

Burlesquing “Otherness” in Nineteenth-Century American Theatre: The Image of the Indian in John Brougham’s *Met-a-mora; or, The Last of the Pollywogs* (1847) and *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage* (1855).

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When John Brougham’s Indian burlesque, *Met-a-mora; or, The Last of the Pollywogs*, opened in Boston at Brougham’s Adelphi Theatre on November 29, 1847, it won the lasting reputation of an exceptional satiric force in the American theatre for its author, while, at the same time, signaled the end of the serious Indian dramas that were so popular during the 1820s and 1830s. Eight years later, in 1855, Brougham made a most spectacular comeback with another Indian burlesque, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage*, an “Original, Aboriginal, Erratic, Operatic, Semi-Civilized, and Demi-savage Extravaganza,” which was produced at Wallack’s Lyceum Theatre in New York City.¹ Both plays have been invariably cited as successful parodies of Augustus Stone’s *Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags* (1829) and the stilted acting style of Edwin Forrest, and the Pocahontas plays of the first half of the nineteenth century. They are significant because they opened up new possibilities for the development of satiric comedy in America² and substantially contributed to the transformation of the stage picture of the Indian from the romantic pattern of Arcadian innocence to a view far more satirical, even ridiculous.

In just a few years after his arrival in America in 1842, Irish-born John Brougham realized his own American dream by launching an extraordinary career as both actor and playwright winning the enthusiastic applause of American audiences, the praise of American critics, and the enviable title of America's Aristophanes.³ Already familiar with the genres of burlesque and extravaganza, Brougham quickly worked himself into American popular culture and national consciousness with plays that vibrated to the rhythms of the American social and cultural life.⁴ His success seems to have depended on his ability to produce a witty dramatic language and the fact that he caught the public fancy quickly. He was lucky because he began writing at a time when burlesque was thriving on the American theatrical scene. As Constance Rourke has eloquently stated, during the 1840s and 1850s the American burlesque was "abroad in the land like a powerful genie let out of a windbag."⁵ Although the term was never really used with great precision, as it could be applied to a number of forms of comic entertainment like travesty, extravaganza, and minstrelsy, burlesque usually aimed at a particular style of acting or dramatic trend considered fashionable and enjoyed primarily by upper-class audiences.⁶

It is not accidental that burlesque on the American stage reached the peak of its popularity at a time when the American society was undergoing a series of social, economic, and cultural changes.⁷ The growth of industrial capitalism between 1825 and 1850 caused major shifts in capital investment, the rise of factory production, waves of cheap labor from Ireland and Germany, and high unemployment among the working classes. Furthermore, the political controversies of the 1840s and 1850s, such as the New York labor struggles, the abolitionist movement, the Seneca Falls Convention, and the Astor Place Riot, reflected intense racial, class, and ethnic relations as well as the changing gender patterns of American society. As would be expected, urban entertainment was affected by the new social and economic conditions. Theatres began to cater to the diverse needs of an essentially diverse audience. Increasing immigration and urbanization spurred theatre-managers to compete for working-class patronage. Thomas S. Hamblin at the Bowery Theatre⁸ as well as managers of other theatres, like the Chatham, the Chambers Street, and the Olympic, largely ignored the tastes of the upper classes and concentrated on comic and musical entertainment for working-class spectators. As Mary C. Henderson has pointed out, "during the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, the Bowery began to develop an independent theatrical life of its own. The theatres built along it appealed mainly to the residents of the area and never constituted a strong threat to the fashionable theatres that were beginning to appear along Broadway at the same time."⁹ The inevitable separation of cultural spaces and dramatic expectations was inextricably linked to the fundamental shifts that took place in mid-nineteenth-century American society not only in terms of social reorganization and cultural redefinition, but also in terms of theatre and audience segregation along class and ethnic lines. That the American society of the time was undergoing a process of fragmentation was manifested in the increased complexity of life,

in the emerging social and cultural hierarchies, in the new residential patterns dictated by a combination of social, economic, and ethnic factors, and in what Lawrence W. Levine has called "the relative decline of a shared public culture."¹⁰ The new industrial ethos of a dynamic market economy and the social standards of industry, sobriety, moderation, and self-control of an emerging middle class positioned entertainment within new ideological borders and boundaries.¹¹

