Shakespeare's Racial Destiny: Tragic Whiteness and the Spirit-Savage Binary in Edwin Booth's *Hamlet* and *Othello*

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Eight months after John Wilkes Booth shot President Abraham Lincoln, his brother and fellow Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth returned to the national stage as Hamlet. Opening night, January 2, 1866, saw a crowd of hundreds thronging the entrance to the Winter Garden Theatre, clamoring to see Booth's return.[1] According to the *New York World*, as soon as the curtain revealed Booth in the second scene, "applause burst spontaneously from every part of the house. The men stamped, clapped their hands, and hurrahed continuously; the ladies rose in their seats and waved a thousand handkerchiefs; and for a full five minutes a scene of wild excitement forbade the progress of the play." The play eventually proceeded, but each act ended with a shower of wreaths and applause for Booth, and even occasional hisses and groans for the lone New York paper to denounce Booth's return to public life.[2]

What explains this outpouring of support? The public seemed to use Booth's return as Hamlet to turn the page on the national tragedy of Lincoln's assassination, something which reviewers took note of. One columnist wrote, "The peculiar regard in which Edwin Booth is held by all who know him is so strange and unique as to amount to a positive psychological phenomenon—the niche in which his country's heart has enshrined him was never filled before by natural man." Commenting on these striking portrayals,

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scholar Daniel Watermeier captures the sentiment of Booth-idolatry:

> It was as if the American psyche, scarred by years of war and then the shocking assassination of an esteemed president, needed to invest its collective suffering into a single individual. In a paradoxical way, Booth's personal suffering—including the loss of [his wife Mary Devlin]—so nobly borne in the public view, a suffering acted out in *Hamlet*, became emblematic of the nation's suffering. Booth like Hamlet endured the suffering, transcended it and triumphed. …It was …a position greater, deeper than mere celebrity.[3]

In what follows, I show how the Shakespearean performances of Edwin Booth, as effigy of national transcendence from the suffering of the Civil War moment and the politics of slavery, shed light on the construction of a specifically white national identity that would structure the racializing visions of human perfectability and progress into the twentieth century.

This article synthesizes cultural histories of postbellum US national identity, racial scientific discourse, and settler colonial expansion through performance analysis. Historian Reginald Horsman employs the term "racial destiny" to describe how the successful settler conquest of the American continent was used *ex post facto* to evidence theories of the innate superiority of the "Anglo-Saxon" branch of the Caucasian race in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. I take racial destiny and its loose Anglo-Saxonism as a conceptual frame for this article to clarify the anxious postbellum desire for national white reunification rather than realizing Black enfranchisement.[4] Reading nineteenth-century Shakespearean star Edwin Booth's performances of Hamlet and Othello, this article argues that the latter nineteenth century's craze for cultural refinement, which Booth's fame exemplifies, is best understood in the context of attempts not only to distance the white body politic from the perceived savagery of ethnic others such as the American Indian, Black Northern migrant, and European laborer, but also to remove any taint of said cultural inferiority from (Anglo-Saxon) white Americans themselves. To this end, I analyze Edwin Booth's unattainable, self-determined yet universal Hamlet and its tawny double in his self-termed "noble savage" Othello to showcase the same fantasy of white transcendence legible in Manifest Destiny

and racialist justifications of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. I offer the term settler (post)coloniality to describe the cultural inferiority complex legible in the US cultural elite and its alignment with differentiating white Americans from animalized racial others on the one hand and the still-lingering cultural influence of England on the other. Ultimately, I reveal the cultural construction of "humanity" as whiteness in the period, suggesting Shakespeare's crucial role in constructing a liberal white identity consonant with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century projects of imperial expansion and settler colonial white supremacy.

Shakespeare's transition from popular to high-cultural status in the US clarifies certain cultural hierarchies amidst Booth's rise to fame. Cultural historian Laurence Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* limns the progress, among other cultural forms, of Shakespearean reception in the nineteenth-century US as he changed from a human figure to the "sacred" Shakespeare, a genius at the pinnacle of human (re: Anglo-Saxon) culture removed from the democratized status of his work in the early-to-mid nineteenth century.[5] Levine notes both that this shift's dates are inexact and that it strongly corresponded to the declining fame of performer Edwin Forrest's emotional and violent acting style to the rising star of Edwin Booth's "more restrained cerebral" style, even after Lincoln's assassination.[6]

Despite Levine's hesitancy, reading this shift alongside the period's racially-informed search for a cohesive national identity separate from English influence provides striking insight. The mid-to-late nineteenth century sought narratives that placed America at the forefront of global civilizing progress, implicitly competing with British imperial strategies of "civilizing" through colonial education. One reflection of the US's postcolonial and racial anxieties at the time was racialist science. Levine oddly delays this crucial foundation to his study for 200 pages: the terms "highbrow" and "lowbrow" that form the blurred binary of his title and conceptual framework stem from racial science. Levine suddenly supplies that the term "highbrow" came into use in the 1880s to describe "intellectual or aesthetic superiority" with its opposite "lowbrow" following in 1900, both terms deriving from a corresponding phrenological taxonomy of progressive racial supremacy beginning from "Human Idiot," the "Bushman" and

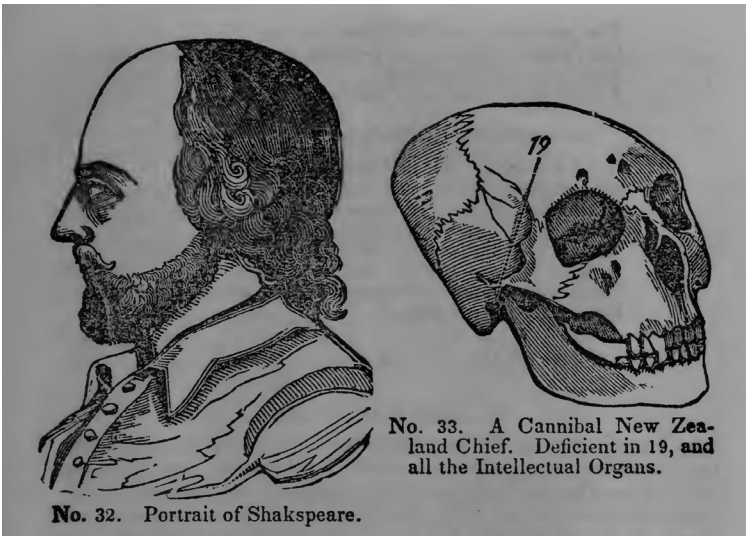

Figure 1: Frederick Coombs, Coombs' Popular Phrenology (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1865), 49.

the "Uncultivated," and culminating in the "Caucasian" and—through even further taxonomical refinement of this highest echelon—the Anglo-Saxon. Even more strikingly, Levine suggests an ultimate origin point in the 1865 illustration of the distinct brows of Shakespeare and a supposed New Zealand Cannibal chief "deficient in. . . all the Intellectual Organs" (Figure 1). But Levine's analysis glosses over just how extensive the connections were between culture's racial hierarchy and what he describes as the period's more general hierarchization of culture along English cultural critic Matthew Arnold's definition, "the study and pursuit of perfection,"[7] which was widely embraced in the US.[8]

So while Levine's work generatively reveals how "culture" came to mean "refinement" and serve as proxy for "class," more must be done to capture the enduring racialization of cultural knowledge that its racial taxonomy implies. Similarly, despite important scholarship on American Shakespeare engaging racial-scientific discourse, nineteenth-century scholarship is generally disconnected from analyses of Progress, Manifest Destiny, and their eventual imposition as global order through US racial imperialism.[9] This deficit is particularly true in the context of increasing anxiety on the part of the white ("Anglo-Saxon") populace to differentiate

itself from various ethnic others such as the American Indian, Black freedpersons, and immigrants from Europe, Latin America, and Asia.[10]

Now-canonical texts in critical race studies can serve to remedy this gap in American Shakespeare studies. Philosopher of race Denise Ferreira da Silva's critical reading of Progressive Era nationalisms (1880-1920), their indebtedness to European Enlightenment philosophy, and subsequent racial-scientific discourse provides a generative theoretical framework from which to interpret Shakespeare's role in the period's definitions of subjectivity and, therefore, white "humanity." She identifies the Enlightenment-era concepts of "universality and self-determination" as key to white Western definitions of what constitutes humanity in the period, and also apparent in post-Enlightenment conceptions of the liberal subject.[11] Secular Reason had begun to assume the place of the Judeo-Christian God as sovereign arbitrator over knowledge and representation; this spiritual "universal" Reason (or Hegel's *Geist*, the translation of which slips between Mind and Spirit) posited a self-conscious and self-determining mind as "always already before" the body and the exterior physical world. If a self-determined mind is supposed to be universal to human experience, then the subjugation of non-white Others could be read as natural to the extent that they are held as determined from without by forces other than Reason, such as the body, positioning them as "affectable" in Western epistemology. For example, Hegel viewed the "Negro" as too mentally deficient to have sufficiently developed self-consciousness and thus self-determination, arguing that, though slavery is inherently unjust, for "the Negro" it could be a "phase of education—a mode of becoming participant in a higher morality and the culture connected with it"; in other words, a mode of assimilation into a sufficiently Universal humanity.[12]

