

**PLAYING “AMERICA” ON NINETEENTH-CENTURY STAGES;
OR, JONATHAN IN ENGLAND AND JONATHAN AT HOME**

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This dissertation, prepared towards the completion of a Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, examines “Yankee Theatre” in America and London through a post-colonial lens from 1787 to 1855. Actors under consideration include: Charles Mathews, James Hackett, George Hill, Danforth Marble and Joshua Silsbee. These actors were selected due to their status as iconic performers in “Yankee Theatre.”

The Post-Revolutionary period in America was filled with questions of national identity. Much of American culture came directly from England. American citizens read English books, studied English texts in school, and watched English theatre. They were inundated with English culture and unsure of what their own civilization might look like. A post-colonial crisis, in other words, gripped the new nation.

This dissertation attempts to explain “Yankee Theatre,” a performance tradition popular from the mid-1820s to the mid-1850s, within this complex, transatlantic sociopolitical situation. It begins with a discussion of early Yankee plays and explains how they were written against the “empire,” distinguishing the new citizen from the English subject. But “Yankee Theatre” was not only popular in America. Several actors traveled across the Atlantic to perform on London stages. Thus, this dissertation also explains the pressures they faced in fighting for international success. It encompasses how the English understood the Yankee and how an imperial standard was established overseas. It offers an account of why English audiences were unhappy with the

first American Yankee actors they witnessed, and outlines how future Yankee actors were caught in this web of criterion and taste for years to come.

“Playing America” asserts that “Yankee Theatre” addressed specific problems, issues, and questions arising from America’s post-colonial status. When the post-colonial crisis passed, Yankee Theatre also ended. By the mid-to late-1850s, the minstrel replaced the Yankee as the symbol of the nation.

An examination of “Yankee Theatre” allows for a greater understanding of circum-Atlantic performance as well as issues of nationalism and national identity in the theatre. Research methodologies include historical and textual analysis as well as post-colonial, literary, and dramatic theory.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 “YANKEE THEATRE:” A DEFINITION

One might think that any play incorporating the Yankee figure, a kind of comic precursor to “Uncle Sam,” would automatically be part of “Yankee Theatre.” This is actually not the case. Many plays from the Post-Revolutionary, Federalist, and Antebellum eras feature “Jonathan,” as the Yankee is often called, but they are not part of “Yankee Theatre.” “Yankee Theatre” was a particular type of performance which flourished on stage, both in America and in England, from 1824 to 1855. It is distinguished by its heavy reliance on a star actor to carry the show, its dependence on improvisation, and its continuous attempt to uncover the boundaries and ranges of “the American.”

As “Yankee Theatre” was gaining popularity in the early 1820s, the star system was also developing in the United States. Thus, many “stars” of the day tried their hands at Yankee parts; likewise, “stars” were made of many men because they played the Yankee well. The most famous delineators of Jonathan included: Charles Mathews, an Englishman, who incorporated the Yankee into his popular *At Home* series, produced in England from 1824 until the end of his career in 1834; James H. Hackett, who was not only the first American “Yankee” star, but was also the first professional American actor to travel to London; George H. Hill, so loved for his depiction of Jonathan that he was popularly referred to as “Yankee Hill;” Danforth Marble, who “westernized” the Yankee, presenting a character more akin to Davy Crockett than to any New

Englander; and Joshua Silsbee, the last of the Yankee “stars,” who danced wildly on stage, kicking his legs out and flapping his arms in what he called the “Cape Cod Reel.” These were the famous “Stage Yankees” who toured through the United States and even traveled overseas to London to play this part.

Part of the reason these particular men rose to the top of their profession was because they each had the ability to carry an entire show. They were, each in their own way, stage virtuosos and had no fear of placing themselves at the center of attention for as long as the intended program lasted. Charles Mathews and James Hackett were incredible impersonators and if the play seemed to lag they brought out a depiction of one of their colleagues, which, no doubt, quickly reengaged the audience. George Hill, Danforth Marble, and Joshua Silsbee were masters of reading their audiences. They inserted jokes, stories, songs, or dances if spectators seemed uninterested. In their capable hands the play was expanded or condensed to fit the particular needs of the spectators who filled the seats on any given night. Because of the large amount of power the “star” had over the content, performance time, and type of humor, Francis Hodge, author of *Yankee Theatre: The Image of America on the Stage, 1825 – 1850*, refers to “Yankee Theatre” as “an actor’s theatre...an American commedia dell arte” (3).

Part of what gave actors such power within this performance tradition was the fact that they often wrote their own dramatic material. Whether the work was a fully realized script or simply notes detailing some comic sketches that the performer would try, “Stage Yankees” felt empowered to alter the dramatic material at will. Even after the tradition codified and professional playwrights began constructing works, flexibility remained a mainstay of the form. Playwrights expected star performers to add their own stories and flare to the work, so they often left blank spaces in the text that were to be filled in by the particular “star.”

Spontaneity permeated “Yankee Theatre” performances. The attending audience never knew which stories would be told or what comic business would be added. In fact, much of the draw of “Yankee Theatre” was its distinctive incalculableness. “Stage Yankees” were masters of improvisation. They were able to sense what a particular audience wanted and to perform the part in a way that specifically “gelled” with the audience present. Night after night and from city to city, they changed their stories, altered their tales, and/or transformed the Yankee character to meet the particular needs of the present spectators.

Francis Hodge notes, “What gave the Yankee character such a long life on the stage... made him so popular, not only everywhere in America but in England as well, was his status as a symbol of American democratic society” (4). Part of the allure of “Yankee Theatre,” in other words, was its sociopolitical link to the United States. Jonathan, from his inception, equaled “America.” In colonial days, he appeared in patriotic songs like “Yankee Doodle;” the first American comic writers used him to satirize enemies of the nation; and political cartoonists drew him when they wanted to represent the United States. When he showed up on stage, audiences understood that he was supposed to personify “the New Man.” It was this strong tie to the developing nation and its people—at the very moment when every aspect of America was undergoing redefinition--that enriched every play in which Jonathan starred.

Many in America and England waited anxiously to see what the “new American” would look like as the country separated itself from England, its former colonizer. Both countries, therefore, were interested in exploring this issue on stage. No one knew what qualities the “new citizen” would exhibit or what characteristics the new nation would embrace. The Yankee helped audiences in both countries deal with this uncertainty. In America, audiences looked to

Jonathan to help them (re)define themselves. In England, the Stage Yankee assuaged anxieties about “the New Man’s” claim of superiority.

Thus, each performer, playwright, and/or manager that engaged with “Yankee Theater,” in fact, played a far more important part in the international world than they knew. Whether part of the nationalizing movement (in America) or complicit in transmitting and continuing imperial notions (in England), they were part of larger systems of international communication. What might have seemed like unimportant stage “plays” were, in fact, concrete acts of national redefinition and/or transatlantic condemnation. Such artists were working—together with audiences—to discern the boundaries and ranges of what was “American.”

* * * * *

1.2 OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

Perhaps because of the Yankee’s link to the American nation, many scholarly works about this kind of theatre have focused solely on how it functioned within American culture. Although “Yankee Theatre” traveled across the sea to show on famous English stages, most scholars have ignored English productions entirely. They explain it only as an American phenomenon and track how it reflected changes and concerns within American society.

Francis Hodge’s book, *Yankee Theatre*, is an example of such an effort. Published in 1964, it is the most recent and only full-length book written on the subject. His study emphasizes the basic machinations of “Yankee Theatre.” Hodge details each “Stage Yankee’s” career, examines key performances and notes the particulars of their performance style. He explains when and in what manner innovations were added to the form and speculates about each

actor's contributions, strengths, and legacy. Although in the work Hodge addresses the various English productions, his focus is on how this type of theatre reflected concerns and issues in American society.

Two other books dealing with the Yankee have come out more recently. Cameron C. Nickels' *New England Humor: From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War* (1993) and Winifred Morgan's *An American Icon: Brother Jonathan and American Identity* (1988). Both works survey the Yankee as he appeared in different types of media in the nineteenth century. For example, Nickels' chapters include: "New England Humor in Print," "New England Humor on Stage," and "New England Humor Illustrated." He also examines early American humor, looking at works written in the colonial era, and analyses a late Jacksonian type of Yankee that he calls "the cracker-barrel philosopher." Nickels' incorporates a more contemporary understanding than Hodge of the post-colonial situation in the nineteenth-century transatlantic world and his first chapter, "New England Humor and the Dilemma of American Identity" speaks to these larger concerns. Overall, however, his work remains grounded in the American context.

Winifred Morgan's work, on the other hand, falls short of scholarly expectations. She also examines the Yankee as he appeared in various medias--on stage, in print, and in political cartoons—but limits her scope to characters named "Jonathan." Such a distinction is pointless, for a Yankee is a Yankee is a Yankee, whether named Jonathan or Hiram Dodge. Placing such restrictions on the character and her area of study, Morgan often misses the larger picture because she examines such small bits of evidence. On top of all of these faults, Morgan, too, limits her analysis to American constructions, productions, and/or images.

Theatre historian Gary A. Richardson has written two relevant articles that will be used in this dissertation. His essays comment on plays that incorporate the Yankee (rather than works of “Yankee Theatre”). One, called, “In the Shadow of the Bard: James Nelson Barker’s Republican Drama and the Shakespearean Legacy,” appears in *When They Weren’t Doing Shakespeare: Essays on Nineteenth-Century British & American Theatre*, which was published in 1989. This article focuses on James Nelson Barker, as the title suggests, and frames him as a native dramatist trying to compete in a theatrical world filled with English plays. The work is well informed and offers a wonderfully complex understanding of American theatre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The second article, “Nationalizing the American Stage: The Drama of Royall Tyler and William Dunlap as Post-Colonial Phenomenon,” is featured in *Making America/Making American Literature*, published in 1996. This article explains *The Contrast*, Tyler’s work, and *Andre*, Dunlap’s work, as creations of cultural resistance, written against the Englishness that engulfed America in the early nineteenth century.

I have also published two articles on “Yankee Theatre,” both which were printed in *The Journal of American Drama*. My 2001 essay, “The Yankee and The Veteran: Vehicles of Nationalism,” focused on how Jonathan functioned within the complex and sometimes contradictory nationalist agenda of the early Federalist period. It relies heavily on scholars of nationalism Benedict Anderson and Lloyd Kramer. The second, entitled, “Expansion, Expulsion, and Domination: Jonathan’s Spatial Tactics on the Jacksonian Stage,” explores how the Yankee both reflected and constructed a Jacksonian sense of space. Both will influence this dissertation, but in a limited way. These works helped me expand my understanding of the Yankee in general, but they also lack a global stance.

There are four unpublished dissertations on various areas of “Yankee Theatre.” Marie Killheffer wrote *The Development of the Yankee Character in American Drama From 1787 to 1861* for the University of Chicago in 1927. Charles Albert Schultz focused on how the Yankee figure changed from 1780-1820 in his work, *The Yankee Figure in Early American Theater Prior to 1820* (Univ. of Michigan 1971). Aron Lee Pasternack wrote *The Development of Popular American Stage Comedy: From the Beginning to 1900* (Tufts University, 1981), and Alecia Cramer followed with *The Yankee Comic Character: Its Origins and Development in American Literature through 1830* (Oklahoma State University, 1995). Interestingly, although written over a span of sixty plus years, these works follow a similar theme. They are all interested in how the Yankee character developed within and around American culture. Each has its strengths, but they offer little information that isn’t available in Hodge.

* * * * *

1.3 A NEW APPROACH

Rather than continuing analysis of how the Yankee fit solely into American culture, my approach to the subject embraces its multinational nature. In this vein, I will be looking at productions in America as well as in England and analyzing how these disparate cultures used this symbol of America. America was a new nation in a large world. Although scholars of American culture often neglect to consider the larger, global picture, “Yankee Theatre” is best understood within this framework, for it was an art form that crossed the sea many times, gained popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, and often addressed international concerns.

In taking a multinational approach, one has to consider the sociopolitical situation at the time. One of the most obvious conditions of the nineteenth-century transatlantic world was its post-colonial nature. But what does this mean? Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, in their work *The Empire Writes Back*, offer an explanation:

The semantic basis of the term ‘post-colonial’ might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power. It has occasionally been employed in some earlier work in the era to distinguish between the periods before and after independence (‘colonial period’ and ‘post-colonial period’), for example, in constructing national literary histories, or in suggesting comparative studies between stages in those histories. Generally speaking, though, the term ‘colonial’ has been used for the period before independence and a term indicating a national writing, such as ‘modern Canadian writing’ or ‘recent West Indian literature’ has been employed to distinguish the period after independence. We use the term ‘post-colonial,’ however, to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupation through the historical process initiated by European imperial aggressors (1-2).

“Post-colonial,” in other words, describes the dense cultural situation within a nation both during and after colonial rule.

In the nineteenth century, superpowers such as England, France, and Spain established colonies throughout the Americas. Following a consistent pattern, these imperialist nations took land that they considered “empty,” set up satellite settlements, and used all the resources they found there (be it people, material goods, or trade routes) to improve their position in the global community. England established some of its first colonies on land that is now part of the United States of America. These colonies—some of the earliest in creation--were the first to successfully overthrow their colonizing power. In 1776, the United States declared its independence from England; by 1783, seven years later, it had gained political autonomy. This occurred, though, only after engaging in a long, hard, and bloody revolution against its mother country.

America's struggle with England continued long after the Revolutionary War ended. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin assert, colonization continues to affect a nation long after the colonizing power has withdrawn and America was no exception to this sociopolitical phenomenon. Its colonial legacy haunted the new nation for decades, affecting nearly every area of life, including educational, political, and cultural structures. Educational systems, for example, remained unchanged after the Revolution. Although America had gained its independence, schools continued to acquiesce to notions implanted during colonial rule; they continued to rely on English texts, teach English linguistic structures, and relate history in a way that honored English traditions. America's educators, in other words, could not easily strip themselves of their imperial-inspired educations. Most continued to teach as if America remained under English rule.

Those working in the political realm seemed to take the opposite approach. They rebelled against English arrangements of power and looked for alternative models of government. Colonial history was still key. Ideas of what made up free, just or tyrannical governance came from an English base; Americans still looked to England for a starting point from which to jump. Whether Americans relied on English models or rebelled against old notions, their colonial history continued to influence nearly every part of life well into the nineteenth century.

America's national culture was also greatly affected by post-colonialism. Scholars have long noticed this trend and have suggested that culture reacts so strongly to this sociopolitical situation because of its intimate relationship with the many societal structures and ideologies from which it emerges. Gary A. Richardson explains: "...radical political transformations...

seem to stimulate oddly dichotomous reactions in the cultural arena” (“Nationalizing” 223). He continues, illustrating how a revolution affects culture:

On the one hand forces of aesthetic inertia and conservatism demand a new type of artistic justification of the political action by suggesting that the new state use widely and historically derived forms and structures to produce an art qualitatively equal to or superior to those derived from other, older, even politically-rejected cultures. On the other hand, nationalists and their allies tend to argue that the new state’s artists should immediately give the political revolution cultural expression in a new artistic forms and then await—usually none too patiently—their production. As might be expected, for most artists this heady time becomes a period of intense self-reflection and often leads to reevaluation of the entire cultural enterprise (ibid).

Artists feel caught in the middle after a complex political shift. They are unsure how to act and insecure about what future national art should look like. Thus, they stop producing at a time when the country most needs iterations of its identity. This cultural uncertainty is one of the most pronounced and injurious legacies of colonialism.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon explains this same experience in a slightly different manner. Many post-colonial nations, he suggests, have difficulty finding a “national voice.” Often this difficulty stems from the tactics the ruling nation imposed during colonization. Fanon explains that under colonial oppression artists must betray their national heritage. Colonial oppression is not only economic and it is not merely political, but rather, it reaches into the entire culture, destroying it from the roots up. In its wake, native art is obliterated, for artists are bound to the imperial power. The artist must “give proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country. His inspiration is European and we can easily link up these works with definite trends in the literature of the mother country” (Fanon

Wretched 222). In other words, the artist acts, creates, and imagines within a schema of complete and total assimilation.

As revolution approaches, Fanon explains, the artist enters a second phase. In this phase “the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is” (ibid). Yet he has become so bound to the occupier and so steeped in the “Other’s” tradition, that he is not familiar with his native identity. He might search through childhood memories or forgotten legends to find this lost sense of “Self” but it is a difficult battle against the unknown. The artist has been removed from his national people too long, and needs to find them again before he can approach a national voice.

In the third phase, after revolution has rocked the country, Fanon says, the native artist turns to look at his people for the first time. He is unsure of himself and of them; he will make many mistakes and write many inaccuracies, but at last he will have a subject about which to write, paint, sculpt, or draw. Fanon elegantly explains this place of ambiguity:

Yes, the first duty of the native poet is to see clearly the people he has chosen as the subject of his work of art. He cannot go forward resolutely unless he first realizes the extent of his estrangement from them. We have taken everything from the other side; and the other side gives us nothing unless by a thousand detours we swing finally round in their direction, unless by their thousand wiles and a hundred thousand tricks they manage to draw us toward them, to seduce us, and to imprison us. Taking means in nearly every case being taken: thus it is not enough to try to free oneself by repeating proclamations and denials. It is not enough to try to get back to the people in that past out of which they have already emerged; rather we must join them in that fluctuating movement which they are just giving a shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called in question. Let there be no mistake about it; it is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come; and it is there that our souls are crystallized and that our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light (226-227).

It is in this space of uncertainty, Fanon explains, from which a national culture will rise. Though it may take a long time, the nation will recover a sense of identity which was lost under colonial

rule. The people will once again learn to speak, write, act, paint, sculpt, and create for themselves.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes about Algeria, where there was an original culture to which artists could return after political turmoil had ended. In America, the situation was different, for the initial culture was British. After the Revolution, when artists looked around for a shared “native” past, there was nothing to recover, nothing before colonization that could be remembered. They had to start “from scratch.” But though the cultural situation was different, American artists went through a crisis similar to the one Fanon describes. They did not know how to begin speaking to and for their countrymen and they did not know how to interpret the nation. They paused, unsure of how to continue, uncertain of what to say.

American artists did finally start constructing again. It was in this cautious, ambiguous, and tentative space that “Yankee Theatre” began to take shape in 1787, four years after the United States gained political autonomy. In “Playing America,” taking my cue from Fanon, I suggest that “Yankee Theatre” helped to crystallize American identity specifically as it emerged from and within this post-colonial context. It was an art form that aided Americans in their search for a national voice. Likewise, it directly engaged with the aftereffects of America’s colonial history. It offered writers a chance to “write against” the English empire; it gave actors the chance to embody a resistant, totally American figure; and it gave managers a chance to produce native works that celebrated American life, customs, language, and geography.

When “Yankee Theatre” traveled overseas—into the heart of the empire--America’s post-colonial status remained important. Specifically, when English audiences encountered resistant American voices, they rejected them, causing the artistic and financial failure of more than one American work. English subjects had no use for unpleasant images—particularly at the theatre,

where they journeyed for enjoyment. Thus, “Yankee Theatre” had to conform to their standards or forever fail in England. America’s post-colonial status was reaffirmed everywhere: in its cultural ineptitude, in its seeming inability to find a national voice, and in the reception of its theatrical products—particularly when they were shown in the heart of the former empire, London.

Because America’s post-colonial situation so motivated “Yankee Theatre,” the art form ended when this particular crisis had passed. By the 1840s, the United States began to find other ways through which to define itself and by the 1850s the process of (re)definition was complete. American identity had crystallized. Ambiguity had vanished and in its place was a solid foundation. In this stable nation, “Yankee Theatre” was no longer needed. With the American identity sure and its societal structures (re)organized and confident, Jonathan was no longer useful; his type of humor lost its edge. It was in this new world that minstrelsy eclipsed “Yankee Theatre.” Minstrelsy seemed more vibrant, serviceable, and exciting. “Yankee Theatre,” at last, quit both the American and English stage.

* * * * *

1.4 TOOLS OF THE TRADE: ANALYZING POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE

How does one analyze cultural products coming out of a post-colonial nation? How does one speak about them and/or understand the dense sociopolitical work being done by the art? Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin offer the scholar the tools he or she needs to accomplish such a task in their book *The Empire Writes Back*. In this work, they begin by explaining three aspects of post-colonial literature. Such art, they say, engages with the imperial experience, uses

language in ways that differ from SBE (Standard British English), and offers insights into the nation's sense of place and displacement.

“Why should post-colonial societies continue to engage with the imperial experience,” Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin ask, “Why is the issue of coloniality still relevant at all?” (6). To this they answer that a colonial history impacts how a country's literature (and other artistic products) are received in the world at large. During colonial rule, literature coming from a colony is assessed as innately “less than” that stemming from the imperial center. It is understood as an offshoot of English production, marred by its “foreign” influence. Once a nation gains independence, it needs to find its own voice, to differentiate itself from its former colonizing power. In this way, it must engage with its past; it must speak back to the empire.

About language, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin say, “Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth,’ ‘order,’ and ‘reality’ become established. Such power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice” (7). Post-colonial nations, in other words, demonstrate cultural sovereignty through their use of language. When their language reflects their own unique place in and construction of the world rather than merely imitating that of former colonizer, then, they have gained autonomy. As the country finds its native voice, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin assert, it will use English (or whatever language the colonizer brought) in a different way. It will begin to own and shape English, forming its own unique version of the language.¹

“A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement,” say Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (8). They continue: “It is here that the special post-colonial

¹ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin refer to this version of English as “english.”

crisis of identity comes into being; the concerns with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place” (ibid). Imperial rule leads to a disconnect between self and place. It suggests that those who speak the most profoundly about “the Self”—even the “colonial Self”—are representatives of the empire. It is for this reason that authors such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, for example, were considered far greater, far more “universal” than any native American writer, even though they wrote about distinctly “English” environments and experiences that may never have been encountered in the American colonies. When a post-colonial nation finds its identity, then it can finally write about its place in the world and/or face its historic sense of displacement. Post-colonial literatures, then, focus on the national “place” in a way not done before.

When a country begins to engage with its post-coloniality, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin suggest, two strategic replacements occur in its literature: 1) the language is replaced, and 2) the modes of communication (what they call “the text”) is replaced. About language, these scholars assert:

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the center and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place. There are two distinct processes by which it does this. The first, the abrogation or denial of the privilege of ‘English,’ involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication. The second, the appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the center, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege (37).

Abrogation, they continue, “is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetics, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in the words” (ibid). In other words, abrogation is when the post-colonial country rejects the longstanding imperial notions that guide and shape language and begins to

speak in its own unique national voice, disregarding imperial standards of speech. Appropriation, on the other hand, is “the process by which the language is taken and made to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural experience” (38), when it is “adopted as a tool and utilized in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences” (ibid). Appropriation, in other words, is when the post-colonial country takes for itself the useful qualities in imperial language and makes them their own.

The same kinds of processes are exacted within modes of communication. First of all, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin explain, controlling the means of communication needs to be one of the first goals of a post-colonial country. During colonial rule, the imperial power often exerts control over texts in a physical way. They publish works they find pleasing, distribute what they see fit, and award recognition to those that meet their standards. When a country gains autonomy, it must take over these processes; thus, in doing so they will assert their own set of values, make their own judgments, and free “the text” from imperial rule.

But there is more to replacing “the text” than simply moving printing locations, assert Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin. “Replacing the text” also involves textual abrogation and textual appropriation. Textual abrogation, they say, is when the post-colonial nation rejects notions of “authenticity.” Imperial nations uphold certain texts—most often those that best reflect its notions of truth, order, and reality-- as “authentic.” The work of many post-colonial texts is a reevaluation of what is “authentic” in the eyes of the new nation. The texts abrogate “authenticity” when they implicitly or overtly reject foreign notions of truth, order, and/or reality, holding up, instead, what the empire considered “marginal” but which is of primary importance to the post-colonial culture. In other words, “the text” is replaced when subjects

previously considered “marginal” are celebrated as subjects worthy of primary focus. The post-colonial nation thus wrestles the very definition of “authentic” from the empire.

“Marginality is the condition constructed by the posited relation to a privileged center, an ‘Othering’ directed by the imperial authority” say Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (102). They continue: “But the abrogation of that centre does not involve the construction of an alternative focus of subjectivity, a new centre. Rather, the act of appropriation in the post-colonial text issues in the embracing of that marginality as the fabric of social experience” (ibid). Appropriating the text, then, means not only recasting “the marginal” as “central,” but also taking away the very notions of “marginal” and “central” by supporting a “complex, interweaving, and syncretic accretion of experience” (103). The post-colonial text, they say, often shows the intersection of different kinds of marginality, thus “centering” what was under colonial rule understood as “marginal.”

“Playing America” uses all of these analytic tools supplied by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin. For example, following their lead, I focus the analysis on how texts coming from America dealt with issues of hegemony, language, and place. I analyze how these new American texts (and performance styles) engaged the empire and questioned its homogenizing rhetoric. I explain how they (re)formed language (and performance styles) to reflect their environment, and how they expressed their place in the world in new ways.

I also examine “Yankee Theatre” with an eye towards how “the language” and “the text” are abrogated and appropriated. For example, in dealing with the abrogation of language, I show how “Yankee Theatre” authors “wrote over” imperial texts. Through “Yankee Theatre” a rejection of English canonical works can be perceived; likewise, how native constructions replaced these imperial favorites can also be determined. Likewise, I show how “Yankee

Theatre” appropriated “English” as well, for “Yankee Theatre” authors reconstructed the very language itself, replacing the “proper” SBE with American slang and a heavy New England dialect.

“Playing America” also investigates what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin call “the text.” For example, I examine how the theatre itself, as an institution, found new American leadership, and control through “Yankee Theatre.” Likewise, I show how “Yankee Theatre” texts abrogated imperial notions of “authenticity” and appropriated notions of “marginality.” “Yankee Theatre” plays, when constructed for an American audience, were dedicated not only to celebrating American identity, but also to wiping out imperial-inspired biases. “Yankee Theatre” authors and actors desired nothing more than the glorification of American art. They wished for it to be removed from the shadow of marginality and held up for what it was--a unique iteration of life in America.

“Playing America” attempts to look at “Yankee Theatre” as a series of post-colonial texts. Each text (be it a performance or an actual script) deals with this complex situation differently, but all stem from and come out of a colonial experience. Using the tools of analysis outlined in *The Empire Writes Back* as my guide, I have tried to uncover the post-colonial aspects and strategies within “Yankee Theatre” texts.

* * * * *

Because “Playing America” is concerned with the multinational aspects of “Yankee Theatre,” though, American texts (and performances) cannot be the only ones that undergo analysis. Texts (and performances) in England also must be examined. But these texts require a different mode of analysis, for they come not from a post-colonial nation, but out of the imperial experience. In this vein, I have turned to scholars interested in uncovering how imperial powers

deal with “the margin,” how they transmit control, and fashion centrality. I found that recent work done on travel writing to be the most serviceable. Books such as *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire, Spectacle, and Displacement* (which includes essays by numerous authors) and *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, by Mary Louise Pratt, were the most helpful. Their analysis of “home,” “the imperial I,” “the Self” and “the Other” are employed.

* * * * *

“Playing America” does not just focus on texts, though. It also attempts to understand what Americans were experiencing in the various eras between 1787 and 1855. In order to do so, I have utilized Franz Fanon’s theories of the effects of colonization. In his work *Black Skin, White Masks*, he documents a kind of psychosis stemming from outside rule, oppression, and racial belittlement. Americans experienced a similar psychological phenomenon. Their colonial experience was not influenced by race, but it did involve cultural rejection, belittlement, and degradation—especially in the artistic realm. English critics continually disparaged their work—for so long in fact that they began to internalize these imperial standards. Even after the Revolution, they were unable to see their artistic creations as worthy, interesting, or “good.” It took years for Americans to see their artistic output as valuable. Judging their work through English imperial standards became habitual and, like all habits, changing this took time.

In dealing with nations in general, I lean on Benedict Anderson. In his work *Imagined Communities*, he defines “the nation” as, “an imagined political community...imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). His point is that large communities—such as nations—are created through an act of communal imagination. People imagine that they are connected to each other in an intimate way. Their relationship to each other is imagined, he says, “because they will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them” (ibid). Yet, “in

the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (ibid). Likewise, though, they also imagine that they are different than other nations—even those that border them.

Ideas about the “nation”—its qualities, its characteristics, its faults, etc.—are promoted through texts, according to Anderson. These texts speak to the people—by reinforcing some ideas and dismissing others they tell the community how to imagine itself. That is, they both reflect and construct the nation. My understanding of theatrical texts is that they can work within nationalism. That is, they can (in concert with other cultural forces) begin to explain “America” to Americans. “Yankee Theatre’s” purpose was nationalistic. Jonathan worked as a symbol of the nation. He helped to explain what the “New Man” meant for this imagined community.

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1.5 A SHORT HISTORY OF YANKEE THEATRE AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

Winifred Morgan claims, “The humor involving Brother Jonathan...offers the opportunity to trace some fault lines of social, sectional, and international tension” (i). To this I would add that the humor of the Yankee also allows the scholar a unique view into how colonial/imperial relations played out not only in the moment of revolution, but in the many decades following this radical political break, for although America split with its mother country, its reliance on England for cultural backing continued well into the nineteenth century. Indeed, New World citizens often turned to the only source of culture they knew for entertainment. Thus, while they hoped to differentiate themselves from the Old World, Americans imported

English actors, supported English plays, and relied on English models for inspiration. The cultural situation was dense, filled with self-doubt and conflicting impulses.

Recent scholarship has tackled some of the intricacies present in post-colonial cultures. An understanding of the stage Yankee adds to this knowledge. Through this figure (and the actors that embodied him), one can see how the culture at large dealt with the anxieties, concerns, and insecurities springing from the post-colonial situation. What's more, because plays shown in England also incorporated Jonathan (performed by both English subjects and American citizens), one is also able to witness how a former power attempted to deal with, manipulate, and control an image of a past colony.

American plays incorporating the Yankee began with Royall Tyler's comedy, *The Contrast*, which premiered at the John Street Theatre in April 1787. But Tyler was not alone in exploring this national character. Many Yankee plays were written in the early Federalist period. They included: *The Politician Outwitted*, (1789) by Samuel Low, *Jonathan Postfree or, the Honest Yankee* (1807) by Lazarus Beach, James Nelson Barker's *Tears and Smiles* (1809), and *Love and Friendship, or Yankee Notions* (1810) by A. B. Lindsley. After the War of 1812 other playwrights added to the dialogue: Colonel David Humphreys wrote *The Yankey in England* (1815), a play that would have a long history despite the fact that it never received more than an amateur production, and James Kirke Paulding constructed *The Bucktails; or Americans in England* (1815).

Chapter One will deal with a selection of these beginning works. Looking at three representative plays, it will examine how the colonial mindset shaped Yankee works from 1787 to 1815. American artists were interested in defining "the American," but, without any real knowledge of what this elusive figure was supposed to be, they were forced to rely on known

English identities through which to start the definition process. America, in other words, could only be defined through England. American artists, in a similar vein, also longed to find a national voice but in attempting to find “greatness” they again turned to what they knew—the English literary (and dramatic) tradition. Progress towards expressing a workable definition of “the American” was made, although it was a slow and difficult process, fraught with many anxieties. This chapter will explore post-colonial manifestations as seen through the beginning years of “Yankee Theatre.”

Chapter Two will travel further into English culture. It focuses on the work of English actor and performer, Charles Mathews and relates him to travel literature popular in England. The New World was a subject of curiosity for many English subjects and they filled their desire for knowledge by reading travel accounts. Unfortunately for Americans, such accounts were often filled with biases, myths, and half-truths. They generated falsehoods about the country, people, and social practices seemingly at every turn. Mathews, who gained his popularity through his comic displays of national and/or cultural differences, traveled to America and upon his return to England, he (with the help of playwright, Richard Peake), constructed two performance pieces that followed the rhetorical style, narrative structure, and mythical proportions of common travelogues. His performance pieces, called *Trip to America* (1824) and *Jonathan in England; or, Jonathan Doubikins* (1824), were anti-American in many ways. Most prominently, they featured the Yankee character as a slaveholder. In this way, these plays quickly and acutely presented a case against America’s “political hypocrisy.” Although Mathews’s Yankee played on stages far removed from American actors who were now attempting this character, his performances impacted them in an all-too-concrete way. Mathews

established a “Yankee tradition” in London that American “Stage Yankees” would encounter and have to deal with for the next thirty years.

Chapter Three swings back across the Atlantic and attempts to catch the reader up with the progress the Yankee made in the New World during the early 1820s. In this pursuit, it touches on Samuel Woodworth’s *The Forest Rose* (1825) and William Dunlap’s *A Trip to Niagara*, which first played in 1828. More important to this chapter, though, is the actor James Hackett. Hackett faced a cultural uphill battle. That is, he was an American actor trying to “make it” in a largely English institution. Negotiating the post-colonial cultural situation, Hackett found a way to succeed. He re-wrote English plays, Americanizing them and placing the “New Man” center stage. His first major works, *Sylvester Daggerwood* (1826), and *John Bull at Home; or Jonathan in England* (1828), featured a Yankee character that literally “wrote over” the English experience, replacing it with an American one.

But if such post-colonial resistant writing was popular in America, it was a sure way to fail on London stages and, indeed, this is what happened. When Hackett traveled to London he was performing against the tradition established by Charles Mathews, and when compared to this Englishman, he could never succeed. English audiences admired Mathews’s work; they found Hackett’s Yankee incomprehensible and boring. They did not understand the language, humor, or characterizations he attempted because of their foreign nature; what’s more, they were offended by Hackett’s blatant disregard for the English material he “hacked” to pieces. Facing such imperial attitudes, it is little wonder that Hackett failed miserably on his first two transatlantic journeys.

Chapter Three ends with Hackett’s third visit to England. This trip was a triumphant one. Most importantly (for Hackett and future Yankee actors), he learned the trick to success on the

London stage. On this journey he asked a native playwright to alter his work to suit the local audience and he was wildly applauded for his efforts. Success in London, it seems, could only be found through utilizing London playwrights.

Chapter Four begins with a look at two popular English travelogues published in the early 1830s and how “Yankee Theatre” responded to their critiques. George Hill came to the fore at this time, conveniently when James Hackett was acting in London, to become America’s favorite Yankee performer. Hill’s work was filled with post-colonial resistance, attempting to answer the charges made against the New World by travel writers Frances Trollope and Captain Basil Hall. When he journeyed to London, though, this aspect of his work dropped off completely. Following Hackett’s lead, Hill asked a London playwright to alter an American Yankee play to suit English taste; what came from these alterations was a piece that would have shocked any American. The Yankee, formed by English cultural imperialism, became a liar, cheat, and scoundrel. He acted as no American Yankee had ever done, save in English travelogues. Performing in a way that reinforced the English perception of this type, Hill became an overnight success. When he returned to America he did not discard the English play, but instead rewrote it to suit American audiences. What followed was an almost comic revolving-door of rewrites, in which Yankee works were continuously rewritten to suit whichever audience lay before them. This chapter examines the impact of international power structures on “Yankee Theatre.”

Chapter Five turns to the next popular Yankee actor, Danforth Marble. Marble’s Yankee acted very differently on stage from George Hill’s version of this same character. At first glance, in fact, it appeared as if Marble’s Jonathan followed the English model, for his Yankees were cheats, liars, and fools. But the change in the character was actually more rooted in American culture than outside of it. This chapter will explain how and why Marble’s Yankee did not

embody “America” in the same way Hill’s Jonathan had. Moreover, because the Yankee no longer acted as *the* representative of the nation, Marble gained more freedom in expressing a comic look at New World inhabitants. Americans could now laugh at themselves and their customs in a way they were not able to do when a culture of “rationality” and “choices” gripped the nation. But such a comic glance at Americans did not go unappreciated by English audiences. Marble was a huge hit in London, primarily because his Yankee adhered to the stereotypes English theatregoers had long believed about their neighboring New World inhabitants.

Chapter Six follows “Yankee Theatre” history to its last major star, Joshua Silsbee. Silsbee grew up in the South and was familiar with minstrel performance traditions, which swept through the nation in 1843. In trying to find a niche in the competitive performance market, Silsbee turned to minstrelsy to influence his version of the Yankee. He danced wildly, sang sentimental songs, and clowned around in a grotesque manner. Unfortunately for him, the American public would no longer accept a white character acting the part of a grotesque stage clown, which by this time was relegated to blackface performance. Thus, Silsbee largely failed on American stages.

But though he fared poorly in the New World, Silsbee was hugely popular in London. His success was similar to Marble’s in that he showed a character that conformed to (old) stereotypes and was therefore easily understood. What is more, English audiences were happy to superimpose the new image of America—the minstrel—on its precursor--the Yankee. Such a combination not only seemed perfectly natural to them but also offered better entertainment value. Silsbee’s London success would be his last. He was greeted with coolness upon returning to the United States and moved to San Francisco, on the margin of America, to finish

his career. His death in 1855 symbolically marks the end of “Yankee Theatre,” for after this date both the character and the form changed drastically. Performers no longer ruled the stage, inserting material as they saw fit, and the character became “domesticated.”

* * * * *

At heart, the Yankee’s hidden cunning—what Morgan calls his “mask of foolishness”—brought on both his wild success and terrible defeat (23). Jonathan greeted the world—from his start to the 1830s-- under a guise of stupidity. He used the prejudices and assumptions his “cultural better” held against him and the American public loved it. Yet this “mask of foolishness” would work against Jonathan in the end, because artists wishing to show the United States in a less than flattering light could easily change this trait into its opposite; “masked foolishness” could be altered into “simple foolishness” with little change. “Latent cunning,” likewise, could be easily transformed into “malicious evil.” It was this particular trait that drew Americans to Jonathan, this characteristic that made him stand out as a trickster figure ready to take on any imperial opposition. Yet it was also this quality of the Yankee that would ultimately work against him in a more complex post-colonial world.

2.0 CHAPTER ONE

2.1 JONATHAN BEGINS HIS AMERICAN STAGE CAREER: IN THEORY AND PRACTICE (1787 – 1815)

Jonathan appeared in many plays from the post-revolutionary through the Federalist era. These works included: *The Contrast* (1787), *The Politician Outwitted* (1789), *Jonathan Postfree or, the Honest Yankee* (1807), *Tears and Smiles* (1809), *Love and Friendship, or Yankee Notions* (1810), *The Yankey in England* (1815), and *The Bucktails; or Americans in England* (1815). In these pieces, the Yankee was a comic greenhorn. Naïve, sweet, innocent, and rather gullible, this early Yankee was part of the lower class, a country bumpkin. He grew up poor. In one play he was so poor that his family only had pumpkins to eat. He was unskilled in dealing with the world. He did not understand city ways, nor did he comprehend sophisticated conversation or refined manners. Due to his worldly deficiencies, dramatists usually attached the Yankee to an older, more refined gentleman, an American veteran, who led him through the urban landscape and taught him society's ways.

Hardly out of the household, this Jonathan was a young man. He was sweet and cute, not yet old enough for any bitterness or real self-awareness. His speech showed this lack of maturity. Often mistaking words and/or stumbling through speeches, he was completely unsophisticated and, despite many mishaps, blameless. Any mistakes he made on stage, any miscommunication, or blunders seemed genuine, stemming only from pure, good-natured

stupidity. One could not help but forgive Jonathan his simplicity. This beginning Yankee is the most innocent of all Yankees.

Jonathan was also ardently patriotic and he often worked as a vehicle of nationalism. Whether compared to an African-American, or juxtaposed on stage to an Englishman, this Yankee was idealized. He was, to quote Gary Richardson, “half of the portrait of American manhood” (“Nationalizing” 239). Wiser and more virtuous than the slave, sweeter and more down-to-earth than the Englishman, this Yankee was the perfect “common man” in a Jeffersonian-Republican sense. He was sentimental and sincere and could not be swayed from the ardent opinion that his American heritage was entirely sufficient for any challenges he would face. He did not aspire to be any better than he was, but sought only to accomplish as much as possible for his country. Always working with a member of the higher class (the veteran), this Yankee demonstrated the perfect union of upper- and lower-American economic strata. True and loyal, gracious and self-sacrificing, he always made the gentleman look good.

Dramaturgically the plays reinforced Jonathan’s success. Though his stupidity may have made the present Federalist audience smile, this Jonathan was not off-putting. Most in the audience would have felt superior to him, for indeed, they were aligned with the veteran in terms of class and intelligence. Working within a Jeffersonian-Republican philosophy, the Federalist Jonathan brought out feelings of patriarchal desire. He was a perfect vehicle of nationalism, promoting and displaying an idealized relationship between the upper and the lower strata in this new national community.

* * * * *

2.2 THE POST-COLONIAL SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The American Revolution broke the bond between American colonists and English subjects in a decisive manner. Americans were suddenly, forcibly on their own. But while colonial leaders were ready, able, and prepared to create a new form of government, they were less equipped to tackle the complications of post-coloniality. “The leaders of the Revolution had been born colonials,” says Robert H. Wiebe, author of *The Opening of American Society*, “and they had come of age as colonials. Few of them anticipated rebellion until it was almost upon them, and when it arrived, they had justified it as aggrieved Englishmen” (17). Colonial leaders, like many of their fellow Americans, were deeply ensconced in English culture and while they sought to create a new society, everything they knew--their sense of national identity, the norms of societal decorum, traditions, customs, and cultural expressions—came from England.

Such a deep connection to the former mother country kept English traditions alive in American culture long after the political break. Wiebe explains, “...the trappings of their colonial past lay everywhere. Hard money was largely European coin with an American authorization, law was largely British dictum with an American gloss, and news was largely London copy with an American filter” (18). English culture also pervaded American art. American painters, for example, looked to English models, many studied abroad, and some even immigrated to London.² New World architects also turned to English styles, incorporating Gothicism and later Classicism into their work, in order to follow Continental vogues; likewise literary writers and poets continued to look to English “greats” such as Spenser, Milton, and Chaucer for inspiration.

² For example, Benjamin West, John Singleton Copley, and Gilbert Stuart all studied in England; they were greatly influenced by English artists Reynolds and Gainsborough. (Richardson “James Nelson Barker” 124).

English preferences and dictates affected the American theatre as well. Gary A, Richardson refers to the American stage as being “Anglicized” and even says that it “operated as if America was still an outpost of the mother country” (“James Nelson Barker” 124). This happened for a few reasons, according to Richardson. He explains:

In a large measure the Anglicized character of American stage and drama sprang from two related cultural phenomena—the general reluctance of American managers, actors, and audiences to challenge a received dramatic canon dominated by British plays; and the steady procession through America’s theatrical centers of touring English actors whose superior performances reinforced the public’s prejudice for British plays (ibid).

“To create a national drama,” Richardson concludes, “an aspiring American dramatist would of necessity have to overcome the English grip on both the library and the stage” (ibid).

The most prominent playwright “gripping” both the library and the stage was Shakespeare. American artists looked to him as a kind of all-purpose muse, a theatrical “god” who offered the best, most “universal” art. Thinking similarly, American audiences demanded to see his plays night after night. Shakespeare was the most performed playwright throughout the nineteenth century. His work paraded on stage night after night, even as native playwrights suffered from audience indifference, their shows closing from meager attendance. When native plays were written, they were unscrupulously compared to the famous bard and criticized for their general lack of imagination, artistry, and/or greatness. Such a comparison was, of course, unfair. The cultural situation, language, and dramatic concerns had changed so radically in two hundred plus years; a nineteenth-century playwright could never write in a manner similar to Shakespeare. Yet, American critics continued to disparage contemporary plays, undermining their own countrymen’s efforts. The situation was so detrimental to native art that in 1808 James Nelson Barker began his native comedy *Tears and Smiles* with a retort to critics saying that they

should not expect American dramatists to “lisp in the language of Shakespeare” (Richardson “James Nelson Barker” 127).

Such cultural infiltration is often found in colonial (and post-colonial) countries, for colonization (or occupation) entails total infiltration. Early “Yankee Theatre” works offer the scholar a unique view into the long-term effects American culture faced due to its colonial legacy. This chapter will examine the first thirty years of “Yankee Theatre” in the post-colonial United States, analyzing the ways that the Old World continued to impact American theatrical art. Specifically, it will look at three plays between 1787 and 1815 in order to highlight the ways playwrights struggled to free themselves from English influence and will examine their successes and failures in this attempt. In all are found a kind of “anxiety of influence” (to use Harold Bloom’s famous phrase), for, despite the best native efforts, English art continued to dominate the American theatre scene well into the nineteenth century. *The Contrast* will serve as representative of the earliest Yankee plays. Such works, written well before revolutionary feelings had chilled, displayed not only a reliance on English forms and models, but also expressed a complex anxiety over American identity. Coming from a culture still largely mired in colonial habits, the audience depended on a stable sense of “Englishness” through which to define “the American.” James Nelson Barker’s *Tears and Smiles* (1808) will serve to emblemize plays from the Federalist period. At this time artists desired new ways to speak of America; likewise, they wanted cultural output to mirror their sense of the political world—which is to say that they wanted to be culturally autonomous. Despite their best efforts, however, their goals of gaining complete cultural sovereignty were minimally accomplished. They were forced to rely on old juxtapositions and old contrasts when trying to explain “the American.” After the War of 1812, artists expressed an even greater desire to find a national

voice, yet they too could not get away from relying on English forms, models, and styles. Although their critiques of Englishness became even more stringent and their proclamation of American difference more thunderous, ultimately, they were unable to remove themselves from under England's cultural shadow. James Kirke Paulding's *The Bucktails; or Americans in England* (1815) will showcase these later concerns.

* * * * *

2.3 THE CONTRAST

After the Revolution ended and the dust of battle settled, Americans were suddenly faced with the arduous task of (re)defining their new culture. Part of the difficulty in performing such a mission lay in the sense of disunity they felt. That is, people living in different areas of the new nation did not usually feel bonded to each other. Each section of the country—each colony---had been its own autonomous “whole” since its inception, and peoples inhabiting them had never before been asked to imagine themselves as having anything in common with their far-off neighbors. If they had considered those others at all, they probably only thought of how different they were from each other. Americans living in the north, for example, felt that they were completely different from those in the South. Differences in agricultural practices, economic concerns, financial stability, styles of leadership, and ethnic makeup were all troubling. Moreover, even after the Revolution ended these differences remained. Feelings of difference between the colonies/states were so keen, in fact, that until 1783 many referred to the various “countries” of America. States seemed distant and unconnected and although Americans had banded together for the war, there was little else connecting them.

Now a new era was upon them and they had to find means of connection and unification. Americans needed to come together into one cohesive, imagined community (to use Benedict Anderson's terminology). But what would a citizen of this new agglomerated country look like? How would he sound? Which qualities would combine to make him specifically an American, opposed to an Englishman, a Frenchman, or a Spaniard, for example?

Of the complications in finding national unity in the Federalist era Weibe says: "In their yearnings to generate what they called a 'national character,' the gentry relied on republicanism as the codeword to distinguish both American from Europe and true Americans from false. Yet they could only explain what they were by what they were not. Initially a republican was not a Tory and a republic not a monarchy" (18). Without a solid definition of the "New Man," in other words, Americans had only a process of negation through which to assess themselves. They were Americans because they were no longer English colonialists.

Tyler's *The Contrast* reflects these problems. For example, one of the main dramaturgical goals of the work is to suggest a definition of "the American citizen," but in doing so, the work relies on a strategy of negation. In the end, the clearest point made is that an American is an American because he is not an English subject. What is more, although the play attempts to imagine America as an independent, confident, and stable nation capable of producing its own art and culture, it simultaneously relies on old English models. English influence invades every aspect of the work.

A plot outline will help to illustrate some of these points. Tyler's piece centers on Maria, a young American woman, who is engaged to marry Dimple, her fellow countryman. Maria was once happy with the choice her father made for her, but since her finance has returned from visiting England, she finds him completely unsuitable and indeed, Dimple's recent journey to the

Old World has done him no favors. He has picked up terrible habits. He now preens for hours at the toilette, spends money foolishly, follows the advice in Lord Chesterfield's letters without question, and has become an all-around snob. Maria no longer desires the match, but she is bound to follow her father's wishes. Surprisingly, Dimple is not interested in Maria either. He finds her overly sentimental and serious; he is much more drawn to society girls like Charlotte and Letitia, who are coy, vain, and superficial. In fact, although he is engaged to Maria, Dimple not only flirts with the other women, but also secretly woos both Charlotte and Letitia, promising to ask for both of their hands in marriage as soon as he can.

Maria's situation is made worse when she meets Colonel Manly, a Revolutionary war veteran, who is both sentimental and serious, like her. She immediately falls in love with him. Manly is in New York to aid his brothers in war, and to meet with his sister, Letitia. He is patriotic and faithful; the idealized "man" in the work.³ Upon meeting Maria he also immediately falls in love with her, so he is disappointed to hear of her engagement to Dimple. In the course of the action, he overhears Dimple's plan to disgrace Maria. Manly immediately comes to her rescue. He draws his sword on Dimple and discloses the villain's evil intentions for all to hear. Maria's father, Van Rough, is disappointed with Dimple's behavior and quickly gives his daughter to Manly, who happily accepts her. The play ends when the safety of the American woman is assured. She will no longer be in danger of having to marry the Anglophied, snobbish Dimple but will live happily with Manly.

An array of lower-class characters round out the play. Jonathan, Jessamy, and Jenny, the "social inferiors" of the work, dutifully follow their "cultural betters" wherever they go, taking on their characteristics and mimicking their behavior. Jessamy, for example, imitates Dimple in

³ Hence his name "Colonel *Manly*"

his adherence to empty cultural “rules.” He instructs Jonathan in how and when to laugh during a play (although the humor of the piece dictates a completely different “score”). Jonathan, too, follows Manly’s lead in patriotism, sentiment, and honorable behavior. He spouts jingoistic exclamations, sings “Yankee Doodle,” desires to lead a good, useful, and moral life, and attempts to visit only the most holy places in the city. In the end, Jonathan even rushes to Colonel Manly’s side when he confronts Dimple.

Tyler’s play, as the title suggests, revolves around contrasts. Contrasts between the New World and the Old World are explored, different types of “Americans” are examined, and sites of influence and/or national sympathies are contrasted. The purpose of his play seems clear: Tyler desired to promote and celebrate the New World. In every juxtaposition the New World citizen or American ideology is shown as preferable to its Old World counterpart. Manly’s courage is established as superior to Dimple’s obsession with appearances; Jonathan’s honest responses are better than Jessamy’s manufactured reactions; and Maria’s sentimental nature is preferable to Charlotte and Letitia’s coy behavior.

Through such juxtapositions, *The Contrast* offers a workable definition of “the American.” “The American,” it asserts, is a virtuous citizen—one who does not put on airs, one who is content with traditional American life, and one who takes marriage seriously. Likewise, the American seems to be humble, sincere, faithful, and patriotic. Colonel Manly, Jonathan, and Maria all display these qualities, and, dramaturgically, they are rewarded for their virtuous actions. Manly and Maria will marry, creating, one would assume, an idealized American family in the future, and Jonathan will stay in Manly’s service, further journeying through the United States with him and improving his economic, as well as intellectual, condition.

In like manner, Tyler's work also defines "the non-American." Dimple and Jessamy, who fawn over every word in Lord Chesterfield's letters, spend hours in the toilette, and devote time to worrying about when and how to laugh in the theatre, are surely "English" in spirit. Indeed, it was Dimple's journey to the former mother country, which Letitia says, was made to "see the world and rub off a little of the paltrous rust" (Tyler 10), that so changed him. Upon his return he seemed completely different. Letitia explains the change Maria saw in Dimple:

She watched his conduct and conversation, and found that he had by traveling acquired the wickedness of Lovelace without his wit, and the politeness of Sir Charles Grandison without his generosity. The ruddy youth, who washed his face at the cistern every morning, and swore and looked eternal love and constancy, was now metamorphosed into a flippant, palid, polite beau, who devotes the morning to his toilet, reads a few pages of Chesterfields's letters, and then minces out, to put the infamous principles in practice upon every woman he meets (Tyler 11).

Dimple's trip to England has not only ruined his character and made him into an unsuitable mate, but it has also taken away his "American-ness." He has become, for all intents and purpose, "English."

Tyler's definitions of the various national identities available to New World citizens are workable, although problematic. First of all, they ignore facts of residency. Dimple, for example, is imagined as an Englishman, though he lives in America and has all his life. He is concerned with outward appearances, acts dishonorably, and disrespects American women. Bad traits, true; but in Tyler's assessment these qualities actually eradicate his American status. All would be better served, the play seems to assert, if Dimple would emigrate across the Atlantic. Yet, despite the poor assessment he receives, Dimple is an American, most simply because of residency and birthright. He was born in the United States and his father was an American

citizen (and it seems a good one at that). Despite these irrevocable facts, though, Tyler would strip him of his citizenship.

Secondly, Tyler's assessments are troubled by their single-minded reliance on personal characteristics. This problem of logic is easily seen if one examines the opposite; that is, if the American is patriotic, sentimental, and serious, could a Frenchman also be an American if he were patriotic, sentimental and serious? Surely a Frenchman is not an American even if he meets all the personal qualifications asserted by Tyler's play. Qualities alone, in other words, cannot define the American.

Underneath Tyler's simplistically constructed *contrasts* lurk anxieties about American identity. Who is a true American? How can he be identified? Are there degrees of "American-ness?" Can the American ever travel abroad without losing his identity, his right to United States citizenship? Can he resist the many cultural temptations of Europe? Or will all affinities for his native country leave him after an evening at the opera? Tyler's definitions seem sure and fast upon first reading, but they easily break apart when further investigated. His *contrasts* are not so clear.

Perhaps the most damning aspect of Tyler's "tidy" national definitions is the fact that they rely on stable English standards to make their point. Tyler would have found it far more difficult to speak about issues of national identity, for example, if he had filled his play with characters all as "American" as Colonel Manly. It is the difference between him and Dimple that most clearly elucidates his "American-ness." Likewise, the play itself would appear far less patriotic if it were devoid of all simplistic contrasts. At a time when no one knew what comprised "the American," Tyler had to rely on known definitions of "the Englishman" and "Englishness" to make his point. The American, in other words, can only be defined through a

series of negations: he does not look like, act like, or dress like an Englishman, so he must be an American. Only “Englishness” could define “American-ness.”

Tyler was not alone in depending on stable foreign identities to define the American; this phenomenon can also be seen in the culture at large. Discussing the situation in America after the Revolution, for example, Wiebe asserts:

Some [Americans] did search industriously for the sources of a unique America. Adams thought he found an indigenous spirit of liberty, Jefferson an indigenous agrarian virtue. But in the end they translated their findings into the same old terminology of negation. ‘If you have no attachments or exclusive friendships for any foreign nation,’ Adams informed one group of citizens, ‘you possess the genuine character of true Americans.’” (18).

Wiebe ends poignantly: “Only Europe could define America” (18).

For better or worse, many Americans at this time understood Europe as a stable and fixed entity. They imagined it as a culture that had had generations to develop and had come to greatness from its ability not only to understand itself, but also to express its unique and particular point of view. Such an understanding was certainly valid. Looking across the Atlantic, this is what the post-colonial New World inhabitant saw and English representatives were quite happy to reinforce such notions. Unfortunately, such an understanding shaped American art and Tyler’s play is a prime example of the outcome of such a view. Tyler modeled his entire play after an English work, which he had seen The American Company perform earlier in the month, Sheridan’s *School for Scandal*. In his introduction to *The Contrast*, Jeffery H. Richards says:

Tyler’s essential problem was how to write a play for a country without much of a theatrical tradition. On the one hand, the theatre was a highly suspect institution... On the other hand Tyler and others wanted to have in America the same arts celebrated in Europe, not simply as imitations but as forms that could take their own local stamp and still rise to greatness (3).

In such a culturally complex scenario, Tyler found himself caught between a proverbial “rock and hard place.” As an American artist, he longed to help his country find its national voice;⁴ but as a citizen living in a post-colonial culture, he was only familiar with the former mother country’s artistic tradition. What’s more, his education had probably consisted of reading, learning, and memorizing selections of “great English works.” As a colonial subject he was surely informed that authors such as Milton, Shakespeare, and Chaucer possessed “universal” genius and was most likely satisfied with this assessment. All of his experience with art and entertainment would have also been inundated with English “greats.” They were performed on stage, studied at home, and read in drawing rooms. Thus, as Tyler set out to speak in an “American voice,” he inadvertently relied on English forms and traditions to vocalize his sense of national identity.⁵ The result was a vacillating, irresolute definition of “America,” which could be easily problematized to incorporate or exclude individuals at random, and an assertion that American art was an empty, imitative form that needed to rely on English models for legitimation.

Jonathan, the Yankee of the piece, exhibited similar problems in his construction. In this instance—his first stage incarnation, his first fully embodied materialization—he, like the play on the whole, displayed the “inevitable doublemindedness that [was] the legacy of [the] post-

⁴ Tyler’s desire to speak in a national voice can be detected in his prologue. It begins, “Exult, each patriot heart!—this night is shewn/A piece, which we may fairly call our own;/Where the proud titles of ‘My Lord! Your Grace!’/To humble Mr. and plain Sir give place./Our Author pictures not from foreign climes/The fashions or the follies of the times;/But has confin’d the subject of his work/To the gay scenes—the circles of New York./On native themes his Muse displays her pow’rs;/ If ours the faults, the virtues too are ours./Why should our thoughts to distant countries roam,/When each refinement may be found at home?” (Tyler 7).

⁵ The opposite view of the argument presented here is well expressed by Gary A. Richardson when he explains this same occurrence as Tyler’s attempt to “Americanize” the comedy of manners format. I offer this not to invalidate my position, but simply to acknowledge that there are two ways of looking at this complex scenario. Both facts—that Tyler used an English model and that he Americanized an old English standard work—are important. The American voice was filled with a dense post-colonial vacillation at this time but because, in general, it was more accommodating than resistant in nature, I have positioned this play as adhering to British norms rather than as attempting to overturn them.

colonial moment” (G. Richardson “Nationalizing the American Stage” 247), for he was both staunchly pro-American and a product of old literary/artistic habits. That is, Jonathan was a truly American character, but also revealed an adherence to English norms and traditions. For example, although the Yankee vigorously sang three verses of “Yankee Doodle” on stage and boasted of his ardent American patriotism, Thomas Wignell, an English actor, played him for both the premiere at the John Street Theatre in April 1787 and the subsequent multiple-city run the play went on in the following year.

That an English actor would play this part was not surprising. All theatrical companies were comprised of English actors at this time, even if they were called “The American Company” (as this one was).⁶ What was surprising, perhaps, was that Wignell, who could not have known what was expected of a “Yankee,” seemed not to have spoiled the part. By all accounts, his performance was quite enjoyable. This was surprising because when Wignell took the role of Jonathan, he was probably at a loss. He had probably never played an American on stage before--and he had surely never played a Yankee. In dealing with this cultural deficiency, he turned to the tradition he knew. Likewise because actors carried little costuming with them, he probably was also forced to draw on the properties at his disposal. Consequently, in portraying Jonathan, Wignell dressed in the traditional Yorkshireman garb. He wore a suit of little color, probably comprised mostly of browns or grays, and completed the image by donning a red wig, a costume element long associated with this part. Thus, although Jonathan was a Yankee, on stage he looked the exact duplicate of the Yorkshireman, a character with which American audiences were very familiar.

⁶ There was one American woman in The American Company at this time, a newcomer named Miss Tuke, who played “Jenny” in Tyler’s production. Likewise, *The Contrast* was the exception to the informal “all English scripts” rule. The other scheduled shows during this season were *School for Scandal* and *The Poor Soldier*.

This element evidently did not bother the attending audience, for an extant review of the production voices no quibbles with this artistic choice. The audience probably accepted it for a few reasons. First and foremost, the Yorkshireman and the Yankee were not all that different in terms of dramatic construction. Both were a bit foolish, making numerous cultural mistakes and societal blunders; both were part of the low-class. Likewise, both were young men in need of management, be it from an employer or an elite gentleman. The difference, ultimately, between the two characters was one of national origin. The Yankee, because he was a symbol of America, functioned as a vehicle of nationalism. Perhaps because of his Englishness, though, Wignell did not know what to do when faced with this new type and so he did not distinguish his Yankee from an ordinary Yorkshireman. He looked like one on stage, and he probably acted like one well. Because of the lack of clarity about what exactly comprised “the American” (which existed even in America), though, no one in the audience in 1787 seemed to notice the discrepancy. A visual representation of England could fill in for “the American” at this point because no one knew what else it should look like. A complete notion of “the American” was still lacking. He still looked much like the Englishman.

Adding more national ambiguity to the performance, Wignell did not sound like an American—even as he spoke American words, used American phrases, and roared American jingoisms.⁷ Of his performance, Francis Hodge surmises, “It is likely that he carried Tyler’s country dialect onto the stage, where it sounded more like a stage Yorkshireman or other English country types, rather than a New Englander” (48). To this he adds, “Wignell was first an Englishman, then an actor, and he could not be expected to tell an audience much about genuine

⁷ It is helpful to know that Tyler filled Jonathan’s speech with specifically American words. Slang like “mortal,” “tarnal,” “nation,” and “cute” would never have been spoken, nor understood across the ocean. Jonathan clearly uses an American dialect.

native Americans” (ibid). Wignell Englishness never left him; like a shadow, it clung to him, even when he stood on stage in the character of Jonathan proclaiming his undying affection for the United States. Moreover, in the presentational style of performance that was popular at this time, Wignell would have done little to disguise these aspects of his person. Englishness was expected of all actors and it would have suited most parts. Jonathan was the anomaly. He was one of the first Americans portrayed in a theatre filled with English subjects, traditions, characters, and manners. Thus, the Yankee’s first stage performance teemed with Englishness.

Similar to the play as a whole, Jonathan showed signs of his nation’s post-colonial state. He was supposed to be an all-American character, written expressly for nationalistic purposes; yet in spite of Tyler’s best efforts, his character was “written over” with Wignell’s Englishness. In both dress and dialect, Englishness permeated America’s first stage Yankee. The first Jonathan, as he appeared on stage, was not the native character Tyler attempted to write. In performance he changed; he became a “mixed” breed, part American, and part English, a reflection that was perhaps more relevant to the post-colonial situation than Tyler intended.

* * * * *

2.4 TEARS AND SMILES

James Nelson Barker constructed *Tears and Smiles* in 1806 at the request of Mr. William B. Warren, manager of the Chestnut Street Theatre, and Joseph Jefferson I, the esteemed American comedian.⁸ Warren simply wanted Barker to put his name in as a dramatist for his

⁸ *Tears and Smiles* was first produced on March 4, 1807 at the Theatre Philadelphia and first published by T. & G. Palmer in 1808. According to William Dunlap’s *History of the American Theatre* it was written “between May 1st and June of 1806” (Barker 138).

next theatrical season. Jefferson, on the other hand, had a more specific request. He wanted a Yankee part from Barker. Reluctantly, Barker agreed. His reluctance was not of a personal nature, but sprang from a professional concern: he admitted that he “had never even seen a Yankee at the time” (Barker 138). But despite his lack of experience with such a type, Barker put any anxiety behind him and set to work on *Tears and Smiles*. It turned out that first-hand experience with Yankee was not needed, for after the piece was completed Barker bragged, “By-the-way, such a Yankee as I drew!” (ibid).

What a difference twenty years made in the American theatre scene! Although the theatre was still considered an English institution and English actors continued to pour into the country to act on American stages, here a native comedian requested a play from native playwright that would include a native character and his request was granted. But despite apparent progress, not all in the theatre community were willing to embrace native works. Many people still resisted such ventures. They wanted to see “high art” (read English art) when they went to the theatre, and did not consider native playwrights capable of producing such entertainment. Responding to these attitudes, Barker began his play with a brief, but biting anecdote. He told of how after showing this new play to a friend, the gentleman advised him to throw it into the fire, asserting that he “ha[d] produced nothing, absolutely nothing but a collection of *Columbianisms*, in five parts” (original emphasis 141). Barker was not familiar (or at least claimed not to be familiar with) the word ‘Columbianism,’ and so asked his friend what it meant. The gentleman explained:

The term...was invented and applied by certain hypercritics of our own, who, perhaps from being placed too near the scene, cannot discover the beauties of their own country, and whose refined taste is therefore better pleased with the mellow tints which distance gives to every foreign object. This term of derision they apply to every delineation an American may attempt to make of American manners, customs, opinions, characters or scenery. Thus, while they rapturously

applaud the sentiments of a foreign stage patriot, the lover of his country, in an American play, utters only contemptible Columbianisms. An allusion to the revolution which made us a nation, or to the inestimable characters who achieved it, cannot be heard with patience, though they may search history in vain for parallels to either. They can never pardon the endeavor to depict our national peculiarities, and yet they will listen with avidity to Yorkshire rusticity, or Newmarket slang. They can feel a poetic rapture, when some muddy stream of Europe flows in verse; but the author might as well incontinently drown himself in it, as lead the pastoral Schuylkill meandering through his poem. They can accompany the fop of an English play in his lounge through Bond-street, while an American personage, of the same cast, would most probably be knocked down, if he attempted a promenade in High-street. They find innumerable Columbianisms in language, too, in that city where all the world beside acknowledge the English tongue is spoken in its utmost purity. In fine, this unaccountable prejudice extends to every thing here; the farther, therefore, you remove from America, the nearer you approach to their favour (144).

Despite their national heritage, many Americans opposed the use or display of Americanisms, American nationalism, or American settings on stage. Barker railed against such negative responses, but many Americans were simply not ready to allow the theatre—a “superior” English institution—to fall into “inferior” native hands.

This type of anti-nationalistic reaction is not uncommon in a post-colonial nation. Franz Fanon describes similar reactions in countries like Martinique, Algeria, and other Arab nations freed from colonial control in the twentieth century. During colonial subjugation, he says, “...[e]very effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture...and to recognize the unreality of his ‘nation,’ and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure” (*Wretched of The Earth* 236). In this situation “...the intellectual throws himself in frenzied fashion into the fanatic acquisition of the culture of the occupying power and takes every opportunity of unfavorably criticizing his own national culture...” (Fanon 236-237). According to Fanon, relinquishing such habits is not easy

and the artist and intellectual go through many stages until they are able to do so, a process which may take decades.

The cultural situation in America made this intellectual challenge even more difficult, which perhaps explains the extraordinarily long time of abnegation seen in America. America's political situation and its break from colonial oppression were strikingly fraught with ambiguity. The United States was the first post-colonial nation.⁹ Perhaps of greater importance was the shared culture Americans felt with the English. In *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Liah Greenfeld describes the close affinity early Americans felt for their mother country. Before the Revolution, she claims, "[Americans] emphasized the natural, historical, and emotional ties connecting [them] to Britain and frequently used the highly charged metaphor of mother country and children colonies" (411). John Randolph, in fact, wrote in 1774, "The Americans are descended from the Loins of Britons, and therefore may, with Propriety, be called the Children, and England the Mother of them" (as quoted in Greenfeld 411). This parent-child metaphor continued to be felt in American society for decades. Such a metaphor has strong post-colonial implications. Explains Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, in *The Empire Writes Back*:

Once the American Revolution had forced the question of separate nationality, and the economic and political successes of the emerging nation had begun to be taken for granted, American literature as a distinct collection of texts also began to be accepted. But it was accepted as an offshoot of the 'parent tree'. Such organic metaphors, and others like 'parent-child' and 'stream-tributary' acted to keep the new literature in its place. The plant and parent metaphors stressed age, experience, roots, tradition, and, most importantly, the connection between antiquity and value. They implied the same distinctions as those existing between metropolis and frontier: parents are more experienced, more important, more substantial, less brash than their offspring. Above all they are the *origin* and therefore claim the final authority in questions of taste and value (15).