As an integral part of mid-nineteenth-century popular entertainment that appealed to predominantly working-class audiences and reflected their longings, hopes, and fears, burlesque aimed at displacing anxieties over unemployment and the new social hierarchies to a performance of working-class cultural elements.¹² By encouraging an "other" discourse that satirized upper-class pretensions and the new codes of social morality, the enjoyment taken in burlesque consolidated the audience, through their laughter, as a distinct social group that had the opportunity to exercise a significant measure of cultural autonomy and self-definition.¹³ Within a context of increasing social and cultural segregation, burlesque constituted an essential paradox: on the one hand, it occupied the liminal space of social/cultural marginality, while, on the other, remained symbolically central in a society that strove hard to define its limits and identity against any notion of "otherness."

John Brougham's Indian Burlesques

Brougham's innovative touch upon the American burlesque tradition¹⁴ lay in his decision to focus on a distinctly American theme and parody a most celebrated national myth. Although, as Robert F. Berkhofer has observed, "both the noble and savage Indian made an ideal subject for American high culture,"¹⁵ Brougham's *Met-a-mora* and *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas* seem to transcend the general practice of burlesque to parody fashionable dramatic forms and stage characters and are specifically linked to the various social and cultural transformations that were taking place in America in mid-nineteenth century. What deserves attention while dealing with Brougham's Indian burlesques are the various, and often contending, discourses from which they sprang and to which they contributed as well as their place in the American dramatic history and national imagination.¹⁶ Both plays convey a social and political commentary of wide-ranging, even radical, character that humorously disrupts the three tersely summarized political tenets of Jacksonian democracy: "expansion (nationalism), antimonopoly (egalitarianism) and white supremacy."¹⁷ Brougham's satiric approach to the national myth of the resistant, but rapidly vanishing Noble-Savage and the acquiescent Indian Princess, cuts deep into the American process of incorporating the Indian into a politically expedient mythic pattern regarding a sense of national origin and the romantic dream of uninhibited expansion. By exposing the essential discrepancy between myth and reality in white-Indian relations and the dramatic representation of the Indian, *Met-a-mora* and *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas* invert a long and firmly-rooted romantic tradition that effectively blurred the historical reality of nativist violence and imperialist expansion.

Furthermore, both burlesques offer a different version of the American concept of cultural nationalism as they remove the Indian from the romantic sphere of exoticism and temporal distance in order to provide the American nation with a sense of what Edward Said has termed as “divine” and “privileged” origin,¹⁸ and actually position the Indian within the social and cultural context of mid-nineteenth-century America. There, that symbolic function and national role inevitably change as the Indian begins to incorporate the diverse, and often contradictory, ideological and cultural elements of a multiethnic, industrial American society. In Brougham’s burlesques, the image of the Indian is turned into a recognizable site where the distinction between “high” and “low” culture is played up against a variety of working-class and ethnic cultural elements and the Jacksonian interpretation of republicanism, equality, and progress. Both plays undermine the political tendency of the American society of the time to promote a homogenizing social philosophy of republican idealism and insist on the notions of diversity and heterogeneity, evident both in their structure, as they combine a wide range of popular culture elements, and their content, as they focus on various social types in the urban culture of Jacksonian America, ethnic humor, class satire, as well as the growing middle-class craving for melodramatic finales that carry the promise of a stable, moral, harmonious, yet essentially hierarchical, social order.

Met-a-mora; or, The Last of the Pollywogs

Although *Met-a-mora* was written eighteen years after the initial production of Stone’s play, its satire remained timely in a society that still enthusiastically applauded the exaggerated acting style of Forrest, who continued to play *Metamora* for almost forty years, and Stone’s dramatic discourse that endorsed the rather abstract notions of republican idealism and patriotic nationalism. It is not enough to look for Brougham’s extensive parody simply in his stylistic devices that change *Metamora*’s heroic cry from “Hah! Hah!” to the more ridiculous “Ugh!” and Oceana’s eagle plume to a tail plucked from a mongrel rooster.¹⁹ Although these were certainly elements that elicited laughter from an audience that was in its vast majority familiar with Stone’s play and Forrest’s acting, they cannot demonstrate the extent of Brougham’s satire and his socio-political comments.