Da Silva thus shows how these inherited conceptions of self-determination render the later racializing "science of man" both possible and necessary. For white (Anglo-Saxon) Americans particularly, however, perceiving non-white Others as affectable produced an anxiety that, due to their distance from Europe, they might slip from self-determination into this abject status themselves. Thus "the articulation of racial difference," da Silva writes, "institutes an ontological account… [which] enables the

writing of the US 'spirit' as a further developed manifestation of post-Enlightenment European principles." In the nineteenth-century, then, racial science accomplishes for those who possess Reason—e.g., white Anglo-Saxon Americans—"a version of the self-determined 'I' that necessarily signifies 'other'-wise" opposed to degradations of this self-determined human subject.[13] The white body thus became the crucial signifier of this spiritual, intellectually-superior self-determination. The US, itself perennially insecure of its intellectual culture contra Europe and competing for national relevance on the global stage amongst European empires, thus could claim to realize the forward progress of Western civilization only by distinguishing whiteness from non-white, affectable others while still claiming shared heritage with Europe.

Analysis of Shakespeare's particular cultural capital in the period also adds nuance to da Silva's framework, particularly through the US's unique position as postcolony of the British empire, for which Shakespeare was a national emblem, and as a settler colonial empire of its own. As we shall see, race and uneducated "savagery" often blurred together in what I term the settler (post)colonial ironies of US imperialism and ever-deferred progress through the frontiers of racial destiny.[14] In turn, the performances of Edwin Booth, icon of Shakespearean refinement, reveal the contours of a whiteness that was based around education of the public away from an "animal" "savagery" toward the higher intellectual, "spiritual" and moral ideals that Shakespeare represented. This less-than-human animality—while markedly racialized—also extended itself toward whites that were deemed unrefined. In Edwin Booth's performances can be seen the reunification of national identity postbellum around the refinement and self-determination that white Anglo-Saxon bodies had come to represent.

Edwin Booth won his widespread popularity while explicitly educating audiences on Shakespeare's intellect with his line-by-line gestural and vocal choices. Booth's Hamlet was pedagogical: it instructed through clear indication—though more subtly and fluidly than his contemporaries—of his Hamlet's interior character. "If the theatre was a school," writes Booth scholar Charles Shattuck, "his performance was an illustrated lecture":

> He cleared the text of obscurities as carefully as he weeded out "impurities," so that even the gallery-gods would understand

> it. If he intended to reduce his Hamlet-in-action to something like the good hero in contest with the bad villain…that was no obstacle to popular acceptance.[15]

Booth's stage pedagogy partly explains the at times jarring superlative critical accounts of his performances that he was the "literal *Hamlet* of Shakespeare" or that if the "Ghost of Shakespeare" were to return, it would claim that Booth "is *my* Hamlet."[16] Through his moral purity, Booth made flesh the ideal Hamlet many had encountered as removed moral pontificator in their common-school textbooks as children, itself a civil education, and thus served as model citizen for a suffering white national identity.[17] This moral dimension added to the "spiritual" sense of intellectual refinement, and in turn the near-religious quality of his performances: Booth "strove with priestly devotion to make his Hamlet an idol of virtue. For many thousands of playgoers it was a lesson and a rite."[18]

Amidst the great national suffering of the Civil War, Edwin Booth's performances of Hamlet were a Shakespearean education in an individual's ability to transcend personal suffering through intellectual superiority and self-determination. Booth's Hamlet was utterly self-possessed: a pure expression of a spiritualized and transcendent, self-determined mind to those who experienced it. Enamored playgoer Charles Clarke, who assiduously documented Booth's Hamlet, summarizes his character as "the Hamlet of a gentleman and a scholar, or a man not apt to fly into a passion abruptly. … In this [first] soliloquy the fitfulness of delivery, though very great, is never savagely abrupt but is always gradated—the passion of one accustomed to self-control."[19] Key to this self-control was his Hamlet's extraordinary intelligence, which dispelled any inkling of madness and perceived all the plot developments almost as the audience did. His motto for the role was "That I essentially am not in madness, but mad in craft."[20] His Hamlet sighted the King and Polonius in the "get thee to a nunnery" scene early on and, according to Booth, "*acts* the rest of the scene… principally for the King."[21] Clarke notes that "Booth's intelligence in playing the madman is conspicuous… The audience is always dexterously made aware that his madness is assumed."[22]

But Booth's Hamlet, its phenomenal success, and the young star's career would all seem doomed even as they began. Within

three weeks of his historic "100 days Hamlet,"[23] Lincoln was dead. Edwin's engagements were immediately canceled. Three Booth family members, including Edwin's two other brothers, were imprisoned and questioned. Edwin himself only escaped arrest through the intercession of friends in Lincoln's administration.[24] Public turmoil led Booth to write a letter, published in several newspapers, in which he announced his retirement from the stage.

The letter, addressed to the "People of the United States," builds upon his public image as Hamlet personified while simultaneously binding Booth and his private suffering to the grieving public through melodrama. Despite addressing the nation, the letter[25] strikes a familiar tone, writing that though "private grief would under ordinary circumstances be an intrusion" when the nation is grieving, "I feel sure that a word from me will not be so regarded by you." Booth continues:

> It has pleased God to lay at the door of my afflicted family the life blood of our deservedly popular President. Crushed to very earth by this dreadful event, I am yet but too sensible that other mourners are in this land. To them, to you one and all, go forth our deep, unutterable sympathy; our abhorrence and detestation of this most foul and atrocious crime…
>
> For the future—alas! I shall struggle on in my retirement bearing a heavy heart, an oppressed memory and a wounded name—dreadful burdens—to my too welcome grave.[26]

Hamlet's words seamlessly interject themselves into Booth's public relations plea, blurring the national and theatrical stage and remixing the play's relationships through metaphor. The phrase "most foul and atrocious crime" evokes the Ghost's description of Old Hamlet's own murder by a brother, specifically the lines "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder… Murder most foul, as in the best it is" (1.5.25, 27). The late Lincoln thus strikingly figures in these Hamletisms as the murdered sovereign that the reflective, morose and perhaps all-too-Christian Hamlet is tasked with avenging. In Shakespeare's play, the failed surrogation[27] of Old Hamlet by his less-than-Herculean son constitutes the central trouble. In the national tragedy evoked by this metaphor, Claudius's original fratricide figures, on the one hand, as John Wilkes's fratricide of Edwin Booth's career through murder of the land's sovereign. But on the other hand, John Wilkes's political

assassination—through the metaphor's contextual resonance—would have clearly evoked for the public the reality that the Civil War had "turned brother against brother."[28] Edwin's Shakespearean condemnation of his brother can be said to have translated the national drama of Union and Confederacy to a symbolic family drama, in which Lincoln played the Ghost of an ideal patriarch now lost to a rudderless public. Edwin's public grief, then, also expresses the Union's ambivalent attachment to the Confederacy: the reality that other Northerners like him would be grieving fraternity and family lost to war.

Hamlet's haunting of Booth's sentiment reaches near parody in his melodramatic farewell to the stage. Booth writes that he will bear "an oppressed memory and a wounded name," clearly citing Hamlet's dying plea to Horatio.[29] It is hard not to see Booth's phrasing as an explicit plea to his audience to sympathize with his situation and "tell his story," as several newspapers in fact did. Booth had written to a friend later that when he heard of the assassination, he was declaiming a line from *The Iron Chest*, a play he was performing in: "Where is my honor now? Mountains of shame are piled upon me—me / who has labored for a name as white as mountain snow."[30] The public would generally grant Booth's wish to keep his image white and pure.

King Hamlet's ghosting of Lincoln here—within Booth's own implicit plea to take up, as Hamlet, the story of national tragedy—does much to capture the public reaction to Booth's return to the stage just eight months later.[31] The quality of Booth's transcendence from suffering was that of a martyred gentleman, flowing easily from Shakespeare's text, but also clearly evoking the martyrdom of Lincoln—the era's more prominent thoughtful gentleman. Regardless of how consciously Booth had chosen to indulge the popular mythology that he was Hamlet,[32] the public certainly assented to taking up his story as Horatio. Booth's refined Hamlet, his tragic understanding, and his morally-frustrated "will" lent itself to the Christlike adornments in the play's last act.