⁹ According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 15.

This “parent-child” metaphor was employed on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁰ Just as Americans understood themselves as “offspring” of English parenthood,¹¹ likewise, the English identified with the parental role when considering Americans.¹² It was this identification with the “parent” that perhaps empowered English sources to criticize American works with even more animosity than homebred critics had done. For example, Thomas Forrest’s *The Disappointment; or the Force of Credulity*,¹³ which was to be the first produced American play before its debut, but which was cancelled due to reconsideration by the Philadelphia theatre management, was strongly criticized overseas.¹⁴ Although its “slang-laden, ethnically inscribed dialogue and its satiric bite” ultimately ruined its chances of production in America, English

¹⁰ One only needs to recall the parental-offspring constructed nature of John Bull to Jonathan to find the strong relevance this metaphor holds in Yankee Theatre.

¹¹ There are many examples here. Noah Webster, for one, urged Americans to “unshackle [their] minds and act like independent beings.” (as quoted in Greenfeld 442). He continued, “You have been children long enough, subject to the control and subservient to the interests of a haughty parent [England]” (ibid). Another example comes from an anonymous American citizen, who wrote into the *The Bee, or Literary Weekly Intelligencer*, an English publication, in 1791. He claimed: “As a foundation has been laid for an extensive circulation of your excellent journal, in the states of North America, and as I have for more than five and twenty years past entered with sincere good will into the interests and happiness of that noble community, which had the honour and resolution to obtain its freedom from the tyranny of the *parent state*, I feel myself inclined to fulfill my good offices toward the good people of America by inserting such papers in your useful collection as may prove of peculiar advantage to our *transatlantic children*” (III: 96; my emphasis).

¹² English opinion on this matter, for the most part, was unspoken. They simply treated Americans as their somewhat wayward offspring and expected the former colony to take all advice given. In this line, some criticism regarded American literary production in a positive light, urging the former colonies to continue in their pursuit of greatness, while others harshly criticized their efforts. All responses, though, contained a parental rhetoric. A brief review of American poems featured in *The European Magazine and London Review* might serve as an example. Says the writer: “From a country like America, where Nature sets before the eyes of the poet the most luxuriant and the most terrific scenes; where the people yet unaccustomed to those refinements which, while they subtilize the understanding, and refine what, in modern times, is called *taste*, cramp the imagination; we might expect wild effusions of fancy, and those nervous glowing thoughts and expressions, whose irregular beauty and sublimity set criticism at defiance. But our [American] author seems...seldom to have ventured to give the reins to his imagination. Instead of copying from Nature he has generally copied from the copiers of her copiests, and those Europeans...” (XII September 1793). “The reviewer goes on to say,” explains Cairns, “that if an American would follow Homer in painting ‘the great scenes of Nature, and the effects of the strongest passions of the human soul his works too might become the delight of the world; but till they shake off the trammels of Europe...they will not rise above mediocrity’” (Cairns and as quoted in Cairns 29-30).

¹³ Forrest used the pseudonym Andrew Barton; this name is still often cited.

¹⁴ William B. Cairns, in his work *British Criticisms of American Writings*, offers many examples of criticisms which were fired across the Atlantic at Forrest. He does not say, however, how these English sources came in contact with the script. Was it produced in England or were these sources referring to a paper copy of the play that made its way across the ocean?

sources seemed to disregard this fact and hammered away at the work (Richards xi). The *Monthly Mirror*, an English periodical, began its review of the play with a “contemptuous reference to Americans as ‘the Yanky doodles,’” then continued by quoting “some of Barton’s [Forrest’s] poorest jokes and vilest obscenities, with context skillfully omitted to make them seem worse than they are.” The critique ended, saying, “Seriously, we beg pardon for these quotations, but we make them to exhibit the state of the drama, in America, and the taste of these independent people—independent, it seems in their plays, of everything like genius, good sense, and decency” (II: 188, September 1807; as quoted in Cairns 82). American drama was more often than not overlooked by English sources, deemed too insignificant to even acknowledge. But when it was reviewed, it was often disparaged as crass, vile, and inferior.

It was this continuing attitude of parental critique that spurred Sydney Smith’s infamous question, “Who reads an American book?” in the *Edinburgh Review*, June 1820. This concise condemnation of American work seemed to represent most English sentiment on the matter and it was echoed over and over again through the following decades.¹⁵ Like an international mantra, Smith’s words continued to circulate in publications on both sides of the Atlantic for years. Implicit in Smith’s remark is the recurrent cultural imperialism assumed by English sources. No one reads an American book because American works are not worth the trouble, Smith’s rhetoric implied; they were bound to be lamentable, insignificant, or crass—not unlike Forrest’s work a decade before. English works, on the other hand, are read internationally, taught in schools, and enjoyed on a daily basis because of their “universal” appeal. England was, after all, the country that had produced such literary “greats” as Milton, Spenser, and

¹⁵ The amazing staying power of this phrase is well documented. Thirty years after its first publication, James Russell Lowell wrote, “The Stamp Act and the Boston Port Bill scarcely produced a greater excitement in American than [that] appalling question” (quoted in Greenfeld 443). Too, in 1850 Herman Melville referenced Smith’s remarks, “...the day will come, when you shall say: who reads a book by an Englishman that is a modern?” (ibid).

Shakespeare. Resting on rhetoric that was backed by an appeal to notions of the “universal,” the “authentic,” and the “original,” their claims seemed justified. English works—worthy or not—were perceived as culturally superior to the artistry of any “offspring.”

Though America had won its political independence, all perceived it, in terms of culture, as far behind its former mother country. This was a high obstacle for American artists to overcome, for not only were American critics suspicious of American works, but the parental, “authentic” English critics were also critical of them. The cultural elite, no matter what side of the Atlantic they resided on, were convinced that no work of any literary or dramatic merit could possibly spring from the United States. Such was the situation in 1808 when Barker wrote *Tears and Smiles*.

Despite his culture, Barker attempted to write a nationalistic work, filled with what his friend would have called “Columbianisms.” Similar to Tyler’s work, his play also featured an American woman in peril. Unlike Tyler’s work, however, this was not a simple argument in play form, but a complex melodrama filled with twists and turns. In *Tears and Smiles*, Louisa Campdon is in danger of marrying Fluttermore, a Europeanized fop. Fluttermore was once a respectable American, but like Dimple, his whole character changed after a trip to Europe. He now utters French words and phrases incessantly, despises American traditions and customs, and considers himself well above the average citizen. Sydney, a young naval veteran, is far more suitable for Louisa and the two have fallen in love. Compdon, Louisa’s father, is against the match, though, because of Sydney’s orphan status. Both Sydney and his sister, Clara, were abandoned when they were only infants, though not because of apathy or dishonorable intentions, but due to mysterious circumstances. Compdon, a friend of their father’s, took in the children, although he never knew the identity of their parents or why they were unable to stay

with them. As the years passed, Compton became much embittered at his wards because of their bad behavior. Clara ran away after bearing a child out of wedlock and Sydney fell in love with Louisa even though he has no inheritance and could offer her no solid future. Although Compton is against the match, the couple plans to elope. Their rash behavior is stopped, though, when Oswald, a mysterious gentleman, tells Sydney that he should not act dishonorably. Sydney cannot understand why Oswald would care so much about his affairs, until Oswald discloses his true identity—he is Sydney's father. In the end, Sydney and Louisa marry; Clara is reunited with the man who ruined her, the unfortunate Fluttermore, who promises to mend his ways; and a family is united. By a happy circumstance, Madam Clermont, the orphan's mother, lived nearby and happened to be at the estate the night of the proposed wedding, where she finds her son, daughter, and long-lost husband.

The work is filled with subplots and secondary characters. Yank, the Yankee of the work, is one of these. He follows Rangely, a gentleman who has saved him from extreme rural poverty, around Philadelphia and aids him in his romantic pursuits. Others include: O'Connor, a lovesick Irishman; Galliard, a Frenchman; the Widow Freegrace, who counsels Louisa in romantic affairs; and Miss Starchington, a man-hungry old maid.

Although this play came out twenty years after Royall Tyler's work, it is quite similar in scope. It deals with the same issues, explores like themes, and comes, in fact, even to similar conclusions. Again, the text is nationalistic. An American woman is in danger of being matched to a Europeanized gentleman. Fluttermore would make a terrible American husband; he is superficial, over sexed, and dishonorable. What's more, Louisa is in love with an admirable veteran, a perfect match for an American woman.

Likewise, the text also questions national identity, although the contrasts within Barker's work are subtler. Dramaturgically, the audience is asked to compare Sydney and Fluttermore, but the direct comparison seems weakened since these are the only two characters under direct juxtaposition (rather than the entire cast). Fluttermore raises problems similar to those associated with Dimple. He has traveled abroad and has come back tainted. The Old World has infected him. General Compton, Louisa's uncle, explains the change in his person, "...he leaves college a clever chubby-cheeked lad, with a florid hue in his countenance, and an honest love of country in his heart; and, after dropping his complexion and principle abroad, returns with a pale face, and a hearty contempt for every thing this side the water" (Barker 145). His "grand tour" has stripped him of "true" American traits.

Is Fluttermore still an American? The text offers an ambiguous answer. He is clearly not suitable for Louisa, but because he has had a child with Clara, he ends the piece married to an American woman. Does her "ruined" status diminish her American status?¹⁶ Moreover, the text is unclear about Monsieur Galliard, a Frenchman who has immigrated to the United States and longs for nothing other than to marry a "little Quaker girl" (Barker 156).¹⁷ While Fluttermore is critical of American culture, Galliard is complimentary of the New World. For example, Fluttermore claims, "I have found the new world is too green to please the palate of a man of *gusto*; and that Europe, like a ripe beauty, is the only object worthy a connoisseur's attention" (ibid). To this, Galliard says, "For me, I tink Europe is like de old libertine, de courtesan; I am disgust vid her. Amerique is de lit demoiselle you point me in the street; vat you call?.., Ah! De quake; yes. So *ingénue*, so *modest*" (ibid). Here is no grumpy traveler, but a sure American. He

¹⁶ One will remember Sydney and Clara are siblings so her lack of true "American-ness" cannot be attributed to her family status. She comes from a respectable mother and father, though she does not know it until the end of the play, and has a respectable brother. Why doesn't the script worry about her marriage to Fluttermore?

¹⁷ He actually says that he wishes to marry a "lit quake gal" (ibid).

always attempts to speak English and requests that those around him speak it so he can learn the native language quicker. Galliard certainly seems American in spirit.

An Irishman, called simply O'Connor, also appears in the play, but unlike Galliard, he is deemed un-American. He longs to marry the Widow Freegrace, but she continually spurns his advances and in the end she chooses the American, Rangely, over the immigrant. He ends the play alone, a pathetic, though comic man. Both men are recent immigrants and both seem honorable. Why is one seemingly given "American" status and one not? Was "American-ness" so politically motivated in the early 1800s that a Frenchman could be considered a legitimate implant, but an Irishman needed to be scorned and ostracized? Barker's text leaves these questions unanswered.

What is clear in the text is the Yankee's national status. Unlike Jonathan from *The Contrast*, whose portrayal was infused with Englishness, Yank's position as an American is never confused, challenged, or compromised. In the play itself the young Yankee displays traits that might have stained his "Americanness." For instance, the text specifies that he grew up very poor—so poor that his family only had pumpkins to eat. Rangely, in fact, saves him from a lifetime of destitution. Yet this abject poverty does not adversely affect his nationality. Instead of condemning him for his upbringing, other characters seem to acknowledge that his rearing has benefited him. Although they chuckle at his naiveté, they do so while referring to him as a "wise man of the east" (Barker 157). Yank's lack of urbanity predisposes him to sincerity. It actually seems to make him even more American, for because of it, he is not "infected" with (foreign) lavishness. His poor financial state seems to save him from the many suspicious, if not outright immoral, extravagances wealth offered to the vulnerable, rich American gentleman.

What is more, the extra-textual aspects of the play also worked to confirm Yank's Americanness. He was played not by an English actor, but by Joseph Jefferson I, a renowned and beloved American comedian who was quickly gaining popularity at this time. Jefferson certainly knew how to dress and speak the part. The red wig of the Yorkshireman was now a thing of the past. The Yankee was becoming more and more American. Likewise, when the text included contemporary American slang, Jefferson surely had no trouble with it. He was an American. He knew how the dialogue should sound. Although the theatre still often seemed like an "outpost of the mother country" ("James Nelson Barker" 124) in the early nineteenth-century, this Yankee could no longer have been confused for his English counterpart. Jonathan was American through and through. What is more, his nationality was not detrimental, but rather beneficial within the world of the play. Barker's play might have offered an unclear, politicized definition of "the American" on the whole, but when it came to the Yankee, he was crystal clear. The Yankee was all-American.

* * * * *

2.5 THE BUCKTAILS; OR AMERICANS IN ENGLAND

In *British Criticisms of American Writing 1783-1815*, William B. Cairns claims, "Almost all Englishmen who read and thought at all took some interest in America and American affairs during the years following the Revolution" (19). The Revolution might have politically split England and America, but this did not mean that English subjects no longer wondered about the doings of their former colonial cousins. Likewise, it did not mean that Americans no longer took interest in England's affairs either. Both the imperial center and the post-colonial margin looked

across the Atlantic with wonder at each other and let their curiosity guide them across the sea to discover the “truth” about each other.

But though these transatlantic travel interests may at first appear similar, in reality, great differences usually spurred such voyages. American tourists were interested in improving their sense of “taste.” They believed (through no coincidence), that English culture was far superior to American culture and so they packed their bags, boarded a ship, and awaited the favorable affects of “culture.” English tourists, on the other hand, visited America for very different reasons. They were interested in witnessing the United States for themselves, curious to see if this “startling venture in statecraft” (Mesick 1) had the political wherewithal to succeed in a world of many strong forces. Although the Revolution ended any official connection between America and England, persons from both countries remained in close contact--according to Americans who encountered these traveling English subjects, the contact was sometimes too close.

English subjects traveling across the former colonies were infamously unhappy. Travel was hard; they were in an unfamiliar land, eating unfamiliar food, and having to acquiesce to unfamiliar—and to what they often considered “barbaric”—traditions. Moreover, many did not keep their grievances to themselves. They complained to anyone who would listen in very public ways. Dealing with such travelers was such a common and prominent nuisance, in fact, that Barker even mentioned it in his work. In the preface to *Tears and Smiles*, he asked the audience to imagine they were travelers and his play was a voyage, but requested that they not take an overly critical disposition, like so many travelers apparently did. He said:

Good, gentle trav'lers, do not then, I pray,
Like some ungracious tourist, curse the way,
From Dan to Beersheba, and back to Dan,
As vile, simply because American.

But, if some humble beauties catch your sight,
Behold them in their proper, native light;
Not peering through discol'ring foreign prisms,
Find them but hideous, rank Columbianisms (Barker 143-144).

His plea certainly spoke to the anti-American sentiment many foreign travelers seem to have been exhibiting, but more important to note is that even by 1806 English tourism was becoming an irritant to Americans. In future years with the printing and distribution of hundreds of travel accounts, written through such discolored “foreign prisms,” English travel would be an even greater source of vexation.

Many Americans were distressed by the infamously dreadful accounts English travelers spread about their country. James Kirke Paulding, one such American, felt it was his duty to fire back. Ralph M. Aderman, author of *The Letters of James Kirke Paulding*, explains, “...Paulding carefully watched the mounting tensions between the United States and Great Britain. Finally he could restrain himself no longer; in 1812 he poured out his spleen against the British in a thinly veiled, sharply worded satire, *The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan*” (ibid). In 1813 he continued his attack on English ideologies and literary styles in a parody of Sir Walter Scott’s famous poem, “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” (1805) and in 1815 he turned his attention to the stage, constructing *The Buckskins; or Americans in England*.¹⁸

Paulding’s overall argument in both *The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan* and *The Lay of the Scottish Fiddle* was nationalistic and he did not veer from this path in *The Buckskins*. This work relentlessly pitted America against its former mother country, contrasting American courage and honor to British foolishness, bias, and malevolence. A plot outline will prove how tightly his argument is made: The scene opens on the preparations for a

¹⁸ Hereafter referred to as *The Buckskins*.

dinner party. Mr. Obsolete, an enthusiastic antiquarian, excitedly awaits the arrival of two Americans who are visiting Bath on a journey through England. Dinner guests attending the party are also excited about their arrival, though they seem terribly uninformed about Americans. Miss Obsolete, in fact, has dubbed them the “bucktails” because she assumes they will be wild savages and wonders if they will be wearing war paint. When the Americans arrive, however, the guests are dumbstruck, for these Americans, Henry and Frank Tudor, appear to be quite normal, not unlike those already seated at the party.

Though initially caught off guard, the English dinner guests soon warm up to the Americans. Especially charmed by Henry and Frank’s sincere American sentimentalism are the two young women present, Mary Obsolete, Mr. Obsolete’s daughter, and Jane Warfield, a close family friend. Love, it seems, is in the air, and after dinner the four young people are soon coupled off. But there is trouble within each match: Mary cannot agree to love Frank because he is an American. Her father hates the New World, loving only old things, so she believes their love is doomed. Jane’s love is also in danger, not from internal concerns, but from external ones. She is an heiress to a modest American fortune and she fears she will be exposed to evil plots because of it. Unfortunately, her concern soon proves true. Later that very evening a wicked Englishman, Norland, kidnaps her. Jonathan, Henry and Frank’s paid servant, first discovers her peril and quickly organizes a search party. With his ragtag team of servants and cultural inferiors, he sets out into the nearby woods. The others soon hear of Jane’s situation and also set out to find her. Eventually, all parties—including Jane, who has escaped from her attacker, and Norland—meet in a castle. It is in this decrepit place that the greedy and evil Englishman is forced to admit his guilt. He relents to the brave American suitor and shamefully asks for forgiveness before leaving the scene. Jane and Henry are reunited, and, in a joyous

ending, Mr. Obsolete agrees to move to America so Mary and Frank can also marry. The play ends with a round of praises for the New World.

Paulding's work, in some ways, is wonderfully resistant. For example, it begins with Jane's announcement of weariness of being abroad. She says: "In plain English...I am tired of England...which is like a belle who has seen her best days, and given place to other rivals in the *beau monde*. It's no better than an Invalid Hospital now. I'm right down homesick" (Paulding 83; original emphasis). When Mrs. Carlton, her sister, asks if she has found love with any Englishman, she is disgusted at the very idea and gives a long explanation of their various faults. The admiral is asthmatic and a braggart; the major is a drinker; Mr. Threadneedle, the banker, is a simpleton only interested in fashion; and the antiquarian can think of nothing outside of ancient cultures, she claims. Mrs. Carlton, in the end, must agree with her sister. She says, "American women should never marry to go abroad, or go abroad to be married" (Paulding 84).

Paulding's critique of English culture continues as the dinner guests prepare for the Americans' arrival. Miss Obsolete, for example, shows her ignorance of New World inhabitants when she says, "Lord, brother, what shall we do with these aboriginals? I have been assured they wear copper rings in their noses—eat raw meat—paint one-half their faces red and the other black—and are positively half-naked" (Paulding 86). She obviously imagines that every American is a Native American, unfamiliar with English customs, dress, and language. Although this view seems outrageous, everyone at the party shares it. As the Americans arrive, many hide behind their chairs, afraid of what barbarity might await them. Likewise, even after they discover that Henry and Frank are dressed in a style similar to their own, they still approach them with caution and attempt "a conversation by signs" (Paulding 92). All are surprised when

the Americans respond to their “mummery” in English. Paulding’s point is clear: English subjects are unilaterally uninformed about Americans.

The prime target of Paulding’s critique, though, is surely Norland, the evil English kidnapper. If the American men were not present, Jane would have been forced into marriage. What’s more, the other English men seem no better. They are all after her fortune and if Norland had not kidnapped her, another one probably would have turned to the same means at some point. It is through Jonathan, Henry, and Frank’s bravery and cunning that she escapes not only Norland, but all greedy Englishmen.

Paulding’s point of view is made clear through the names he chooses for his characters. For example, whereas the Americans are all named normally (e.g. Frank, Henry, Jane, etc.), appellations given to English subjects point to their faults. Mr. and Miss Obsolete are consumed with antiquarianism, Admiral Gunwale is a “Yellow (cowardly) Admiral,” and Threadneedle is obsessed with fashion. Rust appropriately plays the part of servant to the Obsoletes, and Paddy Whack, an unintelligent Irishman, serves Norland. Paulding’s point is clear. He uses all dramaturgical strategies to satirize national differences. He condemns English culture through juxtaposition, through dramatic action, and even through appellations.

Jonathan works easily within this conventional satiric schema. Paulding pits him against lower class Europeans and, unsurprisingly, paints him as far superior to his transatlantic counterparts. For instance, in Act II, Scene ii, Jonathan meets a fat hackney Coachman. He has lost his way in the city and asks the man for directions. Unfortunately, he is unable to tell the Coachman anything about where he wants to go so the Coachman thinks he is stupid. In the end, though, Jonathan not only finds his way, but also gets revenge on the judgmental driver. He tells him that a customer who wants to go to London is waiting for him at a nearby pump and the man

rushes off. The Coachman needs all the business he can get and he looks forward to such an impressive fare. As he rushes away Jonathan muses, “I think I’m partly even with that jockey... If he finds any gentleman at the Pump going to Lunnon in a hackney coach, I’ll give him leave to tell me on’t” (Paulding 90). He ends the scene whistling “Yankee Doodle” as he jovially leaves the stage. A few scenes later he is similarly contrasted to Paddy Whack, the comic Irishman. By the end of the scene, he has compared Whack to an American “nigger” (Paulding 95), confused the irascible man, and generally made a fool of him. Jonathan’s native ingenuity and quick wit shines brightly against both European foolishness and unwarranted English snobbery. Paulding’s point is easily apparent: America is the superior nation.

But while this type of concentrated and determined satire is hugely amusing, it works as a double-edged sword in a nationalistic play. True, it showcases biased English assumptions and highlights English faults, but in doing so it relies on a strong English tradition of satiric writers. Aderman outlines such a concern succinctly when he claims that despite his ardent nationalism, Paulding “[modeled] his literary approach on such writers as Swift, Fielding, and Goldsmith” (xiii). In *Salmagundi*, Paulding exclaimed his belief in American ingeniousness, claiming that New World artist who wished to establish a national voice could do it “by freeing himself from a habit of servile imitation; by daring to think and feel, and express his feelings; by dwelling on scenes and events connected with our pride and our affections...” (II, 270). Despite this belief, though, Paulding seemed not able to actuate his own theories. He imitated Goldsmith and Swift, expressed merely grievances brought on by English travelers, and set his play in Bath. He remained caught in the post-colonial web of imitation and influence. Although he advocated cultural independence and tried to dramatize his nationalistic sentiments, in the end *The*

Bucktails; or Americans in England reads more like a Goldsmith play or a Swiftian treatise than a truly “original” American work.¹⁹

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2.6 CONCLUSION

Cairns offers a useful summary of the cultural situation in the years following the Revolution. “External influences,” he says, “were bound to be especially strong on a literature that had no infancy, and no youth, but that sprang suddenly into being...” (5). Likewise, even years after the conflict ended “American writers continued to work with their eyes fixed on England (ibid);” such fixity of vision “followed naturally,” he explains, because of “the common heritage of language, [and] the ties of blood and of commerce” (ibid). He continues, “[T]he habit developed through two centuries of looking to the mother country for books and periodicals, and especially from an oft-denied but almost universal deference to English judgment in matters of taste” (ibid). Breaking such a “habit” would take years.

American artists were at a distinct disadvantage when they began trying to establish cultural independence. They were not only accustomed to looking to England for literary models and standards of taste, but also bound further to the colonial mindset because of their very language, which was shared with their former oppressors. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin explain the significance of this link. “Language,” they assert, “becomes the medium through which the

¹⁹ To this argument one might claim that in a sense all satiric writers copy each other, drawing from the shared tradition of Greek comedy, most specifically found in the plays of Aristophanes. This is true. I have made an argument here and believe in it, but I think its limitations should also be noted. Paulding seems connected to past English writers because these are the obvious writers with which to contrast his work. If one were to compare him to contemporary French satirists, for example, one would also find similarities.

hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth,’ ‘order,’ and ‘reality’ become established” (7). “‘*We think in English...*’ a perceptive [Alexander] Hamilton was quoted as saying,” states Weibe, suggesting that even early American leaders sensed the dangers in a shared linguistic code (18; original emphasis).

Tyler, Barker, and Paulding were all devoted to a nationalist cause. All sought to write truly “American” works and strived to leave Old World thinking behind. Despite such positions, however, each artist inadvertently dramatized the opposite of his desire. Each showed the solid foundation of the Old World (verses the fragile, instable New World one) and the greatness of English writers and literary traditions (verses the weak, or non-existent American voice). The first Yankee plays were nationalistic texts, but they were troubled by the post-colonial situation in the New World. American writers were still unable to find a constructive way of dealing with English influence.

Such failure cannot be assigned too harshly, though, for in this post-colonial world reliance on the former mother country was probably inevitable. Wiebe claims that the Revolution made Americans “independent colonials and their nation an independent colony inside a European universe” (17); he concludes, “[T]hey could no more break this cast of mind than they could break the international framework reinforcing it” (17). Americans were caught in a colonial mindset. In 1800 America struggled simply to hold its own in a world of greater powers. It was constantly reminded of its lack of substance, too, as it was framed by England to the north (Canada), France to the west (Louisiana Territory), and Spain to the southwest.

Writers did what they could in the pursuit of explaining American difference and highlighting American exceptionalism, despite the ever-growing problem of grumbling English travelers and the increasing amount of criticism coming from English publications and journals,

but they did not yet have the distance or ability to step beyond England's cultural shadow. They would have to wait for the first star Yankee actor, James Hackett, to demonstrate a way through the dense post-colonial thickets. Before he would show up on stage in the 1820s, though, Americans would have to endure more English criticisms hurled across the Atlantic at them. Travel writing, as a tradition, continued to grow and in 1824 Charles Mathews, the English comedian, would even put this literary style on stage, disparaging American political ideologies and using the Yankee—the symbol of the new nation--against Americans.

3.0 CHAPTER TWO

3.1 ENGLISH IMPERIAL SNOBBERY DRESSED UP LIKE A YANKEE: CHARLES MATHEWS AND THE LONDON STAGE (1824-1834)

The “English Yankee” diverged from his American incarnation, although outwardly he possessed many of the same qualities. He was still a comic greenhorn. Simple and naive, he continued to bumble around on stage, not sure of his surroundings, and hardly aware of the many faux pas he made. He was still a clown on stage, part of the lower class, and awkward in every move. But Jonathan changed in key ways when English writers and artists imagined him. Foremost, he became a slaveholder and as such he was used as a political barb aimed directly at American political ideology.

English authorities battled to outlaw slavery on an international level in the 1820s, much to the approbation of their subjects. The whole country seemed to hold their breath, hoping that other nations would follow (what they considered) their morally righteous lead.²⁰ America was a top concern, for it was not only one of the largest offenders of the day, but also its reliance on slavery adversely affected international trading markets.²¹ Although laws were passed outlawing

²⁰ Because of the Church of England’s intervention, the strategic use of enlightenment language and rhetoric, and the tactical association created between the plight of London’s (white) poor and the slave, abolitionist sentiment became a “national issue” during the 1820s (Walvin, 150; original emphasis). Abolitionists, James Walvin claims in *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838*, “spoke the national voice” (149). What had been a minority concern became an absolute fad at this time. See Walvin 140-150 for an in depth discussion.

²¹ The United States and Brazil were the largest slave-holding nations at this time and cotton exports from the U.S. continued to soar through the 1820s. Although English abolitionists argued that free labor was cheaper than slave

the foreign importation of slaves, American vessels continued to cart such cargo across the Atlantic and “man thieves”²² continued to troll the shores of Africa for potential victims. Given the value of such “wares,” the ease of circumventing established laws, and Southern attitudes towards slavery, it seemed unlikely that the United States would give up the “peculiar institution” any time soon. English leaders and subjects alike did what they could to convince their transatlantic cousins of the need for stronger laws and regulations, but they were not convinced that America would abdicate its reliance on slave labor. They pushed and prodded, but America dragged its feet.²³

In the midst of this heightened international concern, Jonathan appeared on the English stage, in the body of Charles Mathews, seemingly unaware of the brewing controversy as he toted his slave behind him, chided him for the slightest of infractions, and treated him with general unkindness. Jonathan’s behavior was abominable, but the political situation made his actions seem far more damning, for he was not imagined as just a slaveholder, but as the worst kind of “master.” He was mean and cruel, unaware that others might find his actions morally repugnant, and indignant at the suggestion that he should act any differently. In this form, Jonathan represented the most revolting of American political ideologies.

The change in the Yankee was striking for a number of reasons. First of all, his slave-owner status was surprising because of his imagined place of origin. He had always been from New England. By the 1820s, every New England state had passed laws limiting future slavery in

labor, they also were quietly angered at the growth both of these economies showed because of their massive slave population.

²² This phrase came from a newspaper report on the progress of an international anti-piracy bill featured in the *Globe and Traveller* (London) on March 27, 1824.

²³ The United States outlawed the importation of slaves in 1808, but the law did little to hinder the practice. Neither slave owners nor sea captains upheld it, and the government did little to enforce it. England hoped that America would agree to both stricter internal enforcement of importation rules and the creation of a kind of all encompassing Atlantic law. Given its own domestic trouble and turmoil over the slavery question, it is easy to see why America was not interested in joining Britain in this abolitionist plight.

their territory.²⁴ In 1820 Maine was the first totally slave-free state added to the Union. What's more, men like Daniel Webster and Justice Story were publicly denouncing slavery at state-sponsored events.²⁵ Although chattel slavery would be a hotly contested issue for decades to come, New England was the center of the abolitionist movement. But when Jonathan appeared in London theatres he was the antithesis of any New Englander. He was fully committed to the practice of slavery and showcased horrible behavior towards his "human property."

The "English Jonathan" did not act like a New Englander and he did look like one either. He wore a large brimmed straw hat, a sealskin waistcoat, and a heavy greenish-brown coat; he carried a gun and smoked a cigar. Not only did he embody the faults of the South, his appearance also suggested this region. This Yankee looked and acted unlike any Stage Yankee before him.

The change to Jonathan was also startling because it forced an alteration to the very purpose which had driven "Yankee Theatre" since its beginning. That is, rather than a play showcasing American nationalism, English "Yankee Theatre" worked to mock purported American independence. The Yankee himself became the means of political condemnation. He represented all of America, but unlike other Jonathans in American "Yankee Theatre," he embodied all American faults, failings, and shortcomings. English artists used the Yankee to talk back to American nationalism and pride, turning the very symbol of (promoted and imagined) American egalitarianism on its head.

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²⁴ Northern states were the first to inaugurate gradual abolition. Vermont ruled in favor of it in 1777, Massachusetts (including Maine) in 1780, New Hampshire in 1783, Pennsylvania in 1780, Rhode Island and Connecticut in 1784, New York in 1799, and New Jersey in 1804. See Louis Filler, *Crusade Against Slavery: Friends, Foes, and Reforms 1820-1860* (Algonac, Michigan: Reference Publications, Inc., 1986) 26.

²⁵ Webster spoke at the bicentennial event of the pilgrims landing on Plymouth Rock. Story gave a speech to the first grand jury assembled in Maine (Lowance introduction).

3.2 CHARLES MATHEWS: THE BEGINNING

The first key player in “Yankee Theatre” (as a formal art) was not an American actor, but an English performer, Charles Mathews (1776 – 1835).²⁶ In 1824 Mathews staged two Yankee plays, *A Trip to America*, and *Jonathan in England; or Jonathan Doubikins*. He constructed both works with playwright R. B. Peake after a performance tour through the United States. Using Colonel David Humphreys’s *The Yankey in England* and the actor’s experience in America as guides, Mathews and Peake quickly compiled situations and places in which to place Jonathan. But while these plays included the Yankee figure, they were radically different from any prior staged Yankee works. The Yankee was an uncouth, cruel man, pointing the finger of Mathews’s satire clearly at American political ideology.

* * * * *

Mathews’s career began in a typical way for the times. He was the son of a bookseller, so he did not have the elite connections that might have thrust him quickly onto trendy London stages. He had to start small, which meant showing in English provinces and subsidiary theatres. In fact, Mathews’s debut did not even occur in England, but at a small theatre in Dublin, Ireland in 1794. From there he continued working his way up. He was hired to play in the line of lead comedian on the York circuit from 1798 to 1802, and he gained a small name for himself in this capacity. His first big break came when he procured a spot at the Haymarket Theatre, managed

²⁶ A few Americans would have this title, if one were judging by portrayal dates alone. James Hackett, for example, was certainly playing the Yankee by the time Mathews visited America in 1821. But since he did not perform in a legitimate theatre until after 1824, the label goes to Mathews.

by George Colman, the Younger, in 1807. After some negotiation,²⁷ Colman agreed to hire the young Mathews. He paired him with John Liston, a performer whose slow, gullible character perfectly set off Mathews's "sharp, quick thinking comic" persona (Banham 692). The pair was successful and Mathews's career blossomed. He had no trouble finding a place in the large winter theatres later that year.

During his employment at the Haymarket, Mathews worked with Jack Bannister, an actor who was well known for his one-person shows. It was this acquaintance more than any other that impacted his future career, for in 1808 he wrote and played in his own one-person show, fashioned after Bannister's work, which was called *The Mail-Coach Adventure*.²⁸ The play was so successful at the Haymarket that Mathews toured it through the provinces later that summer and into the fall. Even with this extended run, audiences could not get enough of it; he repeated it for two seasons.

Mathews's particular performance style was a perfect fit for the one-person show and it was a sure part of his growing popularity. Like all talented solo performers, he was exciting to watch. His wit was sharp and his pace, lively. Although he was lame for most of his adult life, his past injury seems not to have impacted his stage performances, for many lasted over four hours. What is more, every minute seems to have been filled with action. If Mathews was not singing and dancing, he was changing characters or enacting a story. Likewise, as a talented ventriloquist, at any moment he might just make an inanimate stage object come to life. He was lively and energetic, surprising and clever. One never knew what Mathews would say or do next. He might have been similar to twentieth-century comedian Robin Williams. One never

²⁷ Mathews gambled on this opportunity, playing hardball, asking Colman for a very high wage.

²⁸ Though his wife played a small part in this show, it was and is still largely considered a one-man entertainment because the burden of the performance was on Mathews.

knew what type of person he would next play, either. He might have seemed alike today's Anna Devere Smith. Mathews might be an old woman, huddled over with a shawl, or a young boy with a frog in his pocket; he might be a young girl in love for the first time, or a stingy old man recording his earnings. According to personal anecdotes as well as critical reviews, Mathews could play anyone. His imitative ability was reportedly so exacting, that he did not need any costuming to signify a new character. He could simply move a finger, change his voice, tilt his head, or look a certain way and for all watching he would instantly become a different character.²⁹

Such amazing flexibility and imitative genius made *The Mail Coach Adventure* a huge hit, and Mathews was smart enough not to let it slip out of the public mindset before opening another show. In 1811-1812 he toured with *The Travellers*,³⁰ another one-person performance. Again, he earned plaudits from audiences and critics alike across England. Charles Mathews had found the form that matched him best. Although he could have stayed on stage playing the cunning wit, he had discovered an even more lucrative place in the acting world. He would continue to perform one-person shows for the rest of his career.

²⁹ Mathews was adeptly able to capture the physicalities and linguistic differences of others. One story demonstrates this talent (and the mythos surrounding this imitative ability): "AN ANECDOTE OF THE SENIOR MATHEWS— Mathews, the mimic, could effect so extraordinary a change in the appearance and expression of his face, by simply tying up the tip of his nose with a piece of catgut, that he has frequently taken leave, as if for the evening, of a company, amongst whom were some of his most intimate friends, and returned to them sometime afterwards so transformed that not one of them has recognized him. He once indulged in this frolic in a manner that was as whimsical as it was remarkable. He was dining with an acquaintance Mr. A_____, a respectable pawnbroker in the Strand. In the course of the dinner, Mr. A_____ was summoned to the shop below, upon some business of sufficient importance to require his personal attention. Presently Mathews snatched a couple of spoons from the table, quitted the room, disguised his face in the manner described, put on his hat, left the house by the private door, and entering the shop, offered to his friend himself the two spoons in pledge; having received the sum he demanded, and a duplicate, he reentered the house and quietly resumed his seat amongst the company. Upon the return of Mr. A_____, to his utter amazement Mathews placed before him the duplicate and money which but a few minutes before his entertainer had given him for his own property" (Unreferenced clipping from the Harvard Theatre Collection).

³⁰ This show, like the previous one, utilized the talents of another performer, this time singer Charles Inckledon, but again Mathews performed the majority of the acting.

With this lucky find, Mathews's main task after 1812 was to refine his performances. So from 1813 to 1817 he continually reshaped *Mail Coach Adventure*, trying to improve its form to best please his audience. At last he developed it into the perfect vehicle, and renamed it simply enough *Charles Mathews at Home*.

* * * * *

3.3 CHARLES MATHEWS AT HOME

As one might imagine, *The Mail Coach Adventure* put Mathews on a mail coach as he traveled throughout England. He met various eccentric persons and encountered every oddity that British shores had to offer. Sardonicly funny and satirically biting, this show made fun of English subjects throughout the country and its growing empire. *Charles Mathews at Home* was similar in both form and content. It featured the actor in numerous awkward situations and imagined him in foreign places. In all it used the actor's keen wit to mock various pretensions or habits of those he encountered.

According to Richard Klepac, in his work *Charles Mathews at Home*, Mathews's shows generally incorporated a two-part structure. A "musical-recitation section" (Klepac 26) began the show, allowing Mathews to display his singing talent. The second part was a short play, in which Mathews performed every part. This latter section was called the "monopolylogue." The first part, that is, the musical-recitation section, was similar to a vaudeville program; it moved from song, to dialogue, and into song again, transitioning from character to character, each of whom Mathews would introduce in his own persona and then portray. The monopolylogue, the

second part of the evening, was a straightforward comic play, written to accommodate the one-man format.

This form was flexible, and proved so advantageous that Mathews used it time and time again. *Charles Mathews at Home*³¹ became an annual feature that showed in London and in the provinces from 1818 until the end of his career. Charles Mathews became famous. His *At Homes* were well respected and immensely popular. Ultimately, it was this vehicle that propelled him into longtime theatrical fame. The English press would remember him as the topmost British humorist, and as the most acute cultural satirist.

Mathews's *At Homes* showed for over seventeen years in top London theatres, but this is not to say that he performed the exact same play for seventeen years. Every production of *Charles Mathews At Home* was different. It was a series; each individual play was connected to the others thematically through a shared form. Each *At Home* focused on a particular travel experience that Mr. Mathews had recently undertaken. It was advertised using the series title as well as hinting at the particular destination described. For example, a promotion featured in the *Globe and Traveller* looked like this:

THEATRE ROYAL, ENGLISH OPERA HOUSE, STRAND.
MR. MATHEWS will be AT HOME THIS EVENING,
March 27th and on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays with his
Annual LECTURE on Peculiarities, Character and Manners
found on Observations and Adventures during his late TRIP TO AMERICA!
Part III.—A Monopolylogue, called ALL WELL AT NATCHITOCHEs.
All the characters of the Evening's Entertainment to be represented by Mr.
MATHEWS... (March 27, 1824).

The audience member sitting in the house would expect the show to begin as it always did, with Mathews entering the playing space as himself, “in his private dress, as he would have entered

³¹ I will, at times, refer to this series simply as his *At Homes*.

any evening party” (Klepac 26), to then hear the humorous story of his most recent travels--in this case, to America. The form and general thematic content was always the same. In telling of his adventures, Mathews would reenact his experiences, playing each eccentric person he met or encountered, and showing how he dealt with the unfamiliar, the ridiculous, or the bothersome.

The most complete list of particular titles within the *At Home* series makes Mathews’s penchant for the travel theme clear, and tells some of where he traveled to: “*Mathews’s Trip to Paris; or the Dramatic Tourist*,” “*Mathews in America!*,” “*Sketches of Mr. Mathews’s Celebrated Trip to America!*” “*Mr. Mathews’s Memorandum Book*,” “*Travels in Air, on Earth and Water*” and “*The London Mathews*.” What should also be apparent from this list is that he was a satirist of national and/or cultural differences.

Many artistic representations of international travel thrived in the 1820s. What made Mathews’s depiction stand out was his comic depth of perception. Audience members and theatrical critics alike commented on his genius in this area. It seemed that he could not only understand those he found in a particular place instantly, but also know which qualities they possessed that would bring his compatriots the most joy. Mathews was a comic genius of his time. He understood the English mind, manners, and idiosyncrasies; thus armed, he acutely mined surrounding cultures for their humorous qualities. The London public found him hugely enjoyable, particularly in his descriptions of differences between foreign strangers and known English types.³² Such comedic talent, coupled with piercing insight, would keep Mathews playing on major London stages until his death in 1835.³³

³² To be fair, Mathews did also imitate and critique English men and women as well. I suspect, however, that these impersonations had far more to do with class than with damning “Otherness.” Though son of a bookseller, Mathews became a gentleman and was not only accepted into the upper classes, but firmly positioned himself there as well. He clearly saw himself as being above most Americans and wished, like many English travelers, that the lower classes in America would simply accept their lot in life and do their jobs as their English counterparts did. In a letter to his wife he said, “The egregious folly of the middle and lower orders in their financial independence is calculated

3.4 TRAVEL LITERATURE

One of the reasons that Mathews gained such popularity in the 1820s is because his work mirrored another popular form of entertainment of the day: travel writing. Since the 1790s, elite English subjects had enjoyed traveling abroad. Men and women swarmed out of England to explore the world around them, to see the “strange” foreign cultures surrounding their own. Some had European destinations in mind; they observed French fashions, feasted on Italian cuisine, personally discovered the ancient ruins of Greece, and stared mystified at the destitute medieval castles of neighboring Scotland and Ireland. Others ventured further out, to America, India, or Africa.³⁴ Wherever they went, they kept diaries or personal journals. Personal travel writing, in fact, became a fad. Everyone who could afford the travel took up the habit, and all noted their most personal thoughts. The main point was to be able to remember every intimate detail of the trip to explain the experience to others.

As the years passed, however, the mnemonic function of these accounts was superseded by a more public purpose. That is, many of these travel accounts were published, and made their author’s hundreds of pounds. Thus, they began to be written expressly for this purpose. Some were scientific in nature, others focused on the social sciences, and still others were politically minded.³⁵ But whatever the focus, and whomever the writer (qualified or not), travelogues were

to produce a smile of thorough contempt rather than anger. It consists in studied sullenness, the determination never to be civil or apparently kind to a fellow creature, and not to bow, or say thank ye to *a person they know to be their superior* for they affect not to believe it” (memoirs III 322-323, letter sent from New York, dated November 7, 1822; my emphasis).

³³ Mathews died on the morning of June 28, 1835. He was fifty-nine years old.

³⁴ Travel to America had become very popular after the Revolutionary War, but dipped as the War of 1812 approached. After 1815 international travel not only resumed but increased in frequency. The onset of the Industrial Revolution meant that subjects were earning more money, so more could afford to travel at this time than ever before. This trend continued to increase until the 1850s.

³⁵ Travelogues written about America focused on the social sciences as well as the political. It is interesting to note how the growing empire marked a particular country’s “insufficiencies” by assigning a corresponding travelogue genre. For instance, while America was written about as a sister country, whose social and political systems

considered fact. They were part of the imperial phenomenon, both causing English subjects at home to look on the outside world through the eyes of the imperialist, and directly empowering more imperialists to travel and write about the outside world. Perhaps because of the way they both invoked and generated the gaze of the empire, such travel testimonies were hugely popular in the 1820s, and as the traveling radius widened, their attractiveness grew.

English readers (those who could not afford to *be* imperialists) were curious about the world around them and wanted to be able to read about places they could not visit themselves. Travel accounts were a unique way to experience unseen places and foreign lands that were otherwise inaccessible. Likewise attractive, the style of these accounts was personal and intimate. The target audience was those at home; they were written for English subjects by English subjects. Thus, a common background and sense of the familiar could be (and was) assumed. Writers and readers were not only able to communicate easily and quickly because of their similar national origin and experiences, but they were able to make assumptions that would be immediately shared and understood. What seemed (and could be categorized as) “strange” and “exotic” to the traveler was also immediately perceived as “strange” and “exotic” to the reader. Likewise, what was deemed “inappropriate” or “rude” by the traveler was immediately apparent to the reader as well.

This shared sense of “home” impacted the format of most travel narratives. The story often mirrored the travel experience. The writer might begin his or her account just off the shores of England, describe the means of travel (and its inevitable agonies), go through the excitement and fear of arriving at the destination, explore the strange ways and sights while

demanding analysis, countries deemed more “foreign” and “primitive,” like those peppering Africa, were written about in purely scientific terms. These people needed to be studied to determine how the climate affected their bodies, spiritual beliefs, and/or digestive systems, for instance. Depending on how the English understood these “Others,” they were assigned a particular genre. Of course this says more about the English at the time than it ever did about the particular country or culture under examination.

traveling within the foreign place itself, and end with the return home. It was this return to home, this return to the familiar, that made travel narratives such attractive reading; for while the bulk of their material covered the “strange” sights, the uncomfortable moments with “foreign” persons, or uncovered “obnoxious” things far away, the return home unquestionably affirmed English perceptions. Though the world may be filled with exotic peoples and places, the narrative suggested, England was home. It was safe and comfortable. It was the best place on earth, filled with the most enjoyable, the most fulfilling, and most pleasant material and people. It was the place where an English subject belonged, and this inevitable end to the travel narrative, this return to a shared “home,” affirmed the culture for both writer and reader.

* * * * *

3.5 TRAVEL NARRATIVES THROUGH A POST-COLONIAL LENS

Academic interest in historic travel narratives has soared in recent years as a result of “an intellectual climate that is interrogating imperialism, colonialism/ postcolonialism, ethnography, diaspora, visual culture, and spectacle,” (1) according to Kristi Siegel in the introduction to *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire, Spectacle, and Displacement*. Contextualizing the notion of “home,” she surmises:

Travel implicitly calls the notion of ‘home’ into question because that is typically the standard from which experiences are measured. By definition, then, exotic would be ‘other than home.’ In journeys outward—away from home—other landscapes, countries, and cultures are often viewed in terms of how they compare to one’s home (4).

It is this measurement against a standard that creates and codifies a power structure within a travel narrative. Home is the familiar, therefore becomes codified as “the right,” “the correct,”

and more “appropriate” mode of living. The “exotic,” then, by mere juxtaposition, is cast as “the backwards,” “the inferior,” and “the morally degenerative.”

One can clearly see the cultural imperialism present when the otherwise obscured binaries are outlined in this fashion. In travel writing, one is dealing with a sense of “home” and a sense of “Self,” neither of which is questioned within the genre. Indeed, the genre requires what might be called an “imperial I.” The traveler—the “I” of the narrative--sees the “strange”—the “Other”—and records it for his/her fellow countrymen and women. The sense of authority within this recording is not to be questioned; if it were, the genre would disintegrate, fall in upon itself. Authority to look, to analyze, and to explain is required by the genre itself. The sense of “home”/“not-home,” “travel,” “Self”/“Other,” “I,” “Them,” and “We” maintains the framework of the genre.

Simultaneously, this authority creates imagined geographic power structures, which relate to the real world. Melanie Hunter summarizes this power struggle in her essay “British Travel Writing and Imperial Authority:” “The ever-confounded ‘genre’ of travel writing, when viewed through the lens of post-or neocolonialism, becomes intimately bound up with the struggle between the metropolitan centers of power... and the (post-)colonial margins” (29). The genre requires an authoritative narrator, one speaking from and within a sense of “home;” likewise, it demands a misunderstood, misrepresented, and exotic “Other.” These narrative contexts structure world politics and reify world geography as understood by the power centers as well as the margins. Therefore, “[w]hen one is considering the subject of travel and of travel writing,” Hunter says, “one must also consider the matter of perspective, of location, of circumstance and privilege” (30).

Mary Louise Pratt, in her work *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, offers similar analysis:

Borders and all, the entity called Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out. Can this be said of its modes of representation? While the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery... it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis—beginning, perhaps, with the latter’s obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself. Travel writing, among other institutions, is heavily organized in the service of that imperative (6).

In the 1820s, King George III reigned on the English throne, even for a few years after he became senile. Later his son George IV would take over, and although he was not mentally impaired, he did little to help England’s international growth. International tension loomed and internal conflicts needed immediate attention; the empire was an only growing idea. Although England held colonial land, it had not yet reached the level of “empire,” nor was it idle enough (on a national level) to invest all its energies into these far-reaching projects. Soon, though, Victoria would take the throne and English imperialism would explode. In the 1820s, one only finds the interest in the “Other,” in the “foreign” and “different,” that would later fuel the making of a colonial empire.³⁶ Travel writing was part of the growing imperial trend. For it (to return to Pratt’s words), determined the center and the periphery in a clear way. It named England as “home,” the English traveler as the “Self;” all other places were, by default, “foreign,³⁷” “strange,” and “backwards;” likewise, all outside persons were marked as “Others.” Charles

³⁶ It should also be noted that the 1820s were turbulent times, using any scale of measurement. During this time of wars, riots, mutinies, unbelievably strict laws, and lower-class starvation, it seems likely that part of the appeal in travel literature was the shift in focus from the nation to the international. It allowed subjects to forget, at least momentarily, about the troubles at home and focus on the other people’s messes. Likewise, it simultaneously suggested that even though home may be in poor condition, it was far better than other cultures out there.

³⁷ Some were more “foreign” than others. A European destination like France, for example, would be posited as less “strange” than, say, India. The cultures had been in contact long enough as to ease the perceived differences.

Mathews's stage productions utilized the growing popularity of travel narratives; likewise they performed similar cultural functions.³⁸

3.6 MATHEWS'S WORK THROUGH A POST-COLONIAL LENS

Similar to contemporary travelogues, Mathews's work focused on the "strangeness" of both other people and of other places. He, like the traveler in written accounts, was always the "Self" experiencing the "foreign." Klepac explains the way the comedy worked in general and the way it functioned specifically in his *At Homes*:

Comedy may consist in an eccentric facing a normal world or a normal character involved in confusion. These scripts contain both. Mathews is the normal character leading his audience through a world of confusion. The sub-protagonists are the eccentric characters in a relatively normal world (30).

Klepac's use of the word "normal" here makes the point all the more clear. As Mathews staged his imaginative travels, he enacted the part of himself. He would begin and end the piece as

³⁸ The wonderfully clear post-colonial connection to the discussion of "home" within travelogues and Mathews's *At Homes* should not be overlooked. His *At Homes* so well-known that by the 1820s the official titles were often deleted from newspaper advertisements: "MR. MATHEWS will be AT HOME THIS EVENING, March 27, and on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays..." reported the *Globe and Traveller*, in 1824. He was at home in the theatre, in England, and the viewers were welcomed into his home to hear of his latest travels. He would of course be telling the truth—like a dreaded slide show of a family vacation represents fact (its what the family experienced and the pictures "prove" this), his performances equaled fact, even if they were comic. Likewise, he and others used the phrase "at home" in a fashion ripe with overlapping meanings. For example, in a letter to John Smith that Mathews wrote (from Philadelphia, dated February 22, 1823), the actor claimed that he "*hoped* to be annoyed, for the sake of others 'At Home.'" (memoirs III 388; original emphasis and quotation marks). In other words, he hoped to be annoyed because then his future *At Home* production would be even funnier if he were. Likewise, it would confirm the general English opinion of Americans. It would in a sense be good for those in England if he were annoyed in the U.S. Similarly, an American newspaper clipping in his memoirs uses the phrase interestingly. It claims, "The following remarks, which seem to anticipate that Mr. Mathews was likely to take away with him, for *home* consumption, some characteristics of the Americans, appeared in America, just on the eve of his departure" (memoirs III 409-419). The writer was able to take for granted that his readerly audience would understand the reference without explanation. But it also suggested that American manners would be mocked on British stages, when the comedian was "at home." American manners were being taken home, across the sea, for English consumption.

himself, dressed in his own attire, and welcoming the audience into his imagined home. It was this character, this persona, to which the English public could relate. He was a version of them on stage. His reactions were akin to what their own would be; he typified the common English subject.

Since it was a one-man show, though, Mathews also played the part of the “Other.” Directly after being the “Self,” he would enact the “eccentric.” He would portray the Frenchman, the Irishman, the African-American slave, and when he did so, these “Others” were immensely laughable. The Frenchman was overly excitable, easily misunderstood (with his “funny” accent), and always feisty. The Irishman was a fool, not understanding the basic world around him, or extremely and frequently intoxicated. The slave was the wise fool, the uneducated who spoke the truth, or he was simply a ridiculous clown. These “Others” were indeed farcical, but as Klepac makes clear, it was not only their particular eccentricities that generated laughs; it was also the “Self’s” reaction to them. One can only imagine Mathews’s reactions to the volatile, fiery Frenchman, for example. His calm, rational, “normal” English temperament juxtaposed to such an impulsive individual must have been quite amusing, enhanced by the virtuosity Mathews displayed by simultaneously playing both parts.

The many imperialist aspects of Mathews’s work are probably becoming clear. Not only was Mathews staging the “Other” as humorous, laughable, and “odd” (strictly because of the differences they exhibited from the London public), he was, along with his audience, clearly positioned as the “Self,” the “normal.” Physically traveling to other lands and then staging his findings, he brought the “foreign” home; he brought the “strange” and “exotic” to London where it was displayed for all. He was staging a travel narrative. In a real way, then, he conquered these “Others” (which he placed on view,) both metaphorically and physically. Just as we might

think of his traveling and staging these peoples as symbolically conquering other cultures/lands for England, we also might think of Mathews, the actor, physically conquering these “Others,” for he supposedly embodied them in a way unlike any other performer.

According to all accounts, Mathews brought foreigners to life even better than they could themselves. For example, one reviewer said of him:

In imitation he was the greatest master of his art; for he not only imitated the face, voice, gestures, modes of expression, and other peculiarities of the originals who sat for him, but their characters, opinions, sentiments, and minds. As a superior author does not describe his dramatis personae, but as it were, himself becomes really each in turn, so did Mathews transform himself into all the various personages whose vivid portraiture and living likeness it pleased him to present to view (from an unnamed document found in Mathews’s *Memoirs*, IV 427-428).

Assuming (as this reviewer does) that Mathews knew not only the manners, but also the minds of the persons he portrayed, the reviewer³⁹ demonstrated how deep the imperialist notions of Selfhood ran in the culture at this time.⁴⁰ Mathews felt confident in symbolically conquering “Others” on stage and his reviewers assumed that he could perform these persons with intimate accuracy even though he had quite possibly never even spoken to them.⁴¹

In like imperialist rhetoric, Mathews was often described as a “faithful portrait-painter” (*Memoirs* IV 435) and often linked to eighteenth-century English painter William Hogarth. In addition to satiric portraiture, what may have been a better similarity between Hogarth and

³⁹ I often defer to the masculine pronoun in this work. This is not due to a lack of insight on my part of feminist concerns that arise from such a practice, nor does it stem from an ignorant belief that women did not exist during the time period in which I speak. It comes, rather, from my understanding of both contemporary feminist concerns and the position of women in the nineteenth century. Women were largely overlooked in early American and English society. They were often held from the public sphere and mattered little to political, cultural, or military leaders outside of their domestic experience. Men were those under consideration most often, so my choice of pronouns reflects their (unjust and biased) place in society, history, and art.

⁴⁰ After his death a proverb sprang up, which not only demonstrated the approval English reviewers gave him, but also which we might appreciate for its imperialist rhetoric: “Mathews—saw them; Mathews--- was them” (*memoirs* IV; 471).

⁴¹ For example, Mathews played a Baptist minister in *Trip to America*, although he had never formally met the man. He witnessed the minister preach at a service and his performance was based solely on this impersonal interaction.

Mathews was simply the volume of their work. Describing the range of persons Mathews portrayed, John A. Degens, in his article “Charles Mathews’s “At Homes”: The Textual Morass,” explains, they “included men and women, young and old, native and exotic” (76), many of them “with wide-ranging dialects and all designed to display the breadth of Mathews’s talents” (ibid). Mathews portrayed Germans and Dutch, Americans and Welsh, men and women, even those of differing racial, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Perhaps the only consolation for the modern reader is that Mathews imitated every type of person available. Seemingly indiscriminate, he played all he could find to mock on the English stage.

* * * * *

3.7 THE AMERICAN THROUGH THE EYES OF A TOURIST, A GENTLEMAN, AND A POTENTIAL YELLOW FEVER VICTIM

So how did Mathews portray the American? What happened when he turned his satiric, imperialist attention to England’s transatlantic cousins abiding “across the pond?” Contemporary travelogues came into play here again, for they greatly influenced the way Mathews’s understood and portrayed this type.

Mathews traveled to America in 1821 and stayed in the country for less than a year. He came to the United States on an acting tour, and so he had little time (or inclination) to see the culture, save what he could find inside theatres, hotels, stagecoaches, and the occasional ferry. He was interested in making as much money as he could while abroad.⁴² Thus, his observations

⁴² Many English actors had traveled to America and came home far richer. Like these men, Mathews earned a huge amount of money while touring the U.S. and he constantly bragged to his wife and others, comparing himself to these famous persons. For example, from Philadelphia in October 1822 he wrote, “My benefit at Baltimore

of the culture came from slipshod, haphazard, and even unwanted encounters with Americans. As the comedian sat down with Richard Peake to construct his own version of the New Man, Mathews was writing both with a discrete knowledge of what others had said before, and from within the tradition of travel literature.⁴³

So what were contemporary accounts on America saying about the New Man? How was the average American being constructed? How did the English understand this culture, which was once so closely related to their own? And lastly, how were their political and cultural beliefs worked through in their depictions of American ideologies?

* * * * *

When English subjects traveled to America they were barraged with the unfamiliar. They were put in situations that evoked many negative responses. For example, anxiety easily arose for many travelers who encountered outbreaks of Yellow Fever or cholera in larger cities. They might also have been worried by the weather, which was far more volatile than their temperate England, or perhaps the “swarms” of mosquitoes weighed on their minds. Annoyances were apparently even more frequently encountered than anxieties. Britons complained of the service

produced 1000 dollars, a large sum, but really a large house too, about 203£ sterling; --a greater house by 100 dollars than Cooke or Kean had” (Memoirs III 318, dated October 19, 1822). Likewise, again, two weeks later he boasted, “The greatest house ever known there [Washington] before was 380 dollars. I had 550, and crowds went away. I played a second night, and under peculiar disadvantages, got 350; a very small theatre. This made 900 dollars in two nights. 444 dollars are 100£. This has shown what I can do alone” (memoirs III 319-320, letter from Philadelphia dated October 31, 1822).

⁴³ This happened for a few reasons. First of all, travel literature detailing American life gained great popularity at this time, and while many English subjects had traveled to intercontinental nations, only the most elite had actually encountered America. The overseas passage was expensive enough to bar those outside of the upper crust from making the trip. But while not all had seen American shores with their own eyes, the majority had read about their sister nation in travelogues that appeared with more and more frequency on English bookshelves every year. It would have seemed quite strange if Mathews’s account differed much from those with which his audience was already familiar. Secondly, Mathews was one of the readers of such works hitting the bookshelves. He mentioned a few of them in his memoir and even noted a work he considered “under par.” Thirdly, he presented his infamous staged accounts of America, *Trip to America* and *Jonathan in England*; or, *Jonathan Doubikins*, shortly after he had journeyed through the United States. Yet, Mathews was not just traveling; he was on an acting tour. His time was spoken for, spent in theatres rather than sightseeing or leisurely experiencing the culture. He had little actual contact with Americans. He did not necessarily have the time or the inclination to fully experience the culture. He obviously relied on works already written to fill out his own experience overseas.

they received in American hotels,⁴⁴ of being jostled in carriages and woken up far too early to board them, of the lower-class's lack of reverence for their social status, of the food served,⁴⁵ the people invited to the table,⁴⁶ and the way food was eaten.⁴⁷ Nothing, it seems, save perhaps Niagara Falls, made the English traveler happy.

But America did not only “rub the English subject the wrong way” on an emotional level. It also troubled him/her intellectually. For example, the numerous religious, political, and social differences evoked skepticism, if not outright cynicism. English subjects wondered how a country without a centralized church could escape mass atheism. They were curious about the “quaint” Quakers, but less convinced that societal godlessness would lead to anything beneficial. Likewise, they were unconvinced that America's stance on equality would end well. Their own culture held sharp differences in class; servants knew their place, and gentlemen and ladies were treated with respect. America was claiming to offer a different kind of societal structure, where all men were equal. Moreover, it was doing so using enlightenment language, terms, and rhetoric, which to the Briton was a dubious practice that unfairly suggested a more progressive stance.⁴⁸ Although the travelers continually complained that they could not extract the “correct” treatment from Americans (that their class status should have compelled), they were also leery that such a radical philosophy could ever lead to real societal good. In fact, the situation seemed far more detrimental to them. Class differences were not only ignored, but also shunned and, to

⁴⁴ Many complained that supper was not served to them when they arrived, and they refused to understand the innkeeper's reservations about doing so even if it was late at night. English hotels obviously provided this service no matter when the traveler arrived.

⁴⁵ While most English subjects loved the varieties of vegetables available, they were repulsed by how much meat Americans consumed, and at how they cooked it. They complained that it was too greasy, and bad for digestion.

⁴⁶ Many were upset to find servants, those of differing racial background, or simply lower-class individuals seated with them.

⁴⁷ Many complained that Americans stuffed food into their mouths at a disgusting rate, and ate more than any person should. I wonder if current opinion is any different.

⁴⁸ Or even revolutionary France.

the British mind, such ideology caused elite gentlemen and ladies to become servants.⁴⁹ In a society where something as basic as class status could be so grotesquely inverted, they thought, nothing good could come.

American independence was the hot topic of the day, and although English travelers were interested in seeing this phenomenon for themselves, they were not pleased with its outcome. Isaac Weld, for example, complained in his travelogue *Travels through the States of North America*, “civility could not be purchased from the Americans on any terms; that there seemed to them to be no other way of convincing the stranger that he was in the land of liberty but by being surly and ill-mannered in his presence” (I 30). Travelers (perhaps rightly) took offence to oft-used expressions “This is a free country” and “One man is as good as another” that Americans joyfully hurled at British travelers. Although the New Man might have interested the English traveler in theory, in practice he was despised.

The Yankee character came into play in many English accounts of America in this very way, for he was often imagined as the perfect example of what was wrong with America. He was depicted as a “‘cute’⁵⁰ bargainer who tricked foreigners out of capital, an unstoppable inquisitor, who frustrated the traveler simply for his own malicious enjoyment, or as an inexhaustible braggart, who harassed the Briton mercilessly. The Yankee, in other words, was the incarnation and epitome of American character flaws. He represented everything gone wrong with the New Man, the problem with an (alleged) equitable social ideology.⁵¹

⁴⁹ For example, Mathews wrote to his wife, “As to liberty and independence, ‘rare words,’ I am convinced that it is only productive in one very apparent effect, which is, to render the rich and educated, slaves to their inferiors; at least, to their absurd notions” (memoir III 354).

⁵⁰ ‘Cute was the shortened version of acute, used when describing a Yankee’s bargaining techniques (read conniving, shrewd, or devious).

⁵¹ There is wonderful imperial/post-colonial play going on here. Americans used the Yankee to mock British pretensions and snobbishness. In stories, newspapers, journals, comic publications, etc., the Yankee outwitted the seemingly smarter and more cultured Briton, making a fool of the foreigner in the process. His cultural pretension

When Charles Mathews constructed his staged travelogue of America, he would not only thematically follow previous narrative trends, but would also draw the Yankee in this way. America was a land filled with anxiety-causing natural phenomena, numerous annoyances, and questionable social practices. The New Man, in the guise of a Yankee, though, was named as the worst of all New World experiences. He was intolerable, embodying and epitomizing American failings.

* * * * *

As Charles Mathews journeyed through the United States in 1822-1823, he encountered many of the anxieties, annoyances, and “questionable social practices” he had read about in other travel accounts. What he did not find was a Yankee, although he seemed to have been looking for one. Mathews never mentions this character by name in his memoirs, but in a letter to his wife, dated Jan. 4, 1823, postmarked from Boston, he claimed to be scouring the lower orders for something. “As to the lower orders,” he said, “I know not where they are to be found. I know no bait that will tempt them from their lurking places. The servants, waiters, porters, etc., are nearly all ‘niggers;’ [sic] the hackney-coachman nearly all Irish or Scotch” (Memoirs III 354). Watching lower-class people, he seemed to hope, would lead him to a Yankee. Of course it would not (since the figure was largely fictional), but he did come across some persons well equipped to help him better understand this character. He met James H. Hackett on a ferry ride;

to superiority was the very harbinger of his fictional demise. English travelers came across these publications and found that when inverted they suited their purposes perfectly. They recorded Yankee encounters in their travelogues as if fact, as if these fictional accounts had actually happened to them. With the comic foundation ripped out from under it, such Yankee stories worked to deride American customs, traditions, and manners. It made the New Man appear pompous, mean, and conniving. English travel writing continued in this practice well through the century. Some examples of plagiarism were so bold and obvious, in fact, that Cameron Nickels claims that it was amazing that American publishers didn’t publicly denounce the boldfaced lifting. (He tells of one traveler [Henry Cook Todd, *Notes Upon Canada and the United States*, 1840] whose plagiarism was so bold he even copied the italics used in the Yankee work [Haliburton’s *Sam Slick, the Clockmaker*].) The English stage Yankee would rely on similar tactics through the 1850s.

this up-and-coming actor probably performed a Yankee monologue for him.⁵² Likewise, Mathews traveled and stayed with playwright William Dunlap along the way, and developed a friendship with humorist Washington Irving.⁵³ Through these encounters Mathews came in as direct contact with the Yankee as he could ever hope to.

There is reason to believe that all three famous persons spoke of the Yankee and his beginning stage life to the famous English actor, for when Mathews returned to England he was in possession of not only a Yankee play, but of many Yankee sketches⁵⁴ as well. Who exactly gave him a copy of Colonel David Humphrey's *The Yankey in England* (1815) is up for debate. Both Hackett and Dunlap had copies; either could have given a script to him. Whatever the case, Mathews returned to England well-armed. He had encountered the New Man (and like most travelers, was unimpressed); he had met three people with vast information about the American Yankee; he had most likely seen a short Yankee performance, and he had a Yankee script in hand. With all necessary tools, he returned to England to write and stage his own travelogue. Following established trends in the genre, he would represent America acerbically. His New Man, in the guise of the Yankee, would act intolerably. He would epitomize American faults and political failings, hitting the United States perhaps where it would hurt the most, by mocking their notions of liberty and equality.

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⁵² In Chapter Three I will posit that Hackett told him the Uncle Ben story at this time. In true English travel narrative fashion, he stole the story and recounted it as his own experience.

⁵³ By this time *History of New York* (1809) had been published. While mainly focusing on Dutch New Yorker, Hans Knickerbocker, this work featured many Yankees of the American tradition. There is no evidence to suggest that Irving gave Mathews a copy of *History of New York* (1809) or any other work; but the two traveled together for a interval and they knew each other well enough for Irving to go see Mathews perform in London in 1824—well enough to play a joke on him too, as will be soon described. I don't think it involves a particularly stretched imagination to suggest that these two artists may have spoken about the Yankee.

⁵⁴ For instance, he returned to London familiar with the Uncle Ben story and the Militia Muster skit. More will be said on both of these Yankee sketches in Chapter Three.

