incites Brutus and Cassius to arrange a conspiracy against him, killing him on the Senate floor. Mark Antony rallies the population to drive the conspirators from Rome and defeats them militarily at the battle of Philippia, causing Brutus and Cassius to commit suicide.

Author: William Shakespeare
Title: *Cymbeline*
Year Released: 1611
Synopsis: Cymbeline, Rome's vassal king in Britain, is considering cutting his ties with his Roman masters. His daughter Imogen, who is arranged to be wed to her unpleasant step brother, defies her father's will and marries a poor but worthy Roman soldier. After various intrigues involving disguises and poisons, Imogen is permitted to marry Posthumus and Cymbeline renews his allegiance to Rome.

Author: Richard Penn Smith
Title: *Caius Marius, A Tragedy*
Year Released: 1831
Synopsis: Caius Marius is a low-born Roman general who has earned the love and loyalty of Rome's lower classes. He is opposed by the patrician Sylla, and his supporters within the Senate. The people's loyalty to Marius proves fickle and unreliable, and leaves Marius vulnerable. Temporarily stripped of popular support, Marius finds himself vulnerable to Sylla and commits suicide.

Author: Stephen Storace and Prince Hoare
Title: *Dido, Queen of Carthage*
Year Released: 1792
Synopsis: Dido, the Queen of Carthage, takes in Aeneas and his fellow Trojan refugees. Dido and Aeneas fall in love, and pledge their loyalty to each other. Their romance is short-lived however, as Aeneas must continue in his mission to find a new home for his people. Abandoned, Dido curses Aeneas and his people and commits suicide on a funeral pyre.

Author: Mercy Otis Warren
Title: *The Sack of Rome*
Year Released: 1790
Synopsis: The Emperor Valentinian fears that his general, the popular and courageous Aetius, may try and usurp his rule, and so has him killed. Aetius' son Gaudentius seeks revenge and executes a plot to murder Valentinian and enthrone a new Emperor. Valentian's widow, seeking revenge, opens Rome's gates to the Vandals, who sack the city and kill Gaudentius.

Author: William Whitehead
Title: *The Roman Father: A Tragedy*
Year Released: 1750
Synopsis: Rome and Alba Longa agree to settle their lengthy war with a contest of champions, each selecting three brothers to fight on behalf of their city. A single Roman champion, Publius, survives the fight, and returns triumphantly to Rome. This evokes the anger of his sister, who was engaged to marry one of the opposing champions, and she curses the name of Rome. Publius slays her for this treachery, and is put on trial by a mob who are shocked by the apparent ruthlessness of her killing. At the trial Publius' father speaks on his son's behalf, arguing that Publius was discharging his duty to slay the enemies of Rome, and Publius is acquitted.

Author: Edward Young
Title: *Busiris, King of Egypt: A Tragedy*
Year Released: 1719
Synopsis: This play tells the story of the demise of the Egyptian king Busiris, a haughty and tyrannical King who has violently suppressed numerous rebellions and forces his poverty-stricken people to build large monuments for him. A group of conspirators from inside the court finally succeed in toppling and killing him.

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