Yet Booth's *Hamlet* was still Shakespeare's tragedy, and the catharsis the postbellum populace yearned for identified with these noble qualities while still holding out hope for the regenerative militarism that Hamlet so fails to achieve. If anything, Booth's pedagogy instructed in the difficulties of achieving moral justice

through vengeance. Clarke describes Booth in the final scene as "to the very end show[ing] Hamlet's weakness when great responsibilities are thrust upon him." Even after killing the King in desperation, "the instant that deed is done he shrinks from it. His conscience is outraged. His will is appalled, for it has overdone itself… he cannot vindicate himself, cannot assert the justice of his course." Hamlet's "weakness" is both that his excessive conscience impedes his being a man of action, but also as Hamlet's inability to accept these "great responsibilities" and follow them through.[33] For the postbellum North, left with no Captain to guide them through the challenges of Reconstruction and truly realizing equity for freed slaves, Booth's Hamlet expressed a weakness the white populace saw in the nation and in themselves.

Through the contemporary multivalence of the play's final scenes in his return performance, it is impossible not to imagine Hamlet's reconciliation with Laertes being freighted with the wartime significance of brother turned against brother. The various iterations of reconciliation are further emphasized by Booth's curation of the text. Fitting with Booth's interpretation of being utterly self-possessed, he omits the justification of Polonius's murder as "madness" in this speech, leaving only:

> Give me your pardon, sir; I've done you wrong.
> But pardon it, as you're a gentleman.
> Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
> Free me so far in our most generous thoughts
> That I have shot my arrow o'er the house,
> And hurt my brother. (5.2.328-334)

This bond between brothers strikes upon self-determined gentility as the means to amends, and though Booth changed "my father's" to "the" house, the resonance of civil strife under one roof clearly sounds. Southern gentility and Northern refinement seem to echo here as the grounds of the coming reunion around white identity in the Compromise of 1877, which effectively abandoned racial justice efforts in the South.[34] Laertes's dying wish that "mine and my father's death come not upon thee; nor thine on me!" is met with a clasp of hands and Hamlet's line, "Heaven make thee free-of-it. I follow thee." The remixed resonances wash the death of Kings and traitors in familial and Christian blood-sacrifice, which the audience (as Horatio) can live on to tell from whichever side

of the conflict.

One such blood-soaked vision of postbellum reunification was explicitly Anglo-Saxonist: reunion justified through shared "Anglo-Saxon" blood. Historians and Black studies scholars alike identify the Emancipation Proclamation as foremost a military strategy, citing it as one reason that emancipation gradually dropped from public Northern discourse in the decade after the war.[35] Toward the mid-1870s, a new political meaning for the North's victory took its place: reunion. As historian Jackson Lears puts it: "As Reconstruction faltered, the politics of regeneration became restricted to whites only… The ideology of reunion was millennial nationalism, celebrating blood sacrifice but adding a racial component of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Religion and race combined to legitimate the drive toward overseas empire."[36] The War and Reconstruction period clarified whiteness through abandoning freed slaves to their former masters and the extermination campaigns against Native Americans. By 1891, the revision of the war's politics for the nation was complete: rather than being fought over the politics of slavery and its economic implications, the war instead began to be seen as reflecting the very "determination" Booth's morally-impeded Hamlet lacked. The journalist John Robes then described "the War as we see it now" as "an exhibition of the Anglo-Saxon race on trial," one that served "to bring out the resolute and unyielding traits belonging to our race," above all its "unconquerable determination."[37] In striking contrast to the nationally-cherished, muddy-meddled will of Booth's Hamlet, even civil war could be smoothed over through the ideologies of racial destiny, militaristic might here conveying its imperial vision beyond continental borders.

Militarism, gendered masculine, book-ended the mid-century rise of Booth, a change visible in other nineteenth-century theatrical idols. Karl Kippola's performance history *Acts of Manhood* (2017) charts the transition of white middle-class audiences' perception of masculine gender performance through its changing taste from Edwin Forrest's muscular acting style to Booth's new, refined etiquette. Kippola illustrates Booth's return to then-feminized, eighteenth-century modes of gentility and sentiment, and, most crucially, middle-class audience's worship of his refined self-presentation as collapsed with his Hamlet. Booth's self-control

in the face of personal sorrow and repression of emotion—both linked to Enlightenment-era masculinity—gradually became key to the middle-class's sense of gentility and manliness.

While Booth's redefined masculinity illuminates the War's extensive cultural impact, the character of Booth's performances, and their broader cultural significance for this postbellum Northern public, can be misconstrued as too much about "masculinity" if not seen as part of a broader white racial formation. Though Kippola stresses that the models of masculinity he observes are specifically white, not monolithic, and necessarily exclusive of the era's myriad non-white masculinities, the term "white" tends to pull little explanatory weight given the text's well-integrated sources and their contouring of public mid-nineteenth-century American sentiment. In short, Kippola's admirable thoroughness is hindered by its exclusive focus on Booth's masculinity and the subsequent reifying of its object's condition of possibility: the era's racism.

Kippola's epigraph for his chapter on Booth, discussed in the next section, is taken from an oft-cited theatre critic, William Winter, defining Edwin Forrest as "essentially animal." Kippola identifies in this depiction only a "dismissal of Forrest and, by association, the working-class male, as a soulless animal."[38] Granted, intellectual and spiritual progress of individuals as well as civilizations often overlap in nineteenth-century discourse surrounding "refinement," partially due to Hegelian influence.[39] But the repression of the "soulless animal" that Kippola neglects to mark as a specifically *white* middle-class masculinity must be contextualized in scientific racist discourse and narratives of national Progress from the backwoods of uncultivation (and its unsettling proximity to Blackness and American Indian "savagery") into global leadership. Specifically, a lack of "self-control" of the animal passions was the prime tactic in racializing Blackness and, particularly, Black masculinity.

"Self-control," as might be recalled from Charles Clarke's juxtaposition of Booth's Hamlet with "savagery," fit into a racialized notion of intellectual spirit and had in some form since the Enlightenment. Hegel's racist reification of liberal human subjectivity asserted that "the want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes." Grounded in and buoyed by countless

similar formulations, this essential lack of self-determination gave scientific discourse the framing assumptions which the universalizing nineteenth-century science of man sought to prove.[40] And there was still widespread resistance to Darwinism in the US in the mid-nineteenth century, so it is perhaps not surprising that polygenism, the leading alternative "scientific" explanation to evolution, not only found fertile ground in the US, but fit perfectly into Hegel's racist developmental history of human rationality—in which America figured as "the land of the future where…the burden of the World's History shall reveal itself" and to which Africa and its descendants did not belong.[41] Polygenists, the most prominent of whom was close friends with Edwin Booth,[42] offered separate creations to explain the supposed inferiority of American Indian, African and Asian civilizations, now determined more specifically by their biologically-justified *racial* "types."[43] The Caucasian and specifically Anglo-Saxon racial types were positioned as the most refined human specimens—intellectually, according to racial science, and spiritually, through such creationist syntheses.

In this context, Booth's definition of martyr-like suffering and tragic self-determination testify to a white masculinity constructed in contrast to positionalities other than white men, as we can see from Booth's conception of Ophelia and later, in the case of his Othello, the racialized position of the savage Moor. Booth notes in his *Hamlet* promptbook that Ophelia is "the personification of pale & feeble-minded amiability."[44] In this case, Booth employs a "feeble-minded" white woman as a gendered foil that accentuates Hamlet's intellect as well as, humorously, his self-control: Hamlet's coming to Ophelia's closet with doublet unbraced, rather than suggesting their possible sexual familiarity, is to Booth an intentional performance on the part of Hamlet which Ophelia foolishly mistakes for actual madness.[45] Booth's "feeble-minded" epithet presages a key organizing term in eugenics discourse arguing for the sterilization of poor women that might otherwise escape scrutiny as white or white-passing; Irish immigrants, the poor, and the relatives of criminals were branded genetically inferior along the lines of intellectual refinement. Here in the postbellum period,[46] then, decades before the fever-pitch of eugenics, Booth's feminine Hamlet captures the Romantic ideals of civilizing

feminine sentiment while distinguishing his intellect from a feminized and racialized intellectual inferiority. Booth's Hamlet casts muscular masculinity, a certain unrefined white femininity, and racialized lack of self-control as inferior. In short, Booth's Hamlet itself provided an ideal toward which nineteenth-century theatregoers could aspire, an aspirational whiteness that laid claim to the transcendent universality of Shakespeare made particular to the middle-class morality. Adored by female fans, Booth's Hamlet reflected the broadening of theatrical spaces and other cultural forms, allowing inclusion in a national identity based increasingly more on race than gender. Refinement became the main marker of white distinction,[47] becoming less gender exclusive, and unrefinement aligned one with an animality suggesting not only Blackness, but the general "savagery" of non-white Others (i.e., those not possessing the "spirit" of self-determined mind).