3.8 A TRIP TO AMERICA

Upon returning to England Mathews quickly created and produced (with R. B. Peake, a well-known and popular playwright) two plays, *Trip to America* (1824) and *Jonathan in England; or Jonathan Doubikins* (1824). In these works Mathews used the American Yankee tradition; he drew on its stereotypes and style, used its dialogue, stage action, and vocabulary. But unlike American authors before him, he changed the very nature of this type of theatre. He inverted the genre, reversing the nationalist rhetoric and altering the sociopolitical assessments. American artists used the Yankee to bolster national pride by undercutting tropes of Old World cultural oppression; in English hands, the Yankee worked in the opposite way. He criticized American independence. By examining the Yankee figure within these two works, one can see English cultural imperialism and oppression come to life, for they not only satirized Americans using the very tool that had been employed to bolster new national pride, but cemented a performance style and narrative trope that would haunt American Yankee actors for decades to come.

* * * * *

The action of *Trip to America* is simple, though somewhat disjointed, as accounts of travel often seem. The play begins with Mathews addressing the audience as himself, explaining his motivation for crossing the Atlantic. He jokes that he wants to find some “yellow boys” (Klepac 101) and soon after, still on board the ship, he hears that yellow fever is sweeping through New York.⁵⁵ He engages in dialogue with a young man (a Yankee) who confuses the

⁵⁵ This occurrence really happened. Mathews’s ship did not land in New York because just as they were pulling up to port they learned that there was a current yellow fever epidemic and so landed in Baltimore instead. Many of the occurrences within this play, in fact, stem from a real event, though most are altered in some way to make them more dramatically interesting.

actor with his many “Americanisms,” and likewise worries him by speculating on the severity of the fever in the city. The ship finally lands at Hoboken, staying clear of the greatly feared malady.

Once ashore, Mathews meets other two other English travelers, Jack Topham, a mischievous young man, and his uncle, Barnaby Gray. The three, all played by Mathews, travel to an inn, and soon discover how difficult it is to deal with an American landlord. The landlord insists that he has no responsibility to feed the travelers since the meal was served at four o’clock. Yet Mathews, being hungry, persists. He was not yet at the inn, he says, and thus could not partake of the meal when it was served. The landlord still refuses. Mathews ends the bit by expressing his general exasperation with American landlords.⁵⁶ Nothing is easily got in America and the service is of the worst kind.

Mathews then imaginatively travels to Bristol and Baltimore via stagecoach, and is able to meet a few Americans, with whom he is sharing the small compartment. His kind theatrical reception at Baltimore is described, and many anecdotes are shared. On board a steamboat he meets an Irishman, Pat, who sees a real turtle and confuses it with a mock turtle⁵⁷ and then he journeys via stagecoach to New York.⁵⁸ On this coach Mathews meets a young man who is attempting to write a jest book (he has the title and preface ready; he wants “only...the body of the work” [Klepac 104]). While in New York, Mathews witnesses an African-American actor, a tragedian, who performs *Hamlet* and sings the “Opposum Song” in the midst of the famous “To

⁵⁶ Mathews actually experienced a similar landlord while traveling in the U.S. He was so bothered by the experience at the time that he mentioned it in a letter to his wife. It should be noted though that the landlord in question eventually relented and fed the hungry actor.

⁵⁷ Making fun of the Irish was of course an old and favorite pastime of English comedic representations.

⁵⁸ Of such stagecoaches, Mathews wrote to his wife: “No horrors can convey to you the horrors of travelling in this country. Though their winters are like Siberia, because their summers are like the East Indies, they only provide themselves about the heat. I don’t believe there is a carriage in the country covered all over so as to keep out the air...It is impossible...to be warm” (memoirs III 365; letter to his wife, from New York, dated Feb. 7, 1823).

be or not to be” soliloquy. A review of the American militia follows, “in the style of the field day of the London volunteers of former celebrity” (*The Examiner* March 29, 1824), whose inspection and actions are abruptly ended by an onslaught of mosquitoes.

Part II is more pointed. Mathews desires a servant, but he can find none to help him. He asks Daniel Doolittle (a Yankee figure) if he would be his servant, but Doolittle is confused. In America servants are referred to as “help,” so he does not understand the famous actor’s request—nor does he desire to be so insulted as to become a servant. The actor then visits Bunker Hill and inspects the inscriptions on the Monument which read: “This monument was built of brick,/Because we the English did lick” (Klepac 110). Next, Mathews meets the “genuine” Yankee of the piece, Jonathan, who tells him two long stories of his Uncle Ben. He meets a Frenchman, Mr. Mallet, who cannot get mail at the post-office since the persons in charge cannot spell his name⁵⁹ and then sings an air about General Jackson, which showcases classic American bluster.⁶⁰ He criticizes an American judicial trial, highlighting its inefficiency and touches on the “horrid” practice of tobacco spitting. Lastly, Mathews meets an African-American slave, Maximilian, who attempts to serve him dinner. Through ventriloquism Mathews (the actor playing himself at the table) convinces the black man that a child is speaking to him

⁵⁹ Interestingly, in his memoirs Mathews praises Americans for their bilingual ability. Jokes made in broken English in *Trip to Paris* were far more successful in the States, he says, because the audience understood most of the French used in the script. London audiences were not able to appreciate all the humor, not being able to understand the language. So this critique is interesting—quite anti-American in sentiment, knowing his actual experience.

⁶⁰ The lyrics are quite funny and worthy of sharing, I think. Funny too when placed alongside the supposed Bunker Hill monument plaque. Here is a small selection from the song: “I will sing of General Jackson/ Who the foe he has ne’er turned his back on,/ But his soldiers, with all their knapsacks on,/ Did make all de English stray./ He fought them one and all,/ And his courage was not very small,/ For he cut them with his sabre,/ And their backs he did belabour;/ Then we’ll sound the pipe and tabor,/ Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!—Hurrah for General Jackson! The noble General Jackson! Hurrah for General Jackson! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!—When this place they would put one great tax on,/ Ha! Ha! Says brave General Jackson,/ Begar here’s no time to relax on,/ So their blood I will instantly draw./ Then he pulled out his saber so,/ And the gave them the one, two, three, great blow!/ He kick’d up the very devil to pay, Sirs,/ He knock’d off all their legs, people say, Sirs,/ And den dey all run away Sirs,—Hurrah!...etc” (Klepac 115). The humor hit a bit harder than it might seem. Tory prints were shown, and Mathews notes on the performance specified that the “burlesque was heightened by the fact that General Jackson, who is a very *shy* man, refused to attend the dinner until a pledge was given that no other notice of him should be taken beyond drinking his health” (*The Examiner*, March 29, 1824; original emphasis).

from a snuff-box on the table and this so scares him that he drops a dinner dish.⁶¹ Concluding Part II, Mathews claims that he has collected “as much of American manners and American gold as he thought tantamount to his purpose” (Klepac 117), so he decides to return home to share his adventures in America with his countrymen.⁶²

The monopolylogue, “All Well at Natchitoches,” centered on the Yankee, Jonathan, and his slave, Agamemnon.⁶³ In this one-act Agamemnon has run away from Jonathan, who is a slave-owner. Jonathan is upset because he has made a bad purchase—he has been cheated. Uncle Ben, who sold him the slave, said that Agamemnon was a very useful “help,” yet Jonathan cannot get him to do even the smallest task. He has been swindled and wants his \$60.25 promptly returned. The play ends with Jonathan finding Agamemnon hiding in the well⁶⁴ and Mathews expressing generally benevolent sentiments.⁶⁵

Trip to America was similar to contemporary travelogues in format and style. It took the form of a trip across the foreign country and showcased the American culture for all to see (and then to judge). It openly mocked American manners and practices and displayed characters as either “strange” and “exotic,” or just plain “simple” and “confusing.” It relentlessly portrayed American culture through an outsider’s point of view. Likewise, filled with an air of English

⁶¹ Mathews claimed, “I shall be rich in black fun” (letter to James Smith, esq. From Philadelphia, dated February 23, 1823). While against slavery as an institution, Mathews certainly enjoyed the “constant amusement” provided by such “strange persons.”

⁶² One should remember that interspersed with this action were “colorful mimicries, jokes, and patter-songs—half song, half dialogue” (Hodge 67-68). Though I have not noted the songs within the action, they certainly added not only to the amusement of the piece, but also to the anti-American rhetoric in the show as well. Hodge says, “Imagine the scene at Mrs. Bradish’s Boarding House with its salty chatter about the boarders: ‘I guess,’ and ‘I calculate,’ here they’re exclaiming./ But still we can’t blame them for that I will show;/ And ‘I reckon’ the Yankees we mustn’t be blaming./For we have expressions in England, ‘You know.’” (68).

⁶³ It also included Hiram Peglar, a Kentucky shoemaker; Monsieur Capot, a French emigrant tailor; Miss Mange Wurzel, a Dutch heiress; and Mr. O’Sullivan, an Irish improver of his fortune. Hodge claims that the drama was constructed to “...show his [Mathews’s] best characters in one scene” (Hodge 70).

⁶⁴ Hence the title “All *Well* at Natchitoches.”

⁶⁵ One version of the script has him ending the play by saying, “if he can only make his friends smile when he gets back, he will never regret his Trip to America” (Klepac 120). Another account describes his ending comments as suggesting that he hopes this night of innocent entertainment will help bridge any transatlantic gaps between the two countries—that it will help heal any residual hard feelings.

authority, the play presented such depictions as fact⁶⁶ and laid out the occurrences therein as authentic truth-claims.⁶⁷

Likewise, it drew on the type of humor found in travelogues and accounts of America. Mathews was telling no new jokes here. Americans were parodied in a specific way in current travelogues, and Mathews's representation of them did not veer from the established tropes. Americans were queer types, too serious for their own good. They were naive and a bit dimwitted, blatantly voicing American jingoism whenever possible and bragging in a non-stop fashion. Too stringently clinging to their belief in independence and egalitarianism, they were a stubborn and dull people. Mathews's work hit all the same jokes and the English public surely understood this brand of humor. It was, indeed, the general audience awareness of such current depictions of Americans that made his renditions of these specific characteristics so humorous.

Trip to America was similar to travelogues in terms of general themes as well. Jane Louise Mesick and Max Berger, in their respective works, *The English Traveller in America, 1785 – 1835* and *The British Traveler in America, 1836 – 1860*, claim that English travelogues most often focused on religion, manners and customs, national temperament, slavery, egalitarianism, and capitalism.⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, most of these American themes/national differences are covered in *Trip to America*. Though relatively unconcerned with religion,⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Albeit, through a humorous frame.

⁶⁷ Though a theatrical piece, Mathews had actually been to America and his audience was aware of this fact. They may have expected slight exaggeration, but—from this artist—they anticipated the truth as none other could give them. His comedies, they assessed, were amusements, but were funny because of their unveiled truthfulness.

⁶⁸ Each work covers more than these listed subjects, but these seem to be the most important within the whole of their writing.

⁶⁹ This omission is strange since nearly every travelogue on America concerned itself with religion at this time. Some were curious about the Quakers and appreciated their strange ways. Others were concerned with how democracy (lack of an Established Church) would affect religion. This is also an odd omission since Mathews was clearly struck by what he deemed odd religious practices in America. He notes in his letters that he met an African-American Methodist preacher, yet his comments are guarded, even then: “I shall be rich in black fun...It is a pity that I dare not touch upon a preacher. I know its danger, but perhaps the absurdity might give a *colour* to it—a *black* Methodist!” (letter to James Smith, esq. From Philadelphia, dated February 23, 1823). Did Smith, or perhaps

Mathews's work both uncovered and displayed American foreign manner and customs. *Trip* worked to display—if not to exploit—the “unique” and “strange” American ways. Likewise, his play also gave information on the American character. The play itself was a type of catalogue, meant to stand in for the whole American experience.⁷⁰

As for slavery, egalitarianism, and capitalism, Mathews expressed a typical English reaction to these American institutions. What is most interesting about his critique is that all of the hard-hitting assaults came through the Yankee character. Mathews condemned American slavery through Jonathan. He highlighted American hypocrisy and showed his disapproval of American obsession with money through Jonathan.

Key to Mathews's critique was casting Jonathan as a slaveholder. This Yankee not only keeps a slave, but he also mistreats him. His behavior is abominable. But most importantly, Mathews makes sure that Jonathan is clearly linked to “America.” For example, in the monopolylogue, the dialogue is clearly pointed; references to freedom and equality directly follow those on slavery. Jonathan says:

‘Well, uncle Ben, I calculate you have a Nigger to sell?’ ‘Yes, I have a Nigger, I guess. Will you buy the Nigger.’ ‘O, yes! If he is a good Nigger, I will, I reckon; but this is a land of liberty and freedom, and as every man has a right to buy a Nigger, what do you want for your Nigger?’ ‘Why as you say, Jonathan,’ says

playwright R. B. Peake, urge him to leave the subject alone? Also, to what danger is he referring? Would he have been deemed immoral if he made fun of a preacher?

⁷⁰ If not the plot synopsis, a popular lithograph of *Trip to America* demonstrates this. The painting consists of all the characters Mathews played, in full costume (though they could not possibly have been this detailed in performance); below each is written a summation. (In the pursuit of brevity I will list only a few characters):

Baranally Bray ha ha ha what a clever fellow that Jack is—the Boy'll be the death o' me he will ha ha ha. *Jack Topham* Well you Yankees ant so bad as I thought you were but I sh'd like to see one of ye eat a man, you know you always eat yr. Prisoners, at least I know you used to eat 'em all. *Jonathan W. Doubikin* (a real Yankee) I guess I'll go & call on my sweetheart Miss Mangle *Wurzle* I wish Uncle Ben would pay me that trifle he owes me. *Mr. Pennington* (Strictures on English Tourists) Independent Landlord- Want dinner do ye I calculate its just ½ past 4 & you want dinner 2 hours after all other Folk have dinned aye well I'll see what I can do for ye... (Klepac 49).

Each character seems to be able to be summed up by a caption line or two. Like a refrain, the characters come back to one particular aspect of the American character.

uncle Ben, ‘this is a land of freedom and independence, and as every man has a right to see his Niggers, I want sixty dollars, and twenty-five cents...’ (Klepac 119-120).

The Yankee clearly misses the point. Apparently too imbedded in his American viewpoint, Jonathan does not see the hypocrisy of his sentiments. He juxtaposes notions of independence and egalitarianism directly with his right to keep (and mistreat) a slave.

In Mathews’s work the Yankee becomes *the* representative American; he becomes the embodiment of American political practice and/or thought, and as such he bears the brunt of perceived American hypocrisy. In short, he becomes a vehicle for transatlantic condemnation. According to Francis Hodge, Jonathan was the “most successful” character in this play (69), but he was also the most critical: “[Jonathan] reflected Mathews’s deep pessimism about the Great Experiment” (Hodge 77).

Mathews’s Yankee had few redeeming qualities. He was an unpolished, hard bargainer. Never thinking of others, but only concerned with turning a profit, Jonathan was the embodiment of the (imagined) trends and fallout of American capitalism. He was an ignorant country fellow, stupid and devious; likewise, he was deeply selfish and racist. Depicting Jonathan as such, Mathews threw a sharp political barb at the New World.⁷¹

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Though today the scholar may read this play as staunchly anti-American, the nineteenth-century English public did not see it this way. Newspapers and reviewers alike commended *Trip to America*. Many even suggested (as perhaps Mathews did in the last line of the play) that this

⁷¹ Mathews surely knew that the New England states were free. He had visited Massachusetts, Maryland, New York and Pennsylvania on his trip, after all. The choice to have a New Englander—specifically this Yankee character—own a slave was intentional. Not out of malice, per say, did Mathews make this choice, but from strong political convictions. He chose Jonathan, the “real” Yankee, the “authentic” American, for a reason.

work might function as a cultural bridge. Naively, they thought this work would bring the two countries together. For example, *The Morning Advisor* reported:

Mr. Mathews last night resumed his exertions at this House, bringing out the long-looked-for *Budget* from America. It is entitled 'A Trip to America' and is avowedly founded on the Author's—and the Performer's—observations and adventures during his late 'Trip' to the United States. It is an exceedingly interesting production. The subject was new, and it was also difficult; for there were many who calculated that nothing was to be done except the Americans were turned into ridicule. Mr. Mathews, greatly to his credit—has done no such thing. When he visited America he thought for himself; and though he has collected together a rich fund of entertainment, which at the same time gives forcible ideas of the manners of the Americans, we much mistake if Mr. Mathews has not done a vast deal to promote that good understanding between the two Countries, which interested and selfish persons only would desire to interrupt...The house continued excessively crowded to the last' and so happily chosen were many of the peculiarities of American manners and language that they were afterwards loudly repeated. Our conversations will now be inundated with Americanisms—with 'I guess,' and 'I calculate'... The whole went off admirably, and is a production that does Mr. M. great honour (March 26, 1824).

The Globe and Traveller suggested a similar outlook:

As we had anticipated, this little theatre was thronged last night soon after the opening of the doors by impatient numbers, who longed to welcome their favourite actor on his return from his transatlantic expedition, and to banquet on the contents of his budget. Every seat in the boxes had been engaged previous to the time of exhibition; numbers therefore were obliged to 'try conclusions' in an endeavour to get into the pit—'Facilis descensus Averni,' was, however, on this occasion by no means a true adage, and many were compelled, even here, to retrace their steps and seek the upper air without the possibility of gratifying their curiosity. Of the performance we can scarcely speak too highly. Mr. Mathews was treading on slippery ground; on the one hand it required great tact to exhibit the peculiarities without wounding the *amour propre* of a people who have received him kindly and hospitably, and the bare thought of ingratitude to whom might have endangered his popularity even here; while on the other it was to be doubted whether John Bull was too well acquainted with those very peculiarities of brother Jonathan, as to enable him to take many of the jokes which might be served up to him. Between this *Scylla* and *Charybdis*, however, Mr. Mathews has steered his course very happily, and while the explanatory notes, which very inartificially accompanied his text, much have rendered his more recondite allusions clear to the most obtuse, the bit of no American could have been excited by the very chastised caricature of the manners of his country, and he must have admitted that the portrait upon the whole was 'pretty considerably, d---d good.'

Likewise, *The Examiner* began its review by comparing Mathews to another famous world traveler, saying, “Returned from America, like another Columbus,⁷² Mr. Mathews... favoured the long-expecting public with the humourous results of his transatlantic excursion,” and ended its notes on the play:

We cannot conclude without observing, that in utter contempt of *Bulls* and *Quarterlys*, Mr. Mathews has preserved the character of a gentleman, and sinned against no American hospitality by a gleaning from private circles. He has taken no greater freedom with American singularities than with those of his own country and may revisit his republican friends again, without the slightest apprehension of a lower place in their esteem (March 29, 1824).

The British public was thrilled with this performance. They saw in *Trip* a quaint bunch of characters, none of which could possibly anger Americans. They saw innocent humorous depictions. Americans, they thought, would surely appreciate Mathews’s wit.

This play was supposed to forge a new understanding between England and its former colony. It was meant to function conciliatorily. It would surely not upset any American, the British press and public assumed. How wrong they were! Although the British press praised *Trip to America*, American agents condemned it.

* * * * *

Before Charles Mathews even left America, U.S. citizens worried that he would construct a travelogue about their manners and culture similar to the works they had seen him play on stage for the last year. One newspaper printed these comments, perhaps in an effort to combat this anxiety:

On Monday evening this extraordinary actor takes leave of the American audience, to return to the comforts of his home and family... He returns with

⁷² In light of recent post-colonial theory, this comment reverberates with imperialistic connotations.

profit, if not improvement; and though it may be expected that some of our national peculiarities will form the subject of future entertainments, we are persuaded that he has discerned some traits worthy of his esteem and respect. We should not complain if these peculiarities are presented in a rational and amusing way to an English audience; for Mathews has been entertaining us with many amusing hits and laughable absurdities at the expense of his own countrymen. We have, therefore, no right to expect an exemption from professional sallies and satires (Memoirs III 409-410).

Americans were sensitive to international negative portrayals of their country and culture at this time, and Mathews was a biting satirist of national manners. His departure made them worry for good reason, and they continued to worry despite newspaper comments aimed at quelling their fears. Americans would be made fun of—and not in a “rational and amusing way” (ibid). What they soon began hearing about *Trip to America* confirmed their worst fears.⁷³ Mathews had stooped to new levels of biting satire.

⁷³ If such American writers had been familiar with Mathews’s behavior backstage at various local theatres, they would have been even more concerned. Actor-manager Joe Cowell recalled Mathews’s “irascible temperament” (Young 73), recounting, “He was really an amiable, good-hearted man; but his nervous irritability—commenced no doubt in affectation and terminated in disease—rendered him extremely objectionable to those who were not inclined either to submit or laugh at his prejudices; and his uncontrolled expressions of disgust at everything American would have speedily ended his career, but that Price had managed to have him continually surrounded by a certain set, who had the good sense enough to admit his talent as ample amends for his rudeness. He actually came to rehearsal with his nose stopped with cotton to prevent his smelling the ‘d--American chops’” (as recorded in Young 773). Actor James E. Murdoch also commented on Mathews’s rather snobbish (and anti-American) behavior, telling this anecdote: “One morning, in company with Mr. Mathews, I was rehearsing a farce of his in which there are only two characters. He was suffering from rheumatism, and not at all in an amiable mood. The smoke from the burning of some greasy matter found its way to the stage, at which Mr. Mathews cried out petulantly, ‘Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What’s that? Now that’s unbearable! Such a stench! Where can it be from? Poh! Poh!’ I told him that the stage-carpenter lived in the back part of the theatre, and I supposed the odor came from the kitchen. ‘Ah, ah, that’s it! That’s it—beefsteak *done brown*. You Americans don’t know how to cook; you *burn* everything up. You know the old story: ‘Heaven sends meat—the devil sends cooks.’ Hey? Hey?, I laughed, and we went on rehearsing. However, I had the better part of the laugh—‘in my sleeve,’ as the saying is—for I knew the property-man was burning his lamp-rags under the stage (we had no gas then, but used fish oil), and the smell that had offended our olfactories was something widely different from the cooking of a beefsteak. Considering the Englishman’s proverbially ‘rare taste,’ this did no credit to his sense of smell” (as recorded in Young 773-74). These stories not only give the reader an inside look into Mathews’s character, but resound with wonderful post-colonial resistance, much like Hackett’s response to Yankee Theatre in England, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Americans were furious with the content in *Trip to America*.⁷⁴ They judged it an unfair portrayal of their country and were particularly angry because they had so lined the comedian's pockets with their hard-earned money. They had been generous to him (as they were to all touring English stars) and never expected to be repaid with such animosity. Angry comments were printed in domestic newspapers. A few Americans even found a way to get their thoughts published abroad. The clearest example of their indignation, though, came ten years later, when Mathews returned to America for a second acting tour. In early 1834 Mathews needed money. His career was faltering in England;⁷⁵ the obvious choice was to return to America, where he had earned so much capital in 1822. If he assumed that any scandal provoked by *Trip to America* had died down by this time, he was sorely incorrect. On a November evening Mathews arranged to play *Trip to America*. That night a sign was anonymously—and ominously--hung on the theatre door. It read:

We understand chs. [Charles] Mathews is to play on Monday evening, the 13th inst. The scoundrell [sic] ought to be pelted from an American stage after his writing that Book which he did about six years ago called Mathews Carricature [sic] in America. This insult apont [sic] Americans ought to be met with the contempt it deserves. After using the most vilest language against the "TOO EASILY DUPED YANKEES" as he calls us, he thinks thus to repay our kindness towards him. But we hope they will show him that we are not too easily duped this time, as we were then. And drive the ungrateful slanderer from our stage forever (as recounted by Klepac 20).⁷⁶

⁷⁴ There is good reason to believe that Mathews knew how angry Americans would be by his performance. A story that includes Washington Irving demonstrates the comedian's latent fear that an angry citizen would accost him. It goes: Irving happened to be in London for a showing of *A Trip to America*. He did not tell his acquaintance of his visit, but decided to surprise him at the theatre. After the performance, the writer sent word backstage to Mathews that an American wished to see him. When Irving appeared at his dressing room, Mathews was in "a state of excitement" which only calmed when he understood that his visitor was a friend. He cried "My God! Irving, is it you, my dear fellow?" At this, Irving smiled and chided him, "Confess that you expected to find a tall Kentuckian with a gun on his shoulder!" (recounted in Hodge 72n).

⁷⁵ His career faltered due to his health and the English economy, rather than his reputation. Mathews remained a popular star until his death. At this time though he needed to make a lot of money, so the obvious choice was to go to the United States.

⁷⁶ Interestingly, Klepac downplays this event. He claims, "...the public was somewhat opposed to his appearances because of reports that had been told that it ridiculed the American way of life. These erroneous reports had confused *Jonathan in England* with Mathews' entertainment, *Trip to America*" (20). Klepac seems to take Mathews

Too, a crowd threatened violence.⁷⁷ The manager and Mathews waited backstage and braced for the worst. Although it was 1834, ten years after *Trip* originally opened, many Americans still keenly felt the grievances of this play.⁷⁸ Some were ready to riot over it.

But if American citizens were angered by *Trip*, their ire would inflate to new levels with *Jonathan in England; or Jonathan Doubikins*. *Jonathan Doubikins*⁷⁹ was constructed after *Trip*'s hugely successful run. It hit London theatres less than six months after *Trip to America* showed and was so unsympathetic a portrayal of Americans that it not only re-angered New World citizens, but also evoked indignation from English subjects as well. It made *Trip to America* look an innocent and playful sketch comedy by comparison.

* * * * *

at his word that he was not involved in the creation of *Jonathan in England*—a detail soon to be discussed—but if he has done so he obviously did not do enough research. Mathews, though he claimed innocence in *Jonathan in England*, was surely part of the process. Peake wrote him letters discussing the play and it obviously came out of his travels, since there are details in *Jonathan in England* that stem directly from his memoirs but do not appear in *Trip to America*.

⁷⁷ Riots planned for theatres were often surreptitiously announced. Ladies were told not to attend or sent back home in their coaches. Likewise, the performer at fault was often notified through some covert means. Messages were sent through the manager or notices were posted on the doors. Most of the time the crowd simply wanted an apology or some other form of public contrition. If they got it, the show would be allowed to go on.

⁷⁸ Eventually, and somewhat inexplicably, the crowd settled down. If Mathews made some kind of public apology, it is not recorded. When *Trip to America* was shown later that night, it had obviously been changed to suit an American audience. Hodge says, “On that occasion people laughed at the jokes, good, bad, and indifferent, and yawned where they found it dull” (72). Such a blasé response never could have accompanied the play in its original form.

⁷⁹ Because there are four different plays called *Jonathan in England*, I will refer to each one with a different title. This one I will call *Jonathan Doubikins*. The script is also noted as *Jonathan in London* by at least one newspaper. The only published form of this play available (that I have found) is called *Americans Abroad*. While this text differs slightly from the one Hodge used, it has too many similarities to be discussed as a separate play. I should also note that I am generally confused by Hodge’s information on this play. His biography lists the 1820s version of the script as no longer extant, but in his text he states that he used a copy “published under the original title in the late 1820s.” Likewise, he says, “The version I used for discussion here is the original manuscript version approved for the performance by the Lord Chamberlain on September 1, 1824” (73n). I did not find this version available in London. *Americans Abroad* was originally produced on September 3, 1824; thus, it has to be a version of *Jonathan Doubikins*, though its content is slightly different than the source Hodge used.

3.9 JONATHAN IN ENGLAND; OR JONATHAN DOUBIKINS

Jonathan in England; or Jonathan Doubikins, the second piece harvested from Mathews's tour of the United States, premiered at the English Opera House September 3, 1824. Richard B. Peake, a playwright who often assisted Mathews, collaborated on the project. The play begins when Jonathan Doubikins, the same character from *Trip to America*, arrives in England. He has been sent overseas for general "improvement" (*The Courier* September 4, 1824), but instead of embracing the culture around him and/or learning from Britons, he decides to use his time abroad to research. He announces that when he returns to New York he will publish a travelogue based on his experience in England. In the beginning of the play, he and his slave, Agamemnon, arrive in Liverpool where they find Mr. Ledger, a merchant to whom Jonathan has been consigned. Ledger gives him a letter of recommendation for Sir Leather Grossfeeder, a rich Londoner. The night before Jonathan is to leave for London, two postillions rob the larder in his room. They have been in service at the inn for some time and feel cheated by the landlady; thus, for weeks they have squirreled away small items for their trip as just compensation. They open a compartment to remove their stash.

It is dark, the middle of the night. Jonathan hears the two thieves, but cannot understand what they are doing. He thinks they are after his money, which he has been flashing around (in typical American fashion) for all to see. He yells for help, and the two scurry off into the darkness. In the commotion, though, they inadvertently exchange letters with Jonathan. They now hold a letter of introduction to Mr. Grossfeeder, while Jonathan has one identifying him as a common servant. The landlady enters to see what Jonathan is yelling about, though she can find no apparent reason for the tumult he is causing. Affronted by her lack of concern, he leaves the establishment for London. When Jonathan travels to London, with the wrong letter in hand, he is

thought to be a postillion. The “usual mistaken-identity game now begins,” (73) says Hodge. For a brief time general confusion and mischief fills the play: the servants travel to London as well and enjoy Jonathan’s reception, although they are confused by the new employer’s generosity and wonder why he is not requiring any work of them. Likewise, Sir Grossfeeder considers his new employee (Jonathan) the most insolent servant he has ever taken on. The play also features a rather standard subplot: a young girl, Mary, the ward of Mr. Grossfeeder, is unable to marry her beloved, William. In the end, Grossfeeder submits, the two are happily united, and Jonathan’s real identity is discovered. Thus, says Hodge, “The plot is...entirely conventional” (74).

Once again, Mathews relies on the rhetoric and style of current travelogues to emphasize the comedy, albeit in a very different format than in *Trip*. There are two possible readings of *Jonathan Doubikins’s* use of the travelogue. As previously noted, Jonathan appears as a traveler in England. Though unfamiliar with the persons or customs and though planning to stay for a limited time, he is obsessed with writing his own travelogue. He enters all occurrences, and keeps notes on all he meets in a small notebook, which he keeps close to him at all times. This is a “revenge diary” (Hodge 74) of sorts; he makes his purpose clear, saying, “I’ll touch ‘em [the English] up in an atarnal manner that’s what I will. My blud is up. I’m pretty considerable darn’d mad about that Mathers who I hear has taken me off at the playhouse, but I’ll make the whole kingdom smart for it when my book is published” (ibid). Jonathan shows his peculiar, unwieldy, and uncultured American temperament here. First of all, he cannot even pronounce Mathews’s name correctly. Though angered at the comedian, he cannot remember the famous man’s name. Likewise, he is quick to seek revenge, and undeniably painted as a hot-blooded yokel.

One might read Jonathan's furious note-taking and mischievous plans to publish a revenge travelogue as Mathews's mocking the American's fears and anger over *Trip to America*. Americans worried when he left the country. Later they were upset to see their countrymen and culture paraded on stage in a satire of national habits and manners. Was Mathews mocking the American reaction to his work? If this were the case, he was surely combating it rather harshly, painting Jonathan as he did. Likewise, if this is an accurate reading, one should note that Mathews used Jonathan to mock the entire culture. Again the sole representative of American faults and folly, the Yankee, bore the burden for all of his country.

The second way to read this mockery is to interpret Jonathan's actions as a condemnation of travelogues about America. As previously mentioned, the American public was not as concerned with reading travelogues, nor were they as interested in writing about other cultures as they were with combating the misinformation and poor depictions of themselves within such accounts. Many mock travelogues were written; American authors also wrote non-fictional travelogues. Such works, however, starkly differed from the English tradition. They were meant to condemn English practices, to show the prejudice and poor observation techniques English writers employed.

A writer that Mathews refers to only as "Monsieur Pillet," completed one famous account of this nature.⁸⁰ Pillet traveled to England sometime before 1822 to see and experience the customs and manners of Englishmen. He did not stay in the country for long though; his journey ended after only a few weeks. But such limited exposure to the culture did not stop Pillet from publishing his findings. He reportedly "...wrote a book upon England...[with only] a brief and partial knowledge of the manners and customs of [the] inhabitants" (memoir III 315-316). This

⁸⁰ This may have been Rene Martin Pillet, author of *Views of England during a residence of ten years, six of them as a prisoner of war* (1818).

infuriated the English public. They were angered by the sweeping generalizations he made about the English public and enraged by the false assumptions about their habits and temperament. Mathews's memoirs notes that "...having one day seen a lady, on some occasion disgrace herself and her sex by drinking a large quantity of brandy, [Pillet] affected to believe that *all* English ladies did the same..." (ibid). His account was hated because of its seemingly purposeful oversimplification and callous implications. He was not familiar enough with the culture, the English public railed, to make such assumptions. To publish them as fact was simple malice.

Mathews was familiar with this writer and noted his poor technique in his memoirs. He claimed that no one could understand a culture in such a short time, and haughtily rejected Pillet's methodology. He claimed, "...I will not make any remarks [like Pillet] after three weeks' knowledge of the people" (letter from Baltimore, dated October 4, 1822). Whether Mathews committed the same crime or not is a matter of debate. Importantly, however, one might understand *Jonathan Doubikins* as a condemnation of such resistant writing.

Jonathan writes everything down, and makes overtly sweeping generalizations about the English culture and people from his limited experience. Though he has just arrived on English shores and "han't put [his] foot ashore five minutes" (Peake 1),⁸¹ he notes the lack of American luxuries and conveniences. Finding the Waterloo Hotel, he assesses its inadequacies:

This here's the Waterloo Tavern—I see never a bar to it—[takes up a book and pencil] I'll lose no time in beginning my remarks on the state of the British nation—I've done the title page already—'Remarks on the state of the British nation, by Jonathan W. Doubikins, United States'—no bar, en! [Writes] 'The taverns in the British nation, haven't got no bars' (Peake 1-2).

⁸¹ The quotations are credited to Peake because he is listed as the author on the only available published version of the script. Mathews was obviously instrumental in the formation of this work, though, so I will often note him as well in the body of the essay.

Moments later, unsatisfied with the chair brought to him by the innkeeper, he notes in his book, “No comfortable chairs throughout the whole Kingdom of England,” pointedly adding, “There’s rather a slap for them, the sarpents!” (Peake 2). Upon being introduced to the innkeeper, Tidy, he notes, “Tidy, oh! Tidy! That’s information. [Takes his book and writes] All the head waiters in England are called Tidy” (Peake 3). Jonathan continues the work in this fashion, continually noting all that he finds inconvenient while abroad, making exaggerated and supercilious critiques in his soon-to-be published travelogue.

Jonathan’s remarks were humorous because of their exaggeration. The Yankee’s incessant persistence was also comical, for Jonathan never ceases his writing, though he angers many along the way. But Mathews’s use of the Yankee is even more pointed. Jonathan is notoriously dimwitted; he mistakes actions continually, and interprets English behavior incorrectly. For example, when Mr. Ledger meets Jonathan and his slave, he comments on the turtle Agamemnon has, and tells Jonathan that he should bring it to London because a friend of his would love to purchase it for dinner. Jonathan misunderstands the Englishman, thinking he is referring to Agamemnon, rather than the turtle. He writes in his journal: “London aldermen will eat a nigger” (Peake 3).

The Yankee in this work did far more damage, though, than simply giving the English public an uncouth American at which to scoff. He is, again, a slaveholder. “It is the Jonathan-Agamemnon controversy over slavery and freedom,” Hodge remarks, “that gives the play significance for us” (74). Similar to *Trip*, Jonathan’s assertions on New World freedom and independence are clearly juxtaposed to American slavery practices. For example, after having gotten into an unprovoked argument with Mr. Ledger, Jonathan becomes angry. Taking his aggression out on Agamemnon, he spouts: “...[A] pretty considerably darned out of the way

beginning I've made in this country, and you, you great stick of black liquorice [sic]—you great round piece of black spermacetti [sic]—to stand by and hear your boss abused” and he strikes the slave (Peake 4). Agamemnon cries at the blow. Tidy overhears the commotion and asks Jonathan to leave the inn. At this Jonathan bellows: “Du you call this a land of liberty, where I cannot larrup my own nigger without being ordered out of the house? Du explain to me the principles of the British constitution!” (ibid). But without waiting for a reply, Jonathan tries to sell Agamemnon to the landlord. The dialogue is telling:

Doubikins: Here, you, Tidy, what will you give me for this black?

Tidy: Give you, sir?

Doubikins: Yes, he is mine, you Tidy.

Agamemnon: Please buy me, you Tidy—me berry good nigger—I can fiddle like nightingale!

Tidy: You appear quite strange to our customs, sir.

Doubikins: Your customs have got all my trunks and luggage—pretty considerable awful beginning, I guess, for quite a stranger—have you a pony that I might swop with you for the nigger? (ibid)

When Tidy throws Jonathan out of the inn for such behavior, he exclaims, “If I don't tell my uncle Ben of this—to be turned out by an underlin—a help—a sarvant—a sarvant of sarvants is a slave to the devil! Come along you black scoundrel—if I don't complain to Congress—there'll be a war between the tu countries, and all on my account, oh yes” (ibid). Mathews and Peake were obviously interested in throwing a substantial blow at the American myth of egalitarianism and independence.

Jonathan's behavior continues in this way throughout the script. Later that night, for example, when Mrs. Lemon asks if the “black gentleman” would like a bed, Jonathan laughs and says, “I saw a nation nice place below for the black gentleman to sleep in—the water trough—I guess this black gentleman never slept in a bed in his life” (Peake 8). Jonathan is rough with his slave and he is mean-spirited towards him. At the same time, he also brags about his country's

freedom, sings “Yankee Doodle,” and touts jingoistic American sentiments. The point is clear. America is no land of freedom and equality so long as slavery is practiced.

This may have been “the first antislavery play,” says Hodge (74), for Jonathan’s worst qualities come out when he deals with his slave; conversely, Agamemnon is kind and pitiable. What’s more, he seems far nicer than Jonathan. He gets along with everyone he meets and even treats Jonathan—undeserving as he is—with respect. Hitting the political point home, Mathews and Peake constructed an ending that displays Agamemnon’s triumph over Jonathan. A British (black) servant tells him that he should leave Jonathan, for once he set foot on English soil he became a free man. Agamemnon’s response is strategically trenchant: “Free—free! What is dat? In me hear de name in America—but me don’t know what it is” (Peake 13), and once he is convinced of his freedom, he exclaims, “Oh, nice country, England—God sabe de king. Rule Britannia!” (ibid). In Agamemnon’s mind (and surely in the audience’s minds by this time in the play), England is far better country than America. It offers more freedom, more liberty, and more equality.

Not only is Jonathan a slaveholder, he is also a stingy capitalist. He tries at every meeting to sell his slave, not aware he is in a country filled with abolitionists. Moreover, he seems not to understand the value of human life. He tries to barter with Tidy, offering the slave for a horse. Too, he is constantly concerned with money. When the two postillions are trying to steal the larder from their hiding place, Jonathan is only worried about his own life and dollars. He is cowardly, quaking underneath the bedcovers, squeaking, “Oh, my dollars!” (Peake 9). He thinks the two might be planning to kill Agamemnon, but instead of showing any real concern for his slave, he quickly resigns himself to the idea: “Cut a piece of fat out of poor Aggy? What’s to be done?” (ibid). Likewise, once he knows he is safe, the first thing he checks on is

his money. His first lines after the incident are: “Oh, yes—my dollars are safe” (ibid). Immediately following these, come curses flung at Agamemnon for not waking up. He also throws about derogatory remarks concerning England. “Here’s a cursed country,” Jonathan says, “I will have my throat cut” (ibid). The joke is, of course, that the men are not stealing from him at all; it has all been his egocentric money-obsessed imagination.

Jonathan’s (in)famous Uncle Ben also showcases this Yankee fault.⁸² He has sold Agamemnon to Jonathan, first of all, under false pretexts. (As in *Trip*, Jonathan has been cheated out of good money. His Uncle told him the slave was well behaved, but Jonathan finds him to be most belligerent). Likewise, Uncle Ben’s sneaky, dishonest American tactics almost ruin Mary’s future. Mr. Ledger is concerned because he received a clipping from a Baltimore paper saying that a certain American company he put stock in has gone bankrupt. Mary’s fortune is lost. Fortunately for Mary, her fiancé William still wants to marry her. In the end, however, this entire newspaper story is uncovered as false. Jonathan’s uncle wrote the article because he wanted to invest in the company and if he publicized the news that the company had gone bankrupt stock prices would drop. Jonathan summarizes his uncle’s actions as “darned cute” and excuses his behavior to the astonished English subjects, “Lawks! Did your uncles never tell white lies? I reckon” (Peake 15). Although the untruth is discovered before any real mischief transpires, the older Yankee is clearly as money-obsessed as his nephew. Such plot devices clearly criticize American economic “norms.”⁸³

As in *Trip to America*, the Yankee in this play bears the brunt of English discontent with Americans. Jonathan is not only a brute, but unaware of the surrounding culture around him. As

⁸² His Uncle Ben is clearly a Yankee too, not only from his familial relation to Jonathan, but because he is noted in the script as having been baptized in New England.

⁸³ The English public would have believed this was the norm, but, needless to say, it was not.

a slaveholder, and a mean one at that, he personifies America's political hypocrisy. Completely reversing the function of the Yankee character as found in American plays, Mathews uses this figure not only to satirize, but also to condemn American claims to egalitarianism, independence, and honest capitalism.

* * * * *

Mathews and Peake constructed *Jonathan Doubikins* almost solely from Colonel David Humphrey's *The Yankey in England*. They used the author's vocabulary list as a guide for Yankee language, structured the action of their play in a similar manner, and even stole dialogue verbatim from the American work. But their actions were more than simple plagiarism, which was a relatively accepted practice at this time, for they actually reversed the Yankee's function. *Jonathan Doubikins* completely turned Humphreys's play and intent upside down.

For example, the Waterloo Hotel is featured in *The Yankey in England* and in *Jonathan Doubikins*. In both works Jonathan is confused by the customs he witnesses at this inn. In *The Yankey in England*, however, Jonathan's antics are simple cultural misunderstandings. Humphreys uses Jonathan's frame of mind, his very simplicity, to light-heartedly mock the English. Jonathan, for example, cannot understand why the headwaiter will not take the time to answer his never-ending stream of questions. Here is the Yankee's (in)famous inquisitiveness. Yet it is the waiter who ultimately looks rude, hot-tempered, and snobbish in Humphreys's work. In *Jonathan Doubikins* Jonathan gets himself thrown out of this hotel from his rude behavior, constant interruption, and slave-dealing.

There are other examples. In *The Yankey in England*, Doolittle, the Yankee of the piece, begins the play washed up on English shores after a shipwreck. He is described as "wet, in a sailor's dress, munching a piece of bread and sobbing" (Humphreys 19). He was on his way to

London when an English vessel captured his American ship. Mistaking him for a British boy, the sailors press him. Perhaps fortunately, a storm suddenly comes up and the vessel is lost at sea, though close to shore. Doolittle is able to swim to safety. Thus, he begins the play sopping wet and bemoaning his fortune, which is now lost. All of his possessions are gone and he does not know how he will survive in this strange land. This is a young Yankee, merely a boy, and he has suffered tremendously on his transatlantic journey. Emphasizing British tyranny, Humphreys gives details of Doolittle's plight. He describes his impressment at the hands of British sailors, evoking strong pity in the reader or audience. Explaining his capture to the General, for example, Doolittle claims that his captain could do little but give in to English demands:

Opposition! What a rot could he du, when they turned right at us their great black bumbs and guns? Says they, 'Cum tu, or we will shute.' 'Shute, and be darned, if you dare,' says he; 'but if you spill the deacon's ile, I'll make you rue it.' And when they got aboard, says they, 'We want nun of your Yankey rue, or pork and lasses; but we will have that likely British boy' (meaning me) 'whose name is not on your shipping paper, and who has no legal pertection.' Says I, 'I won't stur a step;' but I guess I was forced tu; and they got me so tight into their limboes and bilboes, that when I got my body loose, I looked nation poorly for a lengthy while afterwards...[and then they pressed me]; and squeezed me tu into the hole of a ship, in the hinder part, named the poop. I bawled as bad as I could, and telled them it was a tarnation shame to treat a true born Yankey in that sort of way. But they didn't mind it enny more than they du what the minister says in a gale of wind, as soon as ever the storm is over (Humphreys 42).

Imagining little Doolittle in tears on the English vessel certainly would have affected an American audience. Humphreys's little Yankee is a figure to be pitied; he has endured quite a trial.

Juxtaposed to this innocent Yankee, Mathews's Jonathan enters the stage space with a cigar in his mouth, furious that his luggage was lost on the long sea journey. He has also suffered a trying voyage, but his troubles stem from his obsession with money, rather than from a

terrifying experience with British customs. Wanting to save money on his nephew's voyage, Uncle Ben has sent Jonathan over with the freight. Thus, he has been tossed and tussled in with the cargo, but no one is to blame save another Yankee. When Jonathan bemoans his fate, using the same words as Doolittle: "Oh, Jonathan, Jonathan, you'd a better a staid at home with your mother, brother Josiah, sister Deborah, cousin Jemina, poor little Aminadab, and the rest; not forgetting old granny, bent somewheres about half double—I'm dispurd sick of being in strange parts, tho' I hadn't put my foot ashore five minutes—I wish I was at hum again..." (Peake 1), the audience held little sympathy for him. Humphreys originally wrote these lines imagining a completely different scenario; Mathews's Jonathan complains with little cause. He is simply angry and rude.

Many similar changes appear throughout the play. For instance, in Humphreys's *Yankey in England*, Doolittle gets in a fight with a fellow countryman, Mr. Newton. Winking at the audience, Mr. Newman provokes Doolittle by calling him a "servant." Doolittle was just given clean, dry, new clothing by this man, but despite this kindness, he is ready and willing to come to blows with his new employer upon being referred to in such a derogatory manner. He claims that he will not work for a man who considers him a "servant" and begins stripping off the new clothing. Too, he claims that any American who could believe in the practice of Old World oppression should be ashamed.⁸⁴ In his anger, he claims, "I don't think much of you as an American" (Humphreys 33). After a little more cajoling, he explodes at Newman, yelling: "I'll tell you what, Mister! If ever we Yankeys cum to loggerheads, we'll show whose heads are hardest. We warn't brought up in the woods, to be scart at an owl in an ivy-bush. You can't scare me so; nor make me not luv my country, with all its forts" (ibid).

⁸⁴ The distinction Doolittle is making is that whereas Old World had "servants," the New World had "helps" or "hands."

Mathews draws on these same lines, but works the situation so that they ring differently. In *Jonathan Doubikins*, Jonathan becomes angry with Mr. Ledger for no reason. Assuming that the Englishman has insulted his country, he cries: “Oh, yes!—imposed on—here mister, here’s a flesh and blud as fairn as yourn, and under it a good piece of pluck, about as big as a bullock’s heart...and let me tell you I don’t think much of you as a Great Britainer!” (Peake 3). Ledger is confused, for he has not insulted America and Jonathan’s outburst seems absurd. He asks, “What the devil puts you in such a passion, sir?” (ibid). At this, the Yankee only continues: “None of your flouting, by jumping jigs, I won’t stand it—we Americans have got hard heads—we warn’t brought up in the woods to be scart at by an owl—you can’t scare me so, nor make me not love my country—with all its forts...” (ibid). While Doolittle’s anger is a bit rash and blustery, it is at least sincere, and comes from a justifiable source. Newman, after all, knows how to make the Yankee angry, and with a wink to the audience, accomplishes his goal with ease. Mathews’s Yankee, on the other hand, becomes enraged for no reason. He bewilders the kind Englishman who is only there to help him and his nationalism seems—if anything—out of place. He is spouting jingoisms simply to criticize England. He was not challenged in any way; nor was his country denigrated. Changes such as these make Mathews’s intent and rhetorical position clear. Plainly voicing anti-American sentiment, he reverses the rhetoric throughout Humphreys’s play. *The Yankey in England* worked as a vehicle of nationalism. In the Englishmen’s hands, however, it was drastically altered; it became a vehicle of political condemnation.

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The heavy-handed transatlantic criticism that infiltrated every aspect of *Jonathan Doubikins* did not sit well with audiences. For example, one reviewer commented:

Plot in this sketch it will be seen there is none, nor was there intended to be—it has evidently been produced for the purpose of reproducing Mathews in one of his most favourite personations, and it has answered its intention completely; it is full of fun, and never was audience more disposed to relish it. One remark alone from the mouth of the now enfranchised ‘Nigger,’ excited partial disapprobation, evidently from the *transatlantic* side of the house. It was to the purport that ‘though he (Aggy) had often heard the word *free* used in Kentucky, he never before knew the meaning of it.’ Some jokes are too true to be forgiven (*Globe and Traveller* September 4, 1824; original emphasis).

This review assumed that Americans (or American sympathizers) in the audience were upset by Aggy’s comments, but other accounts of the audience’s reaction suggested that English subjects were the disgruntled parties. For example, a review in *The [London] Morning Advisor* identified the malcontents as English:

Jonathan is accompanied by his fat ‘Nigger’ *Agamemnon*, and while talking of the Star of Columbia that protects them from Tyranny and Oppression in England, goes about seeking somebody to buy his black nigger. This was innocent enough; --however the black here gets his liberty. He is told that on putting his foot on English ground he is free; so he told his Master that ‘he had put his foot in it, and was free—but in America ‘em knew not what *free* meant.’ Now *we* are not exactly the people who ought to sneer at other countries where the Slave Trade may happen to exist. The House justly was indignant at the point, and loudly hissed it (September 4, 1824; original emphasis).

The same English audiences who had laughed merrily through *Trip to America* were astonished at the severe critique doled out in *Jonathan Doubikins*. The play sought to criticize American slavery, but instead it inadvertently struck closer to home. Mathews and Peake assumed that English audiences would be pleased by the image of an American slave gaining freedom on English soil, yet their audience understood the actual politics. An American slave would not be free if he were to arrive in England and, in fact, this would not be the case until slavery were abolished in their nation. The population as a whole was greatly vexed by the political situation. They desired greater domestic and international abolition action; what their government offered

was proposed treaties and bills that the international community either ignored or rebuffed. They were continually disheartened and consistently disappointed. What's more, England itself had not even outlawed slavery yet. Although English subjects were sympathetic to the slave's plight, they could not stop such injustice even on their own soil. *Jonathan Doubikins* seemed to rub this wound with salt. Unsurprisingly, the play closed only days after its premiere.

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Trip to America and *Jonathan Doubikins* did not solve international disputes, nor did they ease relations between the two nations. Britons continued to enjoy *Trip to America*, but *Jonathan Doubikins* would not be played again. Despite the English response to the latter work, both of these plays seemed to broaden the distance between the sister nations. Americans once again felt insecure, misunderstood, and denigrated. They were cautious when Mathews visited their country in 1834 and in fact patronized James Hackett, then a star, more than the English actor when the two went head-to-head, playing at opposite theatres in New York in November of 1834. Americans would line Mathews's pockets far less during this visit.

Jonathan Doubikins brought Mathews little good. Economically, it was a disaster. Unlike any other play he performed, the comedian was forced to close the show only days after it opened. On a broader scale, it also brought other political troubles. Many persons commented on the play in print, not only condemning it, but also going after Mathews as well. The actor must have been surprised by the public outcry, for his responses were long, tireless, and often sound defensive.⁸⁵ Mathews fought back, although he did so mainly to closed ears. Likewise, his defenses for the artistic choices made were rather unsuccessful. First he tried to pin the faults of the drama on his co-writer, Richard Peake. When that did not work, he tried to put them on

⁸⁵ See his memoir for a few examples of the reaction to the play as well as his response. A small selection from this printed conversation will be given in Chapter Three as well.

Colonel David Humphreys, suggesting that the American author was at fault. Neither attempt was successful. The public blamed Mathews in the end. Though *Jonathan Doubikins* soon left the stage, the controversy surrounding it kept it in the cultural spotlight for nearly a year after it closed.

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3.10 MATHEWS'S LEGACY

Although *Jonathan Doubikins* caused Mathews some trouble in 1824 and 1825, it was all but forgotten by 1826. Mathews was too well liked on a national level for one theatrical mistake to haunt him for long. He continued playing *Trip to America* and moved on to other shows as well. The public soon forgot that his Yankee in *Jonathan Doubikins* was anything but a silly low-class yokel who made some inappropriate comments. They clung, instead, to his portrayal of Jonathan in *Trip to America*, which drew fine audiences until Mathews's death in 1835.

In fact, Jonathan from *Trip to America* was so well liked a character that he changed "Yankee Theatre." Mathews's work not only impacted audiences of his time, but also affected future audiences as well, for his Jonathan actually engendered a performance tradition that would live on in England for the next thirty years. His work birthed the "English Yankee" and long after Mathews left the stage his Jonathan would continue to amuse audiences time and time again. Both at the time and in the future, this "English Yankee" starred as the primary object of interest in paintings and pictures. Short story writers picked up the character and put him in their works. Political cartoonists drew on Mathews's depiction as well. Likewise, more English travelogues than ever now featured the Yankee. The success of *Trip to America* birthed an

English Jonathan that would stay in the national memory for decades. No American actor, facing this tradition unawares, would succeed for years to come.

4.0 CHAPTER THREE

4.1 FISHING TOO NEAR A BRITISH NAVAL VESSEL IS BOUND TO MAKE FOR ONE UNHAPPY YANKEE: JAMES HACKETT AND THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL AMERICAN YANKEE (1827- 1834)

Across the Atlantic, the Yankee made startling progress in terms of character development after the Federalist period. In early American Yankee plays, such as *The Contrast* and *Jonathan Postfree*, Jonathan was merely a secondary character. He bumbled around stage and was, dramaturgically speaking, part of the comic support within the play. Though an important component of the early American nationalistic voice, these first Yankees hardly constituted major audience fascination or appeal. Audiences at the time were far more interested in the intermittent patriotic songs, fashionable costumes, or sentimental aspects within the work than in the comic greenhorn-- that is, if they were even watching the stage action. Despite the Yankee's rather insignificant dramaturgical beginnings, however, when James H. Hackett played this part in the mid 1820s and early 1830s the Yankee became the focus of all stage action.

When appearing in new scripts, such as *John Bull at Home; or Jonathan in England* (1828),⁸⁶ the Yankee was the main character. He was intricately involved in the action and the highlight for audience attention, a significant dramaturgical leap from early Federalist plays. When he appeared in more open performance pieces, such as *Sylvester Daggerwood* (1826), the

⁸⁶ Because there are four plays that include "Jonathan in England" as part of their title, I will refer to this particular play as *John Bull at Home*.

Yankee was even more important. He became *the* focus, often the only speaking character on stage. In such pieces, he was a monologist, telling long-winded, seemingly pointless stories, and relating humorous past experiences. He spun out yarns of his large, pumpkin eating family back home, of his beloved country deacon, and of his obstinate Uncle Ben. He shared stories of his boyhood adventures too, telling of fishing in too close proximity to a British Navy ship, of visiting New York City, and of climbing trees to retrieve dead squirrels.

Regardless of the form, whether Jonathan was a major character in a fully scripted play or a monologist in a more flexible performance piece, the Yankee held his position as humorous protagonist. He was a bumpkin from the country who created trouble and confusion wherever he went. He was still part of the low-class, hardly literate, and imbued with a heavy, nasally New England accent. One large change to this character was in the amount of information he was able to present to the audience about himself. Before, Jonathan had been only a sketch, an undeveloped, elusive figure. In Hackett's work the Yankee became well rounded and well known. He was a fully developed character, complete with idiosyncrasies and eccentricities.

Examining the stage Yankee of this time well demonstrates this trend, for Jonathan dominated every work, and was the center of all attention. Despite this strong dramaturgical focus, many authors chose to emphasize the character's numerous and often-contradictory traits by adding their own analysis preceding the dramatic work. In the years preceding Hackett's rise to fame, Colonel David Humphreys wrote such a description in the introduction to *The Yankey in England*.⁸⁷ His description seems ahead of its time, for it is far more similar to the Yankees of the mid to late 1820s than those of 1815. Humphreys foregrounded this character as:

⁸⁷ John Neal in *The Down-Easters* (2 vols. New York: Harper & Bros., 1833), maintains that both James Hackett and George Hill borrowed extensively from Humphreys's work. With Humphreys's penchant for distributing his work to many involved in theatre, it is not hard to imagine that Hackett had a copy of this work and imitated Humphreys's introduction.

Made up of contrarities—simplicity and cunning; inquisitive from natural and excessive curiosity, confirmed by habit; credulous, from inexperience and want of knowledge of the world; believing himself to be perfectly acquainted with whatever he partially knows; tenacious of prejudices; docile, when rightly managed; when otherwise treated, independent to obstinacy; easily betrayed into ridiculous mistakes; incapable of being overawed by external circumstances; suspicious, vigilant and quick of perception, he is ever ready to parry or repel the attacks of raillery, by retorts of rustic and sarcastic, if not of original and refined wit and humor (15).

Hackett, too, offered such a character analysis. In the back of his promptbook for *Sylvester Daggerwood* he outlined this character in similar terms:

Yankees are:

Enterprising and hardy—cunning in bargains—back out without regard to honour—superstitious and bigoted—simple in dress and manners—mean to degree in expenditures—free of decep.—familiar and inquisitive, very fond of telling long stories without any point, which just as they appear to approach is diverted by some new digression—when they finish, will laugh themselves, and never care whether the listener does or not—the only sure way of knowing when they are done is their throwing away a chip or stick, which they invariably keep whittling while telling a story, and putting a knife in their waistcoat pocket after sitting an hour on a wood-pile—(Enthoven Collection; original emphasis; no page numbers available).

At this time artists interested in portraying the Yankee all seemed to be exploring his many traits, teasing out inconsistencies and highlighting the multifaceted nature of what was once a very simplistic stage type. The effect was dramatic. The Yankee became far more complex, a character worthy of complete audience attention most often within shows that lasted well over two hours.

By the time James Hackett took the stage in 1826 the Yankee was developing from a simple country type into a complex cultural phenomenon. Wisely, Hackett not only followed this trend, but pushed the Yankee's development even further. By the end of the decade the Yankee had matured to become the proud possessor of many interesting traits as well as

contradictory characteristics. Though still a stock type on stage, the Yankee was now a complex character. Detailed, original, and undeniably American, the Yankee of the 1820s, specifically in James Hackett's work, could no longer be confused with the Yorkshire man. He had transformed from a generic stock transatlantic type into a more complex American mouthpiece.

The Yankee not only changed in terms of character development. He also displayed a more sophisticated sense of national origin. As in the earlier Federalist plays, nationalism still propelled his stage presence, yet at this time he was not merely a vehicle for American patriotism and jingoism as previous Yankees often seemed to be. The Yankee of the 1820s firmly exhibited his American background and experiences, without question or explanation. At the heart of his stage antics and tales was an American point of view, now largely unconnected to English experience. America had proven its political independence in the War of 1812 and was growing in terms of cultural independence as well. The Yankee poignantly exemplified this trend in autonomy. Here was a character that addressed an audience as if all knew and understood the American experience. He drew on American humor and celebrated American distinction without apology or justification. As the United States continued to develop a national voice, the Yankee stood proudly on stage, seeming to represent its strides in cultural independence.

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4.2 THE YANKEE'S DEVELOPMENT IN AMERICAN CULTURE

In the Federalist period the Yankee was a secondary character. By the mid-1820s he became the key to audience appeal. What changed about the Yankee to make him suddenly worthy of audience interest, a key part of American drama? Part of the newfound lure of the Yankee was due to Samuel Woodworth's *The Forest Rose*, an astoundingly popular Yankee work first produced by the Chatham Garden Theatre in October 1825. This play was a huge box office success. It had a long run as a straight play, but gained even greater popularity after John Davies added music to the script for its run at the Park Theatre later the same year.

The Forest Rose was a pastoral comedy, constructed around themes often used in early American drama. Similar to *The Contrast*, *The Forest Rose* used contrasts to showcase the superiority of the country over the city, of native types over foreign. For example, the play begins by introducing two sisters. One, Harriet, is in danger of making a terrible decision. She has heard stories of city life and longs to leave her small community located in the rural American countryside, despite its beauty and moral purity. The other sister, Sally, is satisfied with her rural home and longs for no more than a moral life in the country. Alongside the contrasting women are two different men. Bellamy, an English "city slicker," is the evil outsider, similar to Dimple from *The Contrast*. He attempts to seduce Harriet away from her home and rural lover, William, offering her a more exciting and cultured life in the city. Juxtaposed to this malevolent foreigner is Jonathan Ploughboy, the Yankee of the piece. He is grounded in American life and courts Sally, Harriet's sister, according to country tradition by

taking her to dances and asking her for “busses” (kisses). All is not smooth in this romance, though. When Jonathan asks for confirmation of Sally’s love for him, she tricks him into kissing Rose, an African-American woman. This is a blow, and Jonathan is quick to take offense at the prank. Attempting to get back at her for the trick, he asks Harriet to accompany him to the country-dance. When Bellamy learns of this pairing, he offers the Yankee money to help him kidnap the young woman. Jonathan faces a hard decision; on the one hand, he could earn twenty-three dollars, an amount, he says, “that an’t to be sneezed at” for relatively little work, but on the other hand, he knows that he should not do what Bellamy has asked of him (Woodworth 169). In the end, he finds a way to fulfill both desires. Rather than helping Bellamy abscond with Harriet, Ploughboy substitutes Rose in her place, thus foiling the vice-ridden Englishman’s plans. He gets to keep the money without endangering the “real” Harriet. To complete the comedy, in the final scene all the lovers are united, even Jonathan and Sally.

As in earlier Yankee works, such as *The Contrast or Tears and Smiles*, *The Forest Rose* reveals national and regional differences. The foreigner is an evil presence, one that threatens the future of the American family. On the other hand, the native can be trusted; a fellow American will generate future happiness, as well as national security. Likewise, the rural bests the urban. City life, the play suggests, might seem alluring, but it often conceals vices and dangers in the midst of its refined offerings.

Thematically, Woodworth’s work offered nothing new to the American canon. It relied on nationalistic rhetoric that had been popular in American drama for decades. Dramaturgically, it did not veer far from the established path either. Similar pastoral comedies appeared decades before *The Forest Rose*, and all followed a parallel, conventional format. An American woman was in danger of entering into a forced or somehow compromised marriage, until an appropriate

American male saved her through an impressive display of bravery, valor, or native genius. Says Richard Moody, “[*The Forest Rose*’s] distinct features—the patriotic glorification of American democracy; the praise of the native honesty of the American farmer; the contrast between the bungling, awkward shrewdness of the ‘Yankee’ and the polished stupidity of the noble Englishman; and the sentimental songs—are all comparable to similar elements in other plays, but they were rendered with greater skill” (147).

Woodworth’s skilled writing, along with Davies’s patriotic music, certainly helped propel *The Forest Rose* into the public eye, but these were not the only factors contributing to its success. Woodworth’s construction of Jonathan also added to its appeal, for rather than a secondary, non-essential character, he was intricately involved in the plot. He did not play a small part in this comedy, but appeared in almost every scene, and even saved the day in the end. Without the Yankee, Harriet would have been lost.

Significant to the Yankee’s appeal was his complexity. Woodworth’s Jonathan did not necessarily conform to generic traits, and he was not one-dimensional. For instance, the script suggests that Jonathan is a shopkeeper, a small businessman, and a sharp dealer, but despite his economic achievements, he also seems naïve and simple. When asked what he does for a living in Act I, Scene 3, Jonathan replies, “A little in the merchant way, and a piece of a farmer besides.” He comments that he deals in “[e]verything: whiskey, molasses, calicoes, spellingbooks and patent gridirons” (Woodworth 160-161). At the suggestion that he might use these items to “shave” the natives, Jonathan responds, “No, sir; everybody shaves himself here. There is no barber nearer than Paris” (Woodworth 161). The Yankee’s response is funny because it highlights his thorough misunderstanding. Although he is a keen businessman, Jonathan is still gullible; he is easily fooled by linguistic play. But his response also shows more

about his character, too, for imbedded in his innocent error is his deep belief in American egalitarianism. Here was truly an American character. Though Woodworth's Jonathan did not include the exceptional character development of later works, his Yankee certainly helped propel the character further than those written before him. Jonathan Ploughboy was unique, detailed, and clearly American. He seemed different from the first generation Yankees, whose simplistic, jingoistic catchphrases signified not only class, national origin, and political standing, but also provided basic character motivation from scene to scene. This Yankee was far more than a stock comic figure or low-class buffoon. He was a wonderfully growing comic character that would become more and more complex with every play that focused on him.

Although similar to prior Jonathans, Jonathan Ploughboy became the focus of all audience attention—so much so that the actor who portrayed him became a star. Before taking part in *The Forest Rose*, Alexander Simpson⁸⁸ was an unknown actor, but his performance of Jonathan in 1825 sparked major attention. It was praised for its uniqueness and noted in contemporary accounts of all kinds. For example, Noah Ludlow remembered him in his *Dramatic Life as I Found It*⁸⁹ and, two future Yankee actors--James Hackett and George Hill--claimed to have been inspired to try such a part as a direct result of watching Simpson perform. James Hackett began telling Yankee stories and singing Yankee songs reportedly only weeks after Simpson's first performance. George Hill, too, reports that he so impressed by Simpson's performance in his autobiography that he chose *The Forest Rose* as his first performance piece in 1832.

⁸⁸ Sometimes noted Alec Simpson.

⁸⁹ It should be noted that Ludlow did not remember Simpson's performance very fondly. He recalled that Simpson played the Yankee as a "silly comic New Jersey boy without any... of the eastern peculiarities [that would later flourish]" (433). Despite his lack of enthusiasm, Ludlow's memory of this performance still speaks to its impact on contemporary audiences. His Yankee might not have been as precise as the Down-east portrayals on the performance horizon, but it was obviously memorable; Ludlow's work was published in 1880, 55 years after *The Forest Rose* debuted.

Woodworth's depiction of the Yankee was more complex than any that had come before it. His writing made Jonathan stand out; simultaneously, Simpson's acting also aided in thrusting Jonathan to new heights of popularity. Woodworth's writing gave Simpson the backing to bring this character to new creative heights. Likewise, the business Simpson added to the part boosted Jonathan Ploughboy from simple stock figure into a character worthy of notice. For example, he played a "jews-harp" to Davie's music; one can only imagine the kind of antics that might have resulted from such a scenario. Script and actor came together in a way that equaled greatness and together they sparked the national imagination. Perhaps without even realizing it, Woodworth had constructed the first Yankee star vehicle and as such, his play pointed the way for future Yankee performances. Jonathan would be the center of attention. Scripts would be written around this character's antics, talented actors would try their hand at the native type, and the Yankee would remain on the American stage for over two more decades.

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The Forest Rose was an important part of the Yankee's development, but this figure was also gaining significance and exposure in areas outside the theatre. By 1825, the number of Yankee publications was quickly increasing. *The New England Galaxy*, which began printing in the mid 1820s, was the first of its kind: a publication devoted to stories, poems, or comic tales starring Jonathan. It also featured reviews of early Yankee actors (like Charles Mathews and James Hackett), offered general commentary on the Yankee character, and gave explanations of particular Yankee speech patterns, words, pronunciations, and adages. As years passed, its circulation became larger and more diverse. Other journals followed suit. *The Yankee Blade* and the *Knickerbocker Magazine* also hit American publishing houses later in the decade. Yankee humor was disseminated throughout the United States.