From the very first scene, Brougham’s *Metamora*, “the ultimate Pollywog, an aboriginal hero, and a favorite child of the Forrest,”²⁰ successfully burlesques the romantic stereotype of the proudly defiant but defeated Noble-Savage:

Oceana: Just as my chance of life I’d given o’er
 And thought the bear a most uncommon bore,
 The forest echoed with a mighty roar;
 And soon I saw before my pathway stand
 One of the na-tyves of this favored land,
 With rifle, belt, plume, moccasins, and all,
 Just as you see them at a fancy ball;

His hair was glossy as the raven's wing;
 He looked and moved a sort of savage king;
 His speech was pointed, at the same time blunt—
 Something between a whisper and a grunt.
 "Ugh!" said he, "pale-face, why linger here?
 Afraid of that ungentlemanly bear?"
 "Just so," said I. With that he gave a yell,
 So sharp, so loud, the bear dropped down and fell.²¹

Far from being the "grandest model of a mighty man,"²² Brougham's Noble-Savage begins to lose his national function as a symbol that served to codify the American national identity, and is gradually turned into a distorted image that exposes the falsity of celebrating an idealized, poeticized version of primitivism. *Metamora's* dichotomous nature is ridiculed as his savagery is humorously stretched to the darkest corners of white imagination:

Vau. How died Old Sassinger?
 Met. Ha, ha! The fool was fried;
 Mustard, peppered, salted, and put down:
 So should a sassinger be served—done brown.²³

And his nobility, which was actually the result of his unmediated bonding to the land, receives serious setbacks and reveals itself for what it really was, a mythical construct. In the scene where he kills Anaconda, the traitor, in cold blood, *Metamora's* "noble" motives behind such an act simply disappear to make way for a parodied justification of his supposedly inherent violence and savagery:

Met. Anaconda, are you the man—you know you are—
 I treated yesterday at Parker's bar?
 Brothers, can he speak words of truth to ye,
 Filled full of cocktails that he got from me?
 Vau. In course he can, and will, I'll bet a hat.
 Met. Anaconda!—no; I will not call thee that.
 Squirt! Say by these people you are led,
 Who've bought the sheep's tongue growing in thy head,
 And you have uttered a confounded lie!
 Well, goose, why don't you cackle? It is I
 Command it—*Metamora*, and thy king!
 Vau. Hold on, I say! He shan't do sich thing;
 In sich proceedings there ain't any sense.
 He's frightening the witness. Send him hence.
 Met. I'll do it. To the shades be thou a passenger!
 Black slave of the whites, go follow Sassinger!²⁴

In his satire of *Metamora*, Brougham's aim seems to have been the destruction of a symbol and not a sugar-coated treatment of the essentially colonizing/imperialistic presence of the Americans who had set out either to "civilize" or eliminate the native inhabitants of the land.²⁵ In this way, his Noble-Savage represented a rupture in the American colonial discourse as its natural innocence, virtue, and patriotism could no longer be reflected upon an American "self" that strove hard to solidify its own identity as the "center."

Despite its inherent contradiction, the image of the Indian as Noble-Savage had become a firmly-rooted myth that served the exigencies of a whole nation and provided the necessary sense of connection between an Arcadian, pre-English past and an American future of progress and expansion.²⁶ According to Anthony Pagden, "the American Indian did seem to provide evidence that there had indeed been a pre-social state where men had led 'natural' lives, or, at least, something very close to them."²⁷ In the first decades of the nineteenth century, and with the rise of Romanticism, the image of the Indian as an integral feature of America's untamed wilderness became part of the national effort to produce an indigenous literature and to define the limits and character of a distinctly American national identity.²⁸ The Indian was celebrated as a symbol, as the perfect natural background for the blossoming of the essentially American ideals of freedom, virtue, and democracy.²⁹ His real presence, however, proved immensely problematic and was widely regarded as counterproductive to expansion, progress, and civilization; that is why it was, in truly romantic fashion, always doomed to destruction and elimination. In the (mis)conception of the Indian as Noble-Savage, white Americans could more easily come to terms with the reality of the existence of a troublesome "other." The Indian's symbolic function as a legendary figure, a reminder of the uniqueness of the American landscape and the white Americans' democratic promise and Manifest Destiny, achieved a double purpose: on the one hand, it established the Americans' ethnocentric assumption of racial and cultural hegemony, and, on the other, excluded any possibility for Native self-expression.³⁰