Reception of Booth's Hamlet reveals an aesthetics of transcendent whiteness. The whiteness of Booth's body itself—often linked with intellectual spirit—drew comparisons to other "ideals" of Western civilization from his audiences. To his most descriptive annotators, the physical features of the man himself seamlessly blur into classical statuary, white and pure. Playgoer Mary Stone anatomically describes Booth performing her "demi-god Hamlet," yet careens into his statuesque whiteness:

> His complexion is naturally pale and is unaltered for Hamlet. The face is one of impressive power and intellectual as well as sensuous beauty, with features cast in the rare classical mould… To see this shapely head on broad shoulders; these handsome classical features…—why! it is like beholding some magnificent Greek statue suddenly endowed with life and motion, sense and speech, with soul, and moreover with the intellect and education of the nineteenth century![48]

Stone links Booth's shapeliness, whiteness, and intellect as markers of nineteenth-century inheritance of a literalized Greek ideal. Booth's "soul" imbues the old vessel of classical Greek culture with new life, the "intellect and education" of common schools and Shakespeare. Booth's white body is a key feature in this metaphor, but it too signifies only, following da Silva, the European origins of the spirit of civilization's progress.[49] Booth transcends the lifeless

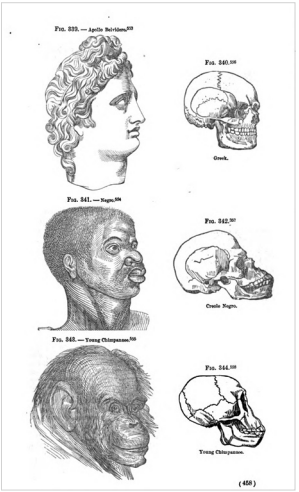

Figure 2*:* George Gliddon and Josiah Nott. *Types of Mankind: Or, Ethnological Researches, Based Upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and Upon Their Natural, Geographical, Philological and Biblical History*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippencott & Co., 1854, 458. The "Greek" bust stands in even for a human body, positioned as a literally white perfection somewhere between the marble depicted and the forgotten human body.

stone just as he transcends the text of Shakespeare: Mary Stone elsewhere describes his Hamlet as having the "spiritual intensity of that glow from the soul outwards which made Booth seem the living, breathing Hamlet of Shakespeare himself, containing *deeps of being* more profound than any words he spoke."[50] Booth brings more to Shakespeare and the stage than impersonation; Booth brings the real thing: a white American body made authentic through theatrical ritual. Indeed, unlike the bust in the racist taxonomy contemporary to his Civil War performances above (Figure 2), Booth's intellectual and "spiritual" refinement are both ideal and human, "endowed with life," the ideal of racialized civilization made flesh.

Transcending the "animal": racial destiny on the settler (post)colonial frontier

Edwin Booth's facilitation of a racially-undergirded sacralized Shakespeare intersected with the US's lasting postcolonial anxieties in ways reflective of the culture's desire for refinement of the national (and white) identity. Booth's career maps particularly onto the settler (post)colonial frontier. Shakespeare's movement from sharing the stage with blackface minstrelsy and burlesques to being a stand-alone cultural event did not occur without star Shakespeareans like Booth to refine Shakespeare's image. Booth did by far the most to effect the simultaneous refinement of Shakespeare on the one hand and, as a public icon, the refinement

of the individual through experience with Shakespeare on the other. Edwin was seen as earning his own stardom through a kind of theatrical frontiersmanship common to the acting circuit in the nineteenth century. Booth first performed Shakespeare publicly in a minstrel song routine, done in blackface, in frontier towns his father toured. Edwin gained experience on the frontier in California and other less prestigious theatrical circuits in the 1850s.[51] He even toured the smaller international circuit at the fringes of the various settler colonial frontiers in Australia and the Sandwich Islands during this period.[52] And during a later tour of the West in 1887, Edwin Booth triumphantly described the Los Angeles audience's "utmost attention and intelligent appreciation" toward his Hamlet as "encouraging proof of intellectual elevation, [and] an assurance of the safety of the higher order of the Drama."[53] If the rugged frontier could be refined through Shakespeare, so could the nation continue to progress toward further refinement.

"Intellectual elevation" was clearly linked to the resolution of settler (post)colonial anxieties about intellectual and cultural (re: "highbrow")[54] inferiority. Booth saw his career as devoted to the refinement of both the stage and its public through his intellectual acting style and theatrical entrepreneurship. He opened Booth's Theater in 1869, arrayed with white marble statues of great English Shakespeareans like David Garrick, Edmund Kean, and Junius Brutus Booth alongside Shakespeare and Edwin himself; Booth effectively joined the pantheon of English genius here as its newest mantle-bearer, commemorated in statue-form while still living. Booth founded the Players Club five years before his death in New York City with the aim of "establish[ing] an institution in which influences of learning and taste should be brought to bear upon members of the stage—a place where they might find… intellectual communion with minds of their own order, and […] refinement of thought and manner."[55] The Players itself was likely inspired by its English predecessor, the prestigious London Garrick club named for the 18th-century star actor David Garrick, into which Booth was welcomed.[56] Taken together, Booth's major entrepreneurial projects demonstrate a vision of refinement that blended intellectual advancement with postcolonial competition with Britain.

But in the appreciation of Booth's spiritual Hamlet (and his own notes on Othello), this postcolonial tension manifested itself, as it did in the broader US culture, in racializing claims to national née imperial supremacy over non-white "savagery." Juxtapositions of Booth's intellectual refinement to other star Shakespeareans during his lifetime, particularly Edwin Forrest and Tommaso Salvini, clearly articulate a binary between an animalistic physicality and a "spiritual" intellectualism. For example, when Booth died in 1893, influential theatre critic and Booth biographer William Winter succinctly captured the shifting dynamics of nineteenth-century Shakespeare appreciation as one from the "animal" Edwin Forrest to the "spiritual and intellectual" Edwin Booth:

> The transition from Forrest to Edwin Booth marked the most important phase of [the American stage's] development. Forrest, although he had a spark of genius, was intrinsically and essentially animal. Booth was intellectual and spiritual. Forrest obtained his popularity, and the bulk of his large fortune, by impersonating the Indian chieftain Metamora. Booth gained and held his eminence by acting Hamlet and Richelieu. The epoch that accepted Booth as the amplest exponent of taste and feeling in dramatic art was one of intellect and refinement.[57]

Scholars, including Kippola, often curiously omit Winter's reference to Forrest's performances as Metamora, primarily referencing Winter's description to track the shift of Shakespeare's cultural status. But Winter's full description is crucial to understanding Shakespeare's ties to ideologies of white racial destiny in the period.

Winter frames his biography by recapitulating longstanding postcolonial anxieties: he describes the period before Forrest's career as that in which "the spirit and tone of the American theatre were English," a time when "America, theatrically, had not ceased to be a province of England."[58] Indeed, Winter's mention of "Hamlet and Richelieu," characters written by Shakespeare and a British baron, as the principal metric authorizing US transcendence from England's imperial rule over American theatre is ironic to say the least. Still, the faux-native character of this transcendence clarifies the loosely Anglo-Saxon racialization of Shakespeare's genius as a marker of global cultural capital at the time. Winter crucially extends the postcolonial logic of the fraught "animal" vs. "spiritual" dialectic by citing, as evidence of that intrinsically animal essence,

Forrest's famed performance as the noble Wampanoag chieftain Metamora, or Metacom.

Metamora; or the Last of the Wampanoags, written by John Augustus Stone in 1829 to win Edwin Forrest's competition for a play starring a Native American, falls within the settler colonial genre of "Indian drama."[59] The play follows the Wampanoag chieftain's noble resistance to English settlers' tyranny and treachery, ultimately slaying his own wife rather than allow her to be enslaved and cursing the English (rather than New-England settlers) as he dies. In that he developed the role, Forrest's own Jacksonian populism amidst Jackson's Indian removal policy blends the performance text's postcolonial significances with anti-elitist settler coloniality. Forrest's appropriation of indigeneity consonant with the political purpose of white nativist populism thus falls directly in line with Vine Deloria's history of white American settlers "playing Indian" from the Boston Tea Party to the boy scouts to rehearse a fictive native presence through the garb of Indigenous peoples.[60]

In this light, Winter's parallelism provides argumentative reasoning that connects each sentence in a logical proof. Winter's description "impersonating the Indian chieftain Metamora" marks Forrest's performance with fraudulence through the emerging connotation of the word "impersonate."[61] In contrast to Booth's more artistic "acting" of characters that, in Winter's stuffy style, speak for themselves as symbols of "intellect and refinement," Forrest's performance is presented as an attempt to mimic and thereby, as the earlier postcolonial references make clear, surrogate a racialized nativeness. Forrest's Metamora on the one hand fails to be more than an "impersonation," but implicitly *must* fail due to the "animal" nature of the Indian chieftain Forrest impersonates. Winter notes with irony that Forrest's inability to define a *white* subject position outside Indianness reified England's imperial rule of American theatre. In short, Winter's logical proof metaphorically quells the *colonial* anxiety of a threatening savage surround through reification of the *post*colonial fantasy of progress and refinement: Edwin Booth's refinement of English drama, particularly Shakespeare.[62]