But it was not only artists and writers who were interested in the Yankee. The Yankee's link to the burgeoning American capitalism caught the eye of businessmen as well. In 1825, for example, George Arnold published a series of letters in the New York *National Advocate* (later the *Enquirer*) under the name of Joe Strickland in the hope of attracting buyers to his lottery. Joe Strickland, a Yankee, was a "barely literate rustic Vermonter whose early adventures in the city included winning big at Arnold's 'lotry'" (Nickels 152). Arnold's short stories had the desired effect. They increased business at his lottery and thrust his Yankee into the public eye. But they did more than build Arnold's business. The unexpected outcome was a new Yankee star. Joe Strickland became an instant American icon that was used in essay after essay and in newspapers around the country.

The Yankee's growing popularity sparked newspapers, journals, and other print media to jump on the bandwagon. Nickels offers an illustration of this trend:

The best example is a series of 'Jonathan's Visit' poems, a rustic Yankee's account of his first visit to or experience with a steamboat, cotton factory, theatre, commencement, and bowling alley. In 1823 'Jonathan's Visit to the Steamboat' appeared in the Cincinnati *National Republican and Ohio Political Register* and in the Washington, D. C., *National Journal*, which had reprinted it from the Providence, Rhode Island, *Journal* (84).

All kinds of print media published Yankee material in hopes of meeting the public demand. Sources were shared and, as Nickels's example shows, some particularly fun Yankee stories made their way across the country, one newspaper at a time. Even the most conservative of publications featured Yankee works. Jonathan showed up everywhere and everyone seemed to love him.

Greater ease in national travel and communications certainly played a role in the Yankee's growing popularity. Technological improvements in printing, publishing, and

distribution led to less expensive popular media that could be more widely distributed. More frequent contact and interaction between media groups also helped established the Yankee in all parts of the country. Sources were shared, and stories were told and retold through different, formerly unconnected regions. This larger communications base allowed Yankee humor to spread to all parts of the country. Commenting on the role of the media, Nickels claims, “By the end of the 1820s, the requisites of a ‘tradition’ of New England humor in the truest sense had been firmly established in the national popular press” (83).

Yankee humor became a national pastime in the 1820s. Jonathan no longer played only on stage for genteel audiences and he no longer appeared in exclusively elite publications. He was available to the entire American culture. Willingly, the American popular culture embraced the Yankee. Readers and audiences alike loved this funny boy from New England, whether named Jonathan Ploughboy or Joe Strickland. In 1811 the editor of *The Chaplet of Comus* claimed, “no good thing of humorous kind can come out of New England” (as quoted in Nickels 84). It seems he was mistaken. The Yankee found a clear and active voice in the 1820s, one that the American public found quite humorous. Disseminated by writers, artists, businessmen, and theatre practitioners to audiences of every kind, the Yankee became a known figure, liked by all.

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4.3 A POST-COLONIAL DILEMMA

From colonial days well into the 1820s, American artists felt that they needed not only to rely on, but also to incorporate English culture into their art. This pressure produced a two-part post-colonial cultural phenomenon. First and foremost, it put the artists in a paradoxical

position. While they desired to write from their own newly discovered national voice, they did not know how to do so. The nation was too young and they had no way of knowing what such expression should sound like. Under such pressure, some artists simply stopped producing. Others continued, as they had before the Revolution, producing art which was solely inspired from English culture. A few, embracing the newly founded post-coloniality of their culture, tried to give voice to the nation. All were condemned: The first group were criticized for not producing; the second for relying on (now) foreign, (now) outdated models, and the third for inadequately representing “America.”⁹⁰ In other words, the post-colonial situation created a culture of negation.

This culture of negation can be examined from many angles. In the theatre, for example, American dramas were quickly and easily dismissed from the stage. Critics were not impressed with them and audiences were not interested in watching them. English plays still dominated the theatre; it was only the most extraordinary native work that ran for more than a night or two. Gary A. Richardson summarizes the situation well. Even into the mid-1800s, he claims, “the American theatre operated as if America was still an outpost of the mother country” (*James Nelson Barker* 124). Audiences, actors, and managers were simply not interested in challenging the dominant dramatic canon, which consisted solely of English plays. American playwrights were encouraged to write in the style of England, and actors were forced to devote their talents to performing in English works. While American literary leaders called for national dramas, they simultaneously patronized theatres producing their favorite English works.

⁹⁰ These aspects of post-coloniality did not always happen in an unconnected manner, as my list might suggest. Both *The Contrast* and *Tears and Smiles* demonstrate this, for they show how artists both looked to the former mother country and tried to give voice to the nation.

Moreover, when truly native works were produced, they were often dismissed (paradoxically) because of their non-English status. Even a script like *The Forest Rose*, that became so popular that critics today compare it to *Oklahoma*,⁹¹ had to overcome this cultural obstacle. The first time it was performed, it was scarcely patronized. A mere one hundred persons sat in the Chatham Garden Theater on October 6, 1825. Only after George Morris, editor of *The Mirror*, chided elite New Yorkers for their lack of patriotism did more citizens attend the production. Other American-bred plays were not so fortunate. Many simply never attained the praise they deserved; some never received productions, others were quickly and quietly removed from the stage.⁹²

This culture of negation was also blatant in the literary world. For example, from the Federalist period well into the Jacksonian age, many literary leaders called for American works. They desired writers and artists to find a national voice, to showcase American genius. Yet in doing so they unilaterally ignored works already in existence or perhaps simply omitted them from consideration, categorizing them as trivial or insignificant, not worthy of national—let alone international—recognition. In 1823, for example, William Ellery Channing disparaged all preceding American literature when he said in his “Remarks on National Literature,” “Literature is plainly among the most powerful methods of exalting the character of a nation... Do we possess indeed what we may call a national literature? Have we produced eminent writers in the various departments of intellectual effort? We regret that the reply to these questions is so obvious” (248, 252). In his (and others’) estimation, Americans had not yet produced any literature requiring “intellectual effort.” American literature—all that had been produced by

⁹¹ Moody 147.

⁹² This is perhaps why works like Humphreys’s *Yankey in England* never made it past amateur productions and why many Yankee plays, stories, and anecdotes have been lost to history.

1823--was completely overlooked. This call for a “true American voice” was not a short-lived phenomenon. It continued well into the mid-1850s. Herman Melville, for example, railed: “While we are rapidly preparing for that political supremacy among the nations, which prophetically awaits us at the close of the present century, in a literary point of view we are deplorably unprepared for it, and we seem studious to remain so” (as quoted in Greenfeld 443). Though the American literary elite seemed desperate to find new American artistic brilliance, they overlooked numerous well-written works in their midst.⁹³

The bias against native art also impacted American actors in the 1820s. The steady procession of English actors through the American countryside discouraged the success of American thespians. On the one hand, these English actors “reinforced the public’s prejudice for British plays” (Richardson “James Nelson Barker” 124); that is, as these actors moved through the country playing in Shakespeare, Sheridan, Goldsmith, and other British favorites, they strengthened the notion of England’s cultural superiority. On the other hand, this “steady procession” also made the theatrical situation more difficult on native talent. Where could an aspiring American actor learn the trade if he/she was always resigned to playing part of the company for a touring star? Likewise, if he/she did rise to stardom, what theatre would take an American actor over an English one? None would. When challenged, the American actor would have to step down to a less prominent stage.

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A few American actors were able to overcome the cultural obstacles in place, rising to fame in the late 1820s. One of them was James Hackett. Unlike any American actor before him,

⁹³ The theatre mirrored literature in this aspect. In his *History of the American Theatre* William Dunlap recorded the works and progress of numerous American writers. James Nelson Barker, John Burk, Joseph Hutton, M.M. Noah, and John Howard Payne, for example, are featured in his work. Yet in *Notions of the Americans*, just four years prior to Dunlap’s publication, James Fennimore Cooper announced that there were no American dramatic writers “or next to none” (I. 148) worthy of mention.

Hackett was able to negotiate a path to success through the dense post-colonial thicket. Though Hodge claims that Hackett was an abominable writer and should have sought professional help in crafting scripts, he found a way to gain legitimation while retaining a true American voice and character. In hindsight, his strategy was a brilliant one, for Hackett used the very post-colonial situation present in America to his advantage. Brilliantly, he used actual English scripts long popular in America and altered them, sometimes drastically, to incorporate the Yankee. Because the country itself sought means of freeing itself from cultural oppression, but nevertheless looked to the Old World for recognition and appreciation, Hackett's work had to negotiate a safe conduit through this cultural quagmire. He recognized American achievements in voice and experience, while simultaneously validating cultural reticence. Drawn from pre-legitimized "parental" sources, then, his dramas did not sustain the extent of prejudiced suspicion that most American works automatically incurred. Taking these pre-legitimized sources and altering them to showcase the Yankee in new and dramatic ways, he forced the very English-ness of the works to bow to American ingenuity.

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4.4 JAMES HACKETT: THE FIRST AMERICAN STAR YANKEE

James Henry Hackett was born in 1800 to a middle class family. His father was an émigré from Holland, his mother, a native of Jamaica, Long Island. In Holland his father had been a lieutenant in the Life Guards of the Prince of Orange. Mrs. Hackett's family had resided in the Long Island area for generation, because of this, she had indirect connections to many important nineteenth-century New York families such as the Duanes, the Beekmans, the

Roosevelts, and the DePysters.⁹⁴ Hackett's father died when he was only three years old. His mother and her family raised him. The connections that he gained from both his father and his mother were important. In a city still largely controlled by Dutch influence, Hackett could hardly have cultivated better associations. Too, they became a crucial aspect in Hackett's later stage career. As a young man Hackett attended Union Academy and later went to Columbia College for a year. He left after a serious illness, began reading law with a local magistrate, and later worked for a wholesaler in groceries. At nineteen he married Catherine Lee Sugg,⁹⁵ a popular Park Theatre actress.

Although James Hackett probably began entertaining groups fairly early in life,⁹⁶ his first professional theatre job came as a result of his marriage.⁹⁷ Sugg left the stage when she married Hackett, much to the disappointment of many elite New York audience members.⁹⁸ Luckily for them, she did not stay in retirement for long. When the couple faced financial hardship in 1826 she reentered stage life, toting Hackett along behind her. Sugg's past career allowed the couple to skip the many steps most actors had to take, performing at smaller theatres and working their way up to leading houses like The Park. Her reputation and leading-lady status meant that they could start at the top. Although they were not sure what the elite Park Theatre audience would think of Hackett, they arranged a debut date, scheduled for March 1, 1826; they would play in *Love in a Village*, Sugg taking the lead role, Hackett playing the smaller part of

⁹⁴ Hodge 84.

⁹⁵ Odell, in *Annals of the New York Stage*, refers to her as Catherine Leesugg, as do other critics and scholars. Hodge claims that Joseph Ireland started this trend and others followed. Hackett himself refers to his wife's name as "Lee Sugg;" hence, I have chosen to use this version.

⁹⁶ I say this because there are many stories of Hackett entertaining guests at parties or other social gatherings with Yankee monologues before 1824.

⁹⁷ There are many conflicting stories about when and how Hackett actually began his theatre career. Some say that he acted under the name of Young as early as 1816. Some suggest that he worked in a Newark Theatre for a time before he met Sugg. Others suggest that smaller theatres hired him to tell Yankee stories and sing Yankee songs before his debut in 1826. I have given what I believe is the most probable truth about his career.

⁹⁸ At this time it was still considered improper for a woman to earn her living from acting; men did not face similar constraints.

Judge Woodcock. Sugg's (re)debut, without surprise, was hugely successful, but Hackett had a more difficult time. He was troubled by stage fright and as a result played poorly that night.

He was soon to try again, though, performing less than a week later, on March 10th, in his own creation, *Sylvester Daggerwood*, a re-write of George Colman, the Younger's, old play *New Hay at the Old Market* (1805). Hackett would not only succeed on this second night of performing for this New York audience, but he would also surpass all expectations.⁹⁹ The elite audience in the Park Theatre loved *Sylvester Daggerwood*. After this first performance it was called for again and again. He played it in full and he played it in part throughout the next few months. So popular was it that one might say with assurance that this was the play that propelled James Hackett into stardom.

* * * * *

What was it about Colman's old comedy that so intrigued this 1826 New York elite audience? *New Hay at the Old Market* had been performed many times for the American public under different auspices and titles. Hackett's version, however, was different from any before, for he not only used this piece to show off his amazing imitative abilities,¹⁰⁰ but also showcased the Yankee, a character he had obviously been working on for some time. Keeping only the absolute basics of the script, he cut and spliced Colman's work until it was nearly

⁹⁹ Hackett's amazing performance on this second date makes the story of his debut seem dubious. I think it may be the stuff of myth, but I have no proof of this suspicion.

¹⁰⁰ Hackett excelled at parts incorporating imitation. Similar to Charles Mathews, he seemed to be able to completely embody another person, showcasing their particular skills and renditions of famous Shakespearean soliloquies, all with a light hint of satire. For example, within *Sylvester Daggerwood* he performed impersonations of lead actors such as John Barnes, Thomas Hilson, Edmund Kean, Charles Macready, and Mathews. His imitation of Barnes was so popular that it encouraged Hackett's next production, *The Comedy of Errors*. One source recalled the events leading to this performance: "His imitation of Barnes had been so perfect that the idea struck the manager that Hackett would make a great hit as *Dromio* in "The Comedy of Errors," Barnes playing the other *Dromio*. It was a happy thought. Hackett so perfectly mimicked Barnes both in voice, walk and gesture, that the audience was completely mystified, and, like Paddy with the pigs, did not know 't'other from which'" (Obituary, Harvard Theatre Collection). Though *The Comedy of Errors* was important to boost Hackett's fame in 1826, he did not perform this role many more times, and *Dromio* never became fully associated with the actor as other roles did.

unrecognizable. Hackett's objective was clear. He wanted a vehicle to showcase the Yankee's newfound character development within the American culture and *Sylvester Daggerwood*, being a mere skeleton, easily transformable and historically malleable, was a perfect tool. Likewise, in choosing a long-popular English work through which to do so, Hackett successfully dodged any criticism a new American work would have evoked due to the post-colonial dilemma in which the United States was caught.

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4.5 SYLVESTER DAGGERWOOD: AN AMERICAN YANKEE TAKES CENTER STAGE

The plot of *New Hay in the Old Market* is simple, though nearly unintelligible to modern audiences because of the numerous topical references. The play begins with an out-of-work actor (Daggerwood) and an un-acted playwright (Faustian) waiting to see the manager of a small summer theatre (a reference to Colman himself, who managed the Haymarket in the early 1800s). Both are seeking employment and hope that the manager will find them places within his company. Unfortunately for these two, he is uninterested in their "talents" and appears to be simply avoiding them, keeping them waiting in his home anti-chamber. The playwright, who desires someone to listen to his play, begins to read portions aloud. The work is apparently terrible, so terrible that Daggerwood, the actor, amuses himself by commenting on it using famous Shakespearean quotations, much to the playwright's chagrin. The two unfortunates finally learn that the manager has quit the house altogether. He has gone off to the theater. They will need to wait for another day to see him.

At this point the play shifts location, moving into the theatre itself. Here a third character is introduced (Apewell), who is also looking for employment. His chances of speaking with the manager seem much better, for he is a talented mimic.¹⁰¹ He performs impersonations of contemporary Shakespearean actors for those present, and his talent amazes all. The piece ends with a song mocking the larger winter theatres such as Drury Lane and Covent Garden for their extravagant theatrical display.

Hackett's rewrite begins like Colman's work, but quickly changes to accommodate the Yankee and other American characters. An out-of-work actor (Daggerwood, played by Hackett) and an unacted playwright (Faustian) are waiting to see a theatre manager. The actor suggests that the playwright might incorporate some unique American characters into his plays. The playwright is unfamiliar with American types, so Daggerwood quickly changes costumes and reenters the space as a Yankee in order to show Faustian the famous transatlantic figure. As this character, he then launches into a myriad of what would later be described by the British as long-winded, incomprehensible, and pointless monologues.

After many stories, Daggerwood changes costumes again, this time reentering the space as another transatlantic type, the "American Dutchman" (promptbook, Enthoven Collection). As this New Yorker, who is called Hans Knickerbocker,¹⁰² he tells many stories. Hans is both a comic greenhorn and a recent émigré to America, so his tales focus mostly on cultural misunderstandings and comic linguistic mix-ups. For example, when he goes to the theatre he is

¹⁰¹ Hence, "ape-well."

¹⁰² The script suggests that Daggerwood portrayed Hans Knickerbocker, but the dialogue makes this assertion less clear. The speaking role appears to be a close friend of Hans (no name given), rather than Hans himself.

confused by what he sees. He believes the action on stage is real and he threatens to disrupt the play.¹⁰³

After nearly 50 pages of handwritten dialogue, the promptbook finally suggests a return to the original script, although it too is transformed. The action is reminiscent of Colman's beginning; the playwright can take no more of Daggerwood's stories, so he interrupts, inserting his own work into the play. Again, his work is terrible, which gives Daggerwood the opportunity to quote Shakespeare to the playwright.¹⁰⁴ The piece ends with the servant informing the two thespian-hopefuls that the manager has left for the theatre. He went to see "Mr. Hackett" and another actor perform, so he has no time for these unemployed.¹⁰⁵ Apewell never appears in this script. Instead, Daggerwood acts as the actor imitator. Likewise, there are hardly any references to specific English theatres.¹⁰⁶ Here is an American script through and through.

Displacing and supplanting all the English references, Hackett's rendition of *Sylvester Daggerwood* resonated with post-colonial resistance. It focused completely on the American experience, celebrated its unique humor, and examined its distinctive inhabitants. Though this script was once filled with references to English players, theatres, and managers, Hackett extricated nearly all of these references. The inside jokes that once played so well to a knowledgeable English audience were removed; in their place stood American references and Yankee humor.

¹⁰³ The play in question was a production of *Richard III*, starring Edmund K. Kean. In telling the story Daggerwood (Hackett) was afforded the opportunity to imitate both Hans and the famous actor.

¹⁰⁴ Here again was an opportunity for imitation. When quoting *Othello* and *Richard III*, Daggerwood (Hackett) impersonated Kean and Macready.

¹⁰⁵ Hackett's script actually leaves a blank for the second name to be filled in. He could not know who would be playing Faustian opposite him when he created the piece, but this actor's name was surely put in on a nightly basis.

¹⁰⁶ There seems to be only one reference to the English theatre-going experience. On the left hand side of the promptbook (in the space reserved for stage directions and lighting cues) a note suggests that he should include a reference to the O.P (Old Price) riots. Was this a hasty re-write specifically made for English audiences when this play was performed in London in 1826? Probably so.

Vastly different in tone and style, Hackett's version began with a wink at English actor Charles Mathews. Daggerwood, who has been a traveling actor in America, offers to show Faustian a performance of his experiences, hoping Faustian will incorporate this material into his play. Hackett's stage directions make this reference clear: "We first hear him offstage in the Yankee character he has sketched while abroad...Then on he comes, singing a Yankee tune in a nasal twang" (ibid). Hackett was simulating a Mathews-style entertainment. An American audience--particularly one that had experienced Mathews only four years previously--would have instantly recognized the reference. The controversy over *Trip to America* and *Jonathan Doubikins* also would have emphasized the reference, making it particularly humorous.

Hackett's version of *Sylvester Daggerwood* clearly focused on an America experience. For example, in the script his Yankee, a recent transport to New York, attempts to sell his wares to circumspect city dwellers. He explains his use of an eel-skin cap and tells them about his clocks, nutmegs, and tobacco for sale. The narration then includes stories of fishing too near a British war ship, hunting with his uncle, and singing psalms to his horse. Completely displacing English concerns and details, this work resounds with post-colonial resistance. Hackett's Yankee focused on American life, experiences, and humor. He celebrated an American perspective. He metaphorically replaced Mathews on stage; likewise, the script metaphorically overwrote the English experience with an American one. Hackett's version of *Sylvester Daggerwood*, in other words, pronounced the New World as legitimate and worthy of stage expression.

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4.6 THE UNCLE BEN STORY

Though admired for all of the characters portrayed in *Sylvester Daggerwood*, Hackett's portrayal of the Yankee is what caught the New York audience's attention. This is evident through the numerous times he was asked to perform the "Uncle Ben Story" in the weeks following the debut of *Sylvester Daggerwood*. George C. D. Odell, author of *Annals of the New York Stage* notes that the anecdote was acted in June and July (III, 192); likewise, Hodge speculates that Hackett played it "several times during the fall" and in November up until the day he left for London (87).

The fact that Hackett only performed a portion of *Sylvester Daggerwood* on many dates following his debut was not surprising. Theatrical entertainment at this time was structured to incorporate many smaller pieces of amusement. Pre-show entertainment, for example, included songs and music. An evening's main attractions consisted of a full-length work, and an afterpiece. Likewise, in between the plays, interludes (short entertainments), were also given. The "Uncle Ben Story" was a perfect fit for such entertainment, for it was about fifteen minutes long, but could be altered to run as long or short as was necessary. Likewise, though upcoming performances might have been scheduled, an interlude—one that was popular enough—could not only draw in additional audience members, but could also be fitted neatly into nearly any evening's schedule. The fact that theatre managers asked Hackett to perform so many times between March and November speaks to his popularity as a performer; it also speaks to the audience's interest in the Yankee figure.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Hackett's jump to fame with this audience is not surprising. What is amazing perhaps is that these New Yorkers liked his Yankee more than the Dutch greenhorn, Hans Knickerbocker. This audience was familiar with Dutch humor. Indeed, many of them were of Dutch descent (as Hackett was himself) and knew Dutch immigrants. But even if they were not closely associated with Dutch persons, they were certainly familiar with comedy incorporating Dutch characters. Perhaps they had even read Washington Irving's new work *A History of New York*. Despite such

But what was this Yankee like? Recounting the “Uncle Ben Story” will make Hackett’s choices clearer. In this story Jonathan and his Uncle Ben are going to spend a day together hunting. They rise early and venture into the nearby woods. After a rather unsuccessful trip, however, their attention is turned to a squirrel in a tree. It was a “real fat one,” with “a great deal of grease in him” (Hackett 24).¹⁰⁸ Both would like to bring the “critter” home for dinner. Uncle Ben raises his gun, but the squirrel runs to the other side of the tree. Jonathan then goes around and aims at it from the other direction. The squirrel runs around the tree again, setting up a successful shot for Uncle Ben. The squirrel’s capture is no easier once it is dead, though, for as it fell from its perch in the tree, its limp body became tangled in the tree’s branches and stuck. Uncle Ben is furious. He gets Jonathan to shake the tree, but the squirrel stays lodged where it landed. Finally, the old Yankee implores Jonathan to climb up the tree and retrieve the catch. Jonathan concedes, but not before entering into a bit of bargaining with his uncle. Uncle Ben offers him nine pence to get the squirrel and Jonathan agrees. However, much to the young Yankee’s chagrin, as soon as the squirrel is brought down and packed away, Uncle Ben informs him that he will have to wait for their next meeting to pay him, since he is carrying no ready cash.

Jonathan never receives payment and looks back on this experience as the only time his uncle lied. He moves from this longwinded story to Uncle Ben’s drinking habits and his familial relations. He even incorporates another anecdote on how this uncle tricked the local preacher. The preacher is trying to get Uncle Ben to stop drinking. He says that he is sorry the Yankee has such trouble with alcohol; after witty repartee on the matter, the preacher is again pressed into

close associations with this brand of ethnic humor, this elite New York audience wanted to see the Yankee again and again.

¹⁰⁸ There are no page numbers in the text. I have simply counted the pages and marked them accordingly.

saying that he is sorry the Yankee struggles so much with this sin. “Yes,” he says, “I am sorry for it” (Hackett 27). Upon hearing this, Uncle Ben turns the preacher’s words around: “[W]ell then...if you *are really sorry* Deacon—I forgive you” (ibid). Commenting on this story, Hodge asks, “Was such a story as this really stage entertainment?” (96). Apparently it was. The New York Park Theatre audience loved it.

Hackett’s Yankee was similar to past Yankee incarnations on stage and in the press. Like Jonathan from *The Forest Rose* his Yankee was a capitalist, trying to make as much cash as possible with as little work as he could get away with. Like Joe Stickland, his Yankee was talkative and naïve, interested in the city, new domestic opportunities, and material things. Also, similar to popular Yankee stories of the time (like the “Jonathan Visits” series), Hackett’s Yankee was simple, easily impressed by the many urban phenomena he encountered. He was a young, inexperienced New England boy, proud of his gun, easily tricked, and barely educated. He was long-winded and opinionated, full of chatter, anecdotes, and tales of family history.

Although akin to previous Yankees, Hackett’s Jonathan had to go further, for he had to create a character that could hold a critical New York audience’s attention for an extended time. Thus, he created a complex character, one that included personal quirks, idiosyncrasies, and eccentricities. Hackett’s Jonathan was stingy and naïve, simple and clever, boisterous and innocent. He was moral, yet conniving. His Jonathan was a unique creation. He resembled other Yankees, but that also added new qualities and details to this stock figure.

Even with these added, unexpected qualities, how did this one story continue to amuse the Park Theatre audience time and time again? Hackett’s Yankee, like Jonathan in *The Forest Rose*, was the star of the show. Yet he was not grounded in a set script as Woodworth’s Yankee had been. Hackett’s brilliance was that he created a flexible, open character within a malleable,

unfixed script, one ultimately dependent on actor inspiration. Hackett's notes in the promptbook indicate his penchant for this type of elastic performance. He claims:

[1] The whole of these sketches are... varied according to the humor of the audience and the actor at the time of representation.

[2] These sketches are as near, as I can commit them to paper, to what I give them on the stage. I frequently vary the order of some of the incidents from the difficulty of committing my own nonsense to memory, and consequently, are more embellished at one time than another, as my *humour* may dictate.¹⁰⁹

Though the "Uncle Ben Story" may be examined, therefore, one also must acknowledge the limited nature for study it offers because it probably changed (at least slightly) on a nightly basis. Part of the pleasure in Yankee works at this time was the unexpected, unforeseen view of the familiar that the Yankee offered to readers or audiences. One never knew what this character would say, what creative spellings he might come up with, how he would explain sophisticated things he encountered, and/or what mistakes this character would make when faced with grand society. Through a varied, spontaneous performance style, Hackett did on stage what these Yankee works accomplished through print. Riding the wave of the Yankee's newfound popularity in the press, James Hackett brought the Yankee into a new era of stardom.

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Using the post-colonial situation that existed in the United States to his advantage, Hackett became a hit in New York. He capitalized on the audience's penchant for English works, while simultaneously speaking to their nationalism by placing the American experience on center stage. Hackett bridged the New and Old Worlds in *Sylvester Daggerwood*. He gave

¹⁰⁹ These notes were not written for an English censor, but seem to have been recorded for posterity's sake. Hackett considered himself an even greater actor than he was. He was quite pompous and sure that all of his writings would one day be treasured for the "sure genius" they exuded. His promptbooks and long analysis of Shakespeare demonstrate this point. I believe he wrote what he did about the Yankee because he was interested in saving all of his ideas, notions, and thoughts for future generations to marvel at. His promptbooks all seem to have the future, aspiring actor or theatre historian in mind.

the audience, which experienced conflicting transatlantic desires, exactly what it wanted. Likewise, with Hackett's innovative performance style, it is little wonder that his Yankee wowed American audiences.

With the American success of *Sylvester Daggerwood*, Hackett soon decided to try his luck on English shores. Though largely inexperienced in the craft of theatre and unfamiliar with theatre traditions on the other side of the Atlantic, the young actor embarked for London in November 1826. Why Hackett left is uncertain. Hodge speculates that perhaps he felt he needed extra training among the "best" in the field. A more pertinent motivation may have been that any American actor who wanted to reach legitimate stardom in the United States needed to secure London credentials.

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4.7 HACKETT'S FIRST LONDON TOUR: 1827

The post-colonial situation in the United States put many American actors in a difficult position. English actors constantly traveled overseas and English material dominated the American stage. Thus, American actors not only had a hard time obtaining top positions in the theatre, but they were also perceived as inferior to English stock and considered inadequately trained. If one desired stardom a journey to England was necessary. An American actor was an amateur, simply dabbling. Nearly all major stars came out of London. A transatlantic journey was required to gain legitimacy on the nineteenth-century stage.

Thus, with only his limited experience, Hackett set off for London on December 16, 1826. It was a drastic and risky venture, but given the cultural situation probably a necessary

one, particularly for an actor who specialized in “native” material. Hackett took with him a few positive reviews from his performances at the Park Theatre.¹¹⁰ Too, he probably had the confidence of a strong, well-built twenty-seven-year old. Hodge describes him as, “...a middle-sized, well-proportioned person, with handsome legs, a capacious mouth, good articulation, a strong and flexible voice, and a pleasing countenance, rather broad and open” (96). With only these personal attributes and limited recognition, Hackett ventured across the Atlantic.

How Hackett managed to convince the manager of Covent Garden to allow him an evening’s performance is unknown. One review gives a possible explanation. *The London Examiner* (April 8, 1827) suggested that Hackett had volunteered for the evening “purely for his own amusement,” and was guaranteed no future showings. Other reviews seemed inclined to believe that he would appear again, perhaps as part of a regular company. After his first London performance, however, it was doubtful any other theatre would take him.

As the first professional American actor to visit England,¹¹¹ his stage debut generated much excitement. Newspapers touted his upcoming performances, urging audiences to experience a “real” American first hand. Yet British enthusiasm for the plebian soon ended when they witnessed what he had in store for them. For his debut he scheduled a performance of *Sylvester Daggerwood*. Here was the script that had brought him much fame and approval in America. It was his most promising dramatic piece. But because it was bereft of any English references, recognizable humor, or identifiable circumstances, the English audience hated it. It seemed nonsensical to this audience; the American characters, humor, and situations simply could not resonate with Londoners as they could with New Yorkers. Within fifteen minutes the

¹¹⁰ They were largely “puffed up” according to Hodge.

¹¹¹ Hodge notes, “John Howard Payne had, of course, appeared on the London stage in 1813. He was not advertised as an American until his second performance, nor did he perform anything that could be labeled an American play. The fact that he shortly afterwards abandoned acting for a career of writing leaves to James Hackett the honor of first consideration as a serious American actor in London” (83n).

audience began yelling “off, off” from all sections of the house. Hackett quickly moved from character to character, blindly trying to please these foreign spectators, but his efforts were futile. With the audience’s disapproval mounting, he deleted most of the Yankee’s monologue and quickly changed into the Hans Knickerbocker costume. But as soon as he came to the part about Hans becoming an American politician—a selection that soon followed his entrance—the audience again voiced its discontent.¹¹² He again adjusted, changed costumes, and moved on to his Shakespearean impersonations. These received some applause. The overall evening, though, was a dismal failure.

The Morning Herald summarized that fateful evening in the theatre:

...*Sylvester Daggerwood* was introduced for the purpose of bringing forward Mr. Hackett from the New York theatre. It was his first appearance, and the part of *Sylvester* was assigned to him, for the purpose of exhibiting the Yankee stories of Jonathan and Uncle Ben, together with the history of Hans Knickerbocker (the American Dutchman.) We had been told previous to our seeing this representation by a United States gentlemen, that his pourtray [sic] of a back wood’s man, was perfect in the extreme—so much so, that any person who had ever seen such a personage, could not fail to recognize an old acquaintance... The audience heard Mr. Hackett last night for some time with a great deal of patience; but at length the hisses became so loud and incessant, that he was obliged to retire, alter his dress, and present himself in a different character. This was an imitation of Mr. [Edmund K.] Kean’s *Richard the Third*, which he gave in an admirable manner. He recited almost the whole of the first speech—‘Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,’ and seemed quite ‘at home’ in doing so.¹¹³ The audience were [sic] now as loud and enthusiastic in their praise as they had been but a few minutes before clamorous and incessant in their hisses. In fact, though we often saw imitations of Kean, we never before witnessed any so good as this. He afterwards attempted to imitate Macready, but it was merely an attempt, the effort being flat, dull, and any thing but good and he consequently received little or no applause. This effort was followed by other imitations, which we did not rightly recognize (April 6, 1827).

¹¹² Hodge claims that the audience’s discontent began when Hans tells about gaining a seat in Congress and having a drink of water with the President. I’m not sure where this reference comes from, though, because it does not appear in the text of *Sylvester Daggerwood*.

¹¹³ One should of course note the Mathews’s reference with the critic’s remarks that Hackett seemed “at home” playing Richard.

The reviewer completed his remarks with: “That piece [*Sylvester Daggerwood*] was not announced for repetition, nor do we suppose that the Manager will, for the present, venture to bring it forward again” (ibid).

The review in *The Morning Herald* is strikingly similar:

Mr. Hackett’s representation of his countrymen, who inhabit the back woods, may be, perhaps, correct; we dare say it is so, as he has been so highly spoken of... But as we see no such description of people as those he would represent, and are not alive to the low wit, or to the real wit, of the stories of Jonathan and Uncle Ben, Hans Knickerbocker, &c., his imitation stories were not, as such, better understood than if a Chinese came to entertain an English audience with those representations, which had afforded pleasure in the most remote parts of his own country. What is wit and entertainment in one country may not be so in another, particularly where extracted from custom and habits... (April 6, 1827).

In similar vein, another critical review called his portrayal of his countrymen “American boors” (*The Times*, April 6, 1827). Clearly, the English were not pleased with what they had seen on stage the night of April 5.

More than displeased, though, they seemed outright angry. One reviewer chided the audience for such bad behavior: “In truth, the reception given to Mr. Hackett was not generous, considering his first appearance in a strong country. We had thought that a London audience would at least have heard him silently, and given him an opportunity of showing what he was capable of” (*The Morning Herald* April 6, 1827). Despite this reviewer’s sense of generosity, the London audience within the theatre that night obviously did not feel obliged to give Hackett a second chance.

Why was this English audience so displeased with Hackett’s performance? The first possible answer is that the English, unfamiliar with American humor, simply did not understand what Hackett was attempting to portray on stage. As *The Morning Herald* claimed, “...his imitation stories were not... better understood than if a Chinese came to entertain an English

audience with those representations...” (ibid). This same review later stated, “He may, however form an acquisition to the Covent-garden Company in various descriptions of low comedy; but *he must not rely on those Yankee stories, which the people of England do not understand*” (my emphasis; ibid). Unfamiliar with the characters, tropes, humor, and American dialect, the English audience was simply bored by the entertainment, not knowing or understanding what they were seeing.

There is, however, another explanation for such strong English disapproval. When compared to Mathews, Hackett could not stack up. He was, in the estimation of English theatre-goers, far less a performer than their esteemed English comedian. The review in *The Morning Herald* makes this secondary concern clear: “Mr. Mathews’s imitations of the same personages are by no means like those of Mr. Hackett. They are totally different” (ibid). *The Times* as well condemned Hackett in light of having witnessed (the “far-superior”) Mathews:

A good deal of curiosity was excited by Mr. Hackett’s appearance; and the theatre was better filled than we had seen if for several weeks, by persons who were anxious to witness a ‘real’ American’s treatment of the same matters which our own countryman, Mr. Mathews, had made so effective in the way of imitation. It has happened, however, before now, within our experience, that an imitation has tuned out to be a better thing than the reality imitated; and we are forced to confess that this is in a considerable degree the case with respect to Mr. Hackett’s performance; its chief effect, as far as American character is concerned, being to excite surprise how Mr. Mathews should have rendered that which is apparently so dramatically valueless, so entertaining. The specimens which Mr. Hackett exhibited were American boors; no doubt delineated with fidelity, but as subjects of amusement, perfectly valueless; his stories and jokes were pointless to an extent perfectly extraordinary; and there was nothing in his acting to call particular approbation (April 6, 1827).

Nearly all reviews of Hackett’s first performance in London 1827 repeat the same criticisms. Not only do they condemn Hackett’s characters as unintelligible, ungratifying, and “perfectly

valueless” “American boors” (*The Times*; April 6, 1827), but they do so by comparing the American actor with Charles Mathews.

The reviewers were not incorrect in making these assessments, for Hackett’s Yankee was certainly unlike Mathews’s Jonathan. First of all, the two Yankees looked surprisingly different on stage. In both *Trip to America* and *Jonathan Doubikins* Jonathan wore a “large brimmed straw hat, a sealskin waistcoat, and a heavy greenish-brown coat, which fell to his feet” (Klepac 35).¹¹⁴ In some accounts he carried a large unvarnished sugar-cane club.¹¹⁵ Other sources have him slinging a large gun over his shoulder, much like a backwoodsman Kentuckian. Reviewers also note Jonathan’s penchant for smoking a cigar.

Conversely, Hackett’s Yankee appeared quite different from this. Though there are no available images of *Sylvester Daggerwood*, one can easily use other contemporary Yankee

¹¹⁴ What the audience actually saw is a bit of a historiographical problem. There is some primary evidence to consider: We have access to a few lithographs made of *Trip*. Detailed in both are all the characters played by this famous actor, and all are in full costume. Though this may seem like solid evidence, however, in his article “Charles Mathews’ ‘At Homes’: The Textual Morass,” John A. Degen addresses the performance logistics within *Trip to America* and other *At Homes*. It has always been assumed that Mathews played every character, he says, but how did he do this? Degen brings up one of the last scenes in *Trip* to explicate the problems here. In Part II, he suggests, Mathews supposedly plays three characters at once: himself (sitting at the table), another guest (also sitting at the table), and the African American waiter, Maximilian. The scene is complex and the humor (the African American is scared by Mathews’s ventriloquism and drops the dish) is physical. It relies, I think, not only on the African American’s reaction, but also on the American’s reaction and on Mathews’s reaction to the humorous situation. “Now how he staged this by himself, embodying all three characters, I for one would certainly like to know” says Degen (78). So, the first problem is a technical one: did Mathews really play all these characters himself and if so how was he costumed for them? The second leads off from this: if Mathews was not fully costumed for all these roles (which I doubt he could be—Degen is convincing), then how did the various artists come up with the costumes for each character? We actually have evidence within these lithographs of three Yankees. They are similar, though slightly different. One, for the frontispiece to *The London Mathews, Containing an Account of this Celebrated Comedian’s Trip to America... [1824]* shows a Yankee similar to the American tradition: he carries a gun over his shoulder, wears a long coat, a short vest and plain pants, with a large straw hat. The hat might be out of place, but the rest of the costume is about right. Another shows a different version of the Yankee, though it too is similar: he wears a long coat (which looks brown), a wide-brimmed hat (more like a cowboy hat than a straw hat), has a gun slung over his shoulder and is holding what looks like a cigarette. It seems far more influenced by a western version of the Yankee—one that would not show up until the late 1830s. Was this rendering drawn later, after Dan Marble or Joshua Silsbee had visited London? However, another primary source shows us something quite different. A rendering for “All Well at Natchitoches,” it shows the Yankee carrying a gun, wearing a large straw hat, a long white coat, with what looks like a flowered vest and long pants. Though this picture is most often printed and looks most like what the American critic (soon to be discussed) suggests, it seems out of sync with the standard Yankee tradition. For clarity in this paper I am going to accept what Mathews says in his memoirs about the character; namely, I am going to trust that he wears what he says he was wearing.

¹¹⁵ As reported by *The Courier* on September 4, 1824.

sources to come to an approximation. For example, in 1828 David Claypoole Johnston painted a watercolor image of many Yankees, called “A Militia Muster.” In this picture the men wear many typical Yankee costumes. Many have on stripped pants. Some wear top hats. Many also don button-down vests (some of these are stripped as well). All are disheveled. This painting was so popular that it was displayed in the Boston Athenaeum. Here were typical Yankees getting ready for militia drills.¹¹⁶ Another source is also helpful. In 1829 *The New England Galaxy* published a lithograph alongside a Yankee story entitled “A Tale of a Bag of Beans.” In this comic portrayal the Yankee wears a top hat, a swallow-tail coat, and close fitting pants. He carries a riding whip in his hand and is traveling to court a woman; perhaps this is why he appears less disheveled than the Yankees in “A Militia Muster.” Hackett’s costume on stage was probably a conglomeration of these Yankee portrayals.

Nickels reports that the common Yankee costume consisted of “striped trousers, [a] top hat, and [a] swallow-tail coat.” For his 1827 debut Hackett most likely wore a costume that at least incorporated some of these items. Regardless of the exact details, his costume most certainly encompassed the same overall qualities, for by this time the Yankee was nearly standardized¹¹⁷ and Hackett had a strong base of materials upon which to draw. His next production, *Jonathan in England*, gives persuasive evidence that Hackett used American material in costuming himself for such parts. For this production, which Hackett began performing in 1833, he wore striped pants and vest, a white collar and scarf around his neck, a swallow-tail coat, and boots. Regardless of the exact costume Hackett wore for his theatrical

¹¹⁶ Militia drills were quite common Yankee territory. Both Mathews and Hackett often performed a skit called “The Militia Muster,” which will soon be discussed.

¹¹⁷ In costume, at least.

debut in 1827, he certainly looked strikingly different than Mathews had in his previous Yankee portrayals.

Secondly, these two Yankees sounded different as well. Though both drew on Humphreys's vocabulary found in *The Yankey in England*, Mathews seems to have been more creative with his pronunciation and linguistic choices. In fact, one anonymous writer lambasted Mathews's stage work in publication, denouncing his Yankee as complete fabrication. Though the entry (found in Mathews's memoirs) is not referenced nor dated, it had to have been written circa 1824, after *Jonathan Doubikins* premiered. Says the American viewer:

...[W]hen we are told that Mathews, the celebrated comedian—a theatre in himself—has been to America on purpose; that he has got up a sort of peculiar entertainment for the very purpose of showing up the real brother Jonathans, or *genuine* Yankees of our earth, we should be justified in looking for uncommon truth, great individuality, and great precision, if nothing more, in his portrait of a New Englander, for the *genuine* Yankee, or brother Jonathan, which Mr. Mathews undertakes to show off, *is a New Englander*, as everybody knows, and yet, after the practice of a whole year, with leisure and opportunity enough the wile for correcting any prodigious blunder into which he might have been led by haste, or by his great inexperience of the real Yankee character, while performing his 'Trip to America,' the first fruit of his labour, out he comes with a new piece, in which though it is got up, and brought forth deliberately, after the practice and observation of a whole year... he puts off upon the multitude of this country for a New Englander, a true brother Jonathan, or, in other words, a '*genuine* Yankee,' a fellow that proves to be a negro dealer and a slave-holder, and while he wears a large straw hat, a seal skin waistcoat, and a heavy greenish brown, or brownish green cloth coat, reaching to his feet, brings a negro for sale into Great Britain, walks the stage as if the world were his own, talks much about liberty and equality, shakes hands with everybody that comes near him, wallops the 'nigger,' whenever he gets 'mad' about anything, or anybody, talks politics with a servant of the individual to whom he has brought letters of introduction, declares that he was '*raised in Varmount*,' '*born all along shore*,' and says, '*I reckon, I guess, I calculate, en-quiry, to home*,' '&c.

Now, honest and faithful as Mr. Mathews undoubtedly is, good-humoured as he is, and exact as he generally is in the rich portraiture of individual or national character, there was nothing at Bartholomew Fair, to my knowledge, either last year, when it was crowded with wonders in every possible shape, or this year, when there was a Yahoo, or a mermaid in every booth, and you could not lift up a ragged bit of drapery without surprising a pair of undoubted giants, or the largest man alive, packed away, *tête-à-tête*, with a dwarf, the smallest ever heard of, who

had been exhibited all over Europe, or he'd 'forfeit a shilling to everybody as wan't satisfied,' absolutely no thing to equal the native *New Englander* of Mr. Mathews, nothing to be compared with his native Yankee, as a matter of humbug or mischief (Memoirs III 525; original emphasis).

Needless to say, this American was quite angered by Mathews's rendition of his beloved national type. The letter goes on for pages, and the author details even the least of Mathews's inaccuracies, from the actor's pronunciation, to the regional mistakes, to his fashion, to his stage action.¹¹⁸

Hackett's Yankee seems to have stayed clear of these linguistic mistakes and regional mix-ups. Having been raised in America, Hackett was surely more knowledgeable of such New World nuances. Yet, even if one were to overlook Mathews's language errors, Hackett's Yankee still spoke differently than Mathews's Jonathan had. When Hackett took the stage he incorporated a strong dialect, one stemming from the heart of New England. For example, one of Hackett's personal acquaintances (and later essayist for *The Galaxy*) claimed, "I...[am] satisfied that Mr. Hackett's representation of Jonathan W. Doubikins as the typical Yankee was not a caricature, as far as the pronunciation or rather enunciation of our vernacular is concerned"

¹¹⁸ Mathews tried to combat the anonymous Yankee writer, submitting his own lengthy article to the same journal. (No date is known). He constructed an in-depth justification of all the choices, splitting hairs and obviously trying to wiggle his way out of the writer's grasp. Within this rhetoric, he is forced to claim that he was not portraying a Yankee per se—for though Jonathan claims to have been raised in New England, Mathews says, he never commits to having been born there. And for the inconsistencies in his dress, Mathews argues that he never intended to portray a Yankee's clothing. Jonathan is simply an American farmer, and thus dressed appropriately. Likewise, in this slippery linguistic play, Mathews first lays the blame for such a dramatic disaster on R. B. Peake, stressing that he merely performed in *Jonathan Doubikins*, and was not its creator. When this slope seems too slippery, Mathews switches tactics, exculpating both himself and Peake, and laying the blame on the original American playwright, General Humphreys: "But whatever offensive matter my 'Native Yankee' can discover in this, he must not attribute to us [Mathews and Peake]. The onus must remain with General Humphries [sic]" (memoirs III 540). The actor continues: "Wicked man, to caricature his own countrymen in such a wretched style and clumsy fashion, and lead the English into error! Fie, fie, Humphries" (ibid). Though Mathews changed Humphreys's work drastically, Americans are blamed for English cultural misunderstanding.

(XIV 555). James Hackett tried to capture the specific New England dialect as he understood it. This mode of speech, however, was far from what Mathews had demonstrated on stage.¹¹⁹

Thirdly, Hackett's Jonathan acted in a very different manner from Mathew's Yankee. Mathews's Jonathan was a slaveholder and hot-tempered, often beating his slave into submission. He was the scapegoat for all (perceived) American political hypocrisy, often voicing his claims to liberty and justice while simultaneously trying to sell his African-American human property to amazed and horrified English subjects.

Opposed to this anti-American rhetoric, Hackett's Yankee was an advocate of America, celebrating his citizenship through sharing his experiences with the audience. In the United States, this young boy's tales amused audiences and theatre critics alike. In England, however, his tales and antics were not looked on as kindly. Though not overtly jingoistic, Hackett's Yankee was proud of his heritage and pleased with his country. This was certainly different than Mathews's creations. If the English public expected an American to berate the United States for its slavery laws, they would have to wait much longer. Hackett's Yankees did no such thing.

* * * * *

These performative differences, as well as Hackett's complete failure at the Covent Garden Theatre, are perhaps most significant in light of the possibility that Hackett actually supplied Mathews with all of the Yankee material he used in both *Trip to America* and *Jonathan*

¹¹⁹ One more linguistic difference should be noted. English reviewers found Hackett's stories (particularly those told by Jonathan) "tedious, excessively lengthy, miserably contrived, wretchedly introduced, dull, highly obscure and puzzling, clumsily done, defective, unintelligible, rambling as conversation...[and] pointless to an extent perfectly extraordinary" (Hodge 98; he cites these comments as being a conglomeration of reviews which followed Hackett's premiere). What the English found so annoying, so pointless, was the mode of American storytelling, a form that would develop into the "tall tale," and continue well into the later nineteenth century through writers such as Mark Twain. This quality is distinctly American, according to Alecia Cramer, who says, "...Americans thought so much of the art of exaggeration that they developed a unique American genre—the tall tale" (18). Though Hackett and Mathews shared material, such as the "Uncle Ben Story," Mathews must have shortened his account of this tale, for only reviewers of Hackett found Jonathan long-winded. Mathews's Yankee must have gotten to the point in a much more efficient manner than did Hackett's Jonathan.

in England; or Jonathan Doubikins. Both promptbooks and newspaper reports offer evidence that supports such a postulation. In the promptbook for *Sylvester Daggerwood*, for example, Hackett noted in the margins that this was the story “as told by me to Mr. Mathews in New York in 1822” (Hackett 20). Though this lone reference might be explained away as mere self-promotion or perhaps as imaginative fabrication, reviews recording Hackett’s debut corroborate his statement. *The Morning Herald*, for example, claimed, “It was said... that Mr. Mathews was indebted to the instructions which he received from this Mr. Hackett, for the imitations he has given of characters in the United States” (April 6, 1827). *The Atlas* had like comments: “Mr. Hackett’s representation of his countrymen... may be, perhaps, correct; we dare say it is so, as he has been so highly spoken of, and *as Mr. Mathews has, as report will have it, taken lessons from him on this subject...*” (April 18, 1827; my emphasis). If these were mere tools of self-promotion spread by Hackett, one would expect to hear a different story from Mathews, but the English comedian remained uncharacteristically silent throughout Hackett’s visit to London.

Though Hackett may have instructed Mathews in playing the Yankee, when judged against the English actor, he was found completely inadequate, and what’s more, utterly incomprehensible. Mathews was the first to present the Yankee on stage. He presented it within English notions and through a familiar English body. He performed this figure in a way found quite pleasing to British sensibilities. With such a precedent set, Hackett was fighting an uphill battle, one that he would not—indeed, perhaps could not—win.

Looking back on this history, Hackett seems to have been doomed to failure, for the British public was uninterested in the growing American “native” voice. Perhaps they did not appreciate it because it was simply too unfamiliar to them. Perhaps they were uninterested in it since it did not “gratify the vanity” “of John Bull” (*The Morning Herald* April 6, 1827), as

Mathews's entertainments had done. Or perhaps they just simply preferred the English interpretation of this character. Whatever the case, one has to acknowledge that the post-colonial situation played an important role in Hackett's failure on the English stage. The imperial center had been given a rendition of the Yankee figure—one that was much approved and enjoyed. The English beloved leading comedian had performed such characters only a few years earlier, to the delight of every subject who witnessed them. Hackett's creations on the other hand were vastly different in style, tone, and rhetoric, and because of this dissimilarity he could not hope to succeed. He was unprepared to meet the English standards (indeed, he did not know what they were) and he was unfamiliar with previous experiences of English audiences. In short, Hackett was poorly equipped for this transatlantic journey.

Hodge questions Hackett's choice, saying, "Why was Hackett so bold as to think he could get up such a piece on his own with the expectation of pleasing a critical London audience? Did he really think it had the flavor and content of a Charles Mathews *At Home*?" (89). No one knows what Hackett was thinking; he left no journals on the subject and he did not keep a diary. From an historical perspective, journeying to England was a poor choice. Yet from the point of view of a young, ambitious, prosperous, and naïve twenty-seven year old, perhaps this decision made more sense. *Sylvester Daggerwood* and the "Uncle Ben Story" had been instant hits in America. Mathews had succeeded in London with parallel material. Likewise, it appeared as if he could do no wrong in America; audiences loved his performances and enthusiastically cheered him on night after night. "Why wouldn't a trip to England be successful?" he might have thought. Unfortunately for the young actor, though, he misjudged this "critical London audience" (ibid). Hackett assumed that similar material would play with similar success. What he did not anticipate was that he was dealing with the former imperial

power—the center--and that he was performing (from) the margin. Regardless of his choice of material, this was a sure way to fail. Unaware of the larger cultural interactions at play, he certainly did not choose an appropriate work for his London premiere. Thus, only days after his dismal failure at the Covent Garden, James Hackett set sail for America.

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4.8 HACKETT IN AMERICA: 1827-1832

Outside of family, friends, and close theatrical colleagues, it seems Hackett kept his failure in London relatively quiet. The American public would not have been pleased to hear of his failure across the Atlantic. Likewise, if they had known the extent of his disappointment they might not have been as ready to grant him as warm a welcome back to the American stage. With a London credit to his name, however, Hackett was ready to return to work in the United States.

Over the course of the following year Hackett continued to tell Yankee stories (and the “Uncle Ben Story”) at the Park Theatre, sometimes in conjunction with *Sylvester Daggerwood*, sometimes as standalone pieces. Throughout this time the New York audience seemed pleased to have him back. He played in *The Comedy of Errors* (again opposite John Barnes), gave imitations of Kean and Macready, and even tried his talents as Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant in *The Man of the World*. Hackett also appeared in some Shakespearean works. For instance, he played roles such as Iago in *Othello* and Falstaff in *Henry IV*, the part that would later be the mainstay of his repertoire. In another direction, Hackett tried playing the pathetic Frenchman in *Monsieur Tonson*, a role Mathews had performed successfully during his American tour.

On December 3, 1828, the night of his wife's benefit at the Park Theatre, Hackett brought out his first new Yankee work since returning to the United States. It was called *John Bull at Home; or Jonathan in England*.¹²⁰ Adapted from George Colman's *Who Wants a Guinea?* (1805), this Yankee work did not veer far from Hackett's established path to success. Using the post-colonial situation to his advantage, again Hackett was able to overcome the cultural barriers in place in America. For in style, tone, and rhetoric, it is amazingly similar to *Sylvester Daggerwood*. *John Bull at Home* relied on the cultural capital automatically endowed to English art works, yet—similar to his first Yankee success--Hackett altered it drastically, erasing and replacing English references and humor with American ones. In his re-write he also informed the script with a strong national sensibility and placed the Yankee center stage.

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4.9 JOHN BULL AT HOME; OR JONATHAN IN ENGLAND

Colman originally wrote *Who Wants a Guinea?* in 1805 to be produced at his own theater, the Haymarket. This theatre was a smaller venue, called a “summer theatre” because it showed pieces from May to September; larger “winter theatres” like Drury Lane and Covent Garden were open the remaining months of the year. Winter theatres could afford massive scenery and the most advanced technology available, which they used to create lavish spectacles.¹²¹ The smaller theatres, like Colman's, could not afford such exhibitions, nor were they large enough to support such grand scenery. Thus, they had to use alternative means to

¹²⁰ One of George Colman's most famous works was called *John Bull; or an Englishman's Fireside*. Did Hackett think of this when titling his own work?

¹²¹ For example, when *Blue Beard, or Female Curiosity* (1798), which was also written by Colman, played at the Drury Lane theatre, real elephants and other wild beasts were paraded on stage.

gather audiences. In hopes of luring theatre-goers to his house, Colman relied on scripts that followed a unique dramaturgical formula.¹²² Peter Tasch, in his introduction to *The Plays of George Colman the Younger*, sums up this playwright's general style: "Theatre-goers saw in his plays a compound... of sentimentality, naïve patriotism, pathos, low humor and homely virtue" (xi). This describes *Who Wants a Guinea?*, for it was filled with nationalism and sentimental pathos, yet also included low-humor and an array of various stage types—a sure lure for English audiences in 1805.¹²³

A short plot outline will help demonstrate Colman's use of these dramaturgical features. The play begins with a discussion between Torrent, a benevolent wealthy man, and one of his colleagues, Heartley. Torrent wants to help poor families in his area. Hearing of a local catastrophe, he offers Hogmere, owner of the burned house, money for his losses. Hogmere will have none of his generosity, though, and gives him back his money. Torrent is disappointed. Though Hogmere would not take his capital, Torrent soon finds a worthy cause. Fanny, a young innocent, believes that she has been left destitute by her fiancé and in desperation places an ad in the local paper asking for assistance. Torrent answers her plea. He offers her work as his housekeeper, a very generous proposition. He sends her directions to his estate and hopes to guide Fanny to a life of virtue. Fanny is overjoyed with the news and starts off for Torrent's estate, keeping her high-class identity a secret. When she believes she is in the vicinity of her new job, she dismisses her old and benevolent servant, Oldskirt. This ends up to be a tragic

¹²² This is true for plays he hoped to show at the Haymarket. *Blue Beard* and other gothic melodramas were written for the larger winter theatres.

¹²³ For more information on Colman and the Haymarket Theatre, see Peter Thomson's article "The Early Career of George Colman the Younger" in *Essays on Nineteenth Century British Theatre*, Peter Tasch's introduction to *The Plays of George Colman the Younger*, Cyril Maude's *The Haymarket Theatre: Some Records and Reminiscences*, William J. Burling's *Summer Theatre in London, 1661-1820, and the Rise of the Haymarket Theatre* and W. Macqueen-Pope's work *Haymarket: Theatre of Perfection*. This last work has interesting information on Charles Mathews's work with Colman.

mistake, for she has mistaken a neighboring house for Torrent's and assumes this is her new place of employment. The temporary master of this house is a lecherous Irishman, Sir Larry M'Murragh. He does not correct the young woman's mistake, but instead takes her in as if she were indeed his new servant. Desiring her to stay on in place of the older, and more cantankerous housekeeper, the Irishman, and his drunken help, Andrew Bang, trick Fanny into remaining in their service, while they lock old Mrs. Gastonbury, the rightful housekeeper, in a closet. Despite the evil Irishman's plans, in the end Fanny is rescued. Oldskirt, Torrent, and Gundy, Torrent's resident rat catcher and valet de chambre, find her in the incorrect estate. They punish the Irishman and Bang for their hand in the deception, and Fanny is reunited with her long-lost father and fiancé, thus restoring her to her rightful place in society.

The *dramatis personae* of this piece showcase a variety of classes and nationalities. Fanny and her family, as well as Torrent and his acquaintances, for example, are part of the upper class. As such, they are sentimental, generous, and constructed as ideal English subjects. On the other hand, Bang and Gundy are part of the English low class. A typical Yorkshire man, Bang speaks in a heavy accent. He spends much of the play drinking, and most often acts without forethought or insight. Gundy, also part of the low class, similarly lacks gentility. He puts on airs, pretending to be a cultured gentleman, though he is only a rat catcher. In this vein, he spends most of the play mispronouncing commonly known French words and phrases. Typical of the time, the Irishman, Sir Larry M'Murragh, is portrayed as a malevolent lecher. He is greedy and clever, tricking the young Fanny into staying in the wrong house. If not stopped, he certainly would have been a threat to her innocence. Colman put an array of varying characters on stage; the English audience could identify with the elite characters on stage, while disavowing characters different from themselves (in either class or nationality).

Perhaps surprisingly, this work did not do very well in 1805. Theatre critics rebuked Colman for having marketed such a dull play, attendance was low, and the play closed soon after it opened. Despite its rather dismal premiere, however, *Who Wants a Guinea?* continued to resonate in both English and American culture for years. In England, it went through many revivals, including one by Charles Mathews in 1820, in which he played the role of Oldskirt. In America, it was also strangely resilient. For example, it showed twenty-one times in Philadelphia from 1800-1816, making it one of the most performed pieces of the time.¹²⁴ Though *Who Wants a Guinea?* was not considered the most fashionable work either in its time or in the 1830s, its simple nationalism and array of colorful characters imbued it with a vitality that kept it alive in the dramatic canon for decades after its premiere.

James Hackett was probably drawn to *Who Wants a Guinea?* because of these very qualities. The blatant nationalism of the script could be easily overturned and the various low-characters could be readily changed to suit his unique acting talents. In 1828 he would show the American public a new version of *Who Wants a Guinea?*, one that was remarkably different from the original and its first adaptations, for it would erase the English nationalism and character types, replacing them with an American sensibility and the most uniquely American type on stage thus far—the Yankee.

Hackett's adaptation of this work was in some ways less transformative than his re-working of *Sylvester Daggerwood*.¹²⁵ Unlike his first star vehicle, in *John Bull at Home* he kept

¹²⁴ This statistic comes from David Grimsted's *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theatre and Culture, 1800- 1850*, Appendix A, Table 2.

¹²⁵ Hackett's version can be experienced in two different formats. The side for *Solomon Swap* is kept in the British Library Collection of Licensed works, and a copy of Hackett's personal promptbook can be found within the Enthoven Collection (London). I relied on the latter version for my research. Appearing on the top of this copy, an inscription reads: "D. L. Nov. 17, 1832." This was the date that Hackett premiered *John Bull at Home* at the Drury Lane Theatre. It is actually a copy of Colman's 1808 version of the script, marked up with pencil and slashed to such a point that it is a bit difficult to read at times. I enjoyed the striking post-colonial reverberations. Not only did

the plot intact. It was heavily edited, but the story basically remained the same. Fanny still needed help. Torrent offered it. The Irishman, Sir Larry M'Murragh, and his drunken help held Fanny hostage, and she was again saved by the English elite figures, then reunited with her family and fiancé in the end. Likewise, Hackett did not cut any main dramatis personae. In *Sylvester Daggerwood* many original parts were simply dismissed. In *John Bull*, however, the principal characters all remained in the script.

So what did he do to alter this play? Hodge offers a succinct explanation. Hackett, he says, “shortened the play to half its original length by eliminating the loquacious Heartley, by reducing in importance the rather unbelievable Torrent, and by cutting Hogmere to a bit part” (104). In other words, Hackett cut nearly all lengthy conversations existing merely to showcase English-style charity and/or economic generosity. Finding them non-essential to the plot, he simply erased them, crossing them out with a pencil in his promptbook.¹²⁶ He also did much to heighten the comedic elements within the work. He increased the role of Andrew Bang, adding substantial comedic bits to this part. Likewise, he increased the role of Solomon Gundy, who he renamed Solomon Swap.

In Colman’s version, Gundy recently took a trip to France and returned “a ‘very monkey that had seen the world’ with a smattering of French phrases which he garbles throughout the play” (Hodge 103). Existing solely as a malaprop, Gundy is a secondary character at best, merely adding a bit more nationalistic humor to the comedy. In Hackett’s version, the same character, renamed Solomon Swap, played second fiddle to none. Whether he was pulling a prank on another character, telling a story, or simply bumbling around, Solomon Swap was

Hackett replace the English with the American, but he physically wrote all over a copy of Colman’s script, marking it up and inserting various Yankee lines and business in the margins.

¹²⁶ Hackett’s promptbook suggests that the entire first scene should be cut. His notes instruct the reader to begin the play on page 14, thus eliminating much of the beginning displays of generosity and class.

always on stage. He became the main character and was the primary focus of the work, moving Colman's play from a sentimental story with comic elements, to a comic work of genius with a few sentimental elements.¹²⁷ So important was this character to this work that the play was often billed simply as *Solomon Swap*.¹²⁸

But Hackett not only strengthened the comedic elements, he also Americanized them. Changing Gundy from a Francophile Cockney-accented Englishman to a Yankee character, Hackett was able to show off natives of his own country. In his version of this play, not only does the New Hampshire Yankee have a role directly involved in the dramatic action, he also has opportunities to spin a yarn, make a joke, and exhibit his Yankee wit. He barter with Andrew Bang, for instance, giving him a watch with no insides—a Yankee trick that would soon be made (in)famous by Thomas Chandler Haliburton's "Sam Slick, the Clockmaker" novels in later years.¹²⁹ Swap was integral to the script, and he was American through and through.

In *John Bull at Home* the American experience was central. An American character completely dominated the script, replacing the cockney-accented Englishman, and minimizing all other English roles. All references to English altruism were eliminated and an American sense of humor changed the overall sense of the play. Rather than focusing on a melodramatic story filled with English benevolence, Hackett's script placed capitalism in the forefront. A Yankee was hired to do odd jobs, he told stories of shipping pumpkin pies and brooms, watches were swapped, and Yankee sharpness, in the end, came out on top.

¹²⁷ Andrew Bang's part was also increased, but to a lesser degree than Swap's. American actor John Barnes played this part. Barnes and Hackett had played opposite each other before, most notably in 1826 for a production of *The Comedy of Errors*. Hackett was said to have copied Barnes style exactly, becoming the very double of him on stage. With this history, Barnes must have been an ideal selection for the role of Andrew Bang.

¹²⁸ The play is sometimes called *Solomon Swop*, as is the character. It is unclear if this alternative spelling is used to denote the particular pronunciation of "Swap" or not.

¹²⁹ This Yankee trick was more enjoyable because Bang never realizes that the watch does not work. He believes that he has outwitted the Yankee in the bargain.

In *Sylvester Daggerwood* Hackett created a vehicle through which the American public could see more of the Yankee, experience more of his personal quirks, and listen to more of his stories. *John Bull at Home* did this to an even greater extent. “Yankee Theatre”—with James Hackett in the lead—was moving into new territory. These plays not only placed the American center stage, but also painted him in interesting and complex ways.

* * * * *

John Bull at Home left a deep impression on many who witnessed it. *The New York Mirror*, for example, said, “Mr. Hackett’s Jonathan Swop is a rare and rich performance. It is new, fresh from life, full of humor” (October 13, 1832). Another admirer wrote, “I consider his [Hackett’s] Solomon Swap the most natural and unexaggerated Yankee I ever saw upon the stage” (Harvard Theatre Collection). And Odell, writing well after the fact, dubbed Hackett a “real star” after its debut (457), and commented, “December came in with a blaze of glory. Hackett returned on the 1st in Solomon Swap, with Barnes as Andrew Bang. It must have been rich and rare to see them in the scenes with the watch” (447).¹³⁰ Hackett had created a unique character through these two plays. He not only created star vehicles for himself, but caught New York—and later America--by surprise.

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4.10 EXPERIMENTING WITH THE YANKEE

With increasing fame to his name, Hackett began performing at other venues and in new roles. In January 1830 he played for the first time at the Bowery. In April 1830 he starred at

¹³⁰ I am not sure why these two sources use identical verbiage.

Philadelphia's Chestnut Theatre, and shortly thereafter traveled to Boston to perform. Between 1830-1832 he went on a national tour, traveling to theatres as far away as Charleston and New Orleans. With a growing national reputation, Hackett was able to experiment with the Yankee figure and form. He tried many new pieces, each showcasing the Yankee within different formats. Some were still a loosely connected group of sketches, as *Sylvester Daggerwood* had been. Others were full-length works with a unified plot, like *John Bull*. Most importantly, American playwrights wrote all of these new works. Hackett had championed a native figure, bringing the Yankee into American theatres; now he championed indigenous creative works. Dramas including the Yankee, it seems, no longer required strict English legitimation to gain access to the stage. It should be said, however, that the ones with such associated cultural capital still fared better (economically and critically) on the American stage. Though Hackett would experiment many times in the upcoming years, *Sylvester Daggerwood* and *John Bull at Home* were still his most significant successes.

In December 1829, almost a year to the date after his triumph with *John Bull at Home*, Hackett brought out a comedy called *The Times; or Life in New York* for his benefit performance at the Park Theatre. It met with only fair success. The author of this work is unknown. It is credited simply to "a gentleman of the city" (Hodge 106).¹³¹ The text too remains somewhat mysterious, for it is no longer extant. From the *Mirror's* review and Hodge's analysis, some information can be gleaned about both this work and *Industrious Doolittle*, the Yankee Hackett played.¹³²

¹³¹ On the authorship, Hodge notes that James Rees, author of *The Dramatic Authors of America*, attributes this work to John Ingham, a playwright later famous for his work *The Usurper*. He also notes that Hackett "worked directly with the script, particularly in developing the central character of *Industrious Doolittle*" (106).

¹³² Hodge was able to use an acting side for his analysis. In the 1960s, when Hodge was completing his research, this side was available for study through the Enthoven Collection in London. I was not able to find it there during my research time in 2003 so I will have to rely on Hodge here.

The *Mirror* outlines the play's form and character base:

[*The Times; or Life in New York*] consists of a dozen or so of scenes thrown cleverly though loosely together, exhibiting the manners and habits of the worthy inhabitants of the city, and the birds of passage that flock to it and through it from every quarter of the globe, and sketching, pleasantly enough, a few of their follies and peculiarities...¹³³ There is a pretended English baronet on his travels, a Frenchman, two Broadway dandies (a black and a white), a plain merchant and his fashionable wife, a talking speculating Yankee, and a brace of young ladies and gentlemen. Some of the jokes are old, though without being stale, but as they are adroitly introduced and well-told, they answer just as well as new ones, and there is considerable bustle and knowledge of stage effect displayed throughout. Altogether it appears as if it were the careless off-hand production of an exceedingly clever writer (December 19, 1829).