On the American stage, the stereotype of the Noble-Savage effectively blurred the Indian's historical reality, which had long required political action, and promoted the white Americans' unacknowledged desire to establish a homogeneous national identity that excluded "alien" cultures.³¹ Written as a response to Forrest's call for the best native drama on a national theme, Stone's *Metamora* underlined precisely this desire as it echoed the passionate patriotism and imperialistic impulse of the new nation.³² On the other hand, Brougham's satiric portrayal of *Metamora* aimed at exactly the opposite as it exposed the essential discrepancy between the rhetorical commitment to the proposition that "All men are created equal," and the American nation's troubled relationship to its own multicultural identity. For example, in Tapiokee's lullaby to her child—a song set to the tune of "O slumber, my darling"—the tone becomes more serious as she sings the truth of Indian displacement and destruction:

O, slumber, my papoose! Thy sire is not white;
 And that injures your prospects a very great sight;
 For the hills, and the dales, and the valleys you see,
 They all were purloined, my dear papoose, from thee.

O, slumber, my papoose! The time will soon come
 When thy rest shall be broken by very bad rum;
 For, though in fair fighting the whites we beat down,
 By a sling made of whiskey the red man is thrown.³³

Bitterly foreshadowing the fate of the Indians and their marginal place in the new American nation, these words are immediately undercut—for the sake of burlesque—by the papoose’s wishful thinking that “when I’ve seen a few more snows, I can go slaying also, I suppose.”³⁴ What is particularly interesting in the play is Brougham’s successful combination of such comic statements, obviously designed to elicit laughter from the audience, and his subtle approach to the reality of the violent and degenerative processes of colonization and westward expansion. In the juxtaposition of the white and Indian characters, Brougham touches upon the notion that expansion is synonymous with exploitation and land appropriation and somehow exposes the schizoid state of American society which, on the one hand, was trying hard to shake off its colonial identity through the promise of social regeneration and progress for all, while, on the other, it increasingly represented a colonizing presence that displaced indigenous peoples. Who owns the land? Who sells and who buys it? *Metamora*’s resistance to the onslaught of the white “civilizing” power and his deftness in business transactions are so humorously portrayed that they lose their pride and nobility and are reduced to what they really were: a vain and desperate attempt sustained by false promises:

Met. Since the first man trod upon our ground,
 Rubbed out our footmarks, that now can’t be found.
 Vau. Come, that’s unbusinesslike and rayther green;
 We bought these diggin’s—how long has it been?
 Some hundred years, or thereabout, I guess.
 Met. Nothing! An acre or a little less.
 O, you’re good buyers now, just as of old.
 Pale-faces, tremble! You may yet be sold.³⁵

Metamora’s “noble” motives behind his enraged verbal attack against the whites sound blunt and unmotivated as they appear to be a bastardized mixture of Stone’s rhetoric, Forrest’s hyperbolic performance, bitter truth, and parody:

The war-whoop startle you from dreams at night,
 And the red hatchet in the horrid light

Of blazing dwellings gleam! From east to west,
 From the north to the south you never shall know rest,
 But hear the cry of vengeance, feel the lash,
 Till, for the lands you've stolen, you've paid the cash.³⁶

Brougham's *Metamora* is an anti-hero whose words and actions have lost their romantic, sentimentalized aura. He is a caricature constructed to ridicule both Stone's generalized patriotic rhetoric, conveyed through his combination of pseudo-Shakespearean verse, melodramatic conventions, and romantic-tragedy sentimentalism, and Forrest's emotion-laden performing style enhanced by his consistent preference for heroic roles that promote the ideals of republican independence and liberal equality against social injustice and aristocratic power.³⁷ As winner in Forrest's playwriting contest, Stone's *Metamora* was particularly designed to enhance the actor's public image of heroic masculinity with a character who simultaneously incorporated and obscured the essential discrepancy deriving from the existence of two conflicting ideologies in American society: the ideology of republicanism and the ideology of liberal individualism. In an increasingly industrialized society, Stone's overwhelming flow of nationalist sentiments and Forrest's heavily sentimentalized acting style offered a sense of security and optimism to the American audiences through the rhetorical affirmation of the republican ideals of freedom, virtue, and patriotism, while, at the same time, encouraged their concept of acquisitive individualism and market economy as the Noble-Savage *Metamora* eventually had to be removed in order to allow them to "expand" and enjoy the prosperity of their Edenic world.