"The savage blood is up": Fluid Racialization and the Ambiguous Humanity of Booth's and Salvini's *Othello*

The white theatrical population's fantasies of progress through refinement reach their clearest racial import in Booth's annotations of his Othello performances, just as performance and reception of Shakespeare's *Othello* have reflected the prevailing racial attitudes in every era since Burbage's first performance in 1604. The continuing debates surrounding Othello's Blackness express the loose racial signifiers of the ambiguous ethnic and cultural othering Shakespeare himself instantiates. But this longstanding critical debate often seems to efface the Eurocentric and, in the nineteenth century, whiteness-reifying point of contention: not whether the noble Othello is innately racially inferior, "animal," or "savage," but rather *to what degree*.[63] In the nineteenth century the stakes of this difference were high for "Caucasian" or white European critics in part due to Shakespeare's sacralization as representative Anglo-Saxon, and thus, under ever-expanding Anglophonic hegemony, human intellectual perfection. An appendix in Furness's *Variorum Othello* (1886) titled "Othello's Colour" points to one crucial premise for this debate, informed by racial theory during Booth's lifetime: that north African Moors, in contrast to the loosely distinguished African "blackamoor," were of light-brown hue due to "their descent from the Caucasian race."[64] The excerpt describes the rationale of actor Edmund Kean, the first "tawny" Othello in the nineteenth century, and argues that Kean's "alteration" through the tawny color—based specifically on this racial justification—had been "sanctioned by subsequent usage."

Both Booth and Salvini ostensibly followed this interpretation of Othello; Salvini, however, brought the "darkest Othello in a generation" to American stages in 1873 and, due to Salvini's violent portrayal and his Italian "foreign-ness," was consistently viewed through a convoluted racial heuristic that raced his Othello as a Black African. This led to frequent oppositions between his Othello and Booth's, one which extends the binary of spiritual intellect and bodily animality to contrast Anglo-American whiteness to not only American Indian "savagery," but also to the black beast trope and a similarly racialized Italianness. Ultimately, Edwin Booth's Othello illustrates the blurred racialization of non-

whiteness generally (though not without its own hierarchical logic) as less-than-human animal.

Another biographer of Booth, Professor Charles Copeland, lauds Salvini as having had the qualities that "give the force of animal passion demanded by tragedy." Copeland then adds that Salvini "was poor in other qualities 'demanded by tragedy'—namely, spirituality and imagination"—qualities which for Copeland Booth has in spades.[65] This is significant because Salvini was most well-known for his darkly-painted and lurid Othello, which was inescapably coded as "Negro" to the nineteenth-century public in the US and England. While Salvini's Othello was a turbaned Oriental Moor and not obviously African to the lay American theatergoer, his was the darkest makeup in the US since the early nineteenth century,[66] and reviews of his performance exemplify the blurring of Blackness and the more ambiguous non-whiteness of a brown body. New York newspapers described him as "Perfectly African in his appearance and his mein," called his portrayal "a blackamoor, and not a Moor."[67] And there was some suggestion that Salvini actively participated in this racial reading of the character: *The New York Times* claimed in a review that he played Othello as "an undeniable woolly-headed negro."[68] Fitting the period's reactive racism against newly-arriving Italian immigrants, Italians were easily lumped into this blurred dehumanization through racialized performance, through both animalistic imagery and the racial science that linked Southern Italians to Africa due to their shared climate. Salvini encouraged this association, perhaps to buttress his authority over the role, in describing Othello as "Meridionale."[69]

Italian-American racialization as "savage" was pronounced enough to lead, in 1891, to the lynching of eleven Italian prisoners in New Orleans.[70] In the postbellum period, however, the extensive racialization of cultural "refinement" is most illustrated by Salvini's Othello sharing "savage" behavioral qualities the press associated with Blackness. Scholar Joe Falocco writes of this critical blackening of Salvini that "[c]omplaints about the 'negro' characteristics of Salvini's Moor had less to do with the actor's physical appearance in the role than with other attributes he gave the character—his 'physical vigor' and his 'barbarism and cruelty,' which revealed a 'tiger latent in his blood.'"[71] This blurring of non-

white racializations, and the taint of Blackness that pervades them, speaks to the fluid and urgent search for a stable idea of whiteness, regularly distinguished from a non-white animality usually linked to Blackness. English actress Ellen Terry further clarified the transatlantic boundaries of Anglo-Saxon whiteness, saying Salvini's Othello succeeded due to his "foreign temperament": "Shakespeare's French and Italians, Greeks and Latins, medievals and barbarians, fancifuls and reals, all have a dash of Elizabethan English men in them, but not Othello."[72] Shakespeare's wholly Other Othello, in Terry's odd logic, is more fitting for an Italian than an Englishman.[73] Racial science clearly informed this view of Anglo-Saxon culture and identity.

Edwin Booth's direct comments on Othello's character are sparse, but the assembled whole reveals deep investment in the racial debates surrounding Othello's color and its relevance to an innate savagery. Though not the tiger-like savage Salvini made famous, Booth's Othello laid heavy emphasis on the "noble" aspect of the noble savage view. Booth himself viewed Kean's "tawny" interpretation to be correct, following his father. As recorded in a posthumous biography written by his daughter Edwina Booth, Edwin Booth reiterates his father's interpretation more explicitly along the lines of race:

> [Junius Brutus Booth] considered every character in Shakspere [sic] worthy of an artist, and of his best efforts. I think his delineation of *Othello's* jealous and suspicious nature raised it above the low level, and at one time commonly accepted idea, of the brutal blackamoor, which my father never believed to be Shakspere's motive.[74]

To Booth and to his father, Shakespeare's genius rules out the "low level" interpretation that Othello is a "brutal blackamoor," which would require no artistry. This view would at first appear to criticize the racist simplicity of the brutal blackamoor itself as a racial caricature, but Edwina Booth's biography seems to have published Booth's views on race quite selectively.

When not curated by his loving daughter as in the above, Booth's views portray a common racial essentialism that, I suggest, structured his view of culture and refinement.[75] Furness's *Variorium Othello* contains unvarnished notes on Booth's stage business which, according to the editor, "were made with no view to their

being printed."[76] Largely sourced from letters sent between the two friends,[77] Booth's notes describe his Othello as a pinnacle of white Victorian refinement and manners. For example, he relates to Furness, who in fact believed Shakespeare intended Othello to be a Black African, that the "keynote" of Othello's nature is that he is a "a modest, simple-hearted *Gentleman*."[78] Yet at times Booth slips into racialist confusion as to whether "the savage" in Othello outstrips his nobility. At the line "If thou dost slander her," Booth writes that

> seeing Iago's dagger I clutch it in frenzy and am about to stab him, when the Christian overcomes the Moor, and throwing the dagger from me, I fall again upon the seat with a flood of tears. To this weeping Iago may allude in his next speech, where he says contemptuously, Are you a man?![79]

The violent "frenzy" of "the Moor" and the "brutality" of the low-culture blackamoor interpretation Booth rejects appear differentiated only by the moderating force of the white, civilized European. Othello weeps as if, as Booth puts it in another note, "in horror" at his own lack of self-control, which then allows in Booth's conception a melancholic admission of the failure of a more Forrestian (i.e., "animal") masculinity in Iago's response. Savagery in Booth's more liberal view is any departure from bourgeois white gentility, and the civilized "Christian" leads to a tearful unmanliness that generally endeared Booth to his increasingly female and war-ravaged audience.[80]

Elsewhere in Booth's acting notes, the character of Othello's otherness further complicates an understanding of Booth's racialist viewpoint. When Othello bursts out "I'll tear her all to pieces," Booth's note describes Othello in racial scientific terms of essential unreason: "Here you may let the savage have vent—but for a moment only; when Othello next speaks, he is tame again and speaks sadly;"[81] grief and Victorian devotion here "tame" an animalistic "savage," not unlike Forrest's Metamora which Winter disdained, ironically, as derivative. In Othello and Desdemona's first relatively private scene together in Cyprus, Booth's racialist lens is more pronounced in his negation of Othello's animality in favor of an exceptional nobility: "They embrace, with delicacy. There is nothing of the animal in this 'noble savage'" (213). Similarly, when Othello disavows his love for Desdemona, Booth strikingly

opposes feelings of "humanity" itself and Othello's innate "savage blood" as vying within him:

> Although the savage blood is up, let a *wave of humanity* sweep over his heart at these words. Breathe out "Tis gone' with a sigh of agony which seems to exhale love to heaven.[82]

"Humanity" engulfs the savage essence that racially determines Othello's innately unreasoned rage. The trope of engulfment seen in Othello's Christian Victorian melodrama strikingly parallels the imperialist sentiment then gaining traction in the US.[83] Indeed, Booth's refined and whitened Othello performance—through the Orientalist gaze which, as Edward Said argued, serves to recapitulate Western desire[84]—expresses the latter-nineteenth-century US iteration of the liberal human subject, complete with its negative self-definition against racialized savagery and the settler (post)colonial anxieties about cultural inferiority based upon *proximity* to said savagery.