Apparently the script was filled with many types, which would offer a strong contrast through which to view the Yankee. Hodge says, "This time he [Hackett] can set off his scheming Yankee against a wealthy New York merchant, an English merchant, an English traveler who hates America, a Negro dandy, and a French valet" (108). One could view the Yankee's salesmanship in contrast to the American merchant and his English counterpart. Its audience could also watch how the Yankee differed from other low-comedic stage types, such as the African-American and the New York dandy.¹³⁴

But what was Industrious Doolittle like? A playbill describes Doolittle as a "Busy, Talkative Native of one of the Eastern States—Speculator in everything—Auctioneer, Bank and Insurance Director, and Stump Candidate for Assembly, with a sneaking notion for Caroline [Caroline Traffic, a rich Carolinian heiress] or more 'specially' her large inheritance in Rice and

¹³³ This description of the many travelers visiting New York at this time foregrounds the play's post-colonial nature. More will be said on this play and the larger cultural concerns propelling such a description in Chapter Four.

¹³⁴ The play not only showed off many differing types of persons in New York, it also showed many sights of the city. Perhaps trying to compete with William Dunlap's *Trip to Niagara*, which had debuted in 1829 at the Bowery Theatre and made a hit with its moving diorama of the Hudson River, *The Times* included "Views of the Battery and of Wall Street" (Hodge 108).

Cotton Plantations” (image found in Hodge 107).¹³⁵ This was quite a different Yankee from what Hackett had previously played. Hodge claims, “Doolittle differs sharply from Solomon Swap” (108). Yet, it appears that Hackett did not completely depart from what he knew would work. Continues Hodge, “He [Doolittle] is something of a country boy moved to the city, and some of the material used in *Sylvester Daggerwood* can be detected in the stories and lines that make up the character” (ibid). While experimenting with the Yankee form, Hackett did not disembark too far from past successes. Industrious Doolittle must have been older than Jonathan in *Sylvester Daggerwood*, for he is old enough to have tried many jobs and to run for political office. He also must have been more of an entrepreneur than Jonathan, for he works his speculations into every interaction; Jonathan tried to sell his eel-skin cap in *Sylvester Daggerwood*, but became scared when potential buyers were not interested and ran away in fear.

Many future Yankees would be ardent capitalists, as was Doolittle. Many future Yankees would run for office or become involved in politics. Some upcoming Yankee works would include a like scene of a wildly dancing Yankee.¹³⁶ Hackett’s experimentation, it seems, led the way for the future development of this character. Hackett was testing the Yankee on stage, seeing what would work and what would not. In his first experiment with a completely native-

¹³⁵ There is more information on this Yankee in Hodge’s work. He explains some of the dramatic action involving Doolittle: “As a New York speculator in all sorts of enterprises, he [Doolittle] confides in the English merchant various schemes for making money, honestly if at all possible. The important thing is to make it... Then he kids the Englishman on the poor market for indigo in New York... He also talks about speculation in feathers, tries to sell Mr. Traffic some stock shares, and tells a Yankee story about tricking a greedy insurance broker. Doolittle carries a pocketful of loose papers, of which one outlines a plan for ‘Heads of an Association to be called the anti-steamboat bell ringing society to discourage the noisy practice of ringing bells and blowing bugles on board steamboats before starting.’ When the Negro porter from the City Hotel comes by with the traveling bags of Sir Croesus Mushroom, Doolittle has a chance to hear his complaints about life in America as they talk about Boston, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the size of the North River, and the state of the theatre. A few minutes later Doolittle entertains the ladies with a dance... Later he announces his plans for running for the New York State Legislature... He finally leaves for Pearl Street for his first job as auctioneer. Sir Croesus Mushroom is left behind with the opinion that all Yankees are savages. Doolittle is shown throughout the piece as a speculator-pretender, a bragging Yankee who tells grossly exaggerated stories in a hearty and friendly way” (108-109).

¹³⁶ Hodge notes that Industrious Doolittle “dances wildly alone” when he cannot properly keep time in dancing with the ladies (109). In the past Humphreys’s Doolittle had incorporated music (his jews harp). In the future other Yankees would dance. Hill and Silsbee would both perform dancing Yankees.

produced Yankee vehicle, Hackett was moderately successful. *The Times* was received well.¹³⁷ Other trials, however, would be far less profitable.

Hackett's experimentation continued the following year. In April 1830 he brought out three new works at the Park Theater: *Down East, or the Village Gazette* (later renamed *Down East, or The Militia Muster*), an adaptation of John Kerr's *Rip Van Winkle*, and *The Indian Wife, or The Falls of Montmorency*, written by H. J. Finn.¹³⁸ Two of these works—*The Indian Wife*¹³⁹ and *Down East*—were Yankee plays. Likewise, two of them—*Rip Van Winkle* and *Down East*—became mainstays in his repertoire. Hackett continued to play both works throughout the following years, gaining much success with them wherever he performed.

Down East also calls for examination, for within this work Hackett again attempted to use strictly native material.¹⁴⁰ Hackett actually wrote this work;¹⁴¹ but he did not create it from scratch. He drew on a theme long familiar and popular in America, one in which the Yankee had often been employed. He used the image of a Militia Training day, a comic scene well known by this time.

Military humor had long been popular in America.¹⁴² Comic images of the American militia began showing up in print soon following the Revolutionary War, and continued to be

¹³⁷ The *Mirror* reported that Doolittle, unlike his name suggests, “did enough to keep the audience in a merry mood from the beginning to end” (VII, December 19, 1829). Yet on opening night this play was ignored by *The New York Times* because another American play and American actor had pre-empted Hackett's spotlight. It was Edwin Forest's premiere performance of *Metamora*.

¹³⁸ In later years Finn would become a major “Yankee Theatre” playwright, writing mainly for George “Yankee” Hill. More will be said about him in Chapter Four.

¹³⁹ Not much is known about *The Indian Wife*, save for the fact that Hackett portrayed a Green Mountain boy, a Vermonter, named Sergeant Peletiah Peabody

¹⁴⁰ It is also important because in 1832 Hackett used it as an afterpiece in London. It will be discussed in this context later in the chapter.

¹⁴¹ On the evening of April 22, 1830 Hackett played both *Rip Van Winkle* and *Down East*. About these works the *New York Evening Post* claimed, “One of the pieces is said to be from the pen of the comedian himself, and the other has received considerable alterations and improvements at his hand.” At this time Hackett was using a version of *Rip Van Winkle*, written by John Kerr. The play “written by the comedian himself” then, had to be *Down East*. Hodge notes this on page 111.

¹⁴² See Hodge page 111 and Nickels pages 86-87 & 231 n 9.

created, copied, and reproduced until the 1860s.¹⁴³ These cartoons most often depicted a group of men readying themselves for war or attending a Training Day. They were not, however, the tidy, well-dressed, organized group one might expect. These men were ragged bumpkins. They often wore traditional Yankee costumes and seemed to be the most ill prepared motley crew ever assembled. Some carried guns, but others had nothing more than umbrellas. Many appeared idiotic or perhaps drunk. How would a group like this ever meet the well-organized, well-trained, completely armed British army? Herein lies the joke. Perhaps initiated by the wit in “Yankee Doodle,” militia humor was amusing because it relied on the knowledge that America—these raggedly dressed and ill equipped men—would in fact win the war.¹⁴⁴ This was the image that Hackett put on stage in *Down East*.¹⁴⁵

The version of *Down East* that Hackett used for his premiere in 1830 is no longer extant. *The Mirror* however summarized this piece as a farce of ten or twelve scenes “thrown loosely together” (VII, 339). It was, in other words, merely a frame for Hackett’s Yankee character. Going back to a more open format (similar to *Sylvester Daggerwood*), Hackett could adjust and alter the piece as he chose. For example, the second performance of this work advertised that it would be “comprised” (as quoted in Hodge 112). When he performed it at the Chestnut Theatre,

¹⁴³ See Nickels page 124 for an image of later Yankee militia.

¹⁴⁴ On this type of humor, Hodge speculates, “It would not be reading too much into the play [*Down East*] to see Joe Bunker as the common image of the floundering and confusions of democratic society, as an image of what democracy meant in everyday practices” (111). I don’t agree with this analysis, but it is worth mentioning since both he and Nickels agree on this point. Both affirm that militia humor resonated within the culture through the 1830s because it was (at least partially) satirical of the new democratic order in America.

¹⁴⁵ The reader should recall David Claypoole Johnston’s painting “A Militia Muster,” created in 1828. Johnston’s work is similar to what Hackett’s *Down East* probably looked like on stage. There is some evidence to suggest that Hackett traveled to Boston (where the painting was displayed) around this time, for Hodge claims that Hackett journeyed to both Boston and Philadelphia between his numerous engagements at the Park Theatre in 1829-1831. Could Johnston’s work have inspired *Down East*? Hackett had been working on such a sketch for some time, for evidence suggests that, along with the “Uncle Ben Story,” he had shared this idea (as well as specific comic bits) with Mathews in 1824. Images of a comic militia band had been increasing in the culture for years. Perhaps these numerous occurrences—spurred by “A Militia Muster’s” indisputable legitimation—convinced Hackett that the American stage would be open to such a scene at this time. Since Hackett did not construct an autobiography, as many future Yankee actors would, it is impossible to determine any clear connection between the two works.

he changed it again. This time Hackett added a new Yankee story called, “How to Sell a Fox Skin” (ibid) to the text. Later, this work was mostly performed as an afterpiece. In this form, *Down East* probably only included one or two scenes from the original full-length play.

One of these scenes—probably from the original full-length work—is still extant. It is a sketch entitled “The Skeleton of the Ludicrous Scene of the Militia Training,” now found in the Enthoven Collection. Examining this sketch gives the historian a clearer idea of what the full work must have been like. In this “Skeleton” Hackett played Major Joe Bunker, “The Yankee Major”¹⁴⁶ and leader of a ragged New England regiment. Hateful Parkins,¹⁴⁷ an “Independent Disorderly”, and Nick Weaver (described only by the simple stage direction “His feet chalked ‘R’ and ‘L’”), are the other speaking characters.¹⁴⁸ These two might have been Yankees (they were from New England, after all), although one critic identified Perkins as “a stolid Puritan” (Hodge 112).¹⁴⁹ Twelve unnamed militiamen, a drummer and a fifer also clutter the stage.

The action of the sketch is simple. This is a Training Day and Major Joe works hard to prepare the men for war. But it is a difficult task. Some do not have guns, but only carry umbrellas. Some seem oblivious to his leadership, and some are unfamiliar with the most simple of military commands. For example, when Major Joe orders the men “Return ramrod,” one soldier, Hateful Parkins, “takes a ramrod from a man L.H. and carries it over to another on the R.H.”. When asked why he has done this, he replies that he is simply following orders: “You said we must all return ramrods, and I see him borrow it when we fell in.” Major Joe even has trouble getting the men to form a straight line. They seem to be unable to complete the most simple of tasks.

¹⁴⁶ All quotes are from the “Skeleton.” No page numbers available.

¹⁴⁷ Sometimes noted as Perkins.

¹⁴⁸ No actors are listed.

¹⁴⁹ Hodge alludes to the fact that Charles Durang originally made this assessment, but he gives no citation for this insight.

The men are most certainly unprepared for the reality of war. But if they are ill equipped, their leader, Major Joe, is even more so. After ordering the soldiers to “Take aim,” he gives the command, “Ram down the cartridge!” One soldier points out that “fire” should follow “take aim.” A dispute follows that is at last settled by reviewing a copy of the Manual. It seems Major Joe has not read it yet. Their major is also unqualified. He is as bumbling as the rest. They laugh at his off-stage antics, for example: “There’s Major Joe trying to get on his old mare, and she won’t stand it. She’s got the most sense of the two. Then he’s gin up and is coming this way. No, he’s fell down. His sword’s got between his legs and tripped him up. Ha, Ha, Ha!” Knowing that he is no better than they, the men scoff that after the war he had better not put on airs. If he acts so “superfluous” “arter traings [‘after training’s’] over,” Hateful says, he will get a “licking.” The sketch ends when the unit disbands because it looks like rain. Many use their “guns”—umbrellas—to shield themselves from upcoming shower.

In examining the alterations made to the Yankee within this piece, Hodge asks, “How old a man was Major Joe Bunker? Solomon Swap was a country boy; Industrious Doolittle could have been in his thirties. Was Joe Bunker Hackett’s “old” Yankee?” (117). No matter what his age though, Major Joe Bunker was certainly a new type of Yankee. Cranky and idiotic, he bumbled around stage perhaps even more than Jonathan in *The Contrast*. Here was no graceful capitalist, but a bumpkin who often fell off his horse, perhaps got on the saddle incorrectly, or rode off in the wrong direction. Here was a Yankee who delighted audiences through simple slapstick.

Filled with this type of familiar low-comic humor, *Down East* was immensely popular. Hackett showed it at least three more times in April 1830 alone, and continued to use it throughout his travels in the following two years. Noah Ludlow remembered: “I never enjoyed

any performance of the comic kind more” (as quoted by Hodge 111). Too, Hodge says, “[s]o successful was Hackett with his American plays that scarcely a week after *Down East* opened he advertised his first Prize Play Contest” (118).

* * * * *

With rising fame as a comic, Hackett certainly needed new material to keep his repertoire fresh. A play contest was perhaps the most efficient means to gaining new works cheaply. Edwin Forest had recently offered such a competition and acquired *Metamora*, a piece that became one of the most popular and important dramas of the Jacksonian period. In similar form, Hackett advertised his contest and offered a prize of \$250. Two dramas were selected, James Kirke Paulding’s *The Lion of the West, or A Trip To Washington*,¹⁵⁰ and *The Moderns, or a Trip to the Springs*.¹⁵¹ Paulding’s work won the prize. Hackett must have offered some consolation prize to the author of *The Moderns*, however, for when he premiered this work he billed it as “the new prize comedy” (Hodge 118).

The Moderns is important as it displays Hackett’s increasing interest in exploring the versatility of the Yankee character.¹⁵² In this work he played Melodious Migrate, a pompous, meddlesome, and bigoted schoolteacher, who was originally from Connecticut. Though this instructor spoke in a Yankee dialect—throwing in stories of “punkin pyes” and “obstropolous” students—he had little else in common with contemporary Yankee characters. Contemporary

¹⁵⁰ This play would later be re-written by Bayle Bernard and entitled *The Kentuckian*. It would bring Hackett lasting fame in America and England.

¹⁵¹ The author was noted only as “a Gentleman of New York” (Hodge 118).

¹⁵² The full acting text of *The Moderns* is no longer extant. Only a side of the principal actor’s lines is available. This makes the entire plot hard to decipher, for it included a full cast of other characters (although not even a cast list is supplied in the actor’s side) whose parts are omitted. Because of this, Hodge seems unable to grasp the play’s plot. He speculates, “...it is entirely possible that again [like *Down East*] it was a series of sketches... perhaps no more than an outline that would be given body when the principal character was acted” (119). Though it offers a unique challenge to the historian, I believe that *The Moderns* was actually a unified play, not a series of sketches. Though much of the needed action is absent (indeed, the first scene available is Act I, Scene iii) there does seem to be a coherent plot.

Yankee characters were, generally speaking, harmless country bumpkins. They were not to be feared, for though they might play tricks on an urbanite, or even threaten violence when in distress, they were never actually malevolent or immoral. They were from the countryside and at this time such a rural upbringing inherently endowed one with a moral code—or at least that was claimed by the rhetoric within Yankee dramas. Melodious Migrate, however, was another story. In Act I he makes a noose from a rope and tries to kill a man. In Act III he threatens his students with a whip. What's more, in the second act he brawls on stage, entering into a kind of nineteenth-century gang fight. One would expect the Yankee to talk big and then duck out of such a conflict, but Melodious yells to his companion musicians "In, in, every one in," urging them to fight.¹⁵³

Melodious was not all villain; he did have his good points. For example, at times he displays a softer side when he speaks of his love for a woman named Tabby.¹⁵⁴ He also appears to help a friend win over another woman through a type of Cyrano-de-Bergerac routine, singing to her outside of her hotel and having his friend mouth the words. He also dances wildly on stage, and sings atrociously at the top of his voice, "Fal, La, Sol." Yet his bad traits in the end outweigh the positive attributes he displays. He is ultimately an overzealous misguided bigot who thinks too highly of himself. The play ends with Melodious dubbing himself "Melodius Migrate, P.O.P. & S.F.C"--that is, "Professor of Psalmody" and "Schoolteacher From Connecticut"—and moving to another district.

It was perhaps these differences in the Yankee—a character that was quickly becoming codified in the American culture--that influenced the audiences' and critics' response to the

¹⁵³ No page numbers are available since it is an actor's side.

¹⁵⁴ Granted, she does not return his feelings. Melodious has actually mistaken her actions as affection for him, but she really loves another man.

piece.¹⁵⁵ It was not reviewed positively and Hackett had to drop it from his repertoire. He did not perform it again after its debut on April 18, 1831. The failure of *The Moderns* seemed to affect Hackett greatly, for it temporarily ended his experimentation with new Yankee works. This was the last new drama he would show to Americans before he ventured to London in 1832.

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4.11 HACKETT'S SECOND LONDON TOUR: 1832

From 1828 to 1832 Hackett's reputation in America grew. He had traveled through most of the country and performed in a number of different roles. With this increased exposure, his national fame increased. *The Mirror* featured in him in its June 1832 edition, printing a lithograph of him and showcasing his work in a front-page profile. This edition lauded him as a pioneer of American drama and even labeled him "the patriarch of comedy" (IX, 377). Perhaps

¹⁵⁵ There are other explanations for this play's failure. For example, *Melodious* is terribly critical of Italian operas and openly criticizes New Yorker's taste in music. He rants: "As for York, they know as much about music as a Jackass knows about an Anthem. When I was there, they were in a desperate all sufficient way about Signorinas and such kind of Italian stuff and nonsense! Why I heerd a woman sing with a trumpet, and soon they both went it, just like Beacon Bigelow's saw-mill in the freshet time—clip, clip, clip! and I couldn't understand a word she said, yet I thought the devil was to pay somewhere." At this time a clearer distinction between "cultivated" and "vernacular" music was becoming codified. After 1825 theatres were moving to decide between the two, based on their audiences' preferred taste. "Cultivated" music was sung in Italian, and "Vernacular" music was sung in English translation. The Park Theatre was clearly associated with "cultivated" music, for on March 31, 1830 it featured the debut of soprano Giulia da Ponte, niece of Lorenzo da Ponte. Though the opera received only lukewarm reviews, elite citizens who patronized the Park were probably interested in supporting this type of performance. Were *Melodious*'s comments directly referencing Giulia da Ponte? While none can be sure, it is clear that interest in Italian opera was rising in New York, for The Italian Opera house opened in 1833. With the elite audience present—perhaps even some patrons that had seen and enjoyed de Pont's performance—*Melodious*'s comments perhaps hit too close to home. He was making fun of these very New Yorkers, condemning their taste in music and questioning their cultured tastes. What's more, he continued such railings all through the play, mocking "Italian" opera and dismissing Rossini, the favorite composer of this time. He even comments that the best band in New York was a Negro band. This comment certainly would not have sat well with Park audiences, who prized their orchestra as one of the most superior in the city. (It included Felipe Cioffi, a trombonist who was famous for his unique role in Italian opera music. He would continue to gain fame throughout the 1830s, later moving to the Italian Opera House after it opened.) Though *Melodious* was obviously a yokel whose music sense could not be trusted, perhaps this aspect of the play offended those in the house. The satire might have simply been too sharp.

it was because of this growing reputation that Hackett decided to try the Yankee again on the London stage.

In 1832 Hackett journeyed to London. He was scheduled to perform at the Drury Lane Theatre, at this time managed by Alfred Bunn. For his second transatlantic showing, surprisingly, Hackett did not veer far from his past course of action, which had led to such failure in 1827. He chose to present *Solomon Swap*, his adaptation of Colman's *Who Wants a Guinea?*. This choice perhaps seemed logical to Hackett for a few reasons. It had been the most successful of his Yankee vehicles in the United States, popular in all areas of America, winning him many prominent rewards. Yet because of his past London experience, Hackett had to be aware of the dangers associated with presenting such a work.¹⁵⁶ Despite the hazards, Hackett continued making arrangements for his second London premiere, seemingly unworried that this work would affect the audience the same way *Sylvester Daggerwood* had in 1827.

A critique of *Solomon Swap* came even before it was staged. Colman, who now worked as the Examiner of Plays, reviewed the piece. In a letter dated 14th November, 1832 he wrote to manager Bunn:

Sir,

In respect to the alterations made by *Mr. Hackett*—a most appropriate name on the present occasion!—were the established play of any living dramatist, except myself, so mutilated, I should express to the Lord Chamberlain, the grossness and unfairness of the manager who encouraged such a proceeding;—but as the character of *Solomon Grundy* was originally part of my own writing, I shall request His Grace to license the rubbish... which you have sent me (as quoted in Hodge 127).

¹⁵⁶ Hodge notes that Alfred Bunn had to have been in consultation with Hackett on this choice of material. “Bunn was too independent a manager, too much the avid businessman,” Hodge says, “to have haphazardly left such an important decision to an actor... [B]usinessman Bunn undoubtedly came to terms with businessman Hackett, and Bunn took the first steps toward performance by setting up the company that was to act Hackett's pieces, and by applying to the Examiner of Plays for a license” (127).

Colman was clearly unimpressed by Hackett's work. He was also obviously annoyed with Bunn's willingness to show a piece that had been so altered by an American.¹⁵⁷ It seems Colman guessed what the response would be to *Solomon Swap* and wished to exculpate himself from any future blame in the matter. Unfortunately Bunn dismissed Colman's misgivings about the scheduled performance. *Solomon Swap* would be shown on November 18, 1832, with *Down East* as the afterpiece.

Though Hodge upholds Hackett's version as a "stronger acting piece than the original" (Hodge 104), London reviewers, like Colman, were unimpressed by his efforts. Though not universally disparaged, Hackett's second London premiere could hardly be counted a success. *The Courier*, for example, claimed, "Mr. Hackett has not yet displayed many of the higher qualifications of a good comedian. His manner lacks variety; and he altogether neglects to represent the finer traits of character which are to be found in the peasantry of America, as well as in our own" (November 24, 1832). In like fashion, *The Times* reported:

The comedy of *Who Wants a Guinea?*, one of the weakest productions of Mr. Colman's muse, was revived on Saturday evening. Whatever the original demerits of the piece may be, they were considerably increased by the metamorphosis of the character of Solomon Gundy, whose ludicrous French and 'malaprop' English afforded great amusement, into Solomon Swap, a regular Yankee, whose slang it was exceedingly difficult to comprehend, and where it was comprehended, appeared to us to boast of no quality beyond sheer vulgarity... (November 19, 1832).

Though this critic claims that Hackett's language was vulgar, cruder speech was being uttered that night. It was, however, not coming from Hackett, but from an English actor, William Dowton, who was hired to support Hackett through his portrayal of Torrent. Though Dowton had been previously lauded for his comic portrayals in many dramas, he performed horribly this

¹⁵⁷ Hodge claims, "As far as the London stage was concerned, Colman was considered John Bull himself. He was now asked to grant permission for performing a 'mutilation' of his own play. And by a Yankee!" (127).

evening. He dropped many lines and began to improvise. Unfortunately for Hackett, his improvisations included much foul language. Hodge recounts, “Oath followed oath... ‘interspersed with witless ribaldry,’ until Dowton had shocked and irritated every ‘respectable person in the house.’ The audience, which had been growing more and more active in its protest, finally took a vigorous hand in the affair and hissed its indignation and reproof” (131). Again Hackett’s performance upset audience members.¹⁵⁸

Surprisingly, Dowton’s poor performance was overlooked in most reviews. If they did mention him, their comments were quite positive. *The Times*, for example, said, “The generous impetuosity of Torrent was well delineated by Mr. Dowton” (November 19, 1832). Likewise, *The Morning Herald* claimed that the play was well cast and that all of the English actors, including Dowton, “...came in for their share of applause” (November 19, 1832).

Yet these same reviewers were not as generous with Hackett. Many questioned his delineation of the Yankee, doubting its authenticity. Hodge details other accounts:

The diatribe against the American continued with serious questioning of the authority of Hackett’s Yankee. One reviewer thought the portrait so exaggerated that it bordered on that of the West Indian Negro. Another thought it as far removed from reality as the stage views of English ploughboys and peasantry in red jackets, drab breeches, and white ribbed stockings with blue ribands [sic] from their real counterparts. And he goes on to assert that such amusing beings as Solomon Swap were very rare in America, and that Hackett caricatured his fellow countrymen more outrageously than Mathews (132).

The last remark is telling. Mathews’s performance was still fresh in the minds of Londoners, although eight years had passed since the debuts of *Trip to America* and *Jonathan Doubikins*. And they still judged Mathews’s Yankee as superior, more authentic, reliable, and entertaining. Mathews was still *the* Yankee performer as far as the English were concerned.

¹⁵⁸ For a more comprehensive explanation of Dowton’s behavior before, during, and after the performance, see Hodge 129-132.

Again, the imperial center came down with force on James Hackett. Though they understood the American culture and character largely from biased travel narratives or hearsay, these critics believed that they could distinguish between a “real” Yankee and a caricatured portrait of the American countryside. Still unfamiliar with the humor, tradition, and history that propelled the Yankee, they argued that Hackett was performing an atrocity, one far more critical and condemnatory of the American “peasantry” than Mathews’s had presented.

If *Solomon Swap* was badly reviewed, *Down East* was slaughtered. Unlike his London premiere in 1827, Hackett had actually made it through an entire play without being booed off the stage. Yet cries of “off, off” soon came when he presented the small afterpiece. From what the reviews say of *The Militia Muster*, (as it was billed that night), it appears that Hackett only showed the militia-training sketch. But although the script was much cut, this London audience was unwilling to sit through even a small piece of this kind. *The Morning Herald* summed up the response to the play succinctly, “The interlude of *The Militia Muster*, that followed the comedy, was not so successful” (November 19, 1832). The review in *The Times* was much harsher:

The comedy was followed by a gross piece of impertinence denominated *The Militia Muster*. The object of this stupid farce is, by placing in a tangible point of view a number of indifferent jokes contained in one of Mr. Mathews’s songs, to cast ridicule upon the citizen soldiers of America. The audience, however, with much good sense and propriety resisted the attempts. The moment Mr. Hackett, who enacted the part of Joe, a major of militia and tapster, commenced drilling his regiment of scarecrows, he was met by a general volley of hisses and cries of ‘Off!’ which continued until the curtain fell. The ‘muster-roll’ we take it, will not be again called over (November 19, 1832).

The Morning Post was similarly resistant:

The Militia Muster... is a mere embodying of Mathews’s song on the same subject... The audience at first laughed a little at the absurd accoutrements of the men, but when they found they had nothing more to expect than to witness the

awkwardness of the troop in obeying the word of command of their Major (HACKETT), they soon grew tired and began to hiss; and the manifestations of general and determined opposition at last became so vehement that it was impossible to know whether the piece was regularly concluded or not, for the curtain fell before it like a pall. There was no attempt made to announce it for repetition (November 19, 1832).

Hodge summarizes: “*The Militia Muster*, the totally original Yankee piece on the bill, was a total failure” (131). This review, like the many others that also appeared following Hackett’s second debut, concluded that what they had seen was a second-rate performance. It simply did not compare to Mathews’s rendition of similar material: “We did not, however, consider his delineation as any improvement on Mathews’s...” (*The Morning Post*, November 19, 1832).

Although the critics harshly judged Hackett’s work, they were perhaps just in comparing *The Militia Muster* and Mathews’s work in *Trip to America*, for the two works were strikingly similar. Hackett’s version of this sketch has already been discussed. A portion of Mathews’s work will only be recounted here. The skit begins with a song:

AIR—“Hey for the Life of a Soldier”
Come militiamen so gay
Bring your drums, your guns, and sabers,
While the fife shall briskly play,
Assemble all your neighbours.
See the officer is near,
See the troops in crowds appear,
Every soldier now is near,
Prosecute his labours (Klepac 107).

A spoken monologue to a fictional army comes next, though Mathews appears to have played both the captain as well as the soldiers.

No gentlemen, to prevent, our falling out, I’ll thank you to fall in.—Form a line if you please—why bless me do you call that a line, why you are as crooked at both ends and not straight in the middle—Now do alter that gentlemen—Why neighbor Swigger, don’t you see your inside is quite hollow, it wants filling up—Yes, and so would yours too, if you had come from home without your breakfast as I

have—Stand at ease! Why neighbor Shuffle you don't stand at ease.—No I can't for I've got a pebble in my shoe. —Eyes right. That's a thing I shall like to do, says Gazeall, and perhaps Mr Officer you'll tell me how to manage it, for look I squint.—That's true, says Rattleport, and that's the reason you always look so cross at the Captain when he commands you. Now gentlemen, you with your guns come forward, you with the umbrellas wheel to the right, and you with the bean stalks go to the left. —Now shoulder. —There now, I didn't say arms. Well, never mind, you might have said it, you know... (Klepac 107-108).

Varying his style, Mathews gives another song, then returns to dialogue:

Halt! Halt! Halt! —why gentlemen, you've left the rear guard behind. —Yes, so we have, we're beforehand with them.—Now gentlemen, we're going to exercise, and in order that all may be correct, I'll give you the word from my book of the new system—Stand at ease! Attention! Shoulder arms! Fix bayonets! --Why Captain, how are we to fix bayonets when our guns are on our shoulders? --Oh, I beg pardon, I've turned over two leaves at once. —Order arms— unfix bayonets. — Why, we haven't fixed them yet, Captain. —That's true, but never mind—ground arms... (Klepac 108).

This monologue ends with a reference to upcoming rain: “What have you put up your umbrella for, Drybones? --Because I guess we shall have a very particularly damn'd heavy shower of rain” (ibid). The sketch again varies in its form, incorporating another song and another dialogue. In this part a familiar joke is told: “Now return ramrods—what, what are you doing there? —Why, I'm returning the ramrod, I borrowed it of Graball, and I'm doing as you bid me” (ibid).

The similarity between the two works is astonishing. Mathews's work, like Hackett's, included many jokes at the expense of Militia Men soldiers. Both show these men horribly unprepared for war. In both the men used umbrellas as guns and had difficulty following the simplest of commands. Too, both incorporated upcoming rain, a cranky and incompetent leader who had not yet read the manual issued by the U.S. government, and many of the same jokes. These two works are so similar in places that they coincide word for word.

Despite the similarity in form, content, and wording, Hackett's version of this material was completely rejected while Mathews's had been enthusiastically applauded just a few years before. Mathews's performance of the American militia had given the London audience what they wanted (namely, a comic portrayal of American soldiers as yokels), and its wild success set a precedent. According to these audiences, Mathews not only performed the Yankee in a "better" fashion, but he also presented all kinds of comic Americans "better" too. Any actor following, trying to "outdo" Mathews would be booed off stage. Hackett's position as "second," performing after London's beloved Mathews, hurt him tremendously.

* * * * *

Though he was again met with criticism and disparagement, Hackett was not quick to leave London this time. On November 23, 1832 he again played *John Bull at Home*, following it with a new afterpiece, *Monsieur Tonson*. Again, critics railed at his work. They disparaged *John Bull at Home* for its vernacular and unintelligibility--a familiar complaint by this time. Likewise, they compared his performance in *Monsieur Tonson* to Charles Mathews's rendition of the same work, and unsurprisingly, Hackett again fared terribly when juxtaposed to the English comedian. English reviewers criticized his French accent as inconsistent and they claimed not to find the degree of pathos that they had detected in Mathews's performance. The English actor, they said, was far more compassionate and empathetic.

But even with this further disappointment, Hackett still did not embark for the safety of home. He performed *Rip Van Winkle* and—perhaps surprisingly--won moderate praise for his portrayal of the old Dutchman. He also showed *Lion of the West*, which had been altered for London audiences, and won acclaim for this play. Hackett stayed in London until the summer of

1833, nearly seven months, and before he left he had played at the Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket Theatres.

Though not the most successful tour, Hackett's time in London was certainly productive, for not only did he gain more experience and greater London credentials, but he also discovered two important ways of subverting the demands placed on the American actor within the post-colonial transatlantic world. First and foremost, he found a means for future success in the former mother country. The secret to prosperity lay in utilizing London playwrights. The second was how to translate English imperialist taste into continuing American success.

When Hackett discovered the benefits of using English playwrights is uncertain, but what is clear is that before he left the country he was relying on their theatrical talents to aid him in catering to London tastes. For example, Samuel Beazley, an English theatre artist, re-wrote his *Militia Muster* sketch.¹⁵⁹ Hodge describes this rewrite and gives a brief plot outline:

The Beazley version, apparently specially prepared for the London audience, is a fifteen-minute sketch with a plot. Colonel Hodgkins insists that his ward Emily marry his son, despite her love for Melville, whom she met while in England, and to ensure it he locks her in her room. In the meantime the Englishman arrives incognito. The Colonel and Joe Bunker think he is a spy, and they lock him up while Joe goes for the militia. Florence, the maid, helps the lovers escape and get married while Joe is drilling the militia for the assault. When they return and the marriage is revealed, the Colonel's plot is thwarted (112).

Some of the speeches found in this version were taken directly from "The Skeleton," but this was clearly a re-write, vastly unlike the first *Militia Muster*. Though Hackett did not perform this version in London, he did employ other re-writes. Bayle Bernard, for example, rewrote *The Lion of the West*, which he quickly renamed to *The Kentuckian*. It was this version that Hackett used in London in 1833 when he finally received positive reviews. He also took this adaptation of the

¹⁵⁹ Though Hodge found the Beazley sketch in 1964 I was unable to uncover it in 2003. I will have to rely on Hodge's account of this script.

play to America and likewise received much approbation for it there. It became one of the most famous and well-enjoyed pieces within Hackett's repertoire.

What inspired Hackett to approach a London playwright? An article written by John Howard Payne and published in the *Mirror* offers a possible answer. Payne claims that he gave Hackett a letter of introduction to Bernard: "When he [Hackett] went thither [to London], I gave him, among such introductions as I thought most likely to be of service, one to Mr. Bernard, who, in addition to his connection with the theatres, I had reason to believe was connected with the press, and able and disposed to be serviceable in many ways" (Harvard Theatre Collection, *The Mirror*, no volume or page number available). Payne recounts how he and Hackett had discussed the possibility of collaborating on an adaptation of *Knickerbocker's History of New York*. Much to his humor and chagrin, he later discovered that Hackett had simply taken this project to another—to Bernard—the very writer Payne had recommended.

Likewise, it is uncertain when Hackett learned of the dramatic promise inherent in imperial taste, but what is clear is that when he journeyed home from London in 1833 he took with him Charles Mathews's infamous script *Jonathan in England; or Jonathan Doubikins*. Hackett had much experience transforming English works to suit the American public. He now turned his attention to Mathews's notorious play.

Unsurprisingly, the bulk of the changes concerned the issue of slavery. In *Jonathan Doubikins*, Jonathan is a ruthless slaveholder who treats Agamemnon with unrelenting cruelty. In *Jonathan in England*,¹⁶⁰ Jonathan still owns a slave, but he is in possession of such "property" through no fault of his own. His uncle Ben gave him the slave and so he loyally totes the

¹⁶⁰ Since there are four scripts with this same title I will refer to this version as simply *Jonathan in England* to aid the reader. The play is part of the "Prompt Books and Actor's Copies" series completed by the V & A Library (London). It is housed in the Enthoven Collection (London). The copy I worked with was on microfiche, available through the University of Missouri, #1.0.0128 & 1.0.0129.

African around with him. But unlike in Mathews's work, Jonathan does not attempt to sell Agamemnon. Moreover, he seems happy with his company while abroad. The Yankee jokes with "Aggy" about his tardiness and laziness, and accepts any excuse for such behavior as apt justification. Hackett's Jonathan does not treat his slave badly. On the contrary, he appears to be on (as) friendly terms (as would be socially acceptable)¹⁶¹ with Aggy, and is even concerned for his safety when appropriate. For example, in *Jonathan Doubikins*, Jonathan is unconcerned with Aggy's well being when the servants break into the room in which Jonathan and Aggy sleep looking for food. He only worries about his "dollars" and later chides the black man for not keeping watch. In Hackett's version, Jonathan often calls Agamemnon "the King of the Greece," and when he awakes from this same commotion in the night, rather than spouting an exclamation about his hidden money, he cries out to his slave, "Hang on—Hang on Caesar" (Hackett 63).¹⁶² After the incident, as well, Jonathan comes to Agamemnon's defense. When Mrs. Lemon accuses the black of stealing, Jonathan claims: "That nigger, madam's, not a thief" (Hackett 67; punctuation added).

The most important change, though, comes at the end of the play. In Mathews's version Agamemnon is set free, a radical move that angered both American citizens and English subjects in the audience. Agamemnon claims to have heard the word "freedom" used in the United States, but not to have known what it meant. Hackett simply cut this in his version. Both Jonathan and Agamemnon will be returning to the United States at the play's conclusion.

¹⁶¹ That is, he is as friendly as a "master" could be to a slave. He could not treat the African-American as an equal, of course. Such behavior would have been unthinkable in the United States, which was still largely committed to the "peculiar institution" even in the North. Many would have been upset to see a white man—especially the image of America—treating a black character with too much deference. There was a thin line to travel here. Jonathan was nice to Agamemnon, but the distinction between white and black, master and slave was upheld.

¹⁶² No page numbers exist on the text. I have simply counted the pages and numbered them accordingly.

In similar fashion, Hackett also changed the play's rhetoric concerning available social systems. America may have slaves, but the alternative across the Atlantic was drawn as far less kind. For instance, while Agamemnon is fat, well fed, and generally cared for, the servants in the Lemon household are starving. Natty and Jemmy, the postillions, choose to leave their positions out of desperation; their theft of the foodstuffs comes out of basic need. Furthermore, Mrs. Lemon treats them terribly. Her over-the-top nastiness is wonderfully portrayed in the orders she yells out to the servants: "Horty Torty! Now here are you two fellows idling when there are chickens to pick, peas to shell, ale to tap, books to clean, bottles to wash, carpets to beat, floors to sand, beans to split, knives to grind, and kittens to drown" (Hackett 35).

Likewise, white and black relations are altered to show an England unlike the perfect interracial utopia Mathews's had drawn. In Hackett's script *Blanche*, the black servant, may dine with the white butler, but will endure English racism while doing so. The butler warns her, "...you shall say and take your tea with me provided you don't touch my bread and butter with your black fingers" (Hackett 91). In *Jonathan in England*, England may have held fewer slaves, but it is more morally superior because of it.

By this time in Hackett's career he was well versed in rewriting English texts. Likewise, he well understood how to flip imperial attitudes on their heads. He had done so in both *Sylvester Daggerwood* and *John Bull at Home* with great acumen. But the reversal in *Jonathan in England* is astounding in its creativity and insight. This was clearly his most ingenious rewrite. For example, Mathews's work was filled with anti-American sentiment. Jonathan was a complete blunderer. He wrote a malicious and uninformed travelogue, became unjustly angry at the least provocation, and constantly assumed "annoying" Yankee attitudes.¹⁶³ In Hackett's

¹⁶³ "Annoying" to the British perception/English traveler that is.

work, these situations are reversed. Jonathan still writes a travelogue, but he does not make the incessant, ridiculous assumptions that Mathews's Jonathan Doubikins does. Likewise, Hackett's Yankee never becomes angry, nor is he rude. In an early scene in Mathews's work, when Mr. Ledger tells the Yankee that he likes his face, Jonathan Doubikins snidely answers that he does not return the sentiment. In Hackett's version, Jonathan answer's Ledger's comment "I like your face" with "[There's a] picture of it in my book" (Hackett 15).

Moreover, Hackett's work highlights biased imperial attitudes. It shows that many assumptions and beliefs English subjects held about Americans came from misunderstanding or imperial-based snobbery. For example, when Lady Gourmand asks Jonathan about his Uncle Ben, he misunderstands her. She says, "You uncle in Liverpool? So he [is] not in the United States?" The Yankee answers, "United States, eh, oh, yes, ma'am. I believe he has been married twice" (Hackett 107). Jonathan confuses her remark to mean a "united state" (marriage) rather than the "United States." His reply, though, is not seen for the innocent misunderstanding that it is. She assumes he is trying to annoy her. In an aside she claims, "How odd. He does not give a direct answer. A peculiarity I have heard of the Americans" (ibid; punctuation added). Similarly, when Mr. Delapierre, an American, says that he will marry Mary, his love, even if she has lost her fortune, Sir Gourmand claims: "Come, come, that's a disinterestedness I did not expect from an American" (Hackett 119). Long believed and regenerated beliefs English subjects held about Americans are seen for what they are—incorrect, biased falsehoods. What is more, in exposing such beliefs as inaccurate, *Jonathan in England* actually turns imperial attitudes around. English subjects are drawn as so snobby that they are willing to believe the worst about others, sight unseen, and such superciliousness leads them to believe all they hear or

read. They should be more fastidious, the play asserts, before believing the worst about others. Their assumptions prove to be the stuff of fiction that occurs only in travelogues.

* * * * *

Hackett had discovered the road to success. London playwrights were the answer. Hackett never performed the Yankee again in London, but he did continue to employ London playwrights to “fix up” other works. Through these means he would gain international fame. Later in his career he became so successful in London that he even performed for Queen Victoria and young Prince Albert. He also was very successful in France. The means to securing success in England, it seems, was to simply conform to its culture and refashion works to fit the current taste. American works told through a native voice and filled with a post-colonial perspective would never work. The imperialist center demanded that “Outsiders” conform to it.

In discovering this strategy Hackett would make it possible for future Yankee actors to also gain success in England. Hodge claims that through presenting the Yankee in London numerous times Hackett “paved the way to Drury Lane Theatre for other Americans” (137). He seems to believe that the English were becoming more and more accustomed to the American Yankee tradition with every performance, and that this continued exposure familiarized them to the traits and characteristics of the Yankee, thus securing future success of other American works. Yet this is not the whole story, for future Yankee actors would also have to follow Hackett’s strategy in order to succeed. They, too, would go to London playwrights and ask them to re-write the Yankee canon.

Likewise, Hackett also paved the way for American actors to use the materials they garnered in England. Coming from an imperialist mindset and filled with misconceptions about the New World, English scripts would be unusable in America unless they were altered. Hackett

showed that such a pursuit could not only be accomplished, but also proved profitable. He opened *Jonathan in England* for New York audiences on September 18, 1833 at the Park Theatre. It was his first performance upon returning home and the American public welcomed him back with financial success. His debut was a hit and the piece became so popular that Hackett kept it in his repertoire for years. Likewise, other Yankee actors also picked it up after Hackett stopped playing this line. *Jonathan in England*, rewritten and re-imagined through a post-colonial lens, would stay on American theatre boards for almost a decade.

Rewritten English scripts--*Jonathan in England* included--would become immensely popular over the next ten years, especially when acted by the next great Yankee actor, George H. Hill. The American public would never know the extent of the rewriting, but they could certainly distinguish that the works were changed, particularly in infamous scripts like *Jonathan in England*. Hackett had no easy time in England and he took the chance when it was presented to him to turn around such imperialist “misunderstanding.” Hodge claims that Hackett’s misfortune overseas actually engendered his performance of *Jonathan in England* with wonderfully compact “overtones;” no doubt future Yankee works would also contain such extra-performance nuances. Because of James Hackett’s creativity and long standing pursuit of New World centrality, American audience members would be able to laugh at the Yankee as he flipped imperialist assumptions around and symbolically battled anti-American biases throughout the transatlantic world during the entire Jacksonian era.

5.0 CHAPTER FOUR

5.1 GEORGE H. HILL AND THE TWO VERY DIFFERENT STAGE YANKEES (1831-1839)

The period between 1830 and 1837 was particularly significant for “Yankee Theatre” in America. The stage Yankee was booming. American playwrights such as Augustus Stone, J. S. Jones, Samuel Woodworth, Charles Shelby, and Cornelius Logan were all writing Yankee plays for both star and rising performers, answering the public demand for comedies that included this type. James Hackett, George “Yankee” Hill, and Danforth Marble were all performing on stage, and these Yankee actors often played along side of other American representatives, such as Edwin Forest (in *Metamora*) and T. D. Rice (as Jim Crow), or showcased their work with classical performers such as Ellen Tree and Fanny Kemble. The Yankee hit his peak in popularity, and “Yankee Theatre” reached its climax as a performance tradition. In America, the Yankee flourished as never before.

The Yankee flourished in England too. Although James Hackett had failed with American material, other actors tried their luck overseas after him. George Hill, the star Yankee actor in America in this period, attempted to woo the London public. Journeying to England twice between 1836 and 1839, Hill was far more successful than Hackett had been. Many of his shows played for weeks—even months!—on end. So popular was Hill in England that Queen Victoria graced one of his productions and advised all other nobility to do the same.

This Yankee was able to prosper both in America and England because of the unique post-colonial situation in the transatlantic world. Pressured by economic and cultural demands, American actors who sought English credits found it necessary to concede artistic authority to British writers. Although American material was demanded at home, abroad the Yankee had to please English audiences. Thus, two Yankee canons of dramatic literature were born, one stemming from an American perspective and one upholding European notions of the New World. Transatlantic tensions were apparent in many forms of creative material produced by both Americans and the English at this time. The Yankee, though, as a representative of America, channeled these tensions in a dramatically physical way. He would look, act, and maneuver differently depending on which side of the Atlantic he played.

The “American Yankee,” that is, a Yankee written and/or created by Americans, was similar to his previous incarnations at this time, albeit with a keener eye to the “main chance.” The Yankee had set about peddling much earlier in the era,¹⁶⁴ but during the Jacksonian period his bargaining skills and trading tricks became his most important trait. He was a ‘cute bargainer and a sly trickster. His best tricks were reserved for those who warranted such treatment in the eyes of northern Americans: Old World representatives, foreigners (especially Dutchmen), haughty social climbers, or Southerners. Though he fooled these “deserving” individuals, the Yankee was not a malicious trickster. He was not a conman, nor an amoral capitalist. When he did get the best of a buyer, he did so through ingenious, resourceful means.

The “English Yankee,” that is, a Yankee written and/or created by an Englishman, was quite different. He was either a sly, immoral capitalist or a complete buffoon. Continuing in the

¹⁶⁴ Federalist Yankees were sometimes portrayed as peddlers. A. B. Lindsley’s Yankees in *Love and Friendship* for example sold Yankee notions. Yankee tricks were also seen in Hackett’s work. His Solomon Swap, for example, traded watches with Alexander Bang, giving him only a case with “no insides.”

line the esteemed Charles Mathews had developed earlier in the era, both types were fraught with anti-American rhetoric, often based on biased travel literature or popular myths about the New World character. For example, when the “English Yankee” acted the part of a sly bargainer his deals were dishonest. His inventions were scams and his investment schemes were frauds. Too, if he could not convince potential customers to invest on only his sales pitch, he turned to immoral means, as so many travelogue Yankees had before him.

When the “English Yankee” was drawn as a buffoon, on the other hand, he was devoid of any common sense. His stupidity was immense and he seemed to sink to new levels of idiocy with every further showing. Likewise, he was often stubborn, sticking to a moral “high road” even when common sense argued otherwise. But the Yankee did not do so out of true ethical concern, he actually worked to put American-boasted moral superiority into place, for he was unable to distinguish between true moral action and mere platitude. Whether the Yankee conned innocent people on stage or idiotically made terrible decisions, in England this figure worked to denigrate Americans in ways reminiscent of popular travelogues.

There was little mixing of the two canons. Similar to the flow of power within imperial/colonial international relations, “Yankee Theatre” moved generally in one direction, from England to America. This seems ironic since American dramatic writers and actors originated “Yankee Theatre,” but it played out like this: American actors might bring ideas and Yankee material to England, but they were not able to perform these plays. The actors would surely fail if they played the American works, and they could not afford to do so given the New-World esteem of English theatre back across the Atlantic. Thus, English authors wrote new plays for the American actors, and of course charged them for this service. The plays succeeded and American actors traveled home joyous of their triumph in England. Upon returning to

American playhouses, actors did not discard the English plays. In reality, they could not; the English name carried too much cultural capital in their (post-colonial) environment. All American eyes were turned towards England and these audiences wanted to see the plays that had gained their actors success overseas. Yet many of these plays were filled with too much anti-American sentiment to be shown without alterations. American spectators would have been furious. So the English works were changed.

Were these American artists performing American post-colonial resistance? Were they, like James Hackett, re-writing English works, or writing over English cultural imperialism? Or were the actors complicit in legitimating the unequal power relations between America and England within the transatlantic world? They were, after all, “wiping clean” the English perception of America and Americans, which, one could say, kept Americans both subdued and falsely admiring of their (imperial) cousins.

Because the Yankee was an image of America, both sides of the Atlantic were interested in exploring this figure. Yet (inter)cultural expectations and tensions kept both cannons from achieving true transatlanticity; in their unaltered state, English works remained solely played in England. Conversely, because they were considered distasteful, American works were not shown outside of the United States.

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5.2 TWO WORRYING TRAVELOGUES WITHIN THREE YEARS

In a span of only three years—between 1829 and 1832-- two of the most worrying travelogues to ever hit American publishing houses came out. Captain Basil Hall authored the

first, called *Travels in North America*, which first appeared in America in 1829. Hall had visited the United States and parts of Canada through 1827 and 1828. He was, according to all reports, the worst type of traveler: irritable, cantankerous, and snobbish. All he saw made him unhappy and all he experienced displeased him. He would freely argue with New World citizens concerning their outlook on life and their established form of government, not hesitating to point out the flaws and faults he saw in each.¹⁶⁵ Before his journey ended, he left a trail of misunderstood and generally abused citizens that stretched from Massachusetts to Georgia.

His published work affected an even greater number of Americans. Across the union, citizens read his work and cringed. They had been so kind to the traveler and he repaid them by throwing insults from across the sea. The American response to such an affront took on physical and literary forms. In the book's wake, for example, American homes were closed to travelers and customary generosity came to a halt. Rev. Isaac Fidler, a subsequent English sojourner, felt the after affects of Hall's work. "The mistress and boarders of the house where we first resided," he said, "informed us that the publication of Captain Hall's *Travels* had shut the entrance against any future reception of English gentlemen into American society" (84). Alongside such everyday actions completed by scores of anonymous Americans, many New World citizens also combated Hall's work in the press. Two very public rebuttals soon followed, one in the

¹⁶⁵ For example, in volume one (page 109-111) Hall speaks about American bragging practices, severely condemning them for their pride. Later he claims that Americans made more of their national qualities than was necessary. They were not as special as they thought they were, he explains. In volume two he continues his rants against Americans, saying, "it would be the most unreasonable thing imaginable to expect the arts and sciences to flourish, or that great excellence could possibly be reached...in America" (305) and throwing other like insults. In volume three, he actually ends his work by recounting an argument he had with an American. He paints himself as calm and intelligent throughout the conversation and, unsurprisingly, wins the discussion point for point. When he leaves the American he explains that they will just have to agree to disagree (although from the reader's position, Hall is right on every point and has adequately deflated at least one American's overactive pride).

esteemed *North American Review* and one published as a pamphlet called “Captain Hall in America.”¹⁶⁶

Captain Basil Hall was universally condemned in the New World and perhaps for good reason. His *Travels in North America* was mean-spirited and piercing, condemning the American character, manners, achievements, and institutions alike. But although the blow resounded through the entire nation, the next work to hit transatlantic publishers would be even worse. In like manner, it would provoke an even greater post-colonial response.

Frances Trollope wrote *Domestic Manners of the Americans* after she spent almost four years in America. Trollope was not the usual traveler. She was an émigré who moved to the New World in hopes of making a fortune. In 1827 she sailed across the ocean to settle in Cincinnati, OH, where she quickly set to work on building and opening a department store, which she named “Bazaar.” In 1831, three years and nine months after she had journeyed across the Atlantic, she was on her way home. Her financial venture had completely failed. Yet her travelogue, comprised of notes she made during her three-year stay in the U.S., was to bring her even more capital than “Bazaar” ever would have. It was published in 1832 and was so popular that it went through four editions in the first year alone. Frances Trollope was soon one of “the best known of British authors” (Smalley ix).

Like Hall’s work, Trollope’s *Manners* was inconceivably hostile towards those she had called “friends” and “neighbors” overseas. She was unrelenting in her faultfinding and unsympathetic in her critique. Trollope had a seemingly unstoppable amount of censure to impose on the American public. She condemned the American character as quickly as she denounced New World institutions and habits. Likewise, no area was overlooked and no aspect

¹⁶⁶ This rebuttal was published anonymously, but the author, Richard Biddle, was soon discovered.

of American life was left unchallenged. She assessed that Americans were a godless people ready and able to steal from all and single-mindedly interested in nothing save the pursuit of the dollar. Moreover, her choice of rhetoric was harsh; more than once she compared New World citizens to beasts and wild animals. Trollope doled out perhaps the most biting critique that the New World had ever encountered.

Frances Trollope was particularly hard on the Yankee. For example, she adeptly demonstrated the Yankee's lack of morality in one quick, almost off-hand comment:

The Yankees... will boast that no people on the earth can match them at over-reaching in a bargain. I have heard them unblushingly relate stories of their cronies and friends, which, if believed among us, would banish the heroes from the fellowship of honest men for ever; and all this is uttered with a simplicity which sometimes led me to doubt if the speakers knew what honour and honesty meant (302).

In another selection, she related how a Yankee handled her—a foreigner unfamiliar with the ways and customs of the New World—when given the chance. Her words were advice for all future transatlantic travelers:

It is necessary to be on the *qui vive* in making your bargain with the driver; if you do not, he has the power of charging immoderately. On my first experiment I neglected this, and was asked two dollars and a half for an excursion of twenty minutes. When I referred to the waiter of the hotel, he asked if I had made a bargain. 'No.' 'Then I expect' (with the usual look of triumph) 'that the Yankee has been too smart for you (352).

The moral was clear: Yankees—in particular--should be treated with vigilance, lest the traveler be robbed. Americans—in general—should be engaged (in conversation or barter) only with caution.

Trollope continued her critique of the Yankee, harshly describing him: "It is by no means rare to meet elsewhere, in this working-day world of our's [sic], people who push acuteness to

the verge of honesty, and sometimes, perhaps, a little bit beyond; but, I do believe, the Yankee is the only one who will be found to boast of doing so” (370).¹⁶⁷ Americans, particularly New Englanders, were assessed as immoral braggarts who knew nothing of principals or ethics, nor cared for the finer things in life, but worried only for personal gain. How similar to Jonathan Doubikins Frances Trollope painted the average American!

The American response to *Domestic Manners* came quickly. “Newspapers in every section of the country made a pastime of reviling Mrs. Trollope,” notes Donald Smalley, in the introduction he supplies to her work (ix). Likewise, more sophisticated quarterlies also added to the scorn, denouncing her “coarse exaggeration” and “bitter caricature” (ibid). A Western editor even indexed his review of her work under the title “Lies of an English lady” (ibid). The American public was furious. But its anger was not only expressed in print; performance-driven expressions of reproach also followed. Some of the more interesting American responses included: a frontiersman who named his “hound with a number of whelps” after her (Smalley x); a circus band that pounded out a ditty called “Mrs. Trollope’s March” to the roar of a lion (ibid); in the theatre, audiences would look for those seated “incorrectly” in boxes and yelled out “A Trollope! A Trollope!” pointing to the “offenders” (ibid); a German traveler reported seeing a wax figure shaped like a goblin marked as “Mrs. Trollope” in a touring museum (ibid); likewise, an English traveler in Maine reported seeing a menagerie that included “an exact likeness” of the hated lady (ibid). “This exact likeness,” said the traveler, “turned out to be the figure of a fat red-faced *trollop*, smoking a short pipe, and dressed in dirty flannel and worsted, and a ragged

¹⁶⁷ Although Trollope speaks of the Yankee as a “real person,” she is imaginatively uniting an “actual” New Englander with the type she had seen played on stage back in England, for right in the middle of this description, she references Charles Mathews, saying: “Mathews did very well, as far as ‘I expect,’ ‘I calculate,’ and ‘I guess,’ but this is only the shell...” (ibid). In other words, Frances Trollope saw and experienced Americans around her—particularly New Englanders—through Charles Mathews’s performances. No wonder she criticized the Yankee so! If she had seen *Trip to America* or *Jonathan Doubikins* (as her remarks imply), she would have considered this figure an abomination hardly worthy of just representation.

slouched hat” (as quoted in Smalley x; original emphasis). Americans spared no creativity in rebuffing the English lady’s remarks on their country.

Such imaginative post-colonial resistance was not left off the stage. Both Captain Basil Hall and Frances Trollope renewed American stage artists’ resolve against Old World biases. Indeed, “Yankee Theatre” seemed obsessed with expressing post-colonial resistance in the years following their publications. New plays came out featuring caricatures of grumpy travelers and old plays were put into service to critique the biased views as well.

A new era of “Yankee Theatre” was born. Rather than focusing on the New Man in his complexity and idiosyncrasies (as Hackett’s work had done), this generation of plays looked across the Atlantic. Pointed clearly at England, English travelers, and English sympathizers in the New World, they attempted to combat Old World attitudes and misconceptions. *Trip to Niagara* (1828), by William Dunlap, *The Forest Rose* (1825), by Samuel Woodworth, and *The Green Mountain Boy* (1833), by Joseph S. Jones, all performed by the new Yankee star, George Hill, answered British snobbery and conceit with homegrown post-colonial resistance. Answering the misconceptions and exaggeration of both Hall and Trollope, these early Jacksonian era plays showed the American citizen as morally superior to the arrogant English subject and highlighted the New World as a land far advanced compared to the decrepit, outmoded English sphere on the other side of the sea.

* * * * *

5.3 GEORGE HILL: AMERICANS FIND A NEW FAVORITE YANKEE

George Hill's professional career began, if one is to believe his (auto)biography,¹⁶⁸ only weeks after seeing Alexander Simpson play Jonathan Ploughboy on stage in 1825.¹⁶⁹ His first solo performance was in the city of Brooklyn in 1826, done in a style "à la Mathews" (Hill 16). When the young actor moved to New York City, he performed in local museums and small venues. Though Hill came from a respectable Boston family, he did not have the necessary connections to immediately begin playing in esteemed houses (as James Hackett did). Thus, he played at sites such as Denyse's Hotel, the courtroom of the Apprentice's Library, the P & S Ways Hotel, Peale's Museum, and The New York Museum.¹⁷⁰ These smaller venues were apt places for a young actor to "learn the trade" at this time, but they were less legitimate, so most of his early performances went undocumented; nearly all were ignored by the press.¹⁷¹

Hill's first "break" came in 1831 when Duffy and Forrest, managers of the Arch Street Theatre, hired him for their season. It was during this year that he was able to play the Yankee in a full-length piece for the first time. He chose *Trip to Niagara or Travellers in America*,¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ This work, called *Life and Recollections of Yankee Hill: Together with Anecdotes and Incidents of his Travels*, was started by Hill and completed by W. K. Northall after the actor's death. I have noted it using parenthesis to alert the reader that it is a combination of autobiography and biography. Hereafter referred to as *Life and Recollections*.

¹⁶⁹ His first performance according to the *Life and Recollections Travels* was at the Chatham Street theatre, as part of a Roman mob. He was only 15 years of age. Even at this point Hill claims that he longed for a theatrical career, so when given the chance to work for a traveling company based out of Western New York, he immediately jumped at the opportunity. Hill returned to New York when he was not yet twenty years old, with plenty of acting experience and stories of greenhorn audiences to work with. See Northall 12-14. For more detailed information on his early career, see Hodge 162-166.

¹⁷⁰ These first performance spaces would prove quite significant for Hill in later years. In the 1840s he drew on his experience of museum culture, giving burlesque lectures in a Yankee voice, which satirized the growing popularity of learned societies and public lectures.

¹⁷¹ Little is known about these performances, but a few titles remain. His comic songs included: "The Hunters of Kentucky," "Barney leave the Girls Alone," and "Big Booby, the song of the Public Robber in New York, or the Man that Ran away with the New City Hall." Story titles included: "Jonathan's Visit to Buffalo, Seneca Village, etc.," "Jethro R. Dutton's Journey to Genesee Country," and "The Fox Skin" (Northall 14).

¹⁷² Hereafter referred to as *Trip to Niagara*.

written by William Dunlap.¹⁷³ Though *Trip to Niagara* never became part of Hill’s repertoire, it is important to note because of the strong post-colonial rhetoric contained in it. Written in direct response to British travelogues, imperial attitudes, and particularly to Charles Mathews’s trip to the United States,¹⁷⁴ it showcased American resistance to Old World bias.

* * * * *

5.4 TRIP TO NIAGARA OR TRAVELLERS IN AMERICA

As one might guess from the title, *Trip to Niagara* was a staged travelogue. It featured the journey of three characters, John Bull, Amelia, and Wentworth, as they traveled via steamboat across American river ways and through various towns and cities on their way to Niagara Falls. The action took place in front of a panorama that featured views of the Hudson River, the newly constructed Erie Canal, Hoboken and other New York towns, mountains, waterfalls, and the Catskill Mountains.

Its plot is anything but simple. Ultimately, *Trip to Niagara* is a conversion story wherein Wentworth, the grumpy, never-satisfied English traveler learns to appreciate American characters, customs, and humor. But Dunlap’s text is anything but straightforward. He weaves in love, disguise, and many comic moments to ease the blatant didacticism of the text. The play begins when John Bull finds his long lost love, Amelia, traveling in America. She is enchanted with the New World, but her brother, Wentworth despises everything about the country. He sees America solely “through the coloured glasses of the book-makers of [England]” (Dunlap 181);

¹⁷³ *Trip to Niagara* was first produced at the Bowery Theater on November 28, 1828.

¹⁷⁴ As noted, this play was produced before Captain Hall’s visit to the United States even ended. Thus, Dunlap probably had Mathews in mind more than Hall, the soon-to-be next infamous English traveler.

that is, through current travelogues. Thus, he finds fault with all around him and feels mistreated through every experience. Amelia desires Wentworth to become more accepting of national difference, so she agrees to fulfill an old promise to marry John Bull if he can alter her brother's attitude. Bull agrees to take on the task, though Wentworth is a "desperate subject" (ibid). He decides that the best way to cure the disgruntled Englishman is to use a kind of reverse-psychology, so he disguises himself as two Americans, Jonathan Doolittle, the Yankee of the piece, and Monsieur Tonson, a French émigré.¹⁷⁵ These two characters badger Wentworth so constantly that he begins to find conventional Americans polite and accommodating in contrast.

An Irishman, named Dennis Dougherty, aides Bull's task, though he is not part of the scheme. Dennis, like Wentworth, is unsatisfied with America. Though he has no trouble traveling, and even finds work along the way to supplement his spending, he is too frightened of yellow fever to enjoy the country. He wants to go to Canada, where he can be safe again "under the British flag" (Dunlap 183). Through the antics of Jonathan, Tonson, and Dennis, Wentworth begins to see the error of his ways, and in the end Bull is successful. By the conclusion of the play, Wentworth is not only praises American ideology, but even defends the country to the Irishman.

Dunlap wrote his play in answer to English travelogues, most notably to rebuke Charles Mathews's plays, staged in London in 1824. He wasted no time in making his intentions clear. The play begins with Amelia writing her own journal. Unlike common English sources, though, she finds both her journey and the country quite pleasant. She claims: "So! I have finished my description of Philadelphia, and given a sketch of our journey to New-York. Ninety miles,

¹⁷⁵ It is notable that both of these characters were from other stage works with which Dunlap was familiar. Jonathan Doolittle starred in Humphreys's play *The Yankey in England*, and Mathews, one will remember, made the Frenchman famous in the play sharing his name, *Monsieur Tonson*.

without fatigue, in nine hours. Superb steam-boats—good coaches—civil people. Landscapes presenting proofs of universal prosperity, and tables testifying overflowing abundance” (Dunlap 178). She quickly follows this assertion by noting the discrepancy between her experience and other works, “I think my sister will believe me, although my letters are so directly in opposition to the book-making journalists, who have prejudiced her mind against the land of civil and religious liberty” (Dunlap 178-179). Dunlap’s point is swiftly made. English travelogues, so commonly sold and read, were biased and untruthful. Through Amelia and the stage action, he would construct a work that would tell the truth about the New World.

Wentworth, Amelia’s grumpy brother, embodies English travelers’ perceptions of Americans. Although Dunlap most likely had Charles Mathews in mind for the original production, when the work was staged in 1831 most Americans probably associated the cranky Wentworth with Captain Basil Hall. Wentworth, similar to how many English travelers chose to experience the New World, is dissatisfied with all he sees and claims to be severely inconvenienced by all American traditions and practices. He complains that Americans treat him “like one of their own democratic herd, just broke loose from the sty” (Dunlap 180) and says that they “stiffen the bristles of their republican insolence” (ibid) when he tries to teach them manners. If this was not a clear enough attack on English travelers, Dunlap’s assault becomes even more transparent when Wentworth announces, “I am a true born Englishman—unprejudiced except in favour of my own country and countrymen, as I ought to be” (ibid). Wentworth, like many English travelers, is displeased with America simply because it is unlike England. He is biased against the New World from the moment he arrives.

Dunlap was clearly writing against the rhetoric found in many travelogues, but he battled most furiously against Mathews’s *Trip to America* and *Jonathan Doubikins*. For example,

Mathews's boldest and most vitriolic critique of America was pointing out its hypocritical political ideology. Specifically, he shows the "land of liberty" filled with maltreated slaves and wretched masters. Dunlap's work displays the opposite. A free black man, named Job Jerryson, for example, helps the travelers with their bags and letters. Nancy, their English servant, assumes that he has a "master" since he is black, but Job corrects her, explaining that he is a freeman and employee of the hotelkeeper. Significantly, he says that masters "may do for whites of the old country; but not for gentlemen and ladies of colour, in America" (Dunlap 181). He also claims that "after being a short time in this country, [she may] set a proper value upon [herself]" and embrace freedom (ibid), which she does by the end of the work. When the travelers reach Albany, Nancy no longer stays quiet, but speaks her mind. Not only does Nancy embrace equality, but she also begins to display the very "problems" that American equality brought into the lower class, according to so many English travelers. She will no longer put up with intolerable behavior from the hands of her "masters." In Mathews's *Jonathan Doubikins*, Agamemnon is mistreated and abused until he embraces English freedom. In Dunlap's work, the opposite occurs; the English servant is able to shake off the shackles of oppression once she embraces the American way of life.

Dunlap's critique of English travelogues goes further, for he also demonstrates not only the outrageousness of exaggerations commonly found in such works, but critiques the type of person who might believe such obvious propaganda. For example, when disguised as Jonathan, Bull tells Dennis and Wentworth amazing stories of common people consuming stews made of both young Native- and African-Americans. Dennis is shocked and horrified, yet he believes every word of it. Wentworth, however, begins to understand Yankee humor; he tries to calm the Irishman, saying that the Yankee is only "quizzing him" (Dunlap 195). The Irishman though

cannot be dissuaded. He says, “It’s true... Didn’t I myself, one day, in the skirts of New-York, just stip into a house, and ax an old woman, who had a big pot over the fire, to give me a drink of water. And what do you think she said? ‘As soon as I have put the Indian in the pot,’ says she. Och! I didn’t know what it meant—at all—but that accounts for it” (ibid). To this Wentworth replies, “This Irishman will believe anything” (ibid). Thus, when Jonathan tells another tale about how his whip is used to “whip niggars” and “drive the black creeturs into the tobacco patches, and keep ‘em working in the hot sun, ‘till their wool blazes again” (ibid), Wentworth realizes this too is an exaggeration. He says, “Pooh, pooh! You must not believe such tales” (ibid). Though the story of the whip may have been closer to the truth of slavery than Jonathan (or any nineteenth-century Northern white, urban American) wanted to believe, here it worked to show the purposeful exaggeration of English travelogues. If one believed such stories, Dunlap’s rhetoric implied, they were no better than this foolish Irishman.¹⁷⁶

Historically the Yankee had faired poorly in English accounts. Charles Mathews had made Jonathan into an embodiment of all (perceived) American political hypocrisy in his staged travelogues; likewise, many English writers coming before and after him had done similarly. In America Jonathan represented the American people, but in England he often stood in for the sociopolitical failings of the “Old colony.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, Jonathan often bore the brunt of English anger, misunderstanding, and/or ideological disagreement. In the 1830s English sources turned their attention to American capitalism and this became the “fault” of choice. In logical progression, Jonathan began to embody this characteristic in travel writing. He became a cheat, a thief, and a liar, willing to do anything to earn a dollar. Mesick explains, “Travellers narrate[d]

¹⁷⁶ The “Irishman” was often portrayed this way in stage renderings. In both England and America he was depicted as the comic gullible fool, a tradition that would continue throughout the nineteenth-century. Dunlap was using this ethnic stereotype to make his point, for certainly no English subject would want to be compared to such an Irishman.

¹⁷⁷ Captain Basil Hall used this term for America.

stories... told [to] them of wooden nutmegs, or of watches sold at auction without works, or of common sheep with merino wool sewed upon them” (312).

The same tales existed in American writing, although in the United States they were understood as fiction. The Yankee became a complex figure of cultural negotiation that helped to secure a path from an older culture of morality to one of rationality.¹⁷⁸ Thus, when Yankees drove a hard bargain or fooled supposedly smarter urbanites or Old World representatives, Americans could laugh, sure that such trickery was imagined and exaggerated to highlight American ingenuity. In England, however, where travel accounts of the New World were understood as “fact,” the Yankee seemed evil incarnate. When these subjects heard of wooden nutmegs or malfunctioning watches or disguised sheep, they assumed such things actually happened across the Atlantic—in that world of liars, cheats, and thieves--and condemned Americans for a nation-wide lack of morality.

In America this aspect of travel literature could be taken more lightly. That is, though both sides took such reports seriously,¹⁷⁹ Americans could have something to laugh about in this respect, for they recognized the Yankee stories therein as frequently repeated fictions.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the humor for an American reader doubled, for a “real” English subject had been duped in a similar manner to that of the fictional Old World representative. In believing and repeating these American tales, English subjects proved (to New World readers) not only their gullibility, but also their quick willingness to believe the worst about their American counterparts.

¹⁷⁸ Bruce McConachie suggests this position in his chapter “American Theatre in Context” in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre*. He explains that when Americans were “struggling with their own conflicts about speculation and morality [the Yankee allowed them to] laugh at their problems without having to resolve them” (154).

¹⁷⁹ The English understood such stories as truth; the Americans railed against them as unjust accounts. Both were “serious” in nature.

¹⁸⁰ Although travelogue writers often recounted Yankee adventures as if they happened to the writer him/herself, many of these tales in fact came directly from newspapers or comic publications of the time.

Emphasizing the American perspective on English travelogues, Dunlap drew on this type of humor in *Trip to Niagara*. For example, Jonathan tells Wentworth that he once sold an entire cargo load of wooden nutmegs, which he constructed out of pine plank. To this Wentworth claims, “These Yankees will undertake to make any thing—they make nothing of saying they made it, whether they made it or no. Come, Amelia—Let’s get rid of this fool—or knave” (190). At this point in the play he does not see the obvious fabrication of the Yankee’s words. Jonathan is telling him a well-known myth and he, like his English counterparts reading travel literature, believes him word for word. When Wentworth begins to understand the essence of Yankee humor, that is, when he begins to acknowledge its imaginative construction, he stops taking the Yankee’s tall tales seriously. For example, when Jonathan tells the story of his brother and the gunpowder, for instance, Wentworth is less gullible. The text is quite amusing:

Bull (as Jonathan): ...Nathan [the Yankee’s brother] and I were out duck shooting on the Connecticut river in father’s skiff. We had meazing fin sport, we had; but just as I was priming my gun some how or ‘nother I drops my power horn, and the curst thing went right over, plump into the river, and pop down to the bottom. ‘There,’ says I, ‘only look o’that!’—‘Nathan,’ says I, ‘lend me your powder horn to prime.’ And would you believe it? The stingy creetur wouldn’t. ‘Well then,’ says I, ‘you’re a good diver—Nathan—there it is—I see it—dive down and fetch it—I’ll give you some.’ Well—he did so. Down he went—and there he staid.

Dennis: For what would he stay?

Bull: That puzzled me. But I look’d down—the water was meazing clear-- and what do you think he was doing?

Dennis: How should I know.

Bull: There I saw the tarnal creetur emptying my powder into his own powder horn.

Wentworth: At the bottom of the river? Do you think we believe such stuff?

Dennis: I don’t doubt it at all. And I shouldn’t wonder if he had set fire to the river, and blow’d you and the boat to the divvil; and then he would have all the powder himself (Dunlap 195).

This time Wentworth is unconvinced that the Yankee’s tale could be true and he begins to not only understand Yankee humor, but to see the error of his Old World bias. Dennis, on the other

hand, is entirely swayed. A gullible stage Irishman, he wholeheartedly believes the Yankee's story. What is more, he understands it as fact. Remaining blind to the truth of his surroundings he believes that all Americans would act as greedily. Americans could laugh at the Irishman's stupidity in Dunlap's play, similar to how they must have chuckled when hearing that famous Yankee stories were told as truth in English travelogues. Their amusement was hampered, however, for tales of American greediness and trickery were told at the New World's expense.

Americans in the audience must also have enjoyed Dunlap's play for the actual Yankee tricks it contained, for they were appropriately matched to their victim. For example, Dennis is the only "real" victim of a Yankee trick. He tells of how he earned his way on a boat by walking before the horses that were to be transported. The ship's owner was quite amused to find such a gullible traveler, willing to not be carried by the craft at all, but happy to walk along side the vessel with the livestock. Wentworth too was tricked in a sense, for he underwent an education through John Bull's disguises, though he did not realize he was acting the part of a pupil. Overall though his education pays off; he has not been tricked out of anything save his unpleasant disposition. Both characters were fit victims: one a gullible Irishman, one a grumpy English traveler. Both represented parts of the Old World and both ultimately reaped what they deserved: the Irishman safe-passage to Canada (back to living under the king's flag), the Englishman a better understanding of the New World and a new appreciation for American charity.

* * * * *

Much of the humor in Dunlap's piece stemmed from the current transatlantic situation, but Hill's portrayal of the Yankee is what ultimately propelled his career forward, and won him plaudits from the Philadelphia audience. Charles Durang, who was working at the Arch Street

Theatre at the time, remembered Hill's performance in *Trip to Niagara* with fondness. He claimed, Hill "sustained the Yankee part with great cleverness" (as quoted in Hodge 163). This part stood out in a way that most of Hill's other roles did not. Francis Courtney Wemyss records that the audience at the Arch did not always appreciate his talent. "G. H. Hill, better known as Yankee Hill," says this actor-manager, "who from a very humble position in the Arch Street Theatre, in which he was frequently insulted by the derision and disapprobation of the audience, suddenly became *a star*, and what is more extraordinary, a good one, too" (as quoted in Young 516).

Though *Trip to Niagara* was a great success in Philadelphia, Hill was not happy at the Arch Street Theatre. After this piece closed, the management asked him to act as a walk-on super in the throne scene in *The Exile*. Hill refused. He left the company and moved south for a tour at Faulkner's company in Charleston, South Carolina. There he gained more experience and became "seasoned in the craft of acting" (Hodge 164). In September 1832 Hill returned to Philadelphia and Forrest and Duffy agreed to take him back. "At this point in time," says Hodge, "his rise to major status was very rapid" (165). He presented himself as a Yankee storyteller and made such a hit that the Arch management asked him to star in a full-length work. He chose *The Forest Rose*.

* * * * *

5.5 THE FOREST ROSE

The Forest Rose first came to prominence in 1825, when Alexander Simpson played the Yankee at the Chatham Garden Theatre.¹⁸¹ At that time, the novelty of a staged representation of the contrast between the New and Old Worlds, Jonathan's growing complexity, and a talented performer playing the Yankee, drove the production's success. In 1832, though, this piece resonated with audiences for different reasons. The post-colonial situation, heightened by the publications of Hall's and Trollope's works, reinvigorated this old work.

The Forest Rose re-opened at the Arch Street Theatre in September 1832. So well received was the production (and Hill in the part of Jonathan Ploughboy) that Mr. Pelby of the Boston Theatre proposed the young comedian come show the play at his esteemed house. Only a few weeks after playing in Boston, Hill journeyed to an even more highly regarded playhouse, the Park Theatre in New York. Hill's rise to fame was quick. In September he was virtually unknown, by December he was sharing the stage with such prominent actors as Charles Kemble and Edwin Forrest.¹⁸² *The Forest Rose* was a crucial part of his success. Why did Americans so enjoy a seven-year old play?

In light of Hall's *Travels in North America*, *The Forest Rose* must have sounded very different on stage in 1832 than it had in 1825.¹⁸³ The play incorporated many moments of resistance that probably resonated with later audiences. For example, when William first sees Bellamy he suggests that he and Harriet have "a little sport with him" (Woodworth 156). Many

¹⁸¹ See Chapter Three for a brief history and analysis of the 1825 production.

¹⁸² At the Park Theatre Hill played *The Forest Rose* a few times, but the majority of his performances were in afterpieces. He gave many Yankee monologues and sang comic songs. (See Hodge 166 for a list of titles.) Simpson had engaged Charles Kemble for weeks in November and, interestingly enough, Kemble actually expressed his desire to incorporate the young American actor into his evening program. He thought Hill's brand of comedy would offer a nice contrast to his work. I wonder if having an American on stage with him would not have helped his receipts at this time of heightened resistance to all things English.

¹⁸³ A plot outline of *The Forest Rose* is available in Chapter Three.

Americans, still angry at Hall's mistreatment, probably would have loved to have a similar chance with an English traveler. William, of course, does not get the opportunity to badger the Englishman, but he does get in a few more sharp words. For instance, when Harriet asks the difference between a "dandy" and a "donkey," the American offers this answer, "The two words, I believe are derived from the same *root*. The real genuine dandy, however, is an *imported* animal; and the breed having been crossed in this country, the full-blooded bucks command but a low price in the market at the present time" (Woodworth 157; original emphasis). Later, too, he mocks the Englishman again: "That for the English dandy, [snapping his fingers] with his squinter. Ah! 'pon honour—[Imitating]" (Woodworth 158). William's opinion of Englishmen is clear. He hates the foreigner nearly sight unseen. He spends no time getting to know Bellamy, nor does he care to do so. He has prejudged the foreigner.

Importantly, though, his assessment is correct. Bellamy is not worthy of William's friendship or even of his company. He is an evil man, interested only in ruining young American women. American opinions of Englishmen were proven correct in *The Forest Rose*. William assesses Bellamy sight unseen, but rather than overturning his quick assumptions, Woodworth proves his action wise. All English should be treated with caution and held at an arm's distance.

The play as a whole, likewise, can be read through a post-colonial lens. In the metaphorical battle of cultures showcased, America is the clear winner. Bellamy, the representative Englishman on stage, is both wicked and inept, and these qualities are exposed time and time again. For example, he cannot hunt without "frightening the birds" (Woodworth 156), nor is he able to kill any prey. Bellamy is categorized as a dandy, and proves himself to be one. Additionally, he is easily tricked. Bellamy ends the play shamed, having tried to run away

with a “negro” girl. An exchange at the end of the work shows the blatant hostility both cultures held for the other:

Miller: As for you, Mr. Bellamy, let your present mortification teach you never again to endanger the happiness of an affectionate family for the gratification of a selfish passion.

Bellamy: Old Squaretoes turned preacher, too, split me!... I shall return to town immediately, and quite the country of savages... I shall, indeed, but I will not fail to notice you all when I publish my *Three Months in America*.

William: And don't forget to notice the beauty and fragrance of our black roses! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Bellamy: Fragrance, you creature! Strike me, exquisite, if all Roussell's perfume would annihilate the cloud of odours with which that caricature upon humanity has impregnated my glove. [Exit]

Jonathan: How d'ye like onions? (Woodworth 172-173)

Bellamy does not reform his ways in the end, but leaves the play cursing Americans and threatening to write his own travelogue.

The Americans show themselves little better, though. They have embarrassed the foreigner, but won't let him leave without further abuse. William and Jonathan continue to throw insults at Bellamy until he leaves the stage. The residual anger over Hall's terribly mean-spirited work probably informed the audience's understanding of this ending in 1832. Audience members watching *The Forest Rose* must have appreciated the stage American's sentiments; they probably wished they could treat/taunt Captain Basil Hall or another English traveler in like manner.

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Although Hall's *Travels in North America* heated up showings of *The Forest Rose* throughout 1832, Hill's performance was certainly connected to its success. What exactly he brought to these various productions, though, is hard to determine. Descriptions of his acting are problematic at best. Americans, it seems, wanted to think of him as a New World version of

Charles Mathews and they described him in terms similar to those the Englishman had garnered.

For example, Northall describes Hill in *Life and Recollections*:

Mr. Hill's Yankee was the 'real critter.' It was not, as are almost all the representations of other actors I have seen, a mixture of Western, Southern and Eastern peculiarities of manner and dialect, but the unalloyed, unadulterated down easter. Mr. Hill did not merely imitate their tone, dialect and manner, but felt and thought like them. It was this faculty, to use a hackneyed phrase, of throwing himself, body and spirit, into a part which gave to his Yankee a richness and truthfulness not approached by any other actor before or since his time. He did not merely put on a flaxen wig, a long-tailed coat, a short vest, a bell-crowned hat, and straps to his pantaloons long enough for suspenders, nor thus attired did he content himself by imitating the peculiar drawl and queer expressions of the Yankee, for the veriest bungler on earth can do this, but the spirit of Yankeedom pervaded every action of his body, peeped from his expressive eyes with such sly meaning, that it was difficult for the time being, not to believe it was a mistake in the bills, when they announced Mr. Hill as Major Wheeler, instead of announcing the veritable Major Wheeler himself (19).

Northall wished that Hill be remembered as the ultimate mimic. He desired that the actor, like Charles Mathews, be seen as perfectly embodying those he performed. Yet this was accurate neither in the popular mode of acting of the time, nor in what was expected of the specific line. The acting style was presentational. Star performers stepped out to the front of the stage to deliver lines. They did not attempt "realistic" connection with the other actors, nor did they try to "enter the character's mind" as modern audiences would expect when watching the Stanislavski-based acting of today. So what was Hill doing? What made him stand out to audiences of his day? From Northall's description one can assume at least one thing: Hill was attempting to portray the Yankee in a specific manner, one that emphasized a regional identity.

Regional uniqueness would have been important to Americans in the 1830s. Economic, social, racial, and ideological differences between the North and South had been growing since the writing of the Constitution. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 well showcased the mounting tensions. Although national leaders found a way to postpone the slavery problem at

that time, they would not always be able to forestall what many historians consider to be the inevitable outcome of such a tension—the Civil War. In the 1830s, the dissemination of knowledge through print media was making regional differences clearer and clearer everyday.¹⁸⁴ Northerners could more easily read about Southerners and mull over the immense divide between them. Likewise, Southerners could read about Northerners and consider how different they were from their New England counterparts. What’s more, political disagreement such as the Nullification Act solidified feelings of difference between the regions that were not acknowledged before.

When Hill took on the Yankee a sense of regional knowledge permeated his performance. Hill was born and raised in Boston. He knew New Englanders and often journeyed “up North” to revisit family and friends. He would have been able to easily master the needed dialect. Although dialect literature (as scholars think of it) was still decades away, Hill experimented with vernacular in an interesting way. He sounded like a New Englander. He imitated a New England style of speech and easily took on New England manners. Hill must have imbued his stage Yankee with an innovative sense of “authenticity.” He must have brought regional differences to life. In the North, he probably reminded the audience of stories they had heard long ago; he was one of them, laughing with them at the unique New England humor. In the Midwest, he probably reminded the spectators of travelers they had met or businessmen with which they had come into contact; they could laugh at their economic mistakes or acumen, depending on the individual situation. In the South, Hill surely looked and sounded very different than any in the audience and allowed them to laugh at their “silly,” “backwards”

¹⁸⁴ Somewhat ironically, English travelogues also helped in this process. Because of improvements made in print media, all Americans could read about an English subject’s experience abroad almost simultaneously. Northerners could read of Southerners (and the perceived differences between them), and vice versa.

northern neighbors. In short, this type of humor was probably helpful in easing felt regional tensions coursing through the United States. Hill, it seems, caught the American public's eye through his unique portrayal of a New Englander.

* * * * *

While at the Park, Hill did exceedingly well. His first performance was an interlude, a comic sketch, entitled, "The Yankee in Trouble, or Zephaniah in the Pantry." Next, he showed in Hackett's past hit, *Solomon Swap*.¹⁸⁵ It was Woodworth's *The Forest Rose* though that attained the largest financial success.¹⁸⁶ Hodge explains, "the extent of his success is revealed in the Park Theatre's financial statement, which shows that Hill's benefit though only modest on the first occasion, jumped quickly on two later evenings to approach Forrest's nightly average, a remarkable position for any actor, especially a native comedian" (166).

Hill was rising as a star. What is more, with Hackett in Europe, and Park Theatre credits to his name, Hill was now able to obtain billings at any theatre across the country. He became

¹⁸⁵ Simpson asked Hill to play the part of Solomon Swap because it was so popular with Park audiences. Hackett later sued Hill for illegally "stealing" his property.

¹⁸⁶ Odell describes Hill's first performances at the Park in an interesting way:

Here is something native as pumpkins. We attended some performances at Chatham Garden in the summer of 1831, and laughed heartily at the Yankee stories of one George H. Hill, who seemed better to some of us than the great Hackett himself. Then, in the late spring of 1832, we had noticed Danforth Marble at Richmond Hill. Which of these native products would first find the Yankee path to fame and fortune? Well, George H. Hill first broke into the sacred precincts of Old Drury. During the engagement of the classic Kembles, he walked out on the stage, on November 14th, between play and farce, and recited 'The Yankee in Trouble, or Zephaniah in the Pantry.' I hope, but with utter doubt, that the haughty Miss Kemble sat within hearing distance. At the Bowery, at this very time, Rice was jumping Jim Crow, and illustrating other traits of the Negro character. Yankee and Negro were certainly more American than anything to be found in the repertoire of the Kembles.

Hill was so successful that he was engaged to play Solomon Swap [sic] on the 17th, thereby carrying a challenge into Hackett's own field. He enacted Solomon Swap [sic] and Jonathan (The Forest Rose) on the 24th, and—oh, horror, Miss Kemble!—repeated (November 26th) Solomon once more as afterpiece immediately after your impersonation of the tragic Isabella! Oh, these dreadful Yankees, and oh, we Kembles! (III 611).

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the post-colonial situation in America often kept native-works and actors off of the stage. Hill even claims in his (auto)biography, "American talent then was hardly known. Plays and players were all imported. A few of the home-bred filled up the gaps; but the features of the play were from the other side of the 'big pond' (52). Odell clearly identifies Hill as American; more importantly, his work is seen as native as well, in sharp contrast to the English billings.

America's new choice Yankee actor. "From this point forward," says Hodge, "'Little' Hill's success was never in question" (ibid). Hill toured to Charleston, New Orleans, Baltimore, Albany, Cincinnati, Louisville, and other U.S. cities, all as a star.

* * * * *

Trollope's publication of *Domestic Manners* in late March of 1832 re-energized "Yankee Theatre." For the next four years both Hackett and Hill would perform in several pieces that included a caricature of the now-hated Englishwoman. Hackett was the first. James Kirke Paulding wrote *Lion in the West* for him in 1832 to reportedly remove "those hateful English types" from the American stage (as quoted in Hodge 119). In response to this play, Hill brought out *Foundling of the Sea*, a work created by Samuel Woodworth, which premiered on May 5, 1833 at the Park Theatre. A year later Hill answered Hackett's *Lion of the West* with his own version, called *Lion of the East; or, Life in New York*, that also played at the Park on June 10, 1835. Also a little known Yankee actor, W. F. Gates, showed in a play of similar nature, called simply *Life in New York* on May 21, 1834.

Each of these works critiqued Trollope in its own way. Hackett's *Life in New York* included a character named "Mrs. Wallope" and Hill's *Foundling of the Sea* had a corresponding effigy of the Englishwoman, called "Madame Truelip." Truelip was an exact replica of Trollope in terms of general description. When she met the Yankee, Zachariah Dickerwell, on stage, for example, she explained that she was on a visit to the United States to learn of their manners and to write a book. American anger at the Englishwoman surely fueled the changes made to her character though, for in this work she was exposed as a fraud. She had two husbands, an English one and a French one, and when her English husband discovered her infidelity he rejected her,

publicly announcing her as a shrew who talks “nineteen to the dozen” (as quoted in Hodge 175). Here was a critique of Trollope most Americans could get behind.

Each of these works was successful to a varying degree. *Foundling*, for example, was not well received, although it did play at the Park for four nights and later showed in Philadelphia. In 1835 Hill dropped it from his repertoire. Gates’s *Life in New York* was poorly received as well; his acting was judged under par. Hackett’s *Lion of the West*, seems to have fared the best of these works. Although the references to Mrs. Trollope were eventually toned down in order to place more emphasis on the backwoodsman character, Colonel Nimrod Wildfire, the work was fairly popular in 1832. Hackett played it all over the country, allowing Americans everywhere to laugh at the infamous Mrs. Trollope.

So fierce was the American anger that Fanny Kemble later wrote, “I would not advise either Mrs. Trollope, [or] Basil Hall... ever to set their feet upon this ground again, unless they are ambitious of being stoned to death” (II 142). When “Yankee Theatre” offered an array of Trollopes, Wallopes, and Truelips on the stage from the publication of *Domestic Manners* until about 1836, it surely helped Americans deal with post-colonially-charged frustrations. They could not vent their anger at the actual persons responsible, and their more respectable outcries—publications and articles arguing against such treatment—were all but ignored. “Yankee Theatre” offered at least a little solace. It allowed for resistant voices to be heard.

* * * * *

Following his success in New York, Hill worked on developing his repertoire. He needed more material to satisfy all the audiences he would encounter. He constructed some scripts himself, and also found playwrights to help him. By 1832 he also had enough “star power” to offer play contests. Scripts came in from all parts of the country and Hill chose a few

for trial. In October of 1833 he played in *Josh Horseradish, or the Lying Yankee*, which was written by “a gentleman from Philadelphia” (as quoted in Hodge 177). In December and March of the same year he tried *The Inquisitive Yankee, or a Peep in All Corners*, a play probably constructed by the actor himself. In 1833 he acquired Woodworth’s *Foundling of the Sea* through a play contest and in 1834 *Ovid and Obid, or Yankee Blunders* was introduced.¹⁸⁷

Most of these new works were not popular enough to remain in his repertoire for long, and for the most part only the titles remain for the historian.¹⁸⁸ There were a few exceptions to Hill’s apparent stint with poor quality scripts. John Augustus Stone wrote *The Knight of the Golden Fleece* for Hill in 1834, for instance, and Hill used it for a few years. Likewise, in 1833 he introduced a play that would not only remain in his repertoire for the rest of his career, but that would also stay on stage after Hill’s death. This play was *The Green Mountain Boy*, written by Joseph S. Jones.

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5.6 THE GREEN MOUNTAIN BOY

The Green Mountain Boy differs slightly from previous “Yankee Theatre” plays because rather than being a pastoral comedy, it was a melodrama. The original script is no longer extant, save for a small portion recorded in Hill’s (auto)biography. A version of the work published in 1860 remains, though, and from this the historian can at least garner the general plot outline. In

¹⁸⁷ This play was probably written by a westerner; Hodge speculates that Hill acquired it after his tour through the western provinces.

¹⁸⁸ American theatres were not under obligation to license plays, so unlike English works, if the pieces were not published during the actor’s career (or preserved in some way after his death) acting manuscripts or full copies of the play were soon discarded.

the play Mr. Tomkins¹⁸⁹ is a social snob. Only valuing empty titles and foreign wealth, he denies Ellen, his ward, the right to marry her love, Edward Merton of the U.S. Navy. Tompkins arranges a marriage for her to Lord Montague, a supposed English lord. Montague however is not English aristocracy. He is an evil man who has not only concocted such a lordship to fool Tomkins, but in years past actually sent Tomkins's brother, Sanfield, to prison for a crime that Montague committed. He is only after Ellen's fortune. Merton returns from his duty in the U.S. Navy shortly before Ellen's arranged marriage is to take place. He plans to elope with her, but a friend, actually Sanfield in disguise, encourages him to wait a few days. Sanfield (still in disguise) meets with Tomkins (his brother though unknown to him) and tells him of Montague's true identity and intentions. Tomkins does not believe it, so Sanfield arranges a way for the truth to be revealed. He asks Tomkins to conceal himself in the room while he and Montague speak. In their interview, Sanfield discloses his identity to Montague and accuses him of his crimes. Montague admits his past deeds, offers Sanfield a bribe to keep his silence, but Sanfield refuses it. Tomkins has the proof he needs now, and has Montague, whose real name is Wilkins, arrested. All ends happily. Ellen is allowed to marry Merton and she discovers that Sanfield is her long-lost father. Tomkins swears to give up his admiration of empty titles, and Sanfield is restored to his family and wealth. Montague will finally pay for crimes he committed in England and Sanfield's record is cleared.

The Yankee fits into this play as a secondary character. Along with other servants of the *dramatis personae*, his role was one of comic relief. Jedediah Hombred, as he is called in this script, enters the action by inquiring about a job Tomkins has posted. Upon obtaining the position he begins his work about the estate, completing odd jobs and running errands.

¹⁸⁹ In the original version this character's surname is "Tompkins."

Throughout the script Jedediah is juxtaposed to other low-characters such as Miss Squeamish, Tomkins's sister who pretends to despise men; Joe Shakespeare, a servant who wants to be a poet and continually quotes his namesake; and Lucy, Ellen's clever woman in waiting. These other low-comedy characters offer a perfect context to display the Yankee's traits.

Similar to *The Forest Rose*, the *Green Mountain Boy* spoke in specific ways to a resistant audience. For example, it featured a rural setting in danger by a culturally elite outsider. Wilkins, a.k.a. Lord Montague, threatens to steal the innocent American woman from her home. Her father made the match believing Wilkins to be of English nobility, but he is no such thing. He is a lowly criminal, whose unlawful ways affected the family ten years ago and now threatens to do even more damage. Wilkins is evil through and through. He longs to marry Ellen only to gain her fortune and though he promises titles and honor for the match, these are not in his possession to give. He is a sham. The only truth he tells is that he is English, an important trait for the villain of such a play, and it seems his very Englishness is an evil which threatens to engulf every character in the American rural setting.

Tomkins, Ellen's father, is also at fault for her endangerment because he has accepted Wilkins' proposal due to his love of all things English. For example, he says that he longs for Ellen to be made into "Lady Montague" because it has a "pretty sound" to it (Jones 6). When Ellen offers resistance to the match, he calls her behavior "mutiny" (ibid) and twice in the play he mistakenly substitutes "Parliament" for "the courts." Likewise, he is overjoyed when Wilkins (falsely) bestows the title "Sir Jonas" on him. The text specifies, in fact, that he dances with joy on this occasion.

Although Tomkins is an American, he cannot seem to deny the imperial directives specifying that anything English is innately better than the American counterpart. For example,

he imports wine, unsatisfied with common American beverages, and he even accepts Wilkins's condescending attitude towards him because of his nationality. When the two are alone for the first time, for instance, Wilkins claims, "let me squeeze your hand in friendship; though in my country it would be considered degrading, and beneath the dignity of nobility, to be thus familiar with a commoner" (Jones 11). To such snobbery, Tompkins merely thanks the "English lord" for his "condescension" (ibid). Any other (stage) American would take such an opportunity to explain their country's adherence to equality, but Tompkins bows to the English conceit. His predisposition to Englishness is clearly posited as a fault in Jones's work. It is this trait that forges him into the foolish father figure, a common line in domestic melodramas such as this, and it is because of this trait that he nearly loses everything that is dear to him: his brother, his family, his fortune, and his honor.

Jedediah offers a strong contrast to Tompkins's anglophilia. For example, he undercuts his employer's penchant for titles throughout the piece by calling him "square" instead of "squire." Likewise, he adeptly mocks Wilkins's condescending attitude. When Jedediah first meets the supposed lord he says of him, "*He* a lord! He don't look as though he knowed enough to enjoy the Christian era" (Jones 11; original emphasis). Later he again mocks the Englishman. As Wilkins tries to figure out who has entered the house, Jedediah barrages him with bothersome questions, to which Wilkins finally retorts: "Would you have me tell you all I know!" (Jones 26). The Yankee quickly answers, "Guess't wouldn't take you long to do that, would it?" (ibid). Audiences furious with English travelers must have reveled in the Yankee's sly insults thrown at the representative English subject on stage. He spoke to Wilkins as they probably longed to do in real life.

In the resistant culture of 1833 it is not surprising that *The Green Mountain Boy* was a success. Its performances at New York's Park Theatre, Boston's Tremont Theatre, and Philadelphia's Arch Street Theatre were all successful. In fact, the melodrama continued to amuse audiences long after the particulars of Hall's or Trollope's travelogues were forgotten. Jones's play remained in Hill's repertoire until his death; other actors following Hill also picked it up, keeping Jones's play on American stages through 1860.

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With his success in *The Forest Rose*, *Solomon Swap*, and *The Green Mountain Boy*, Hill was applauded in more than just theatre spaces. The *Mirror* recognized him as a distinguished American talent, giving him a profile, which included an engraving of the actor, and a brilliant write-up in its publication. The article claimed that Hill was "no less esteemed as a man than admired as a comedian, being an exemplary member of society, liberal, high-minded, and social, an affectionate husband and indulgent father" (XII, 161). To this Hodge adds, "No Victorian could hope for a better card than this" (180).

Newspapers also lauded his success. When he returned to New York after playing in New Orleans and Mobile, a published poem, called "Our Own Yankee Hill" greeted his arrival. A selection of it will show the nationalism attached to Hill's performance of the Yankee character:

New-England, I love thee, dear land of my birth!
The sky-kissing mountains, where liberty roves;
The blossom-gemmed meadows, the sweetest on earth,
Thy bright, sunny fields, and thy musical groves;
Thy landscapes are smiling when summer prevails,
And vocal with melody's amorous trills;
How sweet are thy laughing and musical dales,
How pleasant thy laughing and musical *Hills*...

The fair of the South have acknowledged its worth;
So simple so quiet, so honestly shrewd,
So freight with the richest incentives to mirth,
So richly with wits' sparkling treasures endued.
When Dickerwell, Jonathan, Solomon Swop [sic]
With his Green-Mountain Boy, blue devils to kill,
E'en Beauty must laugh till she's ready to drop,
To view in Mobile such a green Yankee Hill.

Then welcome him back, for this Hill is our own,
And a fresh crop of evergreen shadows his brow;
By you were the seeds of his laurels first sown—
Let fashion and opulence foster them now.
The bright smile of Beauty will welcome him home,
The patrons of Genius will honor him still;
The votaries of Comus forbid him to roam,—
All warmly will welcome our own Yankee Hill
(as quoted in Hill 35).

Hill was widely known throughout the country, and was widely celebrated in diverse locales. Moreover, he was becoming a national icon, a representative of America through his performance of the idealized and resistant American on stage.

In the following years Hill's fame continued to rise and he gained more pieces for his growing dramatic repertoire. In 1835 he tried *Jonathan Doubikins*, the work written for Mathews and revised by Hackett. On May 8th of the same year he played *The Yankee Pedlar*, a piece that would become popular in England after it was re-written by Bayle Bernard.¹⁹⁰ He also brought out *Lion of the East, or Life in New York*, a piece that featured Major Jack Downing, a Yankee made popular by the press in the 1830s. Hackett had already acted in a work featuring the same character. Hill bought this version from Mr. Blake, treasurer of the Park Theatre, for two hundred and fifty dollars. *Lion of the East* was popular and stayed in Hill's repertoire for years. On November 14th he tried *Ephraim Smooth*, which Hodge claims was "probably no more

¹⁹⁰ This piece will be further discussed later in the chapter.

than a sketch” (181) and four days later appeared in *The Adventurer, or the Yankee in Tripoli*, by Joseph Jones. Later that month he performed in *Casper Hauser, or the Down Easter*, by Henry James Finn. This piece also would stay in his repertoire for years. Throughout 1835 and 1836 Hill continued to expand his repertoire with much success. Both Hodge’s history and Hill’s (auto)biography report only one real failure during this time. It was with a play called *Fall of the Alamo*. Hodge explains: “Not even the topicality of this play, hard on the heels of the actual massacre in San Antonio, could save it from disaster. Beyond this one performance he never played it again” (188).

Overall, Hill’s first ten years of Yankee acting were quite successful. He had risen to the top of the American bills. He had performed at every significant theatre, and even ventured into the less legitimate frontier spaces. What’s more, he was esteemed in major publications and acknowledged everywhere as a star. The only credit lacking from his resume was an English theatre, and in 1836 he decided to make the transatlantic journey.

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The general public, as well as members of the theatrical community, was excited by the prospect of a Yankee success in England. More was at stake, however, than first seems apparent. Americans also hoped that Hill would bring about greater transatlantic understanding through his performances. That is, they hoped that he would right the many misconceptions that writers such as Hall and Trollope had established. For example, when Hill announced he would go to London, a group of friends and admirers coordinated a dinner in New York in his honor. Invitations were sent to cities as far away as Providence, Rhode Island, and the invited were significant American personalities. Political representative, theatrical dignitaries, esteemed writers, and prominent businessmen all attended. Hill received a silver pitcher at this dinner,

engraved with the inscription “Presented to GEORGE H. HILL, ESQ., as a slight token of the respect and esteem of a few of his Yankee friends in New York” (Hill 38), a compliment of “intrinsic value” at this time (ibid). Letters were read from those unable to attend. One of these shows the American interest at stake. W. R. Danforth, a collector for the United States Treasury Department in Providence, wrote:

Dear Sir:

It is with unfeigned regret that I inform you of my inability to be present at the dinner to be given to our friend Mr. Hill, prior to his departure for Europe... I esteem him most highly. May he be a star in Europe, and succeed in showing John Bull what brother Jonathan is in his true character. I will thank you to show him this letter, and present him my warmest regards. I forward you a sentiment for this occasion:

‘The Yankee Character. It has been perverted and maligned by the Halls and Trollopes of Europe. If through the modesty of our countrymen its beauty has been ‘hid under a bushel,’ may it soon be seen ‘on the house-top,’ and conspicuous on the *Hill*’ (Original emphasis. Letter dated August 6, 1836; as quoted in Hill 36-37).

Americans desired that George Hill set the record straight on the American character. His performances, they hoped, would show Europe—most prominently England—the inaccuracies about “the American” that popular travelogues had propagated. As Danforth’s letter shows, they were most particularly interested in overturning opinions expressed within the two most recent of such publications, Captain Basil Hall’s *Travels in North America* and Francis Trollope’s *Domestic Manners*.

Unfortunately, the post-colonial transatlantic situation would make righting these inaccuracies a difficult task for any actor, especially for one of the first American stars journeying overseas. Though an ardent patriot and self-proclaimed Democrat, Hill needed to achieve both economic and artistic triumph in England to secure his continued success (and financial well-being) in America. He would succeed in England, but only through bowing to the

established cultural imperialism. He would not overturn English assumptions, but rather play to them. The Yankee would be accepted and applauded on the English stage, but only after the character itself was changed to support established views on Americans.

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5.7 HILL'S FIRST TRIP TO LONDON

Hill journeyed to London in August 1836. He landed in Liverpool and quickly made his way to London. Unlike Hackett, Hill did not immediately play on an English stage. Instead, he journeyed through London, spending time in the city among its inhabitants. His (auto)biography explains this hesitation: "I experienced my anxiety in respect to my mission; how I should succeed" (Hill 126). Hill had good reason to be anxious. No Yankee actor had yet succeeded in England. Furthermore, his success or failure in London would impact his standing in American theatre.

Success would be difficult. Northall explains a major setback with which Hill would have to contend: "The Yankee dialect was little, if at all, known in London; and he [Hill] knew that his success must depend on something more solid than the mere delivery of quaint sayings in a strange and peculiar dialect" (45). Though Mathews and Hackett had performed this character, these past performances would not aide in Hill's challenge. Mathews hardly presented what Americans would call "a true Yankee." The character was wrong and the dialect incorrect. He didn't incorporate Yankee stories, nor did his language reflect the specific character Americans associated with this part. Hackett had been booed off stage before audiences had a chance to understand what "the American Yankee" was all about. His dialect and style were "correct," but

he was considered incomprehensible. The Yankee, as Hill understood it and performed it, was still unknown in London.

For Hill to succeed in London he would need to find a work that would be acceptable to an English audience, and one that they would understand. His Yankeeisms would need to be rewritten to adequately communicate their innate humor. But Hill was unfamiliar with English local references and dialects. Perhaps inspired by Hackett's success in 1833, Hill employed Bayle Bernard to construct a new work for him. The play was *The Yankee Pedlar*.¹⁹¹ This play, Hill hoped, would meet the requirements needed for success overseas, without too acutely damaging the image of "the American." He was correct on the former concern at least.

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5.8 THE YANKEE PEDLAR

The plot of *The Yankee Pedlar* seems fairly similar to other Yankee works at first glance. The play begins with a seemingly benign picture of the South. African-American slaves dance and sing; a southern landowner, named Colonel Bantam, complains to a neighbor about the heat, and drinks many different (exotic) cocktails. He brags to a neighbor about his horse, his daughter's marriage prospects, and asks about the local news. The peace is disturbed when he learns that a Yankee has been seen about the neighborhood. Colonel Bantam hates Yankees. He

¹⁹¹ Though his (auto)biography claims this is a new work, Hill presented a version of this play in 1835 in Philadelphia (as noted on page 48). No source comments on the changes Bernard made to this play, and with no record of the first work, it is hard to estimate what was "new" about it. Changes were certainly made to the Yankee character though, for Hill claims in a letter home, "I have played in London, upon the great stage of Drury Lane, in a new piece written for me by Barnard [sic]—'The Yankee Pedlar.' It is a touch-and-go sort of affair, and I believe I hit them. I should much rather have played in an old part. The Pedlar, as written, gives them not the best idea of an honest Yankee boy" (129). The play's title (as constructed by Bernard) was simply *The Yankee Pedlar*. In later years Morris Barnett, an American playwright, would alter it again, and re-title it *Yankee Peddler or, Old Times in Virginia*.

was tricked by one a few years ago who sold him two horses whose tails were glued on, and he swears to run the rascal out of town. He is even more dismayed when he sees the Yankee in question, called Hiram Dodge, because he was the very Yankee who swindled him in the past. Dodge tries to sell his wares to those present, but his prospects are soon cut short when Bantam orders him off his property, threatening to shoot him in the back if he is not gone in five minutes.

Unfortunately for the Colonel, the Yankee finds a way not only to remain on his property, but also to make money while he is there. Dodge spots a young man approaching the estate with a letter in his hand. The young man is Slingsby, a young jockey who works for Bantam's neighbor and horseracing rival. Dodge cannot resist the challenge of remaining on Bantam's land, so he offers to take the letter into the Colonel himself. Slingsby agrees and perhaps unwittingly supplies Dodge with a means of introduction. He takes the letter inside and presents it to Bantam. The letter explains that the bearer of this document is the chosen jockey for an upcoming race pitting Bantam's favorite horse against his neighbor's. Thus, the Yankee is mistaken for the jockey and the Colonel brings him in the house and to get something to eat.

While in the house, the Yankee walks in on a couple kissing. They turn out to be the Colonel's daughter, Nancy, and her beloved, Moreland, from Philadelphia. They have been forbidden to wed, but hope to win the Colonel over soon. The two are shocked to be discovered, and beg the Yankee not to tell of their affair. The Yankee however will not agree to silence without a cash agreement. They pay him five dollars to hold his tongue. His silence does not last long, however. When the Colonel asks about the two, Dodge agrees to tell him all he knows for another five dollars.

Similar Yankee trickery continues through the script. For example, sensing the Yankee's dishonesty (since Dodge was so anxious to tell what he knew for more cash), Bantam sends him

to his Overseer with a letter which specifies that the Bearer should receive one hundred lashes. Dodge realizes that this letter is probably bad news, so he asks Slingsby to take it for him. Slingsby is whipped and cannot ride in the race. Thus, the Yankee suggests to Moreland that he should ride. The winner of the race is guaranteed Nancy's hand in marriage, so Moreland happily agrees. The Yankee ends up falling off of his horse during the race. A group of slaves bring the broken Yankee in on a stretcher. He appears dead. When Bantam sees how happy his daughter is to be engaged to Moreland (since he won the race), he feels bad about the poor Yankee's fate. He claims that he would give one hundred dollars to see the little fellow alive again. Upon hearing those words, Dodge jumps back to life and claims his monetary reward from the surprised Colonel. Bantam is so relieved that he offers the Yankee even more money.

All ends happily by the conclusion of the short farce. Moreland and Nancy will marry and the Colonel accepts the Philadelphian graciously into his family. Likewise, the Yankee is much richer. He has earned much more than the average day's work, and doesn't seem to have seriously hurt himself in the race. The play ends with a song asking the audience for their applause: "Tho' in all our affairs he's a meddler/ Pray don't condemn the poor Pedlar./ His efforts have been to achieve a good cause/ But all is in vain if denied your applause" (Bernard 28/240).¹⁹²

With this play in hand, Hill secured an engagement at the respected Drury Lane Theatre in September. He would show *The Yankee Pedlar* on November 1, 1836, nearly three months after his arrival in London. The month before his debut was an anxious one for Hill. He wrote to American playwright Joseph Jones, "I have not yet played, as I am to have a new piece written for my first appearance. I wish you were here to take some local hints and put them on the track

¹⁹² Page numbers listed refer to both the internal play's numbers (28), and the number of pages within the larger collection of works within this particular file (240).

for me. There are clever playwrights enough here, but they do not understand the nice points of Yankee character” (Hill 128). He also complained of the script, “The Pedlar, as written, gives them not the best idea of *an honest Yankee boy*” (my emphasis; Hill 129). Despite Hill’s anxieties, this play was a great hit with the London audience. It was so, though, because of the very concerns Hill had about the script.

London reviews unilaterally praised Hill. *The London Times*, for example, claimed, “...the true merit of his acting is, that he gives a perfect picture of a very odd character hitherto very slightly known on our stage, and proves in that power of humor which is somewhat rare and always highly attractive, he can fairly take his stand among the best low comedy actors we possess” (November 2, 1836). It concluded: “He was received with great applause, his jokes produced abundant laughter, and the audience seemed to relish the whim of the representation, that he can hardly fail to become a favorite” (ibid). *Bell’s New Weekly Messenger* had similar compliments for Hill: “Mr. Hill’s dry humor amused the audience greatly; and his Yankeeisms created much laughter” (November 6, 1836). Likewise, *The Sunday Evening Globe* described him: “Mr. Hill’s humor is unlike anybody else’s that we have seen; it is as quiet as it is quaint and felicitous, and bears the strong impress of truth” (November 6, 1836). Hill had made a good impression on the Drury Lane audience. Despite his pre-performance misgivings, *The Yankee Pedlar* was a huge success.

The play stayed at the Drury Lane for a week, a strong run for any play, particularly for a new work. Later in the month it moved to the Olympic Theatre, showing for twenty-one performances. “And during this engagement,” explains Hodge, “so much was [Hill] in demand, the managers of the Queen’s Theatre arranged several appearances at that house, to be performed simultaneously with the Olympic’s” (200). Hill then toured the provinces, playing *The Yankee*

Pedlar in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. Hill had succeeded in London and the provinces. This was the first “real” “Yankee Theatre” victory. Yet its success might have come from the very reasons propelling Hill’s pre-performance anxieties.

* * * * *

Though created from an American source, *The Yankee Pedlar*, as re-imagined by Bernard, was unapologetically Anglo-centric. It not only followed, but re-affirmed established notions of Americans that had been popularized through travelogues. Hiram Dodge could have walked straight out of the pages of Hall’s *Travels in North America* or Trollope’s *Domestic Manners*. For example the Yankee steals from whomever he can. The wares Dodge sells in the beginning of the play are obvious frauds. He offers knives and scissors that will “cut thro’ anything from Cotton to Cartrope” and razors that will shave their owner during the night if only they “ile ‘em well and put ‘em under [their] pillow” (Bernard 8/229). Likewise, while dreading the Yankee’s arrival, Colonel Bentam and Cowpens, his neighbor, reminisce on common Yankee tricks which have fooled them in the past. The Colonel, for example, claims, “...if there’s any thing in this world I hate worse than fever and ague it’s a Yankee pedlar... An’t those feller’s always down here selling their wooden nutmegs[,] pitcoal indigo and red flannel sausages” (Bernard 4/227). These Yankee tricks were the same as had been cited in English travelogues, and this Yankee was unashamed to use them—even on his own countrymen.

But Yankee wares were not the only way Dodge plans on fleecing Southerners. He will make money however he can, through honest means or not. For instance, when the Colonel’s rival expresses dismay that he has no fit rider, the Yankee comes to his aide. Yet his help is not offered out of altruism, but from capitalistic interest. Dodge overheard him exclaim, “if I would find any one to take my place [as rider] I’d say done for a thousand” (Bernard 23/237), thus he

offers to help. One wonders how much experience the Yankee actually has in horse racing. Though he claims, “I rather think I’ve ridden a chance of every thing in my time but an alligator or a flash of lighting” (Bernard 24/237), it seems more likely Down-East bragging than actual fact. He is far less concerned with the neighbor’s anxiety than with gaining his money.

Reviews of the play make this point clear. *The London Satirist*, for example, claimed: “[Hill] embodies a picture of a thorough-bred Yankee, who succeeds only by a sly and fraudulent cunning, in the most humorous manner possible” (November 6, 1836). Likewise, *The Sunday Evening Globe* said, “[Dodge] is the smoothest and slickest of pedlars, lies with so much ease and comfort, and overreaches with such sly satisfaction, that we are glad to make his acquaintance” (November 6, 1836). And *The Morning Chronicle* asserted, “[in] aspect, gait, dress, language, and dialect, [Hill] completely realizes the conceptions we had previously formed of the singular race whose representative he is” (November 2, 1836). Hiram Dodge was the exact personification of English expectations. He was a cheat, a thief, a liar, and a braggart. With his eye on the “main chance,” he did whatever was needed to earn more money; in this piece the more immoral the trickery, the better.

Hiram Dodge reinforced English perceptions of Americans, particularly of Yankees. He acted in accordance to every verdict English travelogues had lain against Americans. Complaining of Yankees, Colonel Bantam claims, “...they’re such unsociable fellers. They think it’s a waste of time to come in and take a drink. Never can get them to sit down like Gentlemen, but they keep moving about all day under a broiling sun like mosquitoes in a sand pit” (Bernard 5/228). How much this sentiment mirrored Trollope’s assessment of the same type when she compared New Englanders to ants in an ant’s nest! (Trollope 301).

The Yankee Pedlar worked within established English travelogue tropes. It furthered preconceived notions of Americans' greediness, immorality, and unrefined manners. Hill had succeeded in London, but the cost was perhaps more immense than he could know. The "English Yankee" canon had its first major work. The next to follow would be even more condemning.

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5.9 HILL RETURNS HOME: 1837

When Hill returned to America in March 1837, he was immediately engaged by Mr. Simpson of the Park Theatre. News of his success with Bernard's piece had reached the United States in previous months, so it is not surprising that Simpson wanted Hill to play in *The Yankee Pedlar*. The Panic of 1837 was in full swing by this time. Businesses were closing everywhere and with a sudden lack of funds many formerly loyal audience members stayed home, choosing to save their ready cash for necessities. "How the playhouses kept open at all is [a mystery]" assessed Odell (IV 130). In this economic crisis Hill was an obvious choice. Simpson needed to bring as many audience members as he could into his theatre, and Hill's success in London, he hoped, would help The Park stay viable. Hill opened *The Yankee Pedlar* in May 1837, billing it as "performed by him at Drury Lane" (Odell IV 129).

The ties to England greatly helped this play—and Hill--do well. Americans wished to welcome their top Yankee comedian back; too, they wanted to experience a Yankee play that had found such unprecedented English success. Northall explains the greeting Hill received: "His reception was of the most enthusiastic and flattering kind. The house was crowded from pit to

dome, and when he made his entrée, it was many minutes before he was allowed to speak, for the applause which greeted his return” (72).

Given the economic hardship in New York, Hill’s success with *The Yankee Pedlar* is perhaps surprising, although one must note the possibility of puffery on Northall’s part. For example, he says that Hill “played to overflowing houses every night of his engagement” (72). Even with a hit coming from England, this lavish description seems a bit unlikely. Odell puts Hill’s New York return in more realistic terms. He explains that at this point theatres combined star performers, hoping (perhaps against reason) that spectators would people their establishments. Hill’s engagement was no exception. Through May he was scheduled with Ellen Tree, a “breeches actress” famous for her Shakespearean performances. Says Odell, “From this time forward, the talents of Miss Tree and of Hill were likely to figure on the same evening. The times were very hard... and the manager was forced to group attractions that time previously would have been deemed sufficient to stand alone” (IV 129).

Though Hill received a welcoming return, the financial situation in New York perhaps spurred his subsequent travels.¹⁹³ *The Yankee Pedlar* hit the road. Through the summer Hill toured through Albany, Boston, Washington, Richmond, Louisville and Cincinnati, showing *The Yankee Pedlar* all the way. Bernard’s work, though at least partially propelled by anti-American rhetoric, was a hit in America.

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The Yankee Pedlar’s success is less surprising when one considers the social circumstances within the play. American audiences certainly prized English authorship,

¹⁹³ No source documents the reason for his tour to other cities in the summer of 1837. It may have been simply Hill’s penchant for travel, or to continue his rise in national reputation. I think the Panic probably had something to do with it though. New York was hit especially hard by the depression. A tour would bring in more money since it offered him a chance to star across the country, benefiting from the novelty of his new play and return to the States.

especially when tied to their favorite comic actor. More importantly, however, American audiences would have understood this work in a different manner than their transatlantic counterparts. When English subjects watched the Yankee steal, trick, and swindle the other characters out of their money, they were seeing one American steal from another. Regional differences were not well recognized, nor were they significant to the English audience. They may have understood that the action took place in the South, but this location had little social significance for Drury Lane spectators. In America, however, particularly in Northern states where *The Yankee Pedlar* was shown, this fact was of the utmost importance. Instead of seeing one American steal from another, these spectators saw a Yankee trick a Southerner out of his money.

The same stage actions read quite differently across the Atlantic. What seemed like simple immorality to English viewers was understood as socio/politically-motivated trickery to residents of New York, Boston, Albany, or Philadelphia. The Southerner was deemed an appropriate victim of Yankee tricks for years in the Northern United States and at least some of this play's success came directly from the regional tensions it explored.

Perhaps more important to the play's success were the alterations made to it to accommodate an American audience. Morris Barnett's version of *The Yankee Pedlar* (called *The Yankee Peddler; or Old Times in Virginia*), which is the most commonly anthologized edition of this play, was officially published in 1877 but it was clearly established in American theatres decades before this date. Barnett heightened racial tension in this version of the script, and this was probably important to its success. For instance, when Dodge enters the estate he is allowed much more interaction with the African-Americans than in the English version. He offers them wares from his basket such as a pin-cushion, a "black doll" (Barnett 27), and sausages. In

addition, this extended interaction allows him ample time to tease them. He asks Pompey, who is obviously a house slave, “What mought you be worth in these parts?” (ibid). Later, as the slaves carry in the table he is to fix, Dodge cries, “Oh Jehosaphat! Four niggers carryin’ one table! They’re ‘bout as weak as old Granny Dobson was—she was so weak that she was obliged to have three or four mustard plasters applied to help her draw her last breath” (Barnett 30). Dodge is clearly racist. He even comments that Pompey “puts [him] in the mind of Phil Waters’ darky—his mouth was so big that he had to get it made smaller for fear he’d swaller his own head” (Barnett 27).

Barnett’s version also emphasized regional tensions between the North and South. The opening scene pointedly depicted “Negroes fanning” Fuller (Colonel Bantam), rather than singing a song about the pleasantness of the South. Too, upon Dodge’s entrance he says, “What, nobody stirrin’ ‘bout these digging’s?... They’re ‘bout lazy as Taunton water, and that’s so darned lazy that it won’t run down hill” (Barnett 27), and later, upon remembering that he sold Fuller “a Canadian pony last year” with its tail glued on, he claims, “But I don’t feel a bit consarned about that. I should think I was duin’ my dewty if I couls sell him one of my cleanin’ cakes, made out of flour and soft-soap. I’d like to get him to eat ‘bout half a one, and I’ll bet my head agin nuthing’, he’d be clean scour’d out in the mornin’! Ha, ha, ha!” (Barnett 28). Another Yankee appearing in this play, a young girl named Jerusha, who works for Fuller, complains about the Southerner, “Ugh! He’s a dreadful cross old creeture; he’s ‘bout as cross and crooked as our old brown heifer’s tail was—and that was so universal crooked dad used to bore holes with it” (Barnett 26).

Jerusha’s inclusion in this version of the play is an interesting one, for as a Yankee girl, she is the perfect romantic match for Hiram Dodge, and he loses no time in initiating a

relationship with her. The end of the play emphasizes this aspect. Rather than asking the audience to forgive the pedlar's wrongs by applauding, it ends with the Yankee pleading for the audience's approval of his progeny's later success. Dodge asks Jerusha for her hand in marriage, and she agrees to the match. The Yankee ends the play saying, "Then all will be right, if our kind friends here will but overlook the Yankee dodging of Hiram Dodge, and will wish success to Mrs. Dodge, and all the little Dodges" (Barnett 32). With the audience's applause, future "little Dodges" will continue in the Yankee's path. They will resume, one might imagine, pestering Old Southerners like Fuller and continue "set[ting his] niggars crazy" with wooden cheeses, leather hams, and "black dolls" (Barnett 26).

Another possible reason for the audience's immediate acceptance of this work was that the Yankee looks far better in this version of the play. Though Dodge is still a cheat (selling wooden cheeses and leather hams), he fares much better in this version than in Bernard's work. For example, in Barnett's play *Slingsby* asks Dodge to take the initial letter of challenge to Fuller for him. The Yankee does not trick him out of it, but agrees to do him a favor. Also, in this version the Yankee tries to help the lovers. Though he still accepts Fuller's money to squeal on them, he then sends Fuller out to the garden looking for Moreland. Misleading the old Southerner, Dodge gives the young man time to escape. Likewise, his aid to Moreland in the end is far more convincing than in the Bernard version. One believes that he actually intended to help his fellow easterner win the woman, unlike in the English script. Though the Yankee is far from perfect, he comes off as far less crass. He is still concerned with making money at each turn, but his capitalism is balanced with his good nature and domestic inclination.

Barnett's version of this play was re-written specifically to speak to American audiences. Emphasizing racial and regional tensions, it spoke to New World spectators in multifaceted

ways, touching on subjects of high importance to the average Jacksonian. Moreover, portraying the Yankee in a more positive light, this edition undercut the English criticisms of the American. With such a rewrite, Hill was sure to succeed with this piece on U.S. shores, and in fact he did. This version of the script remained popular for decades, staying viable in American theatres well into the 1850s.

* * * * *

Despite Hill's recorded/supposed success and continued overwhelming patronage at this time, he tried many new pieces when he returned to New York in September 1837.¹⁹⁴ Many of these works, like those in 1833, no longer exist. Many of them only showed for one night. For example, he played *Speculations, or Major Wheeler in Europe*¹⁹⁵ on September 4th, which was written for him by Bayle Bernard on his previous visit overseas. He showed a sketch called *Turn Out* on the 8th, *A Down-East Bargain*, by J. Moncrieff eight days later, and in November he brought out a fourth piece, *Peaceful Pelton, or the Vermonter*, by H.A. Buckingham, "of this city" (Odell IV 194). *A Day in France*, by Charles Shelby ended his stint of new works. None of these plays, it seems, could bring in a substantial audience, not even those of English authorship. Though critics are silent on the reasons for the apparent lack of interest, it seems

¹⁹⁴ Some of this (probable) inflation has already been noted. Northall adds to it, claiming that when Hill returned he played for a benefit for Samuel Woodworth at the Bowery Theatre, which "resulted in the substantial gain of \$1500 to the beneficiary" (78). He poetically concludes: "I am told by those who were present on this interesting occasion, that he never played so exquisitely before... Knowing as I do, the benevolence of Mr. Hill's heart, I can readily understand the inspiration he felt, for he knew that the poet's heart would be made glad by the results of his exertion, and it threw a spirit into his acting, which mere personal gain could not have done" (ibid). If my suspicions are correct, Hill would have had to be interested in personal gain, for these were hard times and he surely wasn't making the money he hoped to. An upcoming trip to England belies his financial situation. There was simply not enough financial support for a star actor in the United States.

¹⁹⁵ This play is often called *New Notions*. In fact, it is catalogued under this title in the Lord Chamberlain's Collection. A possible reason for the difference in title will be discussed in the following section.

likely that The Panic of 1837 was to blame. Many Americans simply did not have the financial means to indulge in entertainment. In May 1838, Hill left for England for his second tour.¹⁹⁶

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5.10 HILL'S SECOND TRIP TO ENGLAND

Hill's (auto)biography gives insight into his personal state when he arrived in Liverpool in 1838. Says Northall:

Previous to his leaving New York, he had prepared himself with elegantly bound blank books, numbered, ruled, and lettered, for the purpose of recording his doings. One he called his 'diary,' with columns for putting down the beats of his pulse at certain house of the day, his regimen, diet, &c, with a view to ascertain the progress of his 'heart disease.' The entries were spare; although some of them show that the sea-breeze had a good effect upon his appetite, and some amusing entries testify to the improvement of his mind upon the subject of the disease (138).

¹⁹⁶ Cordelia Hill joined her husband for this journey. Hill and Northall both color this oddity with a Victorian sense of domestic duty. They recount how Hill had been quite nervous during the past months, often keeping a doctor backstage to check his tongue and pulse during off-stage intervals. Hill's (auto)biography claims that he was suffering from an "affection of the heart" (138) and notes that he did not want to leave America, but that his personal physician ordered him to do so (ibid). Hill's journey to England—and for that matter, his nervous temperament—though, was in all likelihood more due to the poor economic conditions in the U.S. What's more, his wife might have had other reasons to follow him to England than simply domestic affection. Henry Stone's *Personal Recollections* reveal a more telling reason: "While in London, Hill had an affair with a fascinating but very artful young actress of the name of Miss R----s, whom he brought with him to this country... While in the city of Washington, which was during John Tyler's...administration, she produced so decided a sensation among the magnates of that city by her cunning maneuvering, coquetting, and shrewd strategy, as to actually succeed in controlling the appointment of many a scurvy politician to an office in some of the government departments at Washington, as well as elsewhere. 'Bob' T---, it was strongly suspected, had been inveigled in the meshes of this artful girl, which may in a measure account for the influence she had in controlling affairs to the extent she did. It was through the wiles and intrigues of this young actress that Hill was ultimately driven to an utter state of despair and final ruin! Women and wine, so often the ruin of young men of the present day, was the cause of destroying poor Yankee Hill!" (as quoted in Young 523 and Hodge 203-204).

This “disease” (or troubled mind, as it more likely was) would continue to haunt Hill for the rest of his career, later leading him to take drastic steps to avoid illness. For the time being, however, Hill recovered sufficiently to perform once again on English shores.

This second trip was highly successful. It lasted for over a year, and Hill performed triumphantly in two pieces. His first engagement was at the Haymarket Theatre acting in Bayle Bernard’s *New Notions*.¹⁹⁷ Bernard had written *New Notions* for Hill during his first visit overseas, but *The Yankee Pedlar* was so popular that Hill was never able to show it. Now Bernard’s second attempt at the Yankee character would finally be put on stage. Hill opened this piece on July 13, 1838, and it played daily for over a month, running through September 8th. Like Bernard’s first Yankee play, *New Notions* was a hit in England. Hill succeeded in London, again toured through the provinces, and even tried it in France (for the English Company), gaining plaudits wherever he journeyed.

Part of the attraction of *New Notions* was surely its adherence to established notions about the New World. Similar to *The Yankee Pedlar*, this play showcased the Yankee that conformed to the rhetoric in travelogues. Major Enoch Wheeler, the Yankee of the play, is an over-active salesman, whose eye is always focused on the “main chance.” Rather than peddling

¹⁹⁷ English sources refer to this play as *New Notions* while American works call it *Speculations, or Major Wheeler in Europe*. There is evidence to suggest that these plays were slightly different; that is, *New Notions* was written specifically for an English audience, and *Speculations* written for an American one. (It is uncertain if Bernard wrote both or if Hill simply altered Bernard’s work for U.S. showings.) For example, in his (auto)biography, Hill supplies an excerpt from *New Notions*. It begins with Major Wheeler criticizing England: “Well, I swow nothin’ seems to be goin’ ahead here, the country is so darn’d small, ‘tain’t bigger than a sack full of airth well scattered; and there’s that Thames river they brag so much about, I snore if one of our Nantucket whalers should undertake to come up there, she’d get jammed in...” (Northall 92). The play then continues directly into the scene with Markham, where the Major suggests that they should “hitch teams” since the love affair is “on the go-a-head principle” (Northall 93). What it does not contain however is perhaps more telling. This beginning omits the Yankee’s annoying questioning of Markham (where he tries to find out his profession), and his insistence that the young lover buy shares in his inventions, such as a “new steam turning machine” that is “nothing but a plain box with two doors to it—You throw sawdust into one and pull card tables out t’other” (Bernard 20). The Yankee in *Speculations* is much less anti-American in nature. He does not fall into travelogue stereotypes, but seems only an odd New Englander who tells long stories and desires to help an English lover.

actual ware, however, Wheeler sells shares in new inventions. He is also an annoying inquisitor, constantly asking questions and making himself welcome where he is not wanted. This Yankee could hardly have been more stereotypical, or more condemning of Americans. Indeed, at times he seems to have stepped out of Trollope's or Hall's work, rather than emerging from a trip to Taunton, Massachusetts, as Hill claimed.¹⁹⁸

Its plot followed the standard construction of the time. Major Wheeler has traveled to England to sell various "notions" and shares in his numerous patents. The first person he meets on English shores is Edward Markham, a young man who wants nothing to do with the fraudulent Yankee wares. Though he is uninterested, the Yankee will not give in until he has gained some useful information from Markham. Wheeler soon hits his mark. He learns that Markham is in love with a woman named Ellen Ledger, but is unable to marry her because her father has opposed the match, desiring her to marry a boyhood friend, Major Jungle. Major Wheeler offers to help the young lover in classic Yankee terms:

Wheeler: Is the Gal rich?

Markham: Tolerably.

Wheeler: And pretty?

Markham: Superlatively.

Wheeler: Then I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll jine you in that spekelation [sic].

Markham: What sir?

Wheeler: You shall have the Gal—and I'll take the money (Bernard 21).

Despite the Yankee's apparent self-interest, Markham takes him up on the offer. At this point, the plot turns in an unexpected way. The Yankee approaches the Ledger house to plead Markham's case, but he is confused for Major Jungle, who is expected to arrive from India on this same day. Major Wheeler, thus misidentified, is courteously welcomed into the house, and

¹⁹⁸ See Northall, page 91.

given the best treatment. A servant ushers him in and gives him Mr. Ledger's morning gown and slippers, dinner, wine, and an armchair to rest in while he awaits his "friend's" return.

Unfortunately for Mr. Ledger, the Yankee finds an incriminating letter in the pocket of the gown. It indicts Mr. Ledger in an act of fraud and conspiracy. When Mr. Ledger returns and finds that a stranger in his house, he orders Wheeler to leave immediately. The Yankee refuses, implying that if he is ordered out of the house he will tell Markham of Ledger's illegal behavior and will instruct him to notify the proper authorities. Ledger sees no way out of this conundrum. He is blackmailed. He cannot let the secret out or his reputation will be ruined. Reluctantly, Ledger acquiesces to Wheeler's wishes.

Ledger has arranged a party to be thrown to welcome Major Jungle home to England. All of his friends are in attendance. Major Wheeler takes this opportunity to sell his notions and shares to all. Though Ledger begs him not to rob his acquaintances, the Yankee insists that he will not leave until all available gentlemen have purchased stock in his wares. And all attendees, thinking Major Wheeler is Ledger's boyhood friend, gladly agree to finance his schemes. With capital secured, the Yankee finally agrees to leave the household, but only after he convinces Ledger to allow a marriage between Ellen and Markham. With his promise fulfilled and his pockets full, Wheeler gives the condemning letter back to Ledger and agrees to return to America, considering his "trip to England about the best of all [his] notions" (Bernard 26).

* * * * *

Similar to Hiram Dodge, Major Wheeler acts immorally while abroad. Confirming stereotypes about Americans for these English audiences, the Major is ready to sell anything at a moment's notice. What is more, he seems drawn to dishonest means. The wares he promotes are obvious frauds. For example, he offers Markham a chance to invest in a "Steam Turning

Machine,” which is a device that supposedly transforms sawdust into a full card table (Bernard 20). To Ledger he suggests a “Waterproof Hat,” its impermeability stemming from the fact that it was constructed from the skin of a rabid dog, and a “Cast Iron Self Acting Horse Persuader,” which consists of “a four foot iron rod, jointed at one end” and “screwed onto a horse’s hind leg” (Bernard 27). Wheeler’s wares are ridiculous, and the Englishmen see them for their true nature—a scheme to steal money.

Yet the Yankee’s scheme goes further. He is not selling the items themselves, but shares to these inventions. The buyer leaves with nothing, save perhaps a promise to see monetary returns after the said object is sold in the United States (which, quite obviously, it won’t be). Any Englishman gullible enough to purchase these shares will certainly never hear from Wheeler again (unless he is foolish enough to purchase again; then surely the Yankee will contact him). Similar to *The Yankee Pedlar*, *New Notions* reinforced beliefs that Americans were concerned only with making money. Major Wheeler, the only American representative, is constantly pushing his shares, attempting to swindle his transatlantic counterparts.

The play also confirmed darker views of Americans. For according to this piece, Americans were not only propelled by capitalistic concerns, but they were also ready to attain personal gain through any means necessary. According to this play, blackmail was an appropriate—and often engaged in—tactic for an American businessman. Likewise the play also asserted that New World citizens enjoyed taking advantage of “innate” English generosity. Yankee gain was the only thing that mattered to these “godless” money-grubbers.

Wheeler also mirrored popular travelogues with his penchant for finding out information about others. For example, when he first meets Markham he says, “Don’t think I’m much mistaken if I guess you’re in the law-line?” (Bernard 20). When Markham answers in the

negative, he continues: “Ruther afit to conclude then you’re in the Army?” (ibid). Again, Markham says he is not. The Yankee persists: “Then I calculate you’re a little in the Hulsale way?” (Bernard 20), and after that: “Then I’m not much out if I guess you’re a Doctor?” (ibid). Wheeler wants to know Markham’s line of work, but rather than simply asking him, he insists on trying to guess, trying to push Markham into giving him information that is of no concern to him. Wheeler finally exclaims, “Why don’t you tell!” (ibid). Similar to how writers like Hall and Trollope constructed Yankees, Bernard posits his New Englander as a bothersome inquirer. Wheeler will not be stopped until he gains information from his target of interest, though he has no right to it and causes much discomfort in doing so.