Booth's swerve away from "the animal" lurking in Othello's "savage blood" sits oddly with his general view of the character as at core "a *Gentleman*"—unless, that is, one considers the inherent opposition of refinement to the racially-determined savagery that inheres in Othello's "savage blood." With an emphatic, italicized and capitalized summation, Booth asserts this essence against the backdrop of animalism, meticulously defined in the racialist science of man typified by Salvini's performances. But, as we have seen, this assertion does not scan: in reality, Booth's acting notes show his Othello's refined Victorian vying to *repress* the othered "savage blood," allowing it "vent" as a strategy of control. Thus, the italic emphasis of "*Gentleman*" pushes against and represses Booth's own racial-essentialist performance, expressing *Booth's* repressive sanitization of the text's (racialized) sexuality as well as Othello's savagery and its cultural epitomization in Blackness. As Marvin Rosenberg succinctly puts it in *The Masks of Othello*: "Booth's audible, visual grief was a poetic sublimation of Salvini's violence, which Booth normally shrank from."[85]

Booth's Othello is a true "noble savage," a racial exception. And, much like the assimilationist Indian policy that would cohere at century's end in the motto "Kill the Indian; Save the Man," the distinction between nobility and savagery suggests the very same logic that grounds liberal whiteness in the period: the

transcendence of the physical body and its limitations (here being racial Otherness) toward the realm of the "spirit." Thus, a dialectic of refinement and savagery structures Othello's tragedy just as that of human and ungrievable Indian structure the march of settler colonialism's assimilationist strategy of control.

Through the various descriptions degrading everything outside of the "spiritual" self-determining mind that white bodies signified—from Winter's disdain for Forrest's racially tainted success to the racial-scientific linkage of Italian-ness and Blackness as bestial in Salvini's Othello—Shakespeare's transition to high culture clearly participated in the broader racial project of asserting Anglo-Saxon cultural and racial superiority over non-white populations as disparate as American Indians, the previously enslaved, and recent European immigrants, broadly racialized as "savages."

Notes

1. Daniel Watermeier, *American Tragedian: The Life of Edwin Booth* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2015), 126. For fear of political violence, police squads were dispatched and served to preserve order as the hundreds of ticket-holders pressed through the lobby to their seats for the sold-out performance, filling it to capacity thirty minutes after the house opened. Exact numbers for the evening are hard to come by, but per Watermeier, the venue was "filled to capacity," and thus may number in the thousands. The newer Winter Garden under Boucicault's management was renovated to have fewer seats than the "leviathan" he inherited in Tripler Hall, but exact numbers there are also elusive.

2. Watermeier, *American Tragedian*, 68.

3. Watermeier, *American Tragedian*, 127-128.

4. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). As Horsman notes, while of course the idea of an "Anglo-Saxon race" is an ambiguous and arbitrarily-defined fiction, it was nonetheless central to political, popular and intellectual discourse—including that of expansionism's opponents as well as its advocates—and justified by the era's intellectual community (Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 1-2, 132). Though Horsman focuses primarily on the earlier century, racial destiny also provides a lasting if shifting racial ideology into the twentieth century, one that synthesizes a reunited white body politic with so-called spiritual progress into frontiers beyond continental limits.

5. Laurence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 30-34. By the early 1900s at least some writers viewed Shakespeare dramas as "bores to every-day people," while Mark Twain, a member of Booth's Players Club, was lamenting the passing of the age when, in 1865, "Edwin Booth played Hamlet a hundred nights in New York…What has come over us English-speaking people?"

6. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 51.

7. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 223. English poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold was a key figure shaping nineteenth-century American taste and, following Levine, cultural taste hierarchies. He was a somewhat moralizing figure: "Increasingly, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, as public life became everywhere more fragmented, the concept of culture took on hierarchical connotations along the lines of Matthew Arnold's definition of culture—the best that has been thought and known in the world…the study and pursuit of perfection.' The Englishman Arnold whose critical writings preceded his trips to America in 1883 and 1886, did not discover a tabula rasa in America; he found many eager constituents here from the very beginning. Two years before Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* was published, *Harper's* maintained that certain authors were 'not only tests of taste but even of character.' If a man gave himself to Shakespeare or Chaucer, 'we have a clew to the man.' … The Arnold important to America was not Arnold the critic, Arnold the poet, Arnold the religious thinker, but Arnold the Apostle of Culture. 'I shall not go so far as to say of Mr. Arnold that he invented' the concept of culture, Henry James commented in 1884, 'but he made it more definite than it had been before—he vivified it and lighted it up.' … 'Why does nobody any more mention Arnold's name?' Ludwig Lewisohn asked in 1927 and replied that it was because Arnold's views had become completely absorbed in the mainstream of American thought."

8. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 223. Quoting Henry Raleigh: "Arnold's success in America was immediate, far-reaching, and lasting. In the academic world in particular he has become a fixed star. It would not be an overstatement to say, as several nineteenth century admirers of Arnold did say, that he had perhaps more readers in America than he had in England itself."

9. Andrew Carlson, "Oteller and Desdemonum: Defining Nineteenth-Century Blackness," *Theatre History Studies* 30.1 (2010): 176-186; Kris Collins, "White-Washing the Black-a-Moor: 'Othello', Negro Minstrelsy and Parodies of Blackness," *Journal of American Culture* 19.3 (1996): 87-101; Robert Hornback, "Black Shakespeareans vs. Minstrel Burlesques: 'Proper' English, Racist Blackface Dialect, and the Contest for Representing 'Blackness,' 1821-1844," *Shakespeare Studies* 38 (2010); Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Shakespeare in America's Gilded Age" in *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Gail Marshall. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 340-345; Marvin Carlson, 1997, "Booth, Lincoln, and Theatrical Reception" (published text from *The Geske Lectures* series, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1997). While still few, illustrative analyses of scholars like Andrew Carlson, Kris Collins, and Robert Hornback have indeed considered theatrical representations of blackness through blackface minstrelsy and, especially generative, latter-century minstrel adaptations of *Othello*. Others, such as Virginia Mason Vaughan and theatre historians such as Marvin Carlson, have also considered the importance of Shakespeare and Shakespeare ownership to the frontier and the emergence of more refined, middle-class appreciation of Shakespeare as cultural, moral, even "spiritual" capital. Carlson, for example, notes that in frontier towns the touring performances of Shakespearean stars such as Edwin Booth was seen to effect a "moral and educative function" for the emerging middle-class which "bordered on the religious" (Carlson 24). Similarly, Vaughan points to the significance of owning Shakespeare memorabilia and Booth iconography to indicate social refinement throughout the nation and the frontier, a pattern influenced by the idea that female influence could refine the domestic, and thereby cultural, sphere. "But by the 1880s owning Shakespeare had become

something of a national pastime. In the great age of American collecting the names of Henry Clay Folger and Henry E. Huntington come immediately to mind, but they were not alone. Daly, Furness and Booth are characteristic of nineteenth-century American efforts to memorialize Shakespeare by owning him, whether by purchasing souvenir postcards and bric-a-brac in Stratford or keeping scrapbooks at home" (Vaughan 344-345).

10. Where relevant, I employ the terms "American Indian" "Indian" and "freedpersons" rather than Indigenous peoples or emancipated Black Americans for historical consonance and to distinguish their racial import from contemporary racializations and identities. Admittedly, parsing accuracy and virulence in historical racial terminology is a constant vexation. I do avoid labeling Black emancipated Americans as "emancipated slaves" to attempt to separate people from their enslavement.

11. Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 188.

12. da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 119-120. Specifically, Hegel claimed this would necessitate that "the category of Universality" "which naturally accompanies our ideas" be abandoned. This degradation of Universality in Hegel also provided the basic tenets of progressive-era racism in that it gives root to the White Man's Burden trope of late 19th-century racial imperialism and its strategy of assimilation through education: For Hegel, because "the want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes," Blackness is a condition "capable of no development or culture," he asserts "as we see them at this day, such have they always been," an anti-Black parallel to the vanishing/timeless Indian trope.

13. da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 19-20. According to da Silva, without this earlier century secular-spiritual philosophy, "the ontological priority of the interior/temporal" mind that later racial science sought to taxonomize "would be meaningless."