These facets of the Yankee did not go unnoticed by the English press. One review commented:

...Hill is at home and very amusing in the character of a Yankee speculator and trader, in a piece d’occasion called *New Notions*. The unabashed effrontery and cool cunning of the scheming adventurer are combined with the restless activity, sordid selfishness, and coarse manners of the trafficking nature of that paradise of pedlars, America (*The Spectator*, July 28, 1838).

Perhaps more grievous to Americans, this reviewer assumes that *New Notions* promoted a truthful account of the United States, particularly because it was performed by an American. “It is pleasant,” he says, “to see the ‘high-pressure, go-a-head’ system, that would reduce America to the condition of a calculating machine of perpetual motion, shown up by one of its own citizens” (ibid). Hill was, according to this reviewer at least, complicit in showing America through a lens of greed.

New Notions reinforced the popular discourse on America. It showed America as a land of entrepreneurial frenzy, thronged with citizens whose dishonest ways and immoral ethics would perpetuate its fall into capitalistic chaos.

5.11 WIFE FOR A DAY

Hill's next hit came quickly on the heels of his multinational success with *New Notions*. When he returned to London he opened another play by Bayle Bernard, called *Wife for a Day*. "The play was eminently successful," notes Northall (86), so much that "on the first night of its representation, Mr. Hill was called out, and he announced the repetition of the piece every night until further notice, amidst the cheers and applause of the gratified audience" (86-87). It "ran without interruption for an entire month" (ibid). So successful was this piece that Queen Victoria attended a performance on April 2, 1839. She obviously liked what she saw, for she encouraged other nobility to support the playhouse. Hodge notes that the parade of aristocracy following Victoria's suggestion included the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, the Marquis of Normandy, the Duke and Duchess of Cleveland, the Earl of Chesterfield, the Earl of Kilmorey, the Earl and Countess of Lichfield, and the Earl of Errol (210).

To this string of attendees Hodge asks, "Was the English aristocracy taking a 'serious' look at America through the eccentric comedian they saw on the stage?" (210). He concludes, "If so, Yankee Hill was carrying more of a burden as the favorite ambassador of 'democratic' America than he ever imagined, even in his fondest dreams" (ibid). If Hodge's speculations are correct, however, Yankee Hill was not conveying an image with which many Americans would have agreed. For though Hodge connects his portrayal of the Yankee with a "democratic" America, Hill's image of his fellow citizens in *Wife for a Day* was anything but kind. Likewise, if it was democratic at all, it was only so in the Jacksonian sense of leveling, for all Americans in this piece are mindless idiots, each one worse than the other, and all brainless. If the English aristocracy was looking at "the American" through Hill's newest play, they found a laughable image, one that would only—could only--reinforce their imperial prejudices.

Wife for a Day is a simple play, featuring an American family, The Tuckers. Mrs. Tucker is a social snob who is only concerned with fashion and show. Her favorite son is Montague, whom she previously sent to Europe to become a doctor. Unbeknownst to her, Montague did not complete school, but instead wasted his mother's money gambling and accrued a large debt. He has also married a French dancer, disregarding his mother's intended match. She arranged a marriage between Montague and a local dignitary's daughter, and promised her fortune to the new couple upon their nuptials.

Mr. Tucker, on the other hand, favors Nathan, a simple country boy who is always kind and honest. Nathan desires only to live the life of a farmer, and he is unconcerned with fashion. Because of his simple nature Mrs. Tucker despises him. The couple's disagreement over their sons comes to a head when both return home, Nathan from his uncle's farm in Vermont, and Montague, from Paris.

Despite his mother's wishes, Montague has returned from the Continent with a wife, Mademoiselle Angelique. But though he has disobeyed his mother, he still desires her fortune. He is convinced that once his mother meets Angelique she will find her exceedingly suitable, since she is from abroad, and overlook his small alteration to her plan. This monetary gift is especially necessary because Montague has racked up enormous debts while in France. Besides ruining a few women and gambling, he has also borrowed money from friends, and expects his debtors to come looking for him soon. Thus, he comes up with a plan. He attempts to hide this marriage by convincing Nathan to take Angelique on "for a day," pretending she is his wife. Nathan's agreement to take part in such a plan proves to be a bad decision, for any past creditor, angry father, or acquaintance Montague has wronged over the past years seems to show up at the family farm in the course of the day. Having agreed to act the part, Nathan feels he should face

up to Montague's wrongs. In doing so, he is challenged to a duel, shot at, beaten, and has all of his money taken.

In the end, Angelique accidentally exposes the charade. A sheriff forces his way into the Tucker house, exclaiming that he is there to arrest Montague Tucker for a debt contracted to an American at Paris. Angelique flies to Montague and cries, "Paris! Qui est ce que vous d'etes de Paris. Oh my husband what is the matter?" (Bernard 425). Her comment doesn't go unnoticed. Mrs. Tucker immediately questions her, and she hesitantly admits the truth. She and Montague are married. Thus, the free-spending couple is arrested. The situation is finally righted and Nathan is rewarded in the end. Because he has acted righteously, even through personal danger to keep his word to his brother, his father gives him half of the farm. His repeated mantra, "When I do say a thing I always stick to it" (Bernard 427) proves wise action, though it is not completely acceptable. Mr. Tucker reminds him, providing the moral of the play: "I hope that to days events will teach you never again to lend yourself to falsehoods even to serve a brother" (Bernard 428).

Nearly all Americans are pictured distastefully in this work. Montague is an immoral womanizer, gambler, and liar. He has "ruined" many a young woman in his past, but is remorseless for his prior crimes. He has wasted time and money set aside for education on frivolous activities and has not even gained the benefits of Old World experience. Mrs. Tucker is a social snob; yet she cannot distinguish "real" social excellence when it is placed in front of her. Conversely, Nathan is a blunderer, not able to distinguish between moral action and empty platitudes. He refuses to turn over his brother simply because he made a promise to the contrary, yet he jeopardizes the family in doing so. His actions do not actually aid Montague; they just forestall his due punishment.

Though nearly the entire Tucker family fairs badly in Bernard's presentation, Nathan stands out in ignominy. He is a complete buffoon. For example, within the first scene Nathan misidentifies a parrot, an obvious icon of social status in the Tucker house, calling it a "young owl in Regimentals" (Bernard 387), and in the same manner mistakes his mother's goldfish for an upcoming meal. This is an American who knows nothing of fashion, nor of elite manners. One might be able to overlook such ignorance, for Yankees often made such mistakes. Yet as the play continues, his dimwitted nature increases to ridiculous levels. After taking on his brother's wife, paying for her expensive hotel meal, and even committing to fight a duel with Morton for his brother's debts, the Yankee continues to stubbornly submit himself to further punishment. For example, when McNab, an angry American creditor, enters the scene Nathan questions him extensively, as if fishing for more punishment. The scene follows:

McNab: Good morning Sir. Is Mr. Montague Tucker to be seen?

Nathan: Montague Tucker?

McNab: Yes. I've got a little business with him and—

Nathan: You're quite sure now you don't mean Nathan?

McNab: Nathan? Who's he?

Nathan: Why soothing like his brother.

McNab: What? Has Mr. Tucker two Sons?

Nathan: I spect he has.

McNab: (aside) I must make sure of the right one. The gentleman I mean my friend is married.

Nathan: He is—is he?

McNab: Yes. He's got a French wife.

Nathan: (aside) Come now I ant a going to be done this time for want of caution. Well now, Mister. Suppose I was to say that I'm the man?

McNab: You?

Nathan: Yes.

McNab: Well then I should say that you're my prisoner... I arrest you for the sum of—

[Nathan runs of L.H.] (Bernard 417-418; punctuation added).

McNab first asks for Montague, but Nathan insists on questioning him more until he is mistaken for his brother. It seems this Yankee is asking for his next misfortune.

Unlike his American counterparts, this “English Yankee” has no redeeming points. His stupidity drives the action of the play, increasing with every scene. This Yankee cannot judge right from wrong. Furthermore, he refuses to relinquish his “go-ahead” attitude even in the face of overwhelming catastrophe. In his words, a “bargain is a bargain” and he refuses to give up the charade until the entire household is in danger. Nathan cannot see the difference between true principled action and empty moral platitudes. As a representative of America, Nathan is amazingly dimwitted. More importantly, his stupidity leads him to stubbornly adhere to a code of morality, which is in the end empty of all true merit.

An illustration of the Yankee in *Wife for a Day* perfectly displays this Yankee’s main character trait. In the drawing Nathan is the epitome of stupidity. He seems to be attempting a dance while Angelique looks on, scratching her head in either shock, dismay, or simple confusion. He is bent over in an awkward pose, his head hanging out in front of him, one foot lifted in the air, and the other bent haphazardly toes down, heel raised. He looks as if he is trying to skip, but perhaps he is trying to copy her “third position” ballet pose. His arms hang gangly at his side. He looks at her for encouragement, but it seems the dancer can offer him none. He is simply too gangly to ever be graceful. The Yankee’s stupidity was such a key element in *Wife for a Day* that it easily transferred from play to illustration. Nathan is uncouth, dimwitted, and appears especially uncivilized next to the graceful French ballerina.

* * * * *

Looking at the illustrations of the “English Yankee” neatly highlights Jonathan’s twofold construction. Nathan in *Wife for a Day* is the perfect embodiment of the backwards, uncouth American. Pictures of Hiram Dodge and Major Wheeler, however, show the opposite point of view. These Yankees seem to personify the sly, worldly bargainer. Both are dressed in striped

vests and pants, with overcoats of varying lengths. Their ties are neatly done up, and though they do not look anything like (English) men of fashion, they certainly give the impression of being fastidious, slick dressers. Hiram Dodge holds the letter to the Overseer in his hand, through which he sent Slingsby, the innocent jockey, to reap his intended punishment. Major Wheeler holds the flute with which he entertained Ledger's guests while robbing them of their fortunes. The caption accompanying this illustration points to the Yankee's penchant for lies. It says, "I once invented a Flute that you could blow as many tunes into as you'd a mind to; stop up the holes, and let 'em come out when you wanted 'em." Even in seemingly innocent entertainment this Yankee cannot help but propagate falsehoods about one of his supposed inventions. The flute is an obvious hoax and emphasizes the Major's primary feature: he is a cheat who is willing to say anything to make a buck. Both Yankees are drawn looking up and away from the center, as if dodging the onlooker's full view. These Yankees clearly cannot be trusted and they will not meet direct eye contact.

The binary between the two types of "English Yankee" is strikingly clear. He is either a complete dimwit or a well-versed swindler. The difference between the slick Yankee and the stupid Yankee is so pronounced it seems hard to imagine that this was a single character type on stage.

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5.12 HILL RETURNS HOME FOR THE FINAL TIME

In early October 1839 George Hill traveled back to America. He took *Wife for a Day* with him and quickly opened it in New York City. Niblo's Theatre, (which was being managed

by Wallack for a brief time), was the first house to show the work; the Park Theatre was next, and then the Chatham. That Hill used this new English play was not surprising, for Americans knew of its European success and expected to see the latest European hit. What is surprising is that it stayed in Hill’s repertoire for years.¹⁹⁹ One wonders how this was possible, given the anti-American rhetoric that permeated Bernard’s work. Was the American public becoming more acclimated to “English Yankee” works? Were they simply able to overlook the Tucker’s--most notably Nathan’s--idiocy for the “fun” of this farcical play? Or did Hill change this work, as he had done for *The Yankee Pedlar* and *New Notions*?

There is little evidence to suggest the latter. Most likely *Wife for A Day* was performed in America in its British form for over two years; it was not until around 1841 that hints of a new version can be found in archives. Perhaps no other scholar mentions this fact because only the smallest bit of evidence remains to verify it. No script is extant; no letter to playwright friend Joseph Jones exists (or to anyone else for that matter) suggesting his plan and/or asking for advice; likewise, no entries in Hill’s (auto)biography point to such a rewrite. What does survive is a playbill from the Chatham Theatre, dated Thursday, September 16th, 1841. It advertises the piece as, “*Hill’s original Farce of ‘A Wife for a Day!’*” (my emphasis). This was no printing error, for it is listed this way twice in the flyer. Likewise, the cast list differs from Bernard’s work. It includes only seven characters:

NATHAN TUCKER.....MR. HILL	Peabody.....Blaike
Eli Tucker.....Parker	Judge Willard.....Goodenow
McNab.....Herbert	Norton.....L. Mestayer ²⁰⁰
ANGELIQUE.....Mrs. BLAKE	

¹⁹⁹ See Hodge, page 211.

²⁰⁰ The Bernard script lists this character as Morton, but the playbill has the name as Norton.

Mrs. Tucker is not mentioned, nor is Montague. Kezy Whiting, Nathan's country girl friend, also eludes this list. Although Kezy is not essential to the action,²⁰¹ Mrs. Tucker and Montague seem indispensable. One has to wonder what carried the plot along. Montague, after all, sparks the action of the play, hiding his wife from his parents and convincing his brother to adopt her for a day. Likewise, much of the action of the play stems from the division of philosophy between the elder Tuckers. With no Mrs. Tucker, why would Montague have to hide his wife? With no Mrs. Tucker, Nathan would not be the neglected son, and thus, half of the humor propelling the action would disappear. What did Hill put in its place? What plot carried this script? With so little evidence, it is impossible to say. The only certainty is that Hill not only altered *Wife for a Day*, but also claimed it as his own work, dropping Bernard's name from the work altogether.

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5.13 CONCLUSION

Seeming to embody the cultural spirit of the age, Hill was unafraid of taking calculated risks. He realized that in order to gain true cultural legitimacy in America he needed to succeed in England; thus he traveled overseas, and worked to woo the cautious London public. Following Hackett's lead, Hill found a way to succeed. He hired a local playwright, comprised his artistic integrity to the established cultural imperialism, and played a Yankee far different than that seen in America. This is how Hill succeeded in London. Yet it was through his efforts that the Yankee—the embodiment of America—became not only well known within English

²⁰¹ Indeed, I didn't even mention her in the given plot outline because she is such a minor character in the original work.

houses, but admired as a comedic figure abroad. True, the English version of the Yankee was problematic. Overseas Jonathan was imagined as either an immoral capitalist or an utter buffoon. Created from a culturally imperialistic mindset, his range was depleted, his essential qualities limited, and his nature drawn flatly stereotypical. Yet the initial failure of “Yankee Theatre” abroad had been overturned. Hill had, through his success, opened the door for future Yankee actors. With his triumph, the English accepted this figure as legitimate entertainment.

When Hill returned to the United States he brought English fame with him. He also brought newly publicized English scripts. While Americans certainly wanted to experience the works that created a rage in England, the plays from abroad were not well suited for New World audiences. Thus, in most cases the English works were altered and changed to better play in the United States. Working in a scheme similar to Hackett, Hill rewrote the English works he brought home with him, often erasing their imperialistic notions or anti-American rhetoric.

The brevity of evidence concerning these rewrites invites speculative queries. In changing the English plays, was Hill performing American post-colonial resistance? Was he, like Hackett, writing over English cultural imperialism? Or was he complicit in forwarding the unequal power relations between America and England within the transatlantic world? Was he merely “wiping clean” the English perception of America and Americans, which, one could say, kept Americans both subdued and falsely admiring of their (imperial) cousins? With little dramaturgical evidence, it is impossible to say on which side of this post-colonial equation to place Hill.

Whether wiping clean the cultural stance of the English or writing over the imperial attitudes within the English scripts, Hill moved “Yankee Theatre” further in both America and English perceptions. He brought the Yankee to new heights of fame in the United States and

made Jonathan a household name. Likewise, in England Hill worked to legitimize “Yankee Theatre,” and made a favorable impression on audiences wherever he traveled. Though he often played in shows fraught with compromising rhetoric, the Yankee was, at last, accepted abroad. If the Yankee were ever to move away from his travelogue legacy, though, future Yankee actors would need to stretch the character further than Hill had done. Actors such as the already rising Danforth Marble and Joshua Silsbee would have to take the next steps—if they were able to—in showing the Yankee in a positive light and/or in legitimizing American creative output.

6.0 CHAPTER FIVE

6.1 DANFORTH MARBLE AND THE “LOSER” YANKEE (1836 – 1845)

A poem appearing in New York newspapers in 1846 asks Danforth Marble:

Where didst thou get that homespun coat, which baulks
Description by the most tremendous chalks?
What cunning artist was it, DAN, that placed
Those buttons TWIXT the shoulders, not the waist?
Tell us in confidence, where got you *that*
Distant resemblance to a Christian hat?
Or where procure those miscellaneous pants,
Adown whose seams each monstrous pocket slants?
As full of fun as is the “YANKEE BLADE,”
That knife with which you drive your whittling trade! (Kelly 179; original
emphasis).

How different this description seems from those of other Yankee actors in the past. If the poem is correct, Marble’s coat is indescribable, its buttons misplaced; his hat is old, odd, and perhaps reminiscent of Quaker garb; and his pants are cut incorrectly, the pockets angled in a wild manner. No Yankee before, save perhaps Nathan Tucker, ever looked so foolish. In an earlier poem written to celebrate Hill’s American success, Hill was compared to the American landscape and held up as a national comedian.²⁰² Here Marble is only a fool.

Marble’s Yankee might have looked foolish, but he did not always play the part of the innocent clown; his Yankees were often mean-spirited. Lot Sap Sago, for instance, in *Yankee*

²⁰² See “Our Own Yankee Hill” listed in Chapter Four.

Land foiled an engagement, needlessly tortured a scientist, and abused those living on his father's estate. He was a Yankee not unlike Major Wheeler, albeit without the emphasis on capital. He was an unfeeling scoundrel.

Likewise, Marble's Yankees were also "rough and tumble," similar to Davy Crockett or Mike Fink. Sam Patch, for example, who appeared in *Sam Patch, the Jumper*, was a daredevil waterfall jumper. He rescued women, did battle with Frances Trollope, and finished the play by leaping Niagara Falls. Here was a Yankee who could face any popular frontiersman without flinching. Rather than relying on complex trickery or linguistic riddles, this Yankee depended on his fists, his spunk, and his courage.

Marble, it seems, played a very different Jonathan than any before. His Yankees were clownish fools, mean-spirited brats, or rough backwoodsman types. In many ways, they were not unlike the Yankees that paraded on English stages. But how did this happen? Since Jonathan's beginning he had represented "America." How could he, then, become a clown, a villain, or an insatiable braggart? This chapter seeks to answer these questions. Looking at a selection of Danforth Marble's most famous plays, it will explain how he gained popular acceptance in America despite such depictions. Part of the answer, I will suggest, lay in Marble's particular skills as a comedian. The audiences he performed for played a part as well. The largest reason for such a change, though, came from the culture itself, which for a number of reasons no longer needed Jonathan to represent "America" in a serious way.

* * * * *

6.2 DANFORTH MARBLE: THE BEGINNINGS OF A LOW COMIC

George Hill and Danforth Marble began their careers around the same time. As Odell relates:

We attended some performances at Chatham Garden in the summer of 1831, and laughed heartily at the Yankee stories of one George H. Hill, who seemed better to some of us than the great Hackett himself. Then, in the late spring of 1832, we had noticed Danforth Marble at Richmond Hill. Which of these native products would first find the Yankee path to fame and fortune? (III, 611).

Hill, of course, found the path first. Marble's rise to fame proceeded more slowly. Like Hill, Marble did not come from an elite family, nor did he have any outstanding connections to the theatrical world, so he had to work his way up. He first tried acting at the Chatham Theatre, where he was introduced by friends, and took supernumerary roles. Later, as his career advanced, he tried his hand at leading romantic roles, like sailors and tragic heroes. But he did not strike the audience as a star. In an attempt to advance his career, Marble tried buying his way into a starring role. "For the privilege of the starring role of William in Jerrold's *Black-Eyed Susan*," Hodge tells, "He paid Mr. Spear, whose benefit it was, a cash fee of twenty dollars" (223). This risky move paid off. The audience enjoyed his performance, and he was asked to join John S. Potter's stock company in Norfolk, Virginia. There he played a variety of roles, including the Yankee, and gained much needed experience.

In 1834 Charles R. Thorne, manager of a small touring theatre group, contracted him to play the low-comedy line for his troupe. It was in this position that Marble's talent for comic parts became clear. Marble stayed with Thorne's troupe for three years, gaining experience throughout New York State.

Hill had a large lead. By 1836 he was *the* national comedian; if Marble were to play the Yankee singularly he would need to find a way around Hill. He would need to distinguish himself from the famous actor. But how could he do this? The type Hill played was largely enjoyed; moreover, all the major theatres employed Hill on a regular basis. He was a favorite at the legitimate, elite houses and they turned to him when they desired a stage Yankee. How would Marble, then, get his foot in the door? In 1836, as Hill traveled to London, he got his chance. He would try his hand at the “down-east boy” while Hill was gone. But even though Hill was out of the country, Marble seems to have wanted no one to confuse him with Yankee Hill. So, he sought to differentiate himself from the esteemed comedian, and he did so by playing a very different Yankee to a very different audience: Marble played a westernized Yankee, one not unlike other popular frontiersmen, and he played this Jonathan to the rough and rowdy Bowery b’hoys.

Marble’s first big break came when the managers of the Eagle Street Theatre, in Buffalo, N. Y., offered him a position. It was at this theatre that Marble tried his first full-length Yankee piece, *Sam Patch, the Yankee Jumper*, which soon moved to New York City and gained major popularity.

* * * * *

6.3 SAM PATCH, THE YANKEE JUMPER

That a play about Sam Patch would be born in Buffalo is no surprise. Sam Patch was a real person, a man whose daredevil waterfall leaping captured the American imagination for years until his death from such a feat in 1829. His last leap was from Goat Island, a small

precipice off of Niagara Falls, on October 6, 1829. New Yorkers were amazed at Patch, and gloried in his seemingly unstoppable, independent, fiery spirit. Many had seen him jump, and many were present the fateful day he did not rise up out of the spurge.

Though a large crowd witnessed his death, Patch's spirit lived on in local legend and poetic lore. It was rumored, for instance, that he had faked his death--that he had survived the jump and was quietly living upstream, chuckling to himself at the stir he had made. Other sources claimed that he was on a sea vessel in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Nantucket. Likewise, many authors picked up his tale after his death. H.J. Finn wrote about him in his *American Comic Annual* in 1831; Seba Smith wrote a ballad about him in the voice of Jack Downing;²⁰³ Frances Trollope added him into her travelogue; and *Sam Slick* reported him alive, on a schooner returning from China.²⁰⁴

Many of these authors had connections to "Yankee Theatre," so it is not surprising that Patch was soon linked to the genre. As a character, Patch seemed akin to the spirit of Yankee. In his own way he was overtly patriotic. Most often he dove after making a speech about Washington, Jackson, or Napoleon, inevitably drawing connections between these great leaders and himself. He also insisted on the presence of an American flag to decorate his jumping point. What is more, he possessed the independent, stubborn tenacity of the first Jonathans (if not their blockheaded nature as well), and seemed to interestingly comment on the bold spirit of the Jacksonian age. He was willing to face the falls, often from record-breaking heights, and his first

²⁰³ Jack Downing, a fictional Yankee himself, "wrote" Sam Patch's biography.

²⁰⁴ In this work, Sam Slick met Patch on one of his clock circuits. Patch reported to the inquisitive Yankee that his leap sent him so far down into the water he came out in China. There were many, many more authors who wrote about Patch. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Thomas Ward are only a few. Articles came out in many magazines, and later in moral pamphlets. See Soden, Garrett. *Falling: How our Greatest Fear became our Greatest Thrill*, "Terrified Imagination," pages 43-52 for more information on Sam Patch's life and literary sources that drew on his fame. See Richard Dorson's "The Story of Sam Patch" in *The American Mercury*. Vol LXIV, No. 277, January 1947 for a narrative account of Sam Patch's life.

leap was spurred by a financial crisis. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that a Yankee play would be constructed about him.

*Sam Patch, the Yankee Jumper*²⁰⁵ perhaps originally caught the public's eye because it dealt with a well-known hero who was quickly growing into national legend. In 1836, though, more important to the play's popularity was probably its ardent stance against English travelers and travelogues. A script is no longer extant, but reviews and critical mentions give significant details which indicate that the play was written within the resistant tradition of Hackett's *Lion of the West* and Hill's *Foundling of the Sea*. Americans were still angered by Hall and Trollope's characterizations of their country and in dealing with this anger they continued to enjoy plays that mocked either of the travelers. In this piece, Trollope is the target for American critique. For instance, she and Sam Patch are matched up in one scene, where they discussed "Steam Doctors" and Yankee courtship, no doubt with Trollope receiving classic American comic treatment.²⁰⁶ Of this scene, Hodge claims, "The scene with Mrs. Trollope suggests much to the

²⁰⁵ Hereafter called simply *Sam Patch*.

²⁰⁶ A story featuring a Yankee and Trollope comes up in Marble's biography. It could very well have been the one told within the play (albeit with some alterations). In the tale, Marble and Trollope are both riding on a steamboat near Kentucky. When he is introduced to the famous English travel writer, he decides to trick her, taking on a Yankee persona. She mentions that the scenery is nice, but not as poetic as the English countryside. This pushes Marble into a classic nationalistic Yankee monologue: "No, ma'am...this is not England, but the same old United States you've read about in the books. This, ma'am is America, yonder is Kentucky, and here's Indiany and Ohio. Ma'am, you should have been born in America, the greatest country in the known world. Nature has clustered all her stupendous and dazzling works upon this land, and you should be among them! We have got the greatest men, the finest women, the broadest lakes, the tallest trees, the widest prairies, the highest waterfalls, and the biggest hearts in all creation. Ma'am, go and see the Falls of Niagara. My dear ma'am, if I didn't think I'd waked up in futurity when first I seed that big slanterdicular puddle! (slantendicular's an algebra word, ma'am—mayn't know it)" (Kelly 225). The subject of the Falls seems to give Marble an idea. He will turn Trollope's habit of travel writing against her: "Why, ma'am, I could tell you something about them Falls—but you musn't put it in your book, 'cos nobody will ever believe it. The people that live round about there all lose their speech, and never hear each other speak for years, with the noise of the cataract! Fact, ma'am, true as that's a pencil and a note-book you're takin' out of your pocket. Why, there was a man lived there ten years, and he got so deaf he never knew a man was speaking to him till a pail of water was poured down his neck! When you go to see the Falls, ma'am, you must do all the talking you want to before you get within twenty-five miles of them; for after that, not a word of any kind can be heard" (ibid). Marble continues his benign trickery, suggesting that she should note down the 'facts' about Mammoth Cave in Kentucky; that there is "a salt water lake in the middle of it, twenty-five miles broad" and there's a "natural fountain of pure brandy!" (ibid). These incorrect facts were given specifically to make Trollope look bad. The fictional assumption was that she would write them down in her book, publish the nonsense in London, and be

imagination. She was such a familiar and ridiculous figure to American audiences that comedies seemingly could hardly do without her” (227). Trollope signaled a critique of travelogues and symbolized an all-too-often haughty English attitude Americans encountered when dealing with foreign travelers. *Sam Patch*’s reference to her clearly marked this play as a work of post-colonial resistance, for Trollope was never treated kindly on the American stage.

But although *Sam Patch* was written within the resistant tradition of the early 1830s, it featured a very different Yankee. Sam Patch was tough as nails and his unique abilities were well displayed in the play. For example, he helped a woman escape danger by jumping through a window (Odell IV, 321). Likewise, he leaped Niagara Falls during the production. Moreover, Marble probably tried to incorporate some of (the real) Sam Patch’s attributes. Patch was a flamboyant showman and a boisterous braggart. Before jumping, he would shout out speeches to the watching spectators, glory in their applause, and boast about the incredible feats he had accomplished. He was also not ashamed to compare himself to great leaders and to collect money before and after every jump. His livelihood depended on the latter tactic, but it also gave him a chance to “schmooze” with the admiring crowd, a practice he seemed to adore. Patch was a courageous (if foolhardy) man, whose eccentric, showy personality boosted him to fame.

No illustrations or pictures exist of Marble in the role of Sam Patch, but looking at one of his other roles gives a good indication of what this part might have looked like. For example, a picture of him in the role as Jacob Jewsharp in J. P. Addam’s *The Yankee in Time*, shows his penchant for incorporating western flair. This Yankee hardly looks like he is from the northeast. He wears pants, a shirt, and suspenders, but none of the traditional Yankee costume pieces grace his body. His pants are not striped and what is more, he has taken off his coat and hat and holds

the butt of the joke for all of America. The tale is a wonderful example of the type of post-colonial resistance writing incorporated into Yankee Theatre.

them in his hand. The end result: he looks ready to jump into a stream, fight a bear, or throw a punch. Quite a different Yankee than was previously seen! Although neither script exists, it seems appropriate to compare Jacob Jewsharp to Sam Patch, for both seem to incorporate the “go-ahead” spirit that popular frontiersmen of the day—including Sam Patch--exuded.

Sam Patch was also unique to “Yankee Theatre” because of the physical danger it placed Marble in every night. James Hackett and George Hill played subdued characters that amused audiences with clever wit and skillful linguistic tricks. Until Nathan Tucker, in fact, their Yankees hardly did anything on stage other than talk. Marble, though, was in a different position, for *Sam Patch* required a dangerous leap from high above the stage floor to replicate Patch’s leap into Niagara Falls. When the time came for the leap, Marble would climb to a high point in the theatre--sometimes as high as forty feet--and then jump through a trap door on to a spring bed below the stage, which was often softened with shavings. Once he reached his mark, water was thrown up out of the trap suggesting a wet landing, and then Marble would crawl back onto the stage, completing the illusion. This was a dangerous theatre stunt, even for a professional actor. Marble reportedly broke his ankle during one performance and had to limp through the remainder of the show. On another occasion he complained of pain in his side, perhaps from broken ribs. In playing a daredevil on stage, Marble had to become a bit of a daredevil himself.

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Sam Patch was immediately and immensely popular in Buffalo. This came as little surprise, since Sam Patch (the man) was so well known in the area. It probably also succeeded, though, because of the working-class audience to which it was presented. The spectators included boys who were rough and ready to fight and they probably enjoyed Patch’s similar

outlook. Marble had plenty of experience dealing with working-class audiences and he probably knew how to play to them with specific skill. His start was at the Chatham Theatre, a working-class house, and throughout touring New York he played to many similar houses. In these smaller theatres, Marble often encountered rowdy audiences that yelled out to the performers and caused ruckuses in the pit. His biography, written by Jonathan Falconbridge Kelly and called *Dan Marble: A Biographical Sketch*, is filled with stories of such audiences. Thus, when Marble went to New York City, he probably approached the working-class theatres first. His tactic paid off: he played *Sam Patch* at the Bowery Theatre on May 1, 1837 and became an instant hit. The “b’hoys” loved the show.²⁰⁷

The Bowery B’hoys, similar to the Buffalo Theatre audience, were far from the calm, polite, elite audiences that Hackett and Hill entertained. In fact, *The Spirit of the Times* spoke of audiences at the Bowery Theatre as: “drinking, swearing, smoking, chewing tobacco, knocking each other’s hats down over the eyes, and in a thousand such delicate and fantastic ways given free vent to the coarsest and roughest species of mere animal spirits, stimulated and excited to a sort of good natured madness...” (as quoted in McConachie *Melodramatic* 122). If a performer was to get--or have any chance of holding--the attention of this crowd, he would need to be louder than they, more exciting than the hi-jinks of their fellow “pitites,” and more captivating than the impulses brought on by the whiskey they drank before and during the show. Marble’s Yankee, it seems, was able to accomplish such a feat. In doing so, his Sam Patch had to have been hugely different from Hill’s quiet portrayal of Jedidiah Homebred or Zachariah Dickerwell.

²⁰⁷ The Bowery B’hoys were “one of the most colorful subcultures in [New York’s] history,” claims Tyler Anbinder in his work *Five Points* (178). He continues, “The precise origin of “Bowery B’hoys” is unclear. Americans had used the term ‘b’hoys’ as early as 1834 to describe a working-class fellow who loved fun, adventure, hard drinking, and a night out with his pals” (ibid). Bruce McConachie offers a like description of this type in *Melodramatic Formations*. The Bowery b’hoys, he says, was “a working-class dandy bristling with class and nativist antagonism whose black suit, soaped-back hair, and swaggering defiance was meant to frighten rich folks and Irish immigrants” (133).

As he swung through windows, leapt through the trap door, and humiliated Trollope, Sam Patch was more “rough and tumble” than any Yankee that had come before.

But despite this apparent difference in the character, Sam Patch was not coarse enough to alienate audiences outside the Bowery, for it thrilled other audiences both in the “west” and in New York’s most elite house, the Park Theatre. After his initial success in New York, for example, Marble toured the western provinces, visiting Columbus, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh. This tour was quite successful; in fact, Kelly suggests that Marble became a sudden favorite in all of cities he visited.²⁰⁸ With such a successful tour under his belt, Marble turned his attention back on New York. He would try his hand at the Park Theatre. Amazingly, *Sam Patch* was successful there too. Marble played at the Park Theatre on July 31, 1838 and won the approval of the crowd and reviewers alike. In fact, if one is to believe Marble’s biographer, *Sam Patch* had the ability to captivate all Americans at this time, for he claims that Sam Patch’s jumps started a national “jumping” phenomenon. Kelly says: “The Sam Patch piece set everybody in a *jumping* fever. The boys in the street *jumped*, the old folks jumped, clerks *jumped* counters, and the rustics *jumped* fences! The supernumeraries *jumped*, actors and actresses *jumped*, the mania for doing Sam Patch was general...” (Kelly 93; original emphasis).²⁰⁹ With the post-colonial resistant humor and the exciting jumping spectacle, it is little wonder that *Sam Patch* made such a hit in and out of working-class theatres. Kelly summarizes: “Sam Patch was entirely

²⁰⁸ Emphasizing the type of audiences Marble played for, Kelly notes that he was immensely popular with the “boys” of Pittsburgh as well (46).

²⁰⁹ It is, I’m sure, no coincidence that this sounds like the “Jump Jim Crow” phenomenon. In 1833, a mere three years prior to Marble’s debut of *Sam Patch*, T. D. Rice won international acclaim with his performance of a supposed “Nigger” dance. At this very time he was “Jumping Jim Crow” in England. Although the two “jumps” were quite different—that is, one was jumping over or into something, and one was a dance--the linguistic similarity (“hey, look, I’m jumping Sam Patch;” “hey, look, I’m jumping Jim Crow”) had to have come into play here. Probably it helped propel *Sam Patch*’s popularity.

successful, drawing fine houses, and adding nightly to Marble's rapidly growing popularity" (Kelly 88).

* * * * *

Marble found a way to gain success despite Hill's immense popularity. He played a different kind of Yankee—one not unlike Davy Crockett or Mike Fink--and he played it to a different type of spectator. But Hill's absence certainly helped Marble's rise to fame. Hill had been in London in 1836 when *Sam Patch* first made waves; he came back and toured in 1837 for a short time, but quickly returned to the former mother country by 1838. Here was Marble's second chance and he jumped on it. He opened *The Vermont Wool Dealer, or The Yankee Traveller*,²¹⁰ in Cincinnati on June 4, 1838. In this play Marble also tried to differentiate himself from Hill, but he did it in a new way. He played a foolish Yankee, one not unlike Nathan Tucker from *Wife for a Day*. Significantly, this Yankee did not trick (or even attempt to trick) anyone. Instead, he is the victim of a cruel prank and loses the girl he loves to a man of far less character than he.

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6.4 THE VERMONT WOOL DEALER

The plot of *The Vermont Wool Dealer* is nearly the exact opposite of typical American "Yankee Theatre" works. It begins when Amanda Waddle, Captain Oakley, and Deuteronomy Dutiful, the Yankee of the piece, arrive on a steamboat voyage from Saratoga Springs to New York. While on board, the Yankee was introduced to Amanda, fell in love with her, and vowed

²¹⁰ Hereafter referred to as *The Vermont Wool Dealer*.

to wed her. He is sure that Amanda will accept his proposal, for Captain Oakley appears to only be after her money, and he is much more sincere. But although Dutiful's intentions are pure, Amanda is uninterested in the young Yankee. She loves Oakley and says she will stay faithful to him. When Oakley learns of Dutiful's advances, he challenges the Yankee to a duel. Mr. Waddle, Amanda's father, intercepts a love letter from Dutiful and becomes enraged. Meanwhile, Dutiful, unaware of the potential danger he is in, finds Amanda alone and asks her to marry him. At first she refuses, but when she learns of the proposed duels, she lays a trap for the Yankee. She suggests that they elope. To keep their love a secret, she says, she will wear the clothing of Betty, her mulatto maid, so they can make their clandestine escape unnoticed that night.

The proposed escape plan sounds reminiscent of *The Forest Rose*, but any likeness to Woodworth's play ends here. Oakley and Mr. Waddle discover the plan, so when they see a woman dressed in Betty's clothing, they think it is Amanda. They capture the young woman and chide her for her indiscretion, only to discover that it is not Amanda, but Betty, her maid. Dutiful comes on the scene and is dismayed. He expected to run away with Amanda, but she is nowhere to be found. Then another "disguised Amanda" appears. The men grab "her," but again they are mistaken. It turns out to be Bob, the black waiter. Amanda has tricked all the men. Oakley and Waffle quickly turn this joke on the Yankee. They laugh at Dutiful's disappointment. So harsh is their treatment that he threatens to throw the unsuspecting waiter at them. Amanda finally comes out, laughing at the joke she played on the Yankee. She discloses the trick, accepts Oakley's proposal, and chides Dutiful for being the "American Blue Beard." In the end, Dutiful offers to bring champagne to her wedding.

The Vermont Wool Dealer is disappointing for a number of reasons. Tension is raised, first of all, because Captain Oakley seems far from suitable for Amanda. The text makes it clear that he is only interested in her money. Likewise, he becomes mad easily and does not trust Amanda's fidelity, though she constantly swears it to him and remains faithful. She seems far more intelligent and virtuous than he. Despite these incompatibilities (and Oakley's apparent faults), the couple still marry in the end. The tension raised by such an unequal and unjust relationship is simply never quelled. By the end of the work she still seems his better, and one fears for their longtime happiness.

The end of the play seems inadequate for another reason. The Yankee, who acts loyal, kind, and honorable, is maliciously spurned, tricked, disappointed, and mocked. He admits that Amanda's fortune is attractive, but seems generally interested in the woman as well. Likewise, he is by and large honorable. When Oakley becomes angry due to the Yankee's advances, Dutiful tries to explain his warm feelings for Amanda. Too, when Amanda asks him not to fight her lover, he agrees. Yet in the end, he is punished. What is more, the attacks made on him seem to outweigh his "crime." Amanda gives this half-apology: "Perhaps your disappointment has been a little greater than you deserve, but forgive me, sir...I made use of your vanity to punish his [Oakley's] jealousy" (Logan 18). Dutiful shrugs off her comment, saying that he "can laugh at a joke" (ibid), but her treatment still seems harsh. She calls him an "American Blue Beard," but Dutiful is not guilty of lasciviousness, as she claims. He has expressed honest love for her, not lust. Logan does not explain Dutiful's piteous treatment, but leaves the tension to hang in the theatre after the audience stops laughing.

More troublesome than unresolved dramatic tension is its portrayal of the Yankee. Dutiful is a clown through and through. Not unlike the "English Yankee," Dutiful cannot do

anything right. He blunders trying to write a love letter, and then he stumbles in its delivery; he mistakes a woman's true feelings and he overestimates his own sexual appeal. For example, his courting scene with Amanda is ridiculous:

Deuteronomy: What's the price of wool?

Amanda: Wool, sir? Why, really, you should know more of the article than I.

Deuteronomy: Wool! Well, I do feel a little sheepish; but you see I come down to York to sell wool, and just thought you might know the price of it. You know I came down in the steamboat along with you.

Amanda: Yes, sir, I remember.

Deuteronomy: That journey cost me considerable. I say, how did you sleep on board of that 'ere steamboat?

Amanda: Sleep! Very well, sir.

Deuteronomy: I didn't. They told me I might have the third of a bunk, but a fat man got in first— (Logan 10).

Amanda finally shuts him down, "And is this your sole business with me?" (ibid).

More telling are the scenes between the Yankee and the servants, an Irishman named Con and two black slaves, Slap and Bob. The Yankee seems to be on equal ground with these men. Logan links the Yankee to the Irishman through the name "Con."²¹¹ Likewise, the black servants speak to Dutiful as if he were one of them. They swap chores and insults as if old friends. Similar to the English tradition, Logan equates the Yankee with the "worst" of society. Francis Hodge says that in Charles Mathews's *Trip to America* "Jonathan was as ridiculous as an Irishman or a Scotchman, who, of course, were nothing at all like the Englishmen" (67). The same could be said of Logan's Deuteronomy Dutiful. He appears as much a fool as the Irishman and the black servants, who were—to change the words slightly—"nothing at all like white Americans." This would have been quite an insult in nineteenth-century America.

Most important to understanding the change in this Yankee is Dutiful's miserable loss. Never before on the American stage did a Yankee lose as badly as he does in *The Vermont Wool*

²¹¹ That is, "Con" could easily be a Yankee's name, especially in the English tradition.

Dealer. Dutiful seeks a marriage to what he thinks is a suitable girl, only to wind up embarrassed over and over again. Moreover, Amanda tricks him in a way reminiscent of the tricking that Yankees used in past works. Jonathan Ploughboy in *The Forest Rose* disguised a black girl to mock an Englishman's passion. In *The Vermont Wool Dealer* this very trick is played on the Yankee. He agrees to the secret elopement and he too goes to meet the "disguised maiden" only to find a black maid underneath. Rather than a cunning Yankee, Amanda proves to be the smart one; she is the unexpected champion. Dutiful is the biggest "loser" the American Yankee tradition had produced up to this point.

* * * * *

When Hill returned to the United States in October of 1839, Marble continued to try to differentiate himself from the esteemed comedian. His next star vehicle, *Yankee Land*, which was also written by Cornelius Logan, premiered at New York's Bowery Theatre on November 19, 1842.²¹² Its Yankee, Lot Sap Sago, is an unfeeling prankster, a cunning bargainer, and a fool all wrapped up in one. He is mean-spirited and hostile, sly and tricky, yet ignorant and dim-witted. There would be no mistaking Marble for Hill after this show, for Lot seems the antithesis of what Americans used to enjoy about the Yankee.

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²¹² There is contradictory evidence about the show's premiere. Hodge claims it was at New York's Bowery Theatre, on November 19, 1842. An early copy of the script puts it at Boston's National Theatre in 1842. Because Hodge's information was more specific (including a date), I chose to use his claim.

6.5 YANKEE LAND

The plot of *Yankee Land* is quite convoluted. The action of the play began twenty years earlier in England. Lieutenant Ostrand read a notice in a local paper, which announced the marriage of a woman he believed was his wife. He vowed vengeance on the man who had stolen her away. When he came across the man, Sir Cameron Ogleby, he ran him through with a knife. Ostrand was sure he killed the man, and so he fled the country, moving to Switzerland and later to America. In England, Ogleby's servant, Malson, witnessed the cruel event. He also thought Ogleby would die within a few minutes and, in a moment of benevolence, he agreed to take Ogleby's son and raise him as his own. Ogleby of course supplied his fortune, and so Malson moved to America with the young boy. Despite both men's perceptions, Ogleby did not die, but lived.

Malson, now a rich landowner in America, uses his power as a landlord relentlessly over a young woman, Josephine, and her father, Lieutenant Ostrand, who live on his property. They are very poor and cannot pay the rent. Malson suggests a way for them to gain financial freedom. If Josephine agrees to marry him, he will forgive their debt. But Josephine does not want to marry such an old man and tells her father so. Thus, they band together, resolving to find a way to pay the rent. At this turn of events, Malson becomes enraged. He turns to blackmail to win Josephine as his wife. In this pursuit, he reveals that he knows Ostrand murdered Ogleby and threatens the father with this information.

Right at this time Malson receives a letter from Ogleby. It reveals that he is still alive and in fact is currently journeying to America to reunite with his son. Malson cannot let this happen. He is happy with Ogleby's money and he does not want him to find out about the poor upbringing he has given the lord's offspring. Likewise, if Ostrand discovers that Ogleby is alive,

his threats of blackmail will be empty. Thus, he decides to kill his old master but Lot, Ogleby's son, who is now grown up, stops him just in time. In the end Malson is arrested for his crime and many of the characters discover they are related to each other.

The Yankee is largely separated from the action of the play; until he stops Malson from shooting Ogleby, he has little impact on the plot. He bumbles around the periphery of the action, annoying visitors, and nearly ruining relationships. But unlike past Yankees, Lot's trickery is often mean-spirited. For instance, a scientist named Mr. Otto Manikin has stumbled onto the property, having followed a "red tailed creature" off of the path. He asks Lot for help, but Lot will neither tell him the way back to town, nor lend him a horse. He only offers his pair of oxen, which Manikin must ride "double"-- one foot on each ox, because Lot swears they "won't go single" (Logan 16). Later, Manikin returns, worse for wear. He explains, "There was a young man put me astride of two gentlemen cows, with but one tail between them; but what the mutilated animal wanted in dorsal appendage he made up in horns. He took my foot for a great horsefly, and in endeavoring to transfix it, he nearly drilled a hole through my ankle bone" (Logan 18). Harvey, a neighbor, chides Lot for his meanness: "Launcelot, don't trifle with the gentleman. Take him to our stable, and lend him my horse to go to the village on" (ibid). Even after being reproached Lot doesn't behave. He doesn't give the traveler the intended horse, but saddles him to a troublesome creature. He describes the beast he will lend Manikin while they walk to the barn:

...you see, this horse I'm going to put you on is a reglar snorter. When he fust starts, he goes mostly on his hind legs. When he gets tired of that mode of progressing, he jest sticks up to'ther end, takes the bit in his mouth, and streaks it. If he should go tu skittish, why, you'll have to haul on to one rein, and slew him round into the wood, and if the trees grown pretty thick, you can get him to stop cheap... You must let go of the bridle, hold on to the mane, stand on your knees, and put your legs up behind, and by the time you get through your journey, you'll look jest like a crumbled johnny cake (18-19).

Lot goes out of his way to give Manikin a hard time. He even laughs at the scientist's pain; when Manikin finally arrives at the town Lot laughs that he had "no more sign of trousers on his legs than the horse had" (24). Although his fellow characters want to help the lost man of science, Lot continually badgers him, apparently for no reason. What is more, he seems to enjoy the pain he causes.

Lot Sap Sago causes trouble for no apparent reason. He is mean and unfeeling. Hodge says, Lot "indulges in his practical jokes in the simple, unaffected manner of a small boy on a spree" (236), but his pranks seem far more serious than this implies. Lot Sap Sago simply does not care about anyone around him.

Despite his calculating meanness, Lot is also a fool. He is in love with Josephine, and although he has no way of providing for her, he decides he will speak to her of his feelings. When she enters the room, he says, "Now I got her alone, I will—I swan I will—I'll spark her" (Logan 12). But he cannot broach the subject. When she comes within hearing distance all he can mutter is, "You—I—Malson says—that I—no—you—hem, have you got a rabbit?" (ibid). She presses him further, and he blurts out, "why, Malson says I can't get no provision, and—but I have settled to go a-fishing next spring, and I'll bring home a hogshead of salted eels, and then you and I...will get pickled—married, I mean" (ibid). At this, Josephine runs out of the room. She could not possibly love such a simpleton.

Many of Lot's entrances and exits also mark his ignorance. For instance, he is constantly running into people. He runs into Senil when the old lover is leaving Miss Starchington, upset over her supposed infidelity. Then a few pages later he runs into Malson. The blow from this hit is so forceful that the rabbit he was holding becomes "squashed" so that its "essence.... [starts]

running down, and greasing [his] boots inside” (17). Despite his cunning malevolence and conniving pranks, Lot often seems brainless. This aspect was surely emphasized by Marble, who “played him as a half-witted Yankee” (Hodge 236). Lot Sap Sago was unlike any American Yankee that preceded him. He was a mean-spirited prankster, a cunning dealer, and a fool all at the same time. It is hard to imagine that he came from American authorship.

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With these three very different acting vehicles, Marble certainly distinguished himself from George Hill. Indeed, it seems no one could ever have confused them. One whistled, whittled, and amused his audiences with long stories and linguistic tricks; the other relied on physical comedy and slapstick humor, often complimented by a foolish character that was the butt of all jokes. Marble’s strategy paid off. He was not confused with Hill, nor was he compared to him. He received bookings all around America and became a major star by the 1840s.

Marble’s need to distinguish himself from Hill seems understandable. Likewise, his use of marked low-comedy techniques seems to make sense as well, given his penchant for and experience in performing for working-class audiences. What makes less sense, though, is how the Yankee—the symbol of America—could become such a fool and/or mean-spirited scoundrel on stage. Were Americans ready to let their country be mocked? Were they confident enough in their national identities to allow satire of this kind? If Charles Mathews had performed such a Yankee in America in the 1820s he would have been booed off stage. If James Hackett had done so, he surely would not have gained the approbation of Park Theatre audiences in 1827, and Hill would likely have failed as well in the 1830s. Yet Marble offered a Yankee of a new type—one who was as anti-American as Nathan Tucker or Major Wheeler—and won acclaim for it. How

was this possible? The answer to this question can be found in the culture, for it changed significantly in the late 1830s/early 1840s.

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6.6 POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR AN UN-AMERICAN YANKEE

In his massive, comprehensive work *The Opening of American Society*, Robert H. Wiebe explains the changes that American society went through from the adoption of the constitution to the eve of the Civil War. As one might imagine, drastic alterations took place as the United States moved from an agrarian, deferential society to a culture guided by egalitarian practices and pushed by pre-modern forces. A period that experienced enormous changes was the late 1830s to the early 1840s, for at this point in time Americans turned from concerns of rationality to matters of class.

For example, Wiebe describes the Jacksonian era as a time that experienced “revolution in choices” (276). People of all classes suddenly had a number of different choices available—in business, faith, action, and life style. This was a time of new options and alternatives. Citizens were no longer expected to live their whole lives close to where they were born; they could choose to move to a variety of new places—the city, the frontier, or to a new burgeoning western area like St. Louis. Likewise, they were not bound to follow in the footsteps of their fathers, but could try their hand at a new trade. The economy was opening up in surprising ways and many Americans turned from working in farming to a skilled trade. Furthermore, they were not limited to dealing with those inside their small, close-knit communities, but began doing

business with others—others who sometimes lived quite far away and/or lived life very differently.

Business, in fact, became a major factor and citizens had to rely on themselves, their rationality, and their ability to make “good” choices in a way they never experienced before. In the former way of life, reputation and deference either secured or denied their livelihood. In the 1830s, though, their paths were uncertain; they only had themselves on which to depend. This was, therefore, as many scholars have named it, the era of the “self-made man.” Older systems of regard and esteem gave way to more democratic practices and citizens of all kinds suddenly had to use their own unique abilities to “make it” in the world.

Such a world of new choices, though, had consequences. Wiebe explains, “Unitary individuals felt the need to control the entire terrain of a unitary life. As they understood their own lives, so they judged other people’s, watching in particular for the telltale flaw that would expose the whole story behind it” (276). In other words, in this world of new choices anyone could fail. The individual had to be careful at all turns, constantly examining his or her life to verify that he or she was on the “right” (read moral) path. It is for this reason, Wiebe asserts, that so many books on child rearing came out at this time and religious revivals experienced huge attendance.

Yet with so many options available and the cultural imperative to always look for signs of failure, many Americans felt “special kinds of stress, especially from guilt” (Wiebe 277). This is why, Wiebe claims, popular melodramas often featured “an endlessly repeated ritual of everyone’s guilt: the abandoned mother, the wandering son, the intruding villain, the tender reunion, the triumph of virtue” (ibid), because “[w]hich sons or daughters,” he says, “had not deserted mother, strayed from her truth, and yearned for a reconciliation?” (ibid). Americans

experienced new pressures and anxieties during the 1830s and in the wake of such a worrisome time, citizens often looked to the theatre for relief.

In the 1840s, however, Americans wanted to “take the chance out of choice” (Wiebe 293). They were familiar now with the new choices available to them and wanted to ease the anxieties created by having such a seemingly incalculable amount of options; to do this, they looked at their past choices, determined the best of these, and then structured and institutionalized them so as to pass on their beneficial decisions to future generations. Says Wiebe: “By the early 1840s an entire generation that had been raised in the democratic ethos came of age to provide a mass base for these adaptations and maintain them, along with many new strands, as an intricate, almost invisible stitching of institutional behavior throughout American society” (292). To sustain these new behaviors, publishing houses put out etiquette books by the hundreds, benevolent societies fought social ills such as slavery and alcohol, and lecturers, hoping to better the lives of their audience, took to podiums everywhere. An “institutional web” spread out across the country as Americans tried to stabilize the world of choices for the next generation (Wiebe 321).

As this “institutional web” became more a reality than an idealized notion, claims Wiebe, “it mobilized the values of the new culture into a nationwide standard for inclusion and exclusion” (ibid). The result was a class line that immediately and concretely “separated those who were qualified to participate in a democracy of free choices from those who were not” (ibid). Class became, in other words, a factor of great importance. It dictated who was a “legitimate” member of society and who was not. Some were judged as able and capable of making choices, while others were assessed as incompetent or unqualified to do so. Some were destined to be “teachers” and some were fated to be “students.” Class determined all.

Because of its new importance, class began to impact every aspect of American life. Economically, those in higher classes were afforded more opportunities, better jobs, and more adequate pay. Those in lower classes were forced to fend for themselves, most often in very poor neighborhoods. Higher-class persons were nervous of “contamination” which might come from lower-class citizens so they separated themselves from their “inferior” neighbors whenever possible.²¹³ Likewise, class divides even entered the art world. In theatres, an emphasis on class effected changes in interior architecture,²¹⁴ impacted the types of theatre available,²¹⁵ and even furthered the distinction between “elite,” and “working-class” (read legitimate or illegitimate) houses.

Such an emphasis on class changed the way the stage Yankee was perceived. In the 1830s, when the culture centered on rationality, such a ‘cute bargainer was particularly significant. When issues of monetary gain, deal making, and contract writing were emphasized in the culture, he seemed to reflect and reify these concerns. Says Bruce McConachie in his essay for *The Cambridge History of American Theatre*, “Some of the plays performed by the stars began to reflect and construct Americans’ response to the new constraints and freedoms of rationality” (153). He continues, “The first significant star vehicles to wrestle with these problems were the Yankee plays... These embodiments of republican virtues told stories with a New England twang and balanced rationalistic calculation with sentimental action” (153-154).

²¹³ Unless, of course, they were interested in helping those of the lower class. Then they might spend time with such persons, but it was always guarded time: they were the teachers, the lower-class persons were the students.

²¹⁴ Parquettes, special seating for business-class persons, became a fashionable addition to many theatres. They offered a way for “higher class” audience members to escape the rowdiness of the “lower class” pit.

²¹⁵ New types of theatres opened up as this change occurred. For example, the boom of museum theatres can be explained as a direct cause of more emphasis in class in the culture. Likewise, different types of shows became popular. Melodramas featuring moral lessons, for example, became the rave. (See McConachie *Melodramatic Formations* for a discussion of these melodramas). Too, along with divisions in class came divisions in “taste.” Opera and lectures were offered and largely populated by upper-class citizens, while blackface and popular entertainments continued to be a favorite of “lower-class” individuals. (See Butsch for a discussion of “taste” in the 1840s).

Thus, he concludes, “Americans enjoying [such plays] and struggling with their own conflicts about speculation and morality could laugh at their problems without having to resolve them, a sure-fire lure for comedy” (ibid). The Yankee, in other words, allowed Americans to laugh at their concerns over money, deal making, and rationality in general.

This complimentary relationship with the culture, along with George Hill’s engaging personality, pushed the Yankee into a significant position. He became a symbol of America. Showcasing this new place in the culture, Jonathan began dressing in a costume not unlike our modern-day Uncle Sam. He was imagined, both on stage and in print, wearing a large bell hat, striped pants, and a colored vest. Likewise, it is also because of these reasons that many Yankees at this time were linked to important political notions and/or figures. Jack Downing, for example, supposedly advised President Andrew Jackson, George Hill spoke at both Democratic and Whig dinner parties, and the Yankee appeared in many political cartoons representing “the people” opposed to Andrew Jackson’s “monarchical power.”

But while the Yankee continued to dress in the same way in the 1840s, his place in the culture changed. Rationality, business deals, and moneymaking in general became less important, pushed aside by issues of class. In such a culture of inclusion and exclusion, which was in large measure determined by outward demeanor, the Yankee began to be “read” and judged as part of the low class. Traditionally, Jonathan had always been part of lower society. Since his inception he had been imagined as poor, uneducated, and in need of cultural guidance. That he was not an elite citizen was certainly no surprise to Americans, but in the 1840s, class awareness suddenly propelled Jonathan into a new realm. Lower-class citizens were to be aided, pitied, instructed and/or scorned when appropriate. They were not to be revered and they were surely not to be held up as an image of the nation. Thus, as the Yankee became more associated

with this a group, he could be treated differently on stage. He could be mocked, laughed at, and/or held up as an object of derision without enraging the audience.

What is more, Americans found new icons and symbols through which to express their sense of national identity. Edwin Forest, for example, had become a star performer in the 1830s, but unlike Hill, who declined in favor as class became more important in American society, Forest gained in popularity. He continued to equal “America” on stage as Hill lost his footing. Likewise, “the temperance man” in temperance dramas became an idealized image of “the American” not only because of the many moral choices he made, but also because he often helped “respectable” citizens dodge the pitfalls of alcohol, which would have surely dragged them into lower-class life. He was, in other words, a guardian of (naturalized) class status and so was a revered stage figure. Frontiersmen such as Davy Crockett, Mike Fink, and Buffalo Bill also became more important at this time because they symbolized Manifest Destiny and American superiority as they trekked across large portions of wilderness, fought bears and cougars, and battled with the fiercest of Native Americans. The public simply did not need Jonathan to be patriotic anymore. They had plenty of more appropriate symbols at their disposal and they did not need him to represent “America” any longer.

Thus, when Marble took to the stage and paraded a foolish, mean-spirited, or westernized Yankee, he was not derided, but applauded.

* * * * *

Despite the fact that all his new Yankees were “losers,” Marble did very well with these vehicles. Odell claims that at this time, “In all ways Marble was creeping up behind Hill in Yankee characterization” (IV 571). Through using such a different Yankee, he was able, it

seems, to differentiate himself from Hill, the great Yankee star, and now theatres were unafraid to book both of them. Audiences would not tire of such different Yankees.

Playing these new pieces in conjunction with old favorites, such as *Solomon Swap* and *The Forest Rose*, Marble became an American star. Indeed, it seems he traveled through more of the country than Hill or Hackett ever did. Kelly comments that after these positive performances, Marble “went West, playing a succession of engagements, from Boston to New Orleans... his career being one of honor and profit, health and happiness” (145). He also comments on Marble’s popularity at the time: “He was hailed with delight and enthusiasm whenever he appeared... He was known to nearly every captain, clerk, and engineer, senator, and landlord, from Pittsburgh to New Orleans” (ibid). Marble was a growing star, despite his rather un-patriotic Yankee.

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6.7 MARBLE GOES TO LONDON

Like other Yankee actors before him, Danforth Marble found it necessary to travel to London. Although he had gained much experience in American cities and the “west,” to sustain his popularity and legitimacy as a star actor he needed to secure English credits. So in September of 1844 Marble left for London. When he arrived he quickly accepted “the best engagement offering—at the Strand, under Manager Roberts” (Kelly 151). Although Marble was probably aware that the Yankee actors before him had contacted English playwrights to reconstruct their works, he chose not to delay his premier by waiting for an adaptation. Instead, he

debuted with Logan's *The Vermont Wool Dealer* on September 30, 1844 and to everyone's surprise, he gained instant English approbation.

Never before had an American Yankee work been accepted as whole-heartedly as *The Vermont Wool Dealer* in the fall of 1844. English audiences and critics alike loved the performance and they heralded Marble as a star worthy of English esteem. For example, *The Sun* claimed: "...last night [we] beheld the debut of a Mr. Marble in the character of Deuteronomy Dutiful. The farce, a light, sketchy thing redolent of fun, and the naiveté, the self-gratulating shrewdness, the quaint, yet happy sayings of the "Vermont Wool Dealer" kept the house in a roar of laughter" (October 1, 1844). Likewise, a review from *The Court Journal* praised Marble using similar jargon:

The American Comedian, Mr. Marble, made his debut before an English audience on Monday evening, and met with a success as gratifying as it was decided and deserved. In a very few minutes after his first appearance he had gained the good opinion of his audience, and maintained that good opinion, manifested as it was by loud plaudits and roars of laughter, to the end of the piece, when he was called before the curtain again to receive the approbation of the house. His acting is "considerable first rate," and quite bears out the high reputation he brought over to this country (October 1, 1844).

As the reviewer continues, however, it becomes clear why English sources so appreciated Marble's work:

[Marble's] delineation of the Yankee character, the mixture of *cunning, conceit, selfishness, fun and bombast*, coupled with the habitual lazy drawl both of speech and action, is given with a truth that must be apparent to all. His stories are new, full of drollery, and capitally told. He must prove a good card to the management, and we congratulate both actor and lessee on this popular little theatre having been the medium of introducing such a clever debutant to such a liberal lessee (October 1, 1844; my emphasis).

English sources, it seems, understood Marble's Yankee within the English tradition. Dutiful was "cunning," "conceited," "selfish," and pompous. He was what they had seen on stage before in

Charles Mathews (and even in George Hill, once his plays were re-written) and his Yankee seemed English through and through. Because of this, “Mr. Marble drew handsomely” while at the Strand (Kelly 152) and was a great favorite of English audiences.

Like Hill, Marble had found a way to succeed in England. Rather than playing in scripts written by English playwrights, though, he offered shows that were so similar to the English tradition they were immediately accepted. Although such a “tactic” was not a conscious choice (but came from a change in the American culture rather than from acquiescence to English norms) it certainly worked to Marble’s benefit.

Showing plays that incorporated a figure not unlike “English Yankees” also aided Marble’s second showing, which was at the Haymarket Theatre. Marble played in Logan’s *Yankee Land* on October 11, 1844. Of this piece, *The Court Journal* claimed:

Mr. Marble made his appearance in another American character in a little drama called “Yankee Land,” and has thereby added to the good name and opinion he acquired on his debut. The part he plays is that of a *half-witted boy*, with, however, sufficient sense *to tease, worry, and pass practical jokes on* those who behave ill to him... He was loudly applauded throughout; and we are happy to find that he performs every night to well filled benches (October 12, 1844; my emphasis).

English audiences enjoyed Lot Sap Sago, as they had Dutiful, because he was drawn very similarly to the “English Yankee.” He was “half-witted,” only smart enough to be mean-spirited, to tease, worry, and play practical jokes on those around him. The typical American, according to the rhetoric, was annoying, bothersome, and cunning, always ready to cheat a traveler or make his journey more difficult—or he was a fool, hardly worthy of English attention.

Marble’s success in England was surely bolstered by the fact that his American vehicles seemed identical to those of English authorship. The English audience understood and applauded them. Gone were the complaints of incomprehensibility. These plays, and the

Yankees they featured, made complete sense to English theatregoers. They contained what they liked, appreciated, and expected from “Yankee Theatre.”

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6.8 SAM PATCH, THE JUMPER

Why, with this initial success, Marble would turn to another play is a mystery. Perhaps he was running low on material that the English would find enjoyable. Perhaps he so enjoyed the popularity of *Sam Patch* in America that he wanted to try it abroad. At the end of October 1844 the Adelphi Theatre took him on, so perhaps management pressured him to open with a new piece. Whatever the case, he decided to use *Sam Patch* for his next show. But the American *Sam Patch* would never do. It was filled with post-colonial resistance, which would surely--and rightly--be understood as anti-English. Marble had *Sam Patch* quickly re-written. Who wrote the piece and when they did so is unknown; what is certain is that the play was hastily completed. Hodge says, it “looks suspiciously like a discarded play on which the Sam Patch business is engrafted” (230). Regardless of this fact, the Adelphi Theatre submitted it to the Lord Chamberlain for approval on October 19, 1844 and it showed a week later.

Sam Patch, the Jumper, as it was called, was a typical domestic melodrama of the day, which is to say that its plot was overly convoluted and filled with intrigue. In it, Henry Somerville is about to celebrate his twenty-first birthday. He is in love with a poor woman, Victoria, and desires to marry her, despite her low situation, so when he receives a letter from his mother allowing the match, he is overjoyed. What he does not know is that an evil steward, Gaspard, who desires Henry’s ruin, forged the letter. Before Henry’s father died, he drafted a

will that said Henry was to be awarded his fortune as long as he did not marry a poor woman before his twenty-first birthday. If he broke this condition, all the money would go to the steward, Gaspard. Without knowing this, Henry weds. Thus, when Henry's mother finds out about his marriage, she is heartbroken. She runs to her son's side to tell him the terrible news. He is now a pauper.

In the meantime, the rich Colonel Bradville looks for his long-lost daughter. He had to leave her with a poor farmer twenty years ago as he was being pursued by bandits. In the meantime, she has grown up. Now that all is safe, he diligently scours the land for her, at last finding the small farm where he learns of his daughter's fate. He cannot wait to reunite with her. But the steward overhears him and swears to kill him. He will lose the money if Bradville is able to confirm Victoria's new financial situation, so he hires ruffians to ambush the Colonel at the foot of Niagara Falls. Sam Patch, who has been wandering about the estate throughout the play (causing trouble and trying to seduce the women of the house), jumps the falls and comes to Bradville's rescue. Later, when Bradville meets the steward, the evil man pulls a knife on him. Sam Patch comes to the rescue again, this time killing the steward. The play ends happily with all families reunited and wealthy. Though Sam has saved the day, he is all but forgotten by the end of the work.

Similar to other English "Yankee Theatre" plays, *Sam Patch the Yankee Jumper* displays an uncomplimentary Jonathan. For example, throughout the work Sam is a fool, particularly when it comes to lovemaking. He consistently badgers Bridget, a lowly female servant, with unwanted sexual advances. When he first meets her, he alleges that she "want[s] to get [him]"

alone with [her]” (*Sam Patch* 22A).²¹⁶ To this, she exclaims, “Oh dear! I must be in a helpless condition to wish for such a fright as you! (ibid). Later he kisses her, despite her wishes to the contrary. In another scene he tries to explain her actions, saying, “Bridget’s mad as a windmill, ‘cause I won’t court her” (25B). The truth of the matter is that Bridget is frustrated by his constant harassment. She calls him “ugly thing” and says that she hates him (23A), but Sam is too stubborn. He is too full of himself. He continues to pursue her until he makes her cry.

Not only does Sam try to push love where he is not wanted, but his tactics are as foolish as any Yankee. For instance, he attempts to woo her by talking to her about food:

Sam: Do you love young Turkeys?

Bridget: I just guess I do.

Sam: What kind of sass do you like on yours? Apple sauce or cranberry?

Bridget: I prefer the latter.

Sam: I say Bridget, do you ever go fishing?

Bridget: No.

Sam: Well, I’ve got a bit of halibut (*Sam Patch* 26B).

At this he takes out some fish and chicken vitals and invites the girl to eat. Unfortunately for her, this is part of his plan. He then turns to pity as a means of seducing her. He says that he has never kissed a woman and, although she still resists, Sam kisses her again, this time with injurious consequences. Gaspard walks in on the couple just as Sam plants one on her lips so the steward threatens to fire her. She begins to cry; she needs this job and is scared Gaspard will turn her out. Sam tries to help, but his way of doing so is ludicrous. He says that he was trying to catch flies, that a large one landed on her lips and the steward saw only his attempt to capture the bothersome creature. Gaspard, of course, does not believe him. What is more, Sam Patch does not seem to be making up this lie to aid Bridget as much as he does it to annoy the steward,

²¹⁶ The pagination of this work is quite odd. Every other page is numbered. Hence, I will refer to the pages as A and B. For example, 24 A is the page not numbered, 24 B is the page that is numbered because that is the order in which they are found.

for he never asks for her again throughout the play. He doesn't really love her; he is merely being troublesome. The Yankee is part lecherous villain, part romantic fool. It seems the play was so hastily written the author did not have the chance to make up his mind.

Also similar to past "English Yankees," Sam Patch is greedy and lazy. He shows up at the estate because he has heard that there is to be a birthday celebration and he wants to join the party. He is not invited, though, because he is not part of the household. To remedy this, he begs Gaspard to give him a job and the servant hesitantly agrees. Sam is thrilled, because now he may eat his fill, but he does little to earn his keep. For instance, he does nothing while employed. He lounges around the hallway, kisses Bridget, and constantly helps himself to the foodstuffs in the pantry. He has to be told to "conduct [himself] properly" (*Sam Patch* 24A), and he is chided for bad habits that English travelers often noted in American "helps." Gaspard reprimands him, "You must be less talkative" (26A). Likewise, Mrs. Mouser also notes his idleness and warns him, "Remember sir, this is no place for loungers" (30A). To this comment, Sam "looks at her contemptuously" (*ibid*). He does not work on the estate, but he is also angry when his employers point out his faults. He is perhaps the epitome of what the English thought of American lower-class workers.

Although the Yankee in *Sam Patch* somewhat conformed to the English tradition, the play's hasty construction is what probably caused its failure. So miserable was the response to Marble's showing of *Sam Patch* that Hodge compares it to James Hackett's performance of *Militia Muster*, when he was booed off stage, and Kelly does not even speak of it in Marble's biography. Most critics were annoyed with the script itself; they considered it hackneyed and contrived. But the technical aspects of the play also factored into its failure. *The Morning Herald*, for example, reported on October 15, 1844 that when Sam jumped the audience heard

the blankets and canvases, which were spread out to shield his fall, crackle under his weight. Obviously the stage technicians had not found a quiet means of securing the actor's safety. Even after that problem was fixed, London reviewers were still not satisfied with the spectacle. Another review from the *Morning Post* claimed that Niagara Falls looked like the "boiling over of a vat at the soap-boiler's" (November 5, 1844). *Sam Patch*, despite its English authorship and inferior Yankee portrayal, was a failure in London.

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Marble soon left London and toured through Glasgow, where he played to "so-so" audiences for the David Prince Miller Company (Kelly 155). Later he traveled to Belfast, Ireland, where his biographer says he did "well" (ibid). From there, Marble returned to London, although he was not engaged to show at any theatre. In the closing months of 1845 he traveled back to America.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ There is some contradictory information concerning Marble's time abroad. Marble's biographer gives the timeline above, but other sources suggest a different one. For example, a review found at the Harvard Theatre Collection suggests that Marble played again in London in the spring months of 1844. This reviewer, reporting on his performance at The Olympic Theatre, strangely suggests that Marble's first London tour, presumably his debut during the fall of 1844, was unsuccessful. "But this was entirely owing to the wretched trash in which he appeared rather than any want of merit on his part as an actor," he says. Was he referring solely to *Sam Patch, the Yankee Jumper*? \If so, perhaps this was because this play's failure was so great that it outshone the past positive performances of *The Vermont Wool Dealer* and *Yankee Land*. In Marble's current showing, though, the critic calls him very successful. He describes the actor: "There is a quaintness and dry humour in his performance which is highly diverting; and as *Sampson Hardhead* (What a name!) in "The Game Cock of the Wilderness" in the piece of the same name, he has an opportunity of putting forth all his drolleries" (Harvard Collection). How much like the English Yankee this small description sounds. He is stubborn (Hardhead), quaint, and funny due to his dry humor. Was there any distinction in the English mindset between the Yankee and the Kentuckian? Or did the two combine? Although even in suggesting as much, one cannot judge the English too harshly, for there was an abundance of regional confusion between the Yankee and the Western frontiersman figure, which occurred in both American Yankee Theatre and English Yankee Theatre. Thus, it is probably not surprising to find them described so similarly. Interestingly, the reviewer also comments on the difference in taste between the two countries. His imperial attitude is quite haughty: "The piece itself is by an American author—so, at least, we presume; but, as it has been proved several times, even down to the last trans-Atlantic importation, *Metamora*, that our own excellence differ somewhat with those of Brother Jonathan" (ibid). Knowing Edwin Forrest's massive fame and popularity in America at this time, it is shocking to hear the famous actor so readily and easily dismissed. *Gamecock* probably owes some of its success to the English re-writing it incurred. The reviewer comments, "...The "Game Cock of the Wilderness" is partly rewritten and constructed by Mr. Leman Rede, whose experience in such matters is well known (ibid). He cannot resist one more dig: "...He appears to have had but rough materials to work with" (ibid). Coincidentally, Hodge claims that Marble stayed in Europe until 1848. This is simply untrue.

6.9 DAN MARBLE RETURNS TO AMERICA

When Marble returned to the United States, he continued trying to boost his fame by taking on a frantic touring schedule. He moved from Boston, to Pittsburgh, to New Orleans, to St. Louis on what seems like a weekly basis, if one is to believe his biographer. But whether this is exaggerated or not, what is sure is that Marble was a hit in America, albeit in a different way than past Yankee actors; that is, Marble continued to perform in working-class theatres. Other stars that succeeded in London returned to the United States to claim top billing wherever they went. They took the opportunity to use English success to gain access to the most prestigious American theatres. Marble, on the other hand, seemed happy to play in “the west” and in less legitimate theatres (The Dramatic Calendar, May 13, 1849, clipping from the Harvard Theatre Collection). Accordingly, reviewers note that his showings in Boston were only “so-so” (Kelly 189), but his starring engagements in New Orleans brought in thousands.²¹⁸ Sol Smith hired him many times for his theatre in St. Louis, in fact, and Marble supposedly earned over \$40,000 from this famous theatre manager alone.²¹⁹ Although he was not *the* national comedian, nor the chosen performer of the elite houses, Marble’s success remained notable.

His newest hit was *The Game Cock of the Wilderness*, as re-written by L. Rede, a London playwright.²²⁰ He also starred in a new comedy called *Sam Patch in France*²²¹ and played in a prize-winning comedy, *Family Ties*. Though these details are known, many of Marble’s activities cannot be traced from 1846 to 1849. Suffice to say, he traveled through much of America, earning many dollars wherever he went, and sent them all home to his family, who

²¹⁸ Kelly claims his time at the American Theatre in 1845 was “one of his most successful” engagements (160).

²¹⁹ Hodge 221.

²²⁰ Sometimes noted as L. Reade.

²²¹ This play is no longer extant.

resided in Buffalo. Unlike other Yankee actors, Marble would not die poor. When he succumbed to cholera in May of 1849, his family possessed a modest estate of \$25,000.²²²

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6.10 MARBLE’S LAST PLAY: THE STAGE-STRUCK YANKEE

The Stage-Struck Yankee, by O.E. Durivage, Esq.²²³ is one of the last plays in which Marble starred. It premiered at the Olympic Theatre (another working-class theatre) in New York on February 28, 1849. Though a small afterpiece, it is worth mentioning because it continued the trends so far noted in Marble’s work. That is to say, this play also showcased a clownish, quite anti-American Yankee. Curtis Chunk, as he is called in this work, is ignorant of the world, completely backwards in wooing women, and generally foolish. Like other Yankees Marble played, he is also mean-spirited. He treats his fiancé, Jedidiah, terribly and seems unconcerned with his bad behavior. Similar to Dutiful, Chunk is a “loser” Yankee who falls for the most obvious tricks.

The action of the play is fairly straightforward. Curtis Chunk, a young man who is about to be married, travels to a theatre and sees a production of *Richard III* performed by a small touring company. He immediately falls in love with the lead actress, Miss Fanny Magnet, and so decides to break off his engagement with Jedidiah, his fiancée, the day before their wedding. Jedidiah is heartbroken, but Curtis does not seem to care. He is smitten with the pretty thespian. When his father hears of his plans, he is enraged, and travels to the actress’s abode to put a stop

²²² Hodge 221 and Kelly 205.

²²³ This work was originally called *Our Jedidiah; or, Great Attraction*. The title was changed when it was published.

to the affair. The actress is surprised to be visited by someone she does not know, and even more surprised that he asks her to leave his son alone, for she has no interest in the Yankee. Right then, a love letter arrives from Chunk. After reading it, she assures the Captain that she will not harm his son. In fact, she will do one better. She will cure his son of his love for her. Thus, she sets out to devise a means to trick the young, lovesick Yankee.

When Curtis Chunk arrives at her house, she has disguised herself as “Nelly,” an ugly and obviously low-class workingwoman from the nautical melodrama, *No Song, No Supper*. “Nelly” is a hideous woman. Her face is blacked with shoeshine and her dress is plain. She is also quick to anger and not afraid to fight. Curtis is stunned at the woman in Fanny’s house, and asks where he might find the pretty actress. He is sure “Nelly” is Fanny’s maid, but she assures him otherwise. With the Yankee convinced, she then plays “Nelly” through the rest of the scene. She swears her love for Chunk, and asks him for a kiss but he is disgusted, and denies the actress his lips. Just then Jedidiah enters the abode. Chunk is thrilled and he recommits his love to her, swearing to always be true. But the Yankee does not get off easily. “Nelly” threatens to pursue legal action, suggesting that Curtis revoked his promise of matrimony. The young Yankee is nervous about the monetary loss he might incur, but stays faithful to Jedidiah. At this point, Captain Chunk reenters and is relieved to find the two young lovers reunited. The play ends happily, with Fanny revealing that she is married to the manager of her company--she is no threat to Curtis and Jedidiah’s love. The Chunks end the play by offering to buy all the seats in the house for the evening’s performance to help the struggling theatre company.

In this play, the Yankee, Curtis Chunk, “called for short Cur. Chunk” (Durivage 30), is a complete fool. Like other Yankees before him, he is completely enthralled by the theatrical scene he has seen the night before. But his foolishness at such enthusiasm goes further than in

other greenhorns. He describes his experience at the theatre: "...I snorted right out, and laffed so much I tore my trousers and my shirt" (Durivage 27). He not only had a good time, it seems, but he split his pants in the throes of amusement. Here is a stage clown, sure. His foolishness is also displayed when he woos Fanny in the character of "Nelly." When he rejects her love, she pretends to faint. Curtis gets her a glass of water, which she takes and then "chases him round the stage" (Durivage 30) with it. When she finally catches him, she throws it in his face. Thus, for the rest of the play "Cur. Chunk" is drenched, his hair probably matted to his head and his clothes probably clung to his body. He is surely a fool.

Fanny is not the only character who chases Curtis around the stage. Shortly after this scene, Fanny's husband, Douglas Double, also pursues the Yankee. Pretending that his love has been scorned, he challenges the Yankee to a sword fight:

Double: (Strikes an attitude) Base ravisher, draw and defend thyself!

Curtis: Draw! Why, I ain't got nothing to draw.

Double: Ha! Coward! Then die the death of a dog!

[Drives Curtis round the stage, thrusting him; he defends himself with a band-box] (Durivage 31).

This Yankee is a fool. Reminiscent of Nathan Tucker from *A Wife for a Day*, Curtis Chunk is pushed and prodded around the stage. He probably flailed around in fright. There is no telling how foolish this Yankee looked in the production.²²⁴

How Curtis displays his love is also idiotic. The love letter he writes to Fanny would shame any respectable character:

I write, dear Fanny, for to tell
How in love with you I fell.
Except Jedidiah, you're the fust

²²⁴ The script is even more reminiscent of *A Wife for a Day* in another way. Captain Chunk is also a Yankee, although he is not the main character, and at one point Fanny "waltzes him around the stage" (Durivage 29). If not a direct reference to Bernard's old work, it was certainly an homage to Nathan and Angelique's twirl around the boards.

That ever made my heart to bust.
Jedidiah, I have quit and cussed her,
All for you, you little buster.
Your eyes like lighting bugs do glitter,
You most consummate, beautiful critter,
And I shall be in tarnal torture
Till you let me come and court you.
I guess you'll find a lad of spunk
Is Curtis, called for short Cur. Chunk (Durivage 28).

This Yankee honestly believes that comparing a woman to a bug is a compliment! Durivage's point is made all the more clear by poetically rhyming the shortened version of his name: "Cur Chunk."

But Curtis is not simply an innocent greenhorn. He is also mean-spirited. Not only does he break off his engagement with Jedidiah a day before their wedding, but he does so in a cruel way. He tells her to her face that Fanny is more beautiful than she: "...I see a gal last night that cut Jedidiah right out of her swathe" (Durivage 27). When she threatens suicide and runs out of the room crying, he shows little emotion. He says, "Well, she does take on desperate bad, but I can't help it. What's she compared to that angelic and splendiferous Fanny?" (ibid). Conversely, when addressing the disguised actress, he calls her "the ugliest white gal I ever see" (Durivage 30). He is untruthful and shallow. The audience can hardly believe him when he accepts Jedidiah back at the end of the play, and claims to once again love her "tremendously" (Durivage 31). Curtis Chunk is simply not a nice person.

Most important to trends in "Yankee Theatre" in the 1840s is his gullibility. Curtis is fully "taken in" by the actress's plan. Similar to Deutoronomy Dutiful, Curtis Chunk has been "had." He is the "loser" of the play, and even falls into a trap that could have resulted in monetary loss. It is only out of kindness that Fanny and Double forgive the Yankees their financial debt. What past Yankee would have fallen for so simple a trick?

Curtis Chunk epitomizes the changes the American Yankee tradition underwent from 1836 to 1849. He is a clown, a fool, and a scoundrel, unworthy of singing “Yankee Doodle” with his distant American cousins, Jonathan Postfree, Jonathan Ploughboy, or Jedidiah Homebred. He is far more like his English counterparts Major Wheeler, Hiram Dodge, or Nathan Tucker, who are rascals, liars, or fools wildly dragged around the stage by a representative of cultural superiority.

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6.11 CONCLUSION

Dan Marble’s career began with a typical American “Yankee Theatre” play. *Sam Patch* was filled with post-colonial resistance, bravado, and trickster fun. As his career progressed, though, he turned more and more frequently to works which showcased a malevolent, clownish, or foolish Yankee. Plays such as these were becoming more popular throughout the country because Jonathan was no longer needed as a symbol of America. Class issues and cultural shifts changed the way Americans understood and used the Yankee. He now could be mocked on stage or drawn as a mean-spirited scoundrel without penalty.

Unfortunately for the Yankee, the situation would get far worse than this. The actor following Marble, Joshua Silsbee, would play the character with even greater foolishness, pushing the Yankee into anti-American territory never before imagined.

7.0 CHAPTER SIX

7.1 A GROTESQUE YANKEE FOOL: JOSHUA SILSBEE (1840 – 1855)

Joshua Silsbee was the next major Yankee actor, although his career can hardly be compared to James Hackett, George Hill, or even Danforth Marble. Silsbee was far less successful than any Yankee star before him. True, he traveled to London to play the Yankee and even gained acclaim there, but in America, Silsbee was never very popular. What is more, as his career progressed he seemed to lose more and more favor with the American public. He played in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York in the early 1840s, even making it to the Park Theatre by 1843. But by the early 1850s, even after a triumphant London debut, he was virtually turned away from every major northeastern stage. By 1855 he moved out west to San Francisco, hoping to find a city less choosy about its Yankee portrayals.

Part of Silsbee's lack of popularity had to do with the way he performed the part, for it was different from any previously seen on the stage. An image from the Hoblitzelle Theatre Arts Library begins to demonstrate the characteristics of Silsbee's Yankee. He is dressed to play Curtis Chunk from Durivage's *The Stage-Struck Yankee*, yet he looks different from what one would anticipate. One might expect Curtis to look completely foolish, not unlike Nathan Tucker from Bernard's *Wife for a Day*, but in this picture Silsbee seems different. He is not the simple, stupid clown one anticipates. His hat is large and wonky; his elbows poke out at odd angles, and his face is one of foolish defiance. Curtis certainly looks foolish—no doubt—but he does not

appear to be a standard stage clown. He seems to be grotesque in some way, a bit misshapen or monstrous.

This picture is not an anomaly, for its main features can also be found in another piece from the same collection. In this illustration, (which appears to be from *The Forest Rose*) Silsbee's hat is large and cumbersome, his tie is flamboyant yet disheveled, his lapels stick out at odd angles from his jacket, and his face again has an odd look of agglomerated stupidity and cunning. Again, the character seems a bit grotesque; in fact, Silsbee seems almost unconnected to the Yankee tradition in these parts, although he is dressed in Yankee outfits. Artists depicting George Hill chose to emphasize his youth and innocence; likewise, artists drawing Danforth Marble drew him as muscular and rough, seemingly ready for action. For Silsbee though, they chose to accentuate odd angles and out of the ordinary facial countenances--features unseen before this time in "Yankee Theatre."

What was going on here? Why was Silsbee so different? Danforth Marble tried to differentiate himself from George Hill so he turned to a tougher--either urbanized or western-inspired--Yankee. Joshua Silsbee was in competition with Marble, of course, but Marble was hardly the threat Hill had been. Marble never reached national iconic status and he performed almost exclusively in working-class houses. There was plenty of space for Silsbee—that is, if Marble was his greatest competition, which he was not. Silsbee was not contending with Marble—or with any other Yankee actor, for that matter--but with minstrelsy, a new form of theatre that was sweeping through the nation like wildfire.

Minstrelsy became immensely popular in 1843 when the Virginia Minstrels performed for the first time in New York. They were so successful, in fact, that they traveled to London to perform overseas later that very year. But New York was not long without a minstrel troupe;

soon other blackface performers joined forces, named themselves, and swarmed into the city. From the mid-1840s to the mid-1850s “five or six major companies regularly played there” says Robert C. Toll, author of *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America*. Moreover, other northeastern urban centers also became hosts to numerous minstrel troupes. “Although blackface entertainment was born in the Mid-West and South,” explains Toll, “the minstrel show itself began and matured in the cities of the Northeast” (31). Minstrelsy swept the nation and became America’s favorite form of entertainment seemingly overnight.

Examining images of minstrel performers actually helps to clarify Silsbee’s Yankees, for although his characters seems out of place next to previous Yankees, they appear perfectly at home next to the minstrel. For example, a sheet music cover shows “The Boston Minstrels” in similar poses as the Yankee comedian. Their legs are bent in unusual angles and their arms stick out from their instruments in odd ways. Likewise, they are dressed in costumes surprisingly similar to the Yankee’s. They wear top hats and vests, long jackets, and striped pants. The minstrels seem uncannily related to Silsbee’s Jonathan.

Could Silsbee have been playing with this connection? And if so, could he ever hope to succeed riding on minstrelsy’s coattails? This chapter will attempt to understand Silsbee’s career—including his success on English stages and his failure in American theatres—through such a linkage.

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7.2 THE MISSING LINK: MINSTRELSY AND YANKEE THEATRE

The link between “Yankee Theatre” and minstrelsy is long, longer than one would think upon first consideration. The earliest Yankee plays included black characters. A. B. Lindsley’s *Love and Friendship*, for example, which was published in 1808, included an African character named Harry. Charles Mathews put the black man on stage in the 1820s in both *Trip to America* and *Jonathan Doubikins*. George Hill played alongside T. D. Rice in the 1830s, often appearing on the same bill. Likewise *The Forest Rose*, *The Green Mountain Boy*, and *The Yankee Pedlar*, which showed in the Jacksonian era, all included this type as well.

Such a surfeit of black characters is no coincidence, for their stage functions were linked. When Dale Cockrell, author of *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World*, made a list of the most performed legitimate blackface performances in America, five out of the ten were Yankee plays (16). Cockrell explains this phenomenon as stemming from the Yankee’s function within the construction of race. Looking at a handful of Yankee plays, he asserts that part of their cultural work was “the maintenance of racial distinction,” which was accomplished in a way “not even subtly camouflaged” (24). Other scholars have noted like views. Bruce McConachie, for example, in his essay “American Theatre in Context” claims, “Yankee stars played a large role in the construction of whiteness” (154) and Robert Toll explained that the Yankee was used as a means through which Americans “forge[d] a positive stage image of themselves,” a step they needed to take, he asserts, before they could define the “Other,” most significantly the black man (13).

The Yankee helped to explain what it was to be white. He offered a clear definition of “whiteness.” The black character—who was most likely standing right next to the Yankee on stage—gave such a definition more clarity. That is, he explained whiteness through negation; his

blackness helped to reveal the Yankee's whiteness, for the Yankee was allowed to do certain things, act in a particular manner, and assume specific social roles whereas the black man was not allowed to do like things, to act in the same manner, nor to take the same place in society. The black character was not white, in other words, and the stage action made the difference between the two (racialized) types clear.

Minstrelsy worked in the exact opposite way. That is, it helped to define the black "Other." Says Toll:

It was no accident that the incredible popularity of minstrelsy coincided with public concern about slavery and the proper position of Negroes in America. Precisely because people could always just laugh off the performance, because viewers did not have to take the show seriously, minstrelsy served as a 'safe' vehicle through which its primary Northern, urban audiences could work out their feelings about even the most sensitive and volatile issues. During the sectional crisis, minstrels shaped white Americans' vague notions and amorphous beliefs about Negroes into vivid, eye-catching caricatures as they literally acted out images of blacks and plantation life that satisfied their huge audiences (65).

Minstrelsy allowed white audiences to laugh at "niggers" on stage, a distinction they were just beginning to understand. Minstrelsy and "Yankee Theatre," then, worked towards similar purposes in the culture. After white culture had defined the white "Self," it turned to the black figure and to begin a similar process of classification.

But the link between "Yankee Theatre" and minstrelsy runs even deeper than a similar concern with racial distinction. Minstrelsy might have actually come from "Yankee Theatre."

Cockrell claims:

Historians have long noticed that the Yankee impersonators preceded minstrel impersonators in their emphasis on lower-class, working people as worthy subjects for ridicule or containment by the audiences. It has not been widely observed that many of their most popular plays... involved black face as well as 'Yankee-face.' In this light, some important aspects of theatrical minstrelsy should be seen as a direct spinoff of the Yankee plays (24).

Likewise, Constance Rourke, one of the first scholars examining Yankee humor, tells an interesting story about the formation of the first minstrel troupe. She says:

Four men gathered in a New York hotel, a rendezvous for show people. The leader was Dan Emmet, a backwoodsman of Irish descent who looked like a Yankee deacon. The other three were Yankees, and one of them had been an actor of Yankee parts. They played the fiddle, the banjo, the tambo, and bones. Emmett said afterward that they were all end-men and all interlocutors; and they all wore 'that long-tailed blue' [the Yankee costume] (81-82).

Could the minstrel have come from the Yankee? Could he have been a more distinguished and complex staged vision of race, nation, and “the common man” as racial tensions began boiling over in the United States? Both Cockrell and Rourke suggest so.

The possibility of such a link becomes greater when one looks at the myriad of common images and themes between the two theatrical forms. For example, many minstrel skits featured unkempt militia corps, not unlike the one in *The Militia Muster*, as performed by James Hackett. A sheet music cover of Bryants Minstrels shows a skit of this nature. It is titled “Raw Recruits” and depicts five men of questionable skill who appear to be attending a Training Day exercise. They are dressed in a haphazard manner, appear totally unfit for battle, and seem poised for humorous calamity. They are, as Toll’s comments below the image suggest, “bewildered incompetents” (121)—quite similar to Hackett’s skit which premiered nearly forty years before it.

Other minstrel skits also used images like those found in past “Yankee Theatre” works. One broadside, published circa 1832-7, features the title, “Zip Coon on *the Go-Ahead Principle*,” for example (my emphasis).²²⁵ It shows a black man dressed in a fancy military uniform and jokes about General (President) Jackson in a manner reminiscent of Major Jack Downing. The

²²⁵ I emphasized “the go-ahead principle” because it was a phrase often associated with the Yankee. Hodge even calls Silsbee the “Go-Ahead Yankee.”

black character is obviously not worthy of service in the army, but he relentlessly mocks past American military victories nonetheless. He is pompous and self-aggrandized; like Major Jack Downing, this minstrel character believes himself more important than he actually is.

Thematically, minstrelsy and “Yankee Theatre” were similar as well. As the above broadside suggests, minstrelsy’s humor, particularly in the 1840s, often revolved around race and social strata. The dandy character (mostly called Zip Coon) is mocked for his illusions of grandeur. “Yankee Theatre,” of course, incorporated this type of humor as well. Yankees often considered themselves better than they were and made their audiences laugh from their pretentious attitudes. Cockrell explains one Yankee play in these terms:

When Jedidiah [from *The Green Mountain Boy*] confronts a black man (Bill Brown, a servant) for the first time in his life (thereby establishing his unsullied naturalness), the exchange...reveals much about Jedediah’s character—and audience perceptions... Humor in this case, confirms the (seemingly) innocent nature of manifold forms of difference—between the characters and between each of them and the audience. For playgoers Jedediah’s superiority, a birthright of whiteness, is questioned, and Jedediah is brought somewhat to the level of the spunky Bill Brown (22).

In other words, the scene in question worked to deflate Jedediah’s inflated sense of self-worth. The play brought the pompous character down to earth through its use of racialized humor.

A comparison can also be made between the ways both minstrelsy (before the Civil War) and “Yankee Theatre” imagined the southern plantation. “Romantic and sentimentalized images of happy, contented slaves and nostalgic old Negroes looking back to the good old days on the plantation completely dominated minstrel portrayals of slaves,” explains Toll (88). He continues, “In drawing these images, white Americans rejected the humanizing content of folklore and the complexity of human diversity for the comforting façade of romanticized, folksy caricatures” (ibid). “Yankee Theatre” also presented images of happy plantations filled with

folksy characters. In *The Yankey Pedlar*, for example, Hiram Dodge encounters a myriad of slaves in one of the first scenes. Tellingly, these individuals seem well treated and happy to be on the Bantam estate. They sing and dance and buy trinkets from the Yankee. How unrealistic and sentimentalized both portrayals were!

Although the two forms of theatre are not usually held up for comparison, minstrelsy and “Yankee Theatre” are more similar than one would think. Minstrelsy changed greatly after the Civil War, but in the 1840s the two forms seemed cut from the same mold: they included similar images, themes, and types of humor.²²⁶ Such similarity offers two possibilities. 1) That minstrelsy drew on Yankee humor, finding in it ready-made, tried and tested, available material. Or 2) that the minstrel strategically replaced the Yankee. Both, in the end, seem plausible. Minstrel performers, after all, were not choosy about their material. All they asked is that it made the audience laugh. J. H. Haverly, one of the greatest minstrel promoters, once claimed about his success, “I’ve got only one method and that is to find out what the people want and then give them that thing” (as quoted in Toll 25). If people wanted Yankee humor changed and dressed up in blackface, minstrel performers would give it to them. In “borrowing” such material, though, the minstrel began to overwrite the Yankee. He replaced Jonathan as the image of America as the country changed focus in the 1850s.

Tension ran high at this time on a national level. Although the nation did not know it yet, it was headed for a civil war. Complex differences between the North and South, which affected

²²⁶ In making such a strong comparison, I should note here that there were some very big differences between the two forms as well. Yankee Theatre always held up the Yankee as a positive symbol, even as it mocked him. Minstrelsy, however, did not work this way. The black character was attacked and derided throughout; it was a terribly racist form of theatre. In Yankee Theatre white actors dressed up as white characters made white audiences laugh at their innocent foibles; in minstrelsy, white actors dressed up as black characters—complete with huge red lined lips and dark, greasy skin created with the help of burnt cork—made white audiences laugh through mockery and derision. Both may have relied on similar images and themes, but their purposes were different. The Yankee gave Americans a symbol of their nation in a post-colonial world; the minstrel gave Americans a way to deal with their anxieties surrounding race and difference.

every area of life, including social practices, ideologies, and economics, strained the Union. Working-class issues were also burdening the country, as more and more low-wage earners demanded that they be heard, amused, and accepted into society. Minstrelsy specifically answered these complex anxieties.²²⁷

The song “Nigger Doodle Dandy” perhaps summarizes the situation best. It became a favorite in 1864 and was sung to the tune of “Yankee Doodle.” Claims the song:

Yankee Doodle is not more,
Sunk his name and station;
Nigger Doodle takes his place,
And favors amalgamation (as quoted in Loewen 148).

“Yankee Theatre”—almost seamlessly--blended into minstrelsy as the black character became more significant and vital to the American experience in the 1840s.

* * * * *

Joshua Silsbee was one of the only hitches in the amazingly smooth transition that the popular culture made from enjoying a humorous, white symbol of the nation (Jonathan), to a black character of derision (the minstrel), for Silsbee attempted to play both at once. He was a “Yankee-faced” minstrel (to use Cockrell’s term)—a part that was unacceptable to the American public.

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²²⁷ Many works have been written on this subject. Toll’s work takes an ideological stance, suggesting that minstrelsy answered complex questions, fears, and anxieties about slavery. Eric Lott’s work, *Love and Theft*, describes minstrelsy as connected to the needs of working-class audiences. Cockrell’s work seems to offer an interesting middle ground. He is interested in how minstrelsy worked as a voice for the “common person’s politics” (xiii).

7.3 JOSHUA SILSBEE: THE MEDIOCRE YANKEE

Joshua Silsbee's career started slowly. He made his "unofficial" acting debut in 1836 at The Nashville Theatre. Later that year he moved on to Atlanta, and was seen at houses in Montgomery and Mobile. His "formal" debut, according to his biographer was at a theatre in Natchez, Mississippi, when he was twenty-four years old.²²⁸ His real break came in 1837, though, when Thorne and Scott's National Theatre in Cincinnati agreed to take him on as a comedian for their company. Silsbee stayed with this company for three more years, playing small parts until 1840.

In March of that year he got his chance to shine; Samuel Woodworth's old piece *The Forest Rose* was scheduled and the management granted Silsbee the role of Jonathan Ploughboy. He played this part on March 28th and then again on April 11th with much success. In fact, his talent for the Yankee began to be known. He was asked to tell Yankee stories for J. M. Scott's benefit on March 27th and played Jonathan Ploughboy again on September 3rd. It was on this occasion that he received his first glowing review, and the first intimation that he might rise out of the ranks of stock actors to become a star. *The Advertiser and Journal* claimed: "In the person of Mr. Silsbee, one of the "stock" actors of this establishment, we behold a new "star" just appearing above the horizon" (September 4, 1840). This was enough impetus for the young actor. He began purchasing Yankee pieces or "borrowing" them from his fellow actors. He would try to "make it" as a star.

With this claim to future stardom, Silsbee traveled east. At first he played in small towns, gaining more experience and "enriching and embellishing his style in accordance with his

²²⁸ This city may have been chosen for its particular western flair, for it was famous as being an enclave of gamblers and cheats.

sensing of audience reaction” (Hodge 246). At long last, he was given an opportunity to play at a major theatre. Though it was a working-class house, Silsbee was probably pleased to get the offer. After all, Marble had succeeded largely through performing in these kinds of theatres; perhaps Silsbee thought he might find acclaim with such audiences as well. He tried his *Yankee* at the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia in September 1841. Later that year he played in Boston. It took two more years though for the actor to be accepted in New York. In June 1843, he finally received a New York showing at the Chatham Theatre, another working-class house.

Silsbee’s progress was slow, despite gaining such bookings. Many obstacles stood in his way. He was competing with George Hill and Danforth Marble, first of all, a steep and seemingly endless competition for a small number of theatres. The economic depression that was sparked by the Panic of 1837 was still in full swing; in fact, the prior theatre season—1842 – 1843—was so bad Toll calls it “disastrous” (30). What is more, the first minstrel troupe performed in New York in February of 1843, so by June every comic actor had even more competition with which to deal. *Yankee* actors continued to vie with each other for theatre bookings, but they also suddenly faced outside threats as well.

In such harsh conditions, Silsbee turned to Marble’s old territory, the outer reaches of the legitimate theatrical world. He wrote to Sol Smith, hoping to find employment. On June 26 Silsbee wrote: “I have a better set of pieces than Marble—besides they are generally new. You may think I am boasting—but I can bring letters from—Joe Jones—Thorne—Charlotte Cushman and others if necessary that they consider me No. 1 Easy” (as quoted in Hodge 246). His namedropping and self-promotion only partially worked, for Sol Smith did think he was bragging. The famous western manager replied to Silsbee, “You are perfectly correct in supposing that we may think you are a little given to boasting—But never mind—business is

business. If you are considered *here* better than Marble...you will do well” (as quoted in Hodge 246; original emphasis).

But Silsbee would never be considered better than Marble—not even “out west.” He traveled to Smith’s theatre, did not do very well, and so he continued to travel, looking for work. In 1848 Silsbee was still thought to be under par at the Yankee role, so he tried his hand at management. He bought the Athenaeum National Museum in Philadelphia on Christmas Day. This too ended unsuccessfully. Hodge reports that the venture lasted “scarcely for a month” (248).

Joshua Silsbee needed to do something drastic to stimulate his career. He had tried various theatres across America from the east to the west, and up and down the Mississippi. Nothing seemed to work. Then in 1849 he got a break. His two biggest rivals died within four months of each other: Marble in May and Hill in September. Now was Silsbee’s chance. He had himself billed in Philadelphia as “the gem of Yankee comedians par excellence—the man of many parts” (as quoted in Hodge 248) and played in a show called *Sam Slick, the Yankee Clockmaker*,²²⁹ which was moderately successful. But even after a successful showing, fame evaded him. Silsbee still could not get employment at any large, legitimate theatre and his career seemed dead in the water, even though no Yankee actor stood in his way. He had tried a New York working-class theatre and only succeeded marginally. The Park Theatre would not have him. He had proved moderately successful in both Philadelphia’s and Boston’s working-class houses as well, but to make it as a star he would need a more important success. In 1851 he booked a steamer to London.

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²²⁹ This script is no longer extant.

7.4 JOSHUA SILSBEE GOES TO LONDON

Silsbee's trip to London seems surprising, given his very mediocre reputation in America. Regardless of this fact, though, he was able to obtain a booking in one of London's reputable theatres. His first engagement was at the Adelphi theatre on September 27, 1851, and for his debut he chose to play in Woodworth's *The Forest Rose*. Although this script was one of the oldest in the American tradition, and although Silsbee was not considered a favorite on American stages, his debut was a huge success. London audiences loved him. English reviewers praised the production, and Silsbee seemed to outshine all of his American predecessors. *The Spirit of the Times* in New York heralded Silsbee as a military hero: "Another triumph for America!" (October 18, 1851).

How could such a mediocre performer succeed in England, which was supposedly more fastidious in taste than its former colony? How could they have enjoyed a Yankee actor who could not even make it in the American "western" theatres? The answer is that London audiences experienced Silsbee in such a different way than Americans did. Although the difference between the English viewpoint and the American one had worked against Yankee performers since James Hackett had first traveled across the Atlantic in 1826, in 1851 such a difference actually helped Silsbee. Americans did not like Silsbee because he mixed Yankee humor and minstrelsy. They found it distasteful, an unnecessary condemnation of "whiteness."

In England, on the other hand, audiences were happy to condense the image of the Yankee and the minstrel. They had experienced, enjoyed, and accepted both types as stage symbols of "America." Moreover, they had even staged plays that incorporated both types, a

combination that would never have succeeded in the United States.²³⁰ Thus, when an American presented a character on stage that combined both images, they were quite happy to applaud his efforts. Silsbee, in their minds, took the best of both types and offered them up as one easily understood and controllable stage representation of “America.” It is little wonder, under these circumstances, that he succeeded on one end of the Atlantic and failed miserably on the other.

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Silsbee’s production of *The Forest Rose* offers the scholar a wonderful opportunity. In America many of his productions went undocumented. Reviewers noted their aversion to his work, but gave no explanation for their dismissal of Silsbee. Because they found his performances distasteful, they said little about them. They did not recall details or recount his actions on stage. In London, though, the production was recorded in great detail—precisely for the opposite reason—because they loved his work. Thus, by examining this production the scholar has the opportunity to understand with much greater certainty what Silsbee actually did on stage. One can see how and why he failed on American stages just as one notes how and why he succeeded in English theatres.

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7.5 THE FOREST ROSE

Although Samuel Woodworth’s play was over twenty-five years old when Joshua Silsbee performed in it in London, it was not altered much for the English public. Silsbee split the script

²³⁰ *Yankee Doodle on his Little Pony; or, Harlequin How Many Horses Has Your Father Got in His Stable*, by R. N. Lee, which played at London’s Astleys Amphitheatre in 1849 is a great example. Both Jonathan and Sam Slick appear in the script, along with Dinah and Lucy Long, popular minstrelsy characters.

into nine scenes. He also added country songs and dances to the play. The overall action, though, remained the same. Bellamy threatens to disrupt the idealized rural community (although he is no longer an English dandy but a New Yorker), Harriet still considers moving to the city; Sally and Blandford are united in the end; and Jonathan fools Bellamy into “kidnapping” Lid Rose, the black woman.²³¹ Most of the dialogue, too, came straight from Woodworth’s original manuscript.

But looking at the play itself does not necessarily explain the performance—what audiences actually saw on stage. Reviews offer a fuller picture. For example, *The Era* suggests that Silsbee added many tales to the play. It claims: “His stories are irresistible, and one describing his early courtship, keeps the audience in one convulsion of laughter from the first” (September 28, 1851). Later this reviewer also comments, “[Silsbee’s] mere ejaculation of surprise, ‘Je-rue-ze-leim!’ was enough to relax every risible muscle; but when he told of his exploits at eating, there was no controlling or commanding them at all” (ibid). Silsbee added at least two stories to the performance, then, one about courtship and another concerning American eating habits. Likewise, Silsbee also seems to have added exclamations. *The Era* notes the “Jerusalem” outburst, but it hints that there were others as well. For example, it claims that Silsbee often breached English perceptions of propriety. Were it not for Silsbee’s indelible charm, the critic says, such offenses would never have been tolerated.

None of these alterations can be found in the script. Nowhere does Jonathan yell “Jerusalem!,” and nowhere does he make an indecent remark. Likewise the script does not even note where the stories might have occurred. These were all adlibbed during the performance. Tellingly, *The Era* adds, “the best of his work is utterly unconnected with the ‘comic drama’ in

²³¹ For a detailed plot outline, see Chapter Three. It should be noted that Silsbee took out any element that might offended the English public. Any post-colonial resistance in the play (See Chapter Four) was removed.

question” (ibid). It seems the English audience found the American comedian the most humorous when he departed from Woodworth’s words, when he added new “flare” to the old Jonathan. From these small comments one might start to imagine Silsbee’s characterization of the Yankee.

But what did his Jonathan Ploughboy actually look like? Reviews again offer answers.

The Era, for example, begins its appraisal of Silsbee’s physicality saying:

Such a voice...such a face, such a figure, and such a “make-up” is not easily described” (ibid). But describe him, they do” “You hear the veritable nasal twang, the high-pitched tones, and the peculiar pronunciation, expressions, and words which imitators have made familiar to you—but all to perfection. Here all is genuine. You see, too, *the little cunning blue eyes*, the hairless Saxon face, *the lank hair*, and the *ungraceful figure* about which you have heard so much (ibid; my emphasis).

He continues: “And the costume! No tailor could have made a coat so ugly, and trousers so void of “fit” (ibid).

A picture of Joshua Silsbee, appearing in *The Illustrated London News* on October 11, 1851, shows this description true. In the picture, Silsbee wears a typical costume for the Yankee line--a coat, vest, tie, and pants, (etc.)--yet the overall impression was from far from ordinary. His tie is an oversized bow, which seems too close to his chin. His coat appears far too small for his size; the buttons would never be able to be fastened. His pants run very high, and end too short. The waist comes up to Silsbee’s mid-torso, and the cuffs end at his mid-calf, which expose brightly stripped stockings.

In describing Silsbee’s overall *mise en scene*, the critic’s comments go even further: “Mr. Silsbee seems to aim at the perfection of ungainliness, and his success is astonishing. Every movement is an offence against elegance, and when excited, his distortions are marvelously ridiculous” (ibid). These are significant insights into what actually happened on stage. Silsbee

was “ungraceful,” “ungainly,” and “ugly,” his costume was ridiculous and his overall appearance was absurd.

Silsbee also highlighted the Yankee’s clumsiness in the added country-dances. *The Era* describes his antics: “...when he dances his legs go up behind instead of before, and he uses his head and shoulders as much as he does his knees, while the agitation of his hair is not the least remarkable extravagance of what belongs to him” (ibid). Silsbee named the dance “The Cape Cod Reel,” and it was immensely popular with audiences and reviewers alike. *The London Illustrated News* commented that it was “eccentric and extravagant” (October 11, 1851).²³²

All of these accounts make the point clear: Silsbee played a fool on stage. What is more, he played a fool not unlike those found on minstrel stages. Minstrelsy (for the most part) took a humorous look at black people. It showed them as fools, arrogant dandies, and/or grotesque misfits. Consciously or not, it was a racist theatrical form, which pointed at its subjects in scorn and derision. Although Silsbee performed the Yankee on stage—a character that should have represented “America”—he seems to have performed the part in a similar manner.

Even in form, his performance sounds similar to a common minstrel show in the 1840s. For example, some of the main components of the minstrel show at this time included: dance, song, slapstick humor, stump speeches, and one-liners. Silsbee’s performance also incorporated all of these elements. His Jonathan danced in a way not unlike “Jim Crow” had done in the 1830s. His Jonathan sang on stage (probably songs which focused on a sentimentalized vision of the country); he used slapstick humor, made outlandish speeches (which probably incorporated many malaprops), and spouted out one-liners as well. Point for point, Silsbee seems to have imitated the minstrel stage, taking his cue from the most popular form of theatre at the time.

²³² That this dance sounds similar to descriptions of T.D. Rice’s “Jump Jim Crow” is no coincidence. This dance is certainly one of the links between the two apparently disparate, but intricately related performance modes.

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Silsbee played in *The Forest Rose* for an amazing one hundred and fifty nights, first at the Adelphi, then at the Haymarket.²³³ But why did English audiences so enjoy this performance? What attracted them to his clownish act? Part of the reason is because Silsbee's altered both the play and the Yankee to work within the (old) rhetoric of travelogues.²³⁴ For instance, the battles of conscience Jonathan goes through in Woodworth's 1825 version of the play were cut. When Jonathan finds the lost locket, for instance, he exclaims, "By the hokey! Wouldn't Sal Forest cut a dash with this dangling at her neck. She may as well keep it till we find the owner, and get the reward. Now some folks would keep it, out and out. I wouldn't serve a negro so" (Woodworth 169). In the 1851 version, his lines are simply: "Wouldn't Sal Forest cut a dash with this hanging round her neck. She may as well keep it till we find the owner and get the reward" (44). The changes are small, but precise. Silsbee cut the Yankee's obsession with morality, and sliced his desire to live an honest life. In the new version, Jonathan appears money-hungry, only hoping for a reward.

This trend continues in other places. For example, in the original version Jonathan debates long about how to handle a moral conundrum he faces. He wants to keep the money Bellamy has given him to aid in Harriet's abduction, but he does not want to participate in such questionable activity. He wonders if he can keep the money without having accomplished the deed, and he comes up with an ingenious solution. He will help the Englishman abduct a woman, but it will be 'Lid Rose disguised as the young lady. His sense of morality and decency is clearly taken out of the rewrite.

²³³ He seems to have played at the Strand as well. There is contradictory information on where and when he played exactly.

²³⁴ It is unclear if he knew to do this from past Yankee actors' experience overseas or if he received counsel from a London playwright.

The Yankee also appears closer to his travelogue counterpart due to his obsession with money. A scene is added to the 1851 version that depicts the Yankee in a common “English Yankee” act. Blandford has lost his way. He does not know how to get back to the hotel. He thinks his fortune is changing when he runs into Jonathan. Unfortunately, the Yankee refuses to guide him until he is paid. He barter s rigorously with the lost gentleman:

Blandford: You will not direct me?

Jonathan: Ho much’ll you give me now if I’ll show you the way?

Blandford: I’ll give you six shillings.

Jonathan: Six. I can’t do it for six. Say seven and I’ll do it.

Blandford: (Aside) Deuce take this fellow. I can’t get there without his assistance. I’ll give you seven.

Jonathan: Very well.

[Blandford counts and give them to him]

Jonathan: I say, Mister, that’s a bad un. [Gives another] I say, I spose you don’t want that bad one for anything do you? [Takes it. Aside] I guess I made about a dollar out of him anyhow (25).

Similar to Major Wheeler or Hiram Dodge, this Yankee is a cunning bargainer; like his (old) travelogue predecessors, this Jonathan is ready to fleece any helpless traveler.

English audiences certainly enjoyed this aspect of Silsbee’s performance, for it was similar to other Yankee works they had appreciated in the past. His Yankee was a cheat, a scoundrel, and money-obsessed. Silsbee was showing them no new Yankee here. He relied on (old) rhetoric that worked.

English audiences probably also enjoyed the production because it provided what they considered the best humor to come from the New World. Silsbee’s performance must have reminded them of T. D. Rice’s hugely successful “Jump Jim Crow” shows in the 1830s. Too, it probably incorporated much of the same humor they had seen (and appreciated) done by the Virginia Minstrels, who performed in the city in 1843. English audiences were content to

condense the Yankee and the minstrel as images of America. They understood both as stage representations of their former colony and liked both.

Cockrell says, “English audiences were in a special position to appreciate minstrelsy: In many ways it simply brought images, symbols, and forms back home” (56). Mummery, which had been practiced in England for centuries, plus the stage tradition of pantomime, set the stage for minstrelsy. In America, minstrelsy was a new, indigenous way of dealing with and understanding race, while in England blackface performance had long been practiced. What is more, their need to codify race was far less imperative than in the United States where slavery was still practiced and differences in opinions about this “peculiar institution” were ripping the nation apart. In Silsbee’s performance, then, English audiences did not see the same complex racial performance that Americans witnessed. They simply experienced the best of all American comedy. They were amused by his antics and were not troubled at all by the racial play on stage as their American cousins were.

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Americans, on the other hand, found Silsbee’s work distasteful because his performances were simply too close to minstrelsy. After the rise of this art form in 1843, Americans began to expect certain types of on-stage fools to be black. A character that danced awkwardly, sang silly, sentimental songs about the country, and/or gave foolish speeches about American manners, in their minds, should have been black. A white fool might have been clownish, but he never would have displayed such grotesque or idiotic behavior. A white comic character that acted like a “nigger” would have affronted their racist values. Whites, in other words, were not the fools of society to be paraded and parodied on stage; black people were.

As Americans' notions of race continued to codify, they used the stage to reflect their solidifying views. They desired clear racial boundaries and patronized those stage acts that reaffirmed their beliefs. Minstrelsy presented images in which they could believe. Black stage characters were fools, monstrous beings worthy of the laughter and scorn their real counterparts incurred. Silsbee's performances, on the other hand, flew in the face of these racial conceptions. He presented a white fool that was not only stupid, but also awkward and grotesque in the same way the minstrel character was. Clearly, Americans could not accept such a portrayal as simple "Yankee fun" and so they saw to it that theatre doors were closed to him.

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After Silsbee's marvelous success with *The Forest Rose*, he tried his hand at other Yankee plays in England. Not surprisingly, he stuck to pieces he could be sure the English audience would understand. He played in Bernard's well-liked works, such as *New Notions*, and *Wife for a Day*, in Sterling Coyne's *Seth Slope*, and in Marble's hit, *Yankee Land*. All had previously proven successful abroad, and all displayed malevolent Yankees. English audiences had historically proved that they desired a Yankee that fit their expectations (and nothing else), and Silsbee seemed to give them the genuine article. Silsbee was so loved, in fact, that *The Era* claimed (in customary over-embroidered hyperbolic form):

The Adelphi management has had the good, and we may add the rare, fortune to have secured the services of an American actor, likely to prove extraordinary an attraction in this country. Somehow we fail to get imported, we had almost said any, histrionic excellence from the New World; but Brother Jonathan has now furnished us with precisely what we wanted—what we cannot 'raise' at home—a veritable Yankee low comedian—the faithful pourtrayer of that unadulterated material which is so interesting to the Britisher... (ibid).

The critic is obviously exaggerating, but his point is clear: Joshua Silsbee's performance of the Yankee perfectly satisfied the English imagination. His combination of the Yankee and the

minstrel created a Yankee that was foolish and grotesque. Because of this and his reliance on (old) travelogue rhetoric about “the American,” Silsbee was named the greatest thespian import to the country so far. His Jonathan served up what Britons considered the best of American comic art: both the monstrous black man and the foolish New Englander rolled into one immensely funny stage character.

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7.6 JOSHUA SILSBEE RETURNS TO AMERICA

London reviewers and critics so noted Joshua Silsbee’s acclaim that theatrical critics of his own country began to take notice. A review of the actor appeared in *The Drawing-Room Companion* while he was still showing the play in London, and Americans everywhere anxiously awaited his return. But his homecoming was anticlimactic compared to the attention he received while he was away. His debut in New York did not make news, and when he returned to Philadelphia theatres the results were downright disastrous. The Philadelphia audience hated him. A critical response to his portrayal of *The Forest Rose* is lengthy, but its contents are worthy of mention, for it is the first American response which not only identifies the true rhetoric motivating the clownish Yankee, but also recognizes the malice in the British response to him.

A newspaper article about his performance at the Walnut claims:

Mr. Silsbee has been across the water and, having succeeded in making money there, returns to the country demanding American applause as the echo of British plaudits. The Yankee of the stage is unlike the Yankee of New England. The dramatic representative of the inhabitants of the most flourishing States of the Union is an ill-dressed, wily, sneaking and loquacious cheat. The theatrical exponent of the character of the best-educated population of the Union is a half-civilized, drawling ignoramus. The Yankee of the play-house has no prototype in any part of the confederacy. He is a creation, an ill-shapen exaggeration of a few slight peculiarities, which, in the hands of the caricaturing actor, become

monstrous. It may be considered no credit to the taste of the English people that Mr. Silsbee succeeded in England. It was disreputable to their judgment that they crowded the theatres to witness the performances of “the representative of American manners.” But, in patronizing the Yankee drama, they gratified their feelings of malevolence. They saw an American representing his countrymen to be avaricious, silly, ignorant and ill-mannered. It was gratifying to them that such an imputation on the character of the Yankee should be presented them by one claiming the title of an American citizen; and they crowded the theatres to laugh and sneer. The success of Mr. Silsbee in England is no reason why he should succeed here. The pecuniary compliment to him was so much substantial detraction of the United States (Unreferenced clipping from the Harvard Theatre Collection).

The critic continues, “In this country, the stage Yankee has had his day. He was a fiction, a grotesque myth, who served in his novelty to make many laugh at his capers. He is becoming tiresome” (ibid). In this world of minstrelsy, the Yankee seemed no longer funny. What is more, he could not play with costumes, movements, or conventions that the American public did find humorous, for these belonged (only) to the “nigger.” There was no real place for the Yankee anymore, at least not as a one-man comic character show.

The reviewer finishes his article: “Mr. Silsbee created no sensation at the Walnut. He attracted tolerably fair houses, but there was a dreariness about all the pieces in which he figured, which was extremely fatiguing... The performances of Mr. Silsbee lagged through the week” (ibid). Any good grace that extended to Silsbee came to an end. Americans would not stomach his kind of Yankee humor any longer.

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Silsbee was a decided failure in Philadelphia, and he continued to do poorly throughout the east. By 1852 he could find no theatre that would have him. So he quickly moved out west to California to try his luck on less sullied stages. Unfortunately, even in “gold country” he did not find a warm reception. Hodge comments, “What was recognizable about the Yankee in New

York and London, Silsbee thought, would also be perfectly clear to Californians. But others had traveled the road before him—minor actors, to be sure—and the market for Yankee eccentrics was not so fresh and lucrative as he had hoped” (252).

Unlike actors before him, Silsbee’s time in London seems to have injured, not abetted his career. His performances were judged clownish upon his return, and other actors, in his absence, had beaten him to the Western territory he thought he could count on. Silsbee continued to play the Yankee for a few more years in the San Francisco area, but he gained only limited success. Even in the most sparsely populated theatrical setting, Silsbee could not do very well.

Silsbee would never live to be as well loved as James Hackett, George Hill, or even Danforth Marble. Despite his acute business sense and ambition, he would not rise to the top. He would live the rest of his life in California, playing to mediocre houses and receiving mediocre reviews until his death at the age of forty-two in 1855.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 THE YANKEE TAKES A BACKSEAT

After Joshua Silsbee's failure on American stages, no new actors attempted to make their living solely from playing Yankee parts. Actors still performed the role, of course. Throughout the 1850s G. E. Locke, David G. Robinson, Joseph Jefferson III, Fayette Robinson, J. H. McVickers, John Sleeper Clarke, and John Owens all played the character, some earning great acclaim for their portrayals. Likewise, plays incorporating the Yankee continued to show on stages through the rest of the century. In the 1860s John Owens played the Yankee Solon Shingle in Joseph S. Jones's *The People's Lawyer* (1842), C. K. Fox played Gumption Cute in George L. Aiken's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), Joseph Jefferson III portrayed both Salem Scudder in *The Octoroon* (1859) and Asa Trenchard in *Our American Cousin* (1858). In the 1870s Denman Thompson played Josh Whitcomb in *The Old Homestead* and James A. Herne filled his plays with Yankee characters in the 1880s.²³⁵

Despite the plethora of Yankee characters that still appeared on the American stage, "Yankee Theatre," as a vibrant performer-centered art form, ended. By the time Joshua Silsbee moved to California and died in 1855, actors who played the Yankee no longer had control over the material or the form. They could not expand the character in any way; they could not add

²³⁵ Most notably, *Margaret Fleming* contains Pitticus Green, a Yankee character, and the entire dramatis personae of *Shore Acres* are Yankee characters.

stories, showing their own personal flare; nor could they insert comic business as they saw fit. The Yankee became just another character in the play. He was no longer the leading comedian with full power over the audience's experience. Likewise, actors playing the part no longer were the stars of the show. Audiences came to watch other stars or the play now, not necessarily the Yankee.

These changes in theatrical form seem to have affected the Yankee character himself, for he seems much changed after 1855. Many plays suddenly featured a kinder and older Jonathan. This Yankee, who spoke with wisdom about the old times and only infrequently brought out his old whittling knife, no longer tricked his cultural superiors, baffled those around him with incoherent dialogue, or amused them with long winded stories about the country and his family relations. Jonathan was a changed man.

Examining how one particular play changed makes the overall alterations clearer. For example, Joseph S. Jones wrote *The People's Lawyer* for George Hill in 1842. Hill made his debut in the part of Solon Shingle at the Park Theatre on December 17th of that year. The plot itself is a standard domestic melodrama; Shingle, the Yankee of the piece, wanders in and out of the plot. He is a farmer from New England who comes to the city because he desires remuneration for some stolen property. He is first heard, off-stage, trying to control his herd of cows, which don't seem to appreciate the confinement of city streets. When he finally settles them, he enters a bank, though it has already closed. Shingle doesn't seem to understand the notion of business hours, so he insists on being helped. The shop owner is, of course, resistant to the idea, but the Yankee cannot be stopped. While in the business establishment, Shingle bumbles around the complex urban space and causes multiple disruptions. He shoots off a gun, struggles with flour and a lampblack, and wreaks havoc with the owner's books. Later in the

play he also proves his resilience when he goes to court to disclose a theft of his applesauce. His arguments with Mr. Tripper, the prosecuting attorney, are quite humorous, and though Shingle is far less sophisticated than Tripper, he outwits the lawyer at every turn.

Hill played this part in his customary way, which is to say that he played Shingle as a young boy. Shingle, in his production, was a country bumpkin who was rambunctious and full of youthful energy. His antics in the street, bank, and court were all a direct outcome of his naiveté. Shingle was a country boy and he simply did not know that he should behave any differently; what is more, he was unfamiliar with urban (read: more sophisticated) traditions and customs. In other words, Shingle was similar to the many Yankees that had come before him. He showcased native ingenuity, outsmarting his cultural superiors with little to no effort. Likewise, he highlighted the benefits of a rural mindset, upbringing, and way of life in a society that was quickly becoming “modernized.”²³⁶

When Owens played the part in the 1860s, he made Shingle an old man. Such a drastic change in the character affected the whole performance; most importantly, it altered the way the audience understood Jonathan. For example, in Owens’s version, Shingle’s rambunctious behavior in the street, the bank, and the court could not be explained as simple youthful vim. Thus, it made the Yankee appear even more foolish than in the 1840s version, for Owens’s Yankee is a pathetic, old man who is simply so behind the times he does not understand what was around him. What is more, in the guise of an old man, Jonathan seemed to become a symbol of a by-gone era. He became a representative of an older age, rather emblemizing the present

²³⁶ I put modernized in quotation marks to alert the reader that I am using this term with caution. Modernization, as we think about it in a scholarly fashion, certainly had not occurred in the United States in the 1840s. The society was still largely agrarian. Despite this fact, Americans were worried about the changes they saw around them. New businesses were opening every day and Americans needed to deal with the world in a more rational manner than ever before. Although it was not modern as we understand the term, the word starts to suggest what Americans were concerned with.

time, as the young Yankee had done in the 1820s, 30s, and 40s. Symbolically and physically, as this example shows, the Yankee became an old, worn out character by the end of the 1850s. He was no longer useful and so was imagined as pitiable and inept.

So different was the Yankee after the mid-1850s that many scholars suggest Jonathan became “domesticated.” But why did this change occur? Some scholars imagine that it did not and they trace the Yankee within different characters and stage traditions well into the late nineteenth century.²³⁷ Some suggest that as the United States grew and expanded in geographical area the particular New England nature of this character became less important and so he morphed into other figures of greater significance, like the frontiersman.²³⁸ Many suggest that even though the Yankee disappeared, the particular brand of humor for which he was famous stayed alive in American frontier writing and political cartoons.²³⁹ Likewise, some suggest that in order to more closely mirror Abraham Lincoln's appearance, the Yankee transformed directly into the Uncle Sam character after the Civil War.²⁴⁰ In addition, some researchers claim that Yankee humor simply lost its edge as the United States urbanized and modernized.²⁴¹ Most, however, suggest that the Yankee character had simply fulfilled his purpose. American identity was created and had solidified by the 1850s and with this job completed the Yankee was no longer needed. He became a moot symbol, and so vanished from the popular culture.

²³⁷ They often see the Yankee as changing into the frontiersman or backwoodsmen or see him as splitting into domestic versions and frontier versions. See Constance Rourke *American Humor*, Alicia Cramer “The Yankee Comic Character: Its Origins and Development in American Literature through 1830,” and Marie Killheffer “The Development of the Yankee Character in American Drama From 1787 to 1861.”

²³⁸ This is very similar to the first mentioned explanation. Scholars of this school see the Yankee as losing his New England roots, but see his essence (as a representative of America) within other characters. See Aron Lee Pasternack “The Development of Popular American Stage Comedy: From the Beginning to 1900.”

²³⁹ Scholars of this school find the Yankee in writers like Mark Twain. Yet here too is the hybrid: the Yankee develops into the frontier hero, a teller of tall tales, a country bumpkin who makes good. See Carolyn S. Brown *The Tall Tale in American Folklore and Literature*.

²⁴⁰ See Winifred Morgan *An American Icon: Brother Jonathan and American Identity*.

²⁴¹ See Cameron C. Nickel's *New England Humor: From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War*.

While all of these speculations certainly make sense and offer possible reasons for the Yankee's change, there is a more practical option available and that is simply that the blackfaced minstrel eclipsed the Yankee (just as minstrelsy eclipsed "Yankee Theatre"). Minstrelsy swept the nation in 1843 and became a national success. Toll explains the situation, "Indicating its [minstrelsy's] rapid acceptance, in 1844, only a year after the first minstrel show, the Ethiopian Serenaders, a blackface minstrel troupe, played at the White House for the 'Especial Amusement of the President of the United States, His Family and Friends.'" (31). What is more, as the years passed, minstrelsy became even more popular. Says Toll:

In subsequent years, minstrels entertained Presidents Tyler, Polk, Fillmore, and Pierce, as well as countless common Americans throughout the nation. In response to the seemingly insatiable public demand, innumerable minstrel troupes appeared. It is impossible to determine how many there were... because amateur and amateurish troupes appeared almost everywhere... When large numbers of people trekked across the continent in search of California gold, for example, minstrelsy quickly established itself there. First presented in 1849 by local amateur groups scattered throughout the gold fields, minstrelsy by 1855 claimed five professional troupes in San Francisco alone. Similar developments occurred wherever people were concentrated and transportation was available... (ibid).

Wherever Americans were in the 1850s, there was minstrelsy. It was the most popular theatrical form from the mid-1840s through the Civil War; it remained trendy until the turn of the century.

Minstrelsy was everywhere. What this meant for the Yankee actor was that there were fewer venues in which to perform. With the changes in class recognition and distinction that the 1840s had brought about, Yankees would be always be read in a different way from how they had been in the 1820s or 1830s. They would be considered part of the low class. As such, they were meant for low-class audiences. Yet at this time the low class was devoted to the minstrel stage. It spoke with a greater accuracy to their anxieties and cultural concerns. The Yankee took

a back seat to the minstrel, and there were simply not enough working-class theatres or money to be spent within that class to support two forms of theatre.

What is more, the rise of minstrelsy changed the nature and expected appearance of the stage fool. Leading stage fools—after 1843—could only be black. This is not to suggest that white characters could not act foolishly; nor does it imply that a white actor could not play a secondary idiotic, awkward, or silly character. What it does suggest is that when a character's foolishness was the main attraction of the performance, after 1843, that character was expected to be black. The leading fool, in fact, became equated with the black man to such an extent that to show a white fool offended the audience's (white) racist sentiments. In a culture obsessed with race and racial definition, there was no room for two types of fools on stage. The stage, if nothing else, needed to be clear if it was to offer its audiences workable definitions and classifications. If it was to assuage people's anxieties, it had to offer images that were specific in nature and appropriate to the culture. The minstrel did this. The leading black fool offered a clear definition of "blackness" and spoke to the racist culture of the time. The Yankee—a leading white foolish character--simply did not fit into this equation any longer.

With these material obstacles in his way, the Yankee could only do one thing: change to fit his new role in the theatre. If the Yankee were not the main character, if he were not the center of attention, he would have to blend into the rest of the drama, subduing his humor and downplaying his aggressive tactics of the past. In other words, he would need to behave like a secondary character and this is exactly what he did. Although the Yankee remained on stage through the end of the nineteenth century—and indeed, into modern day²⁴²--he became a

²⁴² I am thinking of the Stage Manager of *Our Town* or perhaps Adam Sandler in the movie "Mr. Deeds." Mr. Deeds, the main character, is not only from New England, but displays many of the qualities found in early Yankees. He is a humorous character that gets ahead by dumb luck (inspired by his country upbringing) and native ingenuity.

changed man, a figure so subdued he was hardly recognizable. If not for his dialogue which was still written to indicate a New England accent, contemporary readers might never realize that characters like Gumption Cute, Salem Scudder, or Asa Trenchard were Yankees at all.

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8.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY

This dissertation has attempted to explain “Yankee Theatre” within America’s post-colonial situation. I have spoken about how early Yankee plays wrote against the empire, searching for their national voice; looked at the ways beginning Yankee actors expressed their American heritage and voiced their nationalism; likewise, I explained the pressures they faced in fighting for international success and outlined many instances of rewriting which were a direct outcome of the situation in the transatlantic world. I have also discussed the English side to this equation, explaining how an imperial standard was established in London, why English audiences were unhappy with the first American Yankee actors they witnessed, and how future Yankee actors were caught in this web of criterion and taste for years to come.

The state of affairs in America (political, cultural, etc.) was long affected by its colonial history. It impacted nearly every aspect of life and infiltrated every citizen’s values. Moreover, post-colonial anxieties, concerns, and reactions continued to shape the United States for nearly seventy years after its break with England. Such a widespread, comprehensive, and significant cultural situation should not be ignored; yet it is surprising how little is written on this subject. American studies is largely bereft of an adequate analysis of this condition, which lasted through

the middle of the nineteenth century. Many works on post-coloniality have surfaced in recent years, but little has been said about the United States, the first post-colonial nation.

Why has this happened? Perhaps Gary A. Richardson best summarizes the situation: “The passage of more than two hundred years since its revolutionary struggle and its status as an imperial power throughout the twentieth century has done much to efface critical memory of the United States’ colonial origins” (“Nationalizing” 221). Historians, however, should not forget America’s roots and they cannot overlook the impact that such a heritage had on the country. What is more, as the United States continues to act as an imperial power, forcing its politics and beliefs on the world much as England did in the nineteenth century, it is even more important for the scholarly community to reflect, analyze, and deal with the long-term affects of colonization.

This dissertation attempts to enter into the discussion about how the post-colonial situation affected the nineteenth-century transatlantic world. “Yankee Theatre,” of course, was only one part of this complex sociopolitical equation. Indeed, the theatre itself, though an important part of nineteenth-century life, offers only a small glimpse into the world and culture. More work, focusing both on other forms of theatre and on other forms of art, needs to be done on this vast and important subject. What is more, historians need to better understand and explain in general how countries on both sides of the Atlantic understood and dealt with the aftermath of colonial rule. New work is surfacing everyday about modern cultures that experienced colonization; little, however, is coming out that deals with this situation in a historical sense. What are the patterns? Have nations begun to act differently under such a strain or is colonization a steady force whose outcome is always identical? Likewise, one might ask how historic forms of resistance voiced themselves and if such resistance effected the future

nation's political outlook. Much more work, in other words, still needs to be accomplished on this interesting and significant subject.

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8.3 SOME QUALIFICATIONS

I was able to visit several archives in both the United States and England while researching this topic. Harvard University's Theatre Collection, which is housed in the Houghton Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was one of the most helpful resources. I visited it three times through the writing of "Playing America" and found something new each time. In England, I was able to access the Enthoven Collection, which is located in the Theatre Museum. Francis Hodge used Enthoven material in 1960s when he wrote *Yankee Theatre*. Although the collection has changed since then, it was still invaluable to my research. I also visited the Newspaper Library, in Collindale (London), which supplied me with the numerous play reviews and advertisements I used within this work. The Lord Chamberlain's Collection was perhaps the most important English resource. England's licensing laws, which were established long before the nineteenth century, fashioned this amazing collection. Each play produced in London had to be read, approved, and held for official records. Thus, every Yankee play that showed in London is part of this collection and available for reproduction. The Lord Chamberlain's Collection, it hardly needs to be said, was invaluable to my work. It was where I found most of the plays I analyzed and it was where I discovered a few Yankee works that I did not know existed.

There are some archives that I was not able to view, however. Hodge tells about two such collections: The Albert Davis and Messmore Kendall Collections, held at the Hoblitzelle

Theatre Arts Library at the University of Texas, and the Theatre Collection in the New York Public Library. I just learned, as well, about a collection at the University of Illinois, which contains some “Yankee Theatre” material. Primary sources in these archives might have qualified the conclusions that I drew.

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