14. The settler colonial narrative of US Manifest Destiny—the spiritual projection of ownership beyond and importantly *away from* the colonial self toward the Westward continental limits—can be understood as a postcolonial teleology. The US as a postcolony is marked primarily by an obsession with finding its distinctiveness from Britain culturally, politically, and, to a more limited degree, racially. From James Fenimore Cooper's white frontiersmen abstracting American Indian knowledge into a unique American identity to Emerson's assertions of white Americans "speaking our own minds" contra Europe to Whitman's early distaste for Shakespeare as anti-democratic, the nineteenth century was suffused by anxious American exceptionalism that contended specifically with a sense of intellectual and cultural inferiority. Many historians describe westward progress and its attendant desire for regenerative war as typifying America's dreamscape in the nineteenth century (Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000); T.J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009). But seen apart from war and violence, Manifest Destiny can also be read as a projection of postcolonial desire to progress—spatially and culturally—away from the British Empire and into a national identity of one's own. It is the irony and contradiction of the settler (post)colonial impulse that would abstract the frontier's possibility into ideals of Progress and racial categorization, an ironic surrogation of Britain's colonial authority achieved through simultaneous genocidal denial, racial segregation, and claims to nativeness. In other words, as white Americans became

Americans through the progress of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier, they enacted a doubled surrogation of nativeness on the one hand and imperial might on the other. This vexed contradiction disables a conventionally "postcolonial" understanding of the US, as the shared logic of empire manifests in merely revised form, in what Taiaiake Alfred calls a "paradigm of post-colonial colonialism" (qtd. in Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 36).

15. Charles H. Shattuck, *The Hamlet of Edwin Booth* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), xxiii-xxiv.

16. Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, 12.

17. Philip H. Christensen, "McGuffey's Oxford (Ohio) Shakespeare," *Journal of American Studies* 43.1 (2009): 101-115. Shakespeare declamation featured prominently in common school curricula in the service of moral education and socialization, as evidenced in McGuffey's *Readers* (1837) and *Rhetorical Guide* (1844). These texts, building on prior elocution texts, instructed morality through selections from Shakespeare and the Bible side by side, and would "mould the tastes of four generations" (Alice McGuffey Merrill Ruggles, *The Story of the McGuffeys American Book Co.*, 1950, 97). The first students of these texts would become the audiences encouraging Booth's Civil War rise to fame. These coinciding circumstances of Shakespeare on the page and Booth's refined stage encouraged Shakespeare's authority as a national body of work. As one scholar puts it, "By the close of the century, the McGuffey canon had contributed to an American belief in Shakespeare's authority as second only to the Bible's, a point of view reflected in Emerson's judgment that Shakespeare is 'inconceivably wise'" (Philip H. Christensen, "McGuffey's Oxford (Ohio) Shakespeare," *Journal of American Studies* 43.1 (2009): 101). The *Readers* and *Guide* advanced Shakespeare's (highly edited) texts as a model for public discourse which would instill praiseworthy character. In many of the editions of this "wisdom literature," usually free from dramatic plot or context, the "To be or not to be" soliloquy—termed simply "The Hamlet Soliloquy" or, in Scott's earlier elocution source text "Hamlet's soliloquy on death"—represented Shakespeare's tragedies (Christensen, "McGuffey," 112-113). Despite the moral ambiguity of Hamlet's soliloquy, it was likely included due to the play's popularity (and continued to be included in the later revised editions, albeit in more advanced *Readers*). To be a good citizen in the mid-nineteenth century, Hamlet's decision to bear the ills he has for fear of death and the unknown was required reading. Small wonder, then, that the postbellum populace could give itself so completely to the character-worship of Edwin Booth, who embodied this forbearing yet self-determined Hamlet in a time coping with great death and tragedy. A unique potential for middle-brow whiteness—as patient martyr for justice in securing abolition on the one hand and in civilizing the savage world through imperialism on the other, at personal and national cost—was already here arising.

18. Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, xv.

19. Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, 129 In 1870, Charles Clarke, a twenty-one-year-old self-described "mere playgoer," took it upon himself to record in great detail Booth's performance of Hamlet; this manuscript is housed at the Folger Shakespeare Library and is the main primary source that Shattuck uses to reconstruct Edwin Booth's performance of the role. Shattuck describes it as "perhaps the fullest record of any Shakespearean performance before the advent of the motion picture and the sound track" (103). See page 102-107 of Shattuck's text for more on Clarke's remarkable endeavor.

20. Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, xxii.

21. Qtd. in Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, xxiii.

22. Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, 197.

23. *The Evening Post*, qtd. in Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, 116-117. This highly-successful run of *Hamlet*, performed for 100 consecutive nights in New York City in 1865, solidified his already significant national image as the role's eminent actor.

24. Watermeier, *American Tragedian*, 119.

25. Booth had a friend draft the letter (as he was never prone to speechifying), which might explain the letter's at times glaring Hamletisms. A note attached to this letter indicates it was drafted by John B. Murray, and Booth accepted the draft but added the words "in my retirement."

26. Qtd. in Watermeier, *American Tragedian*, 120.

27. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Trans-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3. Joseph Roach's concept of surrogation redefines performance through the "doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins," a term with wide applicability and with special potency to Hamlet's Oedipal relationship to his father.

28. J. Tracey Power, "Brother Against Brother: Alexander and James Campbells's Civil War," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 95:2 (April 1994).

29. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor. (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

> "O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
> Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me!
> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story" (5.2.328-333).

30. Sir Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*.

31. It is tempting to exclaim, in nineteenth-century palimpsestual prose, "Within eight months! …Frailty thy name is Booth."

32. A friend did have a hand in drafting the letter, perhaps suggesting more the public's view of him as Hamlet rather than his own self-conception or self-fashioning in this instance.

33. Qtd. in Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, 102-107.

34. T.J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America,1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 19-27.

35. Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 19-22.

36. Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 21.

37. Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 27.

38. Karl Kippola, *Acts of Manhood: The Performance of Masculinity on the American Stage, 1828-1865* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 117. Combined with the curious omission of Winter's reference to Forrest's stardom as an American Indian in *Metamora*, Kippola's reading serves as an erasure of the racial imperialism of the era, and in turn avoids the difficulty of engaging with racial imperialism's relationship to Booth's more feminine masculinity. These omissions call into question the validity of analyzing class without race, even when coupled with an innovative study of masculinity. One might ask what utility the lens of white masculinity has in the nineteenth century without an engagement with the whiteness that serves as its often much more "invisible" structuring surround.

39. This blurring of seemingly highly distinct conceptual frameworks can in part be traced to the influence of German Romantic idealism upon the Emersonian school of intellectualism, ironically committed to independence of American thought. Specifically, Hegel's widely-read *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807)—which was read across New England and the Midwest in organically formed reading clubs in the period—and the translational difficulties surrounding the German term "Geist" in, translated as either "Mind" or "Spirit," blurs Mind or rationality with its religious counterpart of the soul or Spirit.

40. Hegel, qtd. in da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 188; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 2.

41. Hegel, qtd. in da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 188. For analysis of this quote and more extended analyses of certain postcolonial anxieties, see da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 188-189.

42. Edwin Booth's close friend Louis Agassiz was a key figure in resisting evolutionary equality. A life-long proponent of polygenism, the Swiss-American geologist and naturalist frequented Booth's Cambridge, MA performances and is repeatedly referenced in Booth's letters to his daughter as a house-guest. Perhaps not coincidentally, Booth's strong views against Shakespeare writing Othello to be "a brutal blackamoor" match Agassiz's racism, as written to his mother: "What unhappiness for the white race—to have tied their existence so closely with that of negroes in certain countries! God preserve us from such a contact!" (See Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 77). Agassiz portrayed the presence of Black people within society as an "element of social disorder" due to "the very *character* of the negro race" being more sexually receptive, "indolent," "unsteady in their purpose" and "in everything unlike other races, they may but be compared to children, grown in the stature of adults while retaining a childlike mind" (qtd. in Collins, 89).

43. da Silva, *Global Idea of Race*, 119-120.

44. Qtd. in Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, xxi.

45. Shattuck, *Hamlet of Edwin Booth*, xxi-xxiii. Shattuck summarizes: "Opposite the lines in which Ophelia describes that wild scene Booth notes that *to an actor* this is all 'play acting'; that Shakespeare, who was so well posted in actors' tricks, meant it to be so understood by the audience."

46. The promptbook was published in 1878 but referred back across Booth's conception of *Hamlet* in performances like his 1866 return to the stage in the role.

47. In the cultural register, the idea that the Civil War was a tragic challenge from which to progress supported idealistic beliefs like Booth's that the arts were constantly progressing toward perfection, and that, as the standard-bearer of the so-called "Standard Drama," he would help enshrine them there. Booth's somewhat conservative view of progress in the arts reflected that of his audience. An early champion of Booth, William Winter suggested in 1862, the very year of the Emancipation Proclamation, that the ennobling qualities of the lyrical style Booth championed were the antidote to the unfolding tragedies of the Civil War: "The sole refuge of this age is art; and that should be kept white, pure, peaceful and beautiful. What we need on stage is what will cheer, comfort, and strengthen." Though appearing during the war itself, the text suggests the tendency toward reunification through the comfort of the white middle-class ahead of the war's end. This is no surprise, in that Winter's conservative aesthetic tastes matched his conservative return to an antebellum sentiment that feared the political perils of staging *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and encouraging further abolitionist

sentiment. *The New York Herald*'s editorial ten years prior, for example, wrote, "It is a sad blunder; for when our stage shall become the deliberate agent in the cause of abolitionism, with the sanction of the public, and their approbation, the peace and harmony of this Union will soon be ended." Winter's choice of language mirrors this prior sentiment and also indicates this comfort's character: the aestheticized space of "art" is to be "kept white" and "pure." Booth's performances of that "white" and "pure" art suggest the need for keeping the stage an aesthetic realm of comforting distraction from the anguish of the conflict in contrast to, for example, continued contemporary stagings of Uncle Tom's Cabin. The need to keep the nation pure amidst the conflict between slavery and abolitionism here overlaps with the need to escape into the virgin "whiteness" of peace, allowing the white middle-class mind to be unbesmirched by the question of Emancipation and its consequences.

48. Daniel Watermeier, *Edwin Booth's Performances: The Mary Isabella Stone Commentaries* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990), 2.

49. da Silva, *Global Idea of Race*, 119-120.

50. Watermeier, *Edwin Booth's Performances*, 6; emphasis mine.

51. Katherine Goodale, *Behind the Scenes with Edwin Booth* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 179. San Francisco playgoers saw him as "San Francisco's boy" due to his performances in melodramas like the *San Francisco Fire Boy* there during the Gold Rush.

52. Watermeier, *American Tragedian*, 33. King Kamehameha IV himself, who was forced to compromise with the growing influence of the American missionary and capitalist settler class, attended Booth's *Richard III* and "spoke kindly" of the performance.

53. Qtd. in Watermeier, *American Tragedian*, 314.

54. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 222-226.

55. Winter, qtd. in Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Shakespeare in America's Gilded Age" in *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 340-345), 344.

56. Watermeier, *American Tragedian*, 246. Henry Irving had supported his joining on his second tour there in 1880.

57. William Winter. *Life and Art of Edwin Booth, by William Winter* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1893), 1-2. Most other scholars, including Kippola, excise the reference to Metamora.

58. Winter, *Life and Art*, 1.

59. Theresa Strouth Gaul, "'The Genuine Indian Who Was Brought Upon the Stage': Edwin Forrest's *Metamora* and White Audiences," *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 56. (2000): 1-27. "Beginning in the 1820s and continuing through the next decades, 'Indian dramas,' a designation that refers to plays written by whites about American Indians, were one of the hottest phenomena on the American stage. With the roles of American Indians played by white actors, Indian dramas were the first theatrical form to put a supposedly genuine version of the racial other before the American public" (1).

60. Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 5.

61. "impersonate, v.". *OED Online*. September 2022. *Oxford University Press*. https://www-oed-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/view/Entry/92330?rskey=J6RfuN&result=2 (accessed October 11, 2022). Definition three reads: "To pretend to be (someone or something else), usually for the purpose of entertainment or fraud; to imitate (a person's voice, mannerisms, etc.); (in early use *esp*.) to act the role of

(a character in a play, etc.)." The example of "to act the role of" cited is from 1821 whereas the significance connoting fraudulence is from an 1889 text entitled *How to Read, Recite, & Impersonate*, which itself interestingly references Jacksonian masculinity: "Nothing is more ludicrous than to hear a lady try to impersonate the voice of Stonewall Jackson." Additionally, though Metamora was modeled after the historical Metacom (and therefore could be seen to be "impersonated" in the former sense), Cardinal Richelieu was also a historical figure, and Forrest premiered the theatrical role based on him first in 1839. Winter nonetheless aligns him with Booth's well-received "acting" of the role.

62. *Critical Survey of Drama*, ed. Carl E. Rollyson, 3rd ed. (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, a division of EBSCO Information Services, Inc., 2018), 132-133. While both Richelieu and Hamlet represent the aspirations of the middle-class toward European "good taste" at this time, Hamlet, as a Shakespearean character, placed Booth's performances in a larger performance tradition than Bulwer-Lytton's 1839 play, itself largely imitative of Shakespeare's history plays.

63. Imtiaz Habib, *Shakespeare and Race: Postcolonial Praxis in the Early Modern Period* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 2000), 122-123.

64. Hawkins, qtd. in *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Othello*, ed. Horace Howard Furness, 2nd ed. (London: J.B. Lippincott Company 1886), 390.

65. G.H. Lewes, qtd. in Charles Copeland, *Edwin Booth* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1902), 141; Copeland, Booth, 142.

66. Tilden G. Edelstein, "Othello in America: The Drama of Racial Intermarriage," *Region, Race, and Reconstruction*, ed. J Morgan Kousser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Carol Jones Carlisle, *Shakespeare from the Greenroom: Actor's Criticism of the Four Major Tragedies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967). To say there is even slight scholarly disagreement surrounding this point would be an overstatement. Joe Falocco's article (cited in note 60), while otherwise insightful and informative, seems to whiten Salvini somewhat for his argument's purpose. Citing only Ellen Terry's description of both Booth and Irving's Othellos as "black," he extrapolates in negation that Salvini's turbaned Othello was thus also a tawny Moor. According to newspaper reviews, William Winter's description of Booth lightening Othello to avoid the perception of miscegenation, and Carlisle's sourcing, this is false.

67. "Salvini as Othello," *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1873.

68. "Salvini as Othello." The review goes on to acknowledge that the "peculiar features of that race are not thrust violently upon us" and then attempts to properly segregate these racial categories, writing that there are "many moors, with not a drop of negro blood in their veins, who are darker than Salvini's Othello."

69. Joe Falocco, "Tommaso Salvini's Othello and Racial Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *New England Theatre Journal* 23 (2012): 15–35, 25.

70. Matthew Frye Jacobson. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 1999), 44, 52-56.

71. Falocco, "Tommaso Salvini's Othello," 25. Even Henry James employed this particularly pervasive "tiger" trope to describe Salvini's performance. More generally, Salvini was often described as a "beast" in ways clearly linked to Blackness. For example, an actress backstage at Salvini's performances captures this blurry blackening of Italians through disgust at Salvini's miscegenational lust: "...when, at Cyprus, Othello entered and fiercely swept into his swarthy arms

the pale loveliness of Desdemona, 'twas like a tiger's spring upon a lamb. The bluff and honest soldier, the English Shakespeare's Othello, was lost in an Italian Othello. Passion choked, his gloating eyes burned with the mere lust of the 'sooty Moor' for that white creature of Venice. It was revolting, and with a shiver I exclaimed aloud, 'Ugh, you splendid brute!'…a man's rough voice had answered instantly, 'Make it a *beast*, ma'am, and I'm with you!'" (See Clara Morris, *Stage Confidences: Talks About Players and Play Acting* (New York: Lothrop Publishing, 1902), 240-241.)

72. Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1908), 204-205.

73. Terry, *My Life*, 268. Notably, however, this "foreign temperament" does nothing to improve Booth's Othello for Terry, despite him being from a foreign nation. In fact, what makes the US a "foreign experience" for the English, in Terry's biography, is the presence of its Negro servants.

74. Edwina Booth, *Edwin Booth: Recollections by His Daughter, Edwina Booth Grossmann, and Letters to Her and to His Friends* (New York: The Century Company, 1894), 21-22.

75. As an interesting sidenote, Booth's biographer and daughter Edwina Booth Grossman is often confused, rightfully so, with Edwina Booth, the actress who starred in *Trader Horn* (1931) as savage and scantily clad blonde Nina Trent, "The White Goddess."

76. Furness, *Variorum*, vii.

77. It should be noted that Horace Howard Furness believed, contrary to Booth's conception of a tawny North African Moor, that Shakespeare meant Othello to be a Black African. See Furness's editorial note in his Appendix, "Othello's Colour."

78. Furness, *Variorum*, 32; emphasis in original.

79. Furness, *Variorum*, 203.

80. Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of Othello: The Search for the Identity of Othello, Iago, and Desdemona by Three Centuries of Actors and Critics* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 85; Kippola, *Acts of Manhood*, 117-126. Booth was still at times criticized, notably by his most resistant critic, "Nym Crinkle" (whose real name was Andrew Carpenter Wheeler).

81. Furness, *Variorum*, 208.

82. Furness, *Variorum*, 509; emphasis mine.

83. Though many in Booth's orbit would actively oppose imperialism (Howells, Samuel Clemins, etc.), the cultural project of "intellectual elevation" Booth presaged the eventual "imperialism of the spirit" that defined Wilsonian doctrine during the Progressive Era with education of the Philippines, as well as the period's missionary imperialism, emerging from roots as deep and varied as common school Shakespeare and discourse on the US's Anglo-Saxonist institutions, which argued that Shakespeare was as spiritually instructive for non-Anglo-Saxons as Biblical scripture.

84. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1979).

85. Rosenberg, *The Masks of Othello*, 86.