Furthermore, the American audiences of the time unconsciously identified this ambiguous merging of republican virtue and liberal progress in the face of their national super-star. Forrest's self-made success, on the one hand, and, on the other, the patriotic and common-good dictum of his characters positioned him at the heart of Jacksonian ideology and made him particularly appealing to a broad "democratic" audience.³⁸ In the public imagination, Forrest's most popular characters, like Jack Cade, Spartacus, and, of course, *Metamora*, became heroic figures that vindicated the people's democratic rights of republican freedom and liberal prosperity against any form of governmental or aristocratic oppression. The egalitarian and patriotic rhetoric of Forrest's heroic melodramas was amplified by his preference for dynamic characters who drew uncompromisingly on the most cherished—as much as abstract—American values of virtue, honor, and independence. Like the other super-heroes of American history, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and, of course, Andrew Jackson, Forrest's *Metamora* proved to be the perfect model for the Jacksonian definition of masculine honor and heroism:

Walter. Is justice goodly? *Metamora's* just. Is bravery virtue?
Metamora's brave. If love of country, child and wife and
 home, be to deserve them all- he merits them.³⁹

Forrest passionately delivers the hero's patriotic adherence to the land of his ancestors and his sacrificial devotion to his family and people, gaining the enthusiastic applause of the audience but effectively concealing the play's essential contradictions.⁴⁰ His *Metamora*, who symbolizes liberated existence and attachment to pristine nature, fights for what all Americans hold sacred: the ideal of freedom. "Death! Death, or my nation's freedom!"⁴¹ cries the valiant *Metamora* who, through his words, adds to the nation's process toward cultural self-definition and to Forrest's own heroic public image as another Andrew Jackson.⁴² As a true son of Arcadia, *Metamora's* existence is inextricably integrated with his natural environment from which he receives his innocence, power, and love for freedom:

I started to my feet and shouted the shrill battle cry of the Wampanoags. The high hills sent back the echo, and rock, hill and ocean, earth and air opened their giant throats and cried with me, "Red man, arouse! Freedom! Revenge or death! [*Thunder and lighting. All quail but Metamora*].⁴³

Brougham's burlesque undermines such powerful melodramatic "clap-traps" and touches upon the American people's need to idolize democratic heroes who promise a return to pre-industrial concepts of equality and independence. This is achieved through Brougham's parody of Forrest's acting habit to dominate the American stage with his overwhelming presence and stilted language, addressing the audience directly while vehemently conveying romantic visions of heroic dignity and uncompromising morality:

(Exeunt all but Metamora)

It's very probable you'd like to know
The reason why the Pollywog don't go
With his red brethren. Pray take notice, each,
He stops behind to have an exit speech.
And here it is: - *(Takes stage)*
Into the foe a feet or two I'll walk!
Death or my nation's glory! That's the talk. *(Exit)*⁴⁴

Furthermore, the comic finale and the ridiculous pantomime at the end of the play satirize Forrest's well-constructed death scenes in which he drove himself to physical exhaustion to convince his audience of the sincerity of his performance. The ending of *Met-a-mora* strips *Metamora's* death of its heroic aspect, exposes Forrest's conscious manipulation of his audience in his effort to collapse the distinction between the actor's overly expressive style and the character's suffering, and gives the final blow to *Metamora's* construction as a legendary figure heroically sacrificed to make way for white civilization:

- Met. I feel it's almost time for me to slope.
 The red man's fading out, and in his place
 There comes a bigger, not a better, race.
 Just as you've seen the squirming Pollywog
 In course of time become a bloated frog. (*Dies.*)
(Burlesque combat by everybody; all fall and die.)
Chorus, "We're all nodding."
 We're all dying, die, die, dying,
 We're all dying just like a flock of sheep.
Solo, Metamora
 You're all lying, lie, lie, lying,
 You're all lying; I wouldn't die so cheap.
- Met. (*Rises*) Confound your skins, I will not die to please
 you.
- Tap. (*Rises*) I shall get up too, if that's your game.
- Vau. (*Rises.*) That's a good move, and so I'll do the same.
*(All rise.)*⁴⁵

Brougham's *Met-a-mora* runs counter to the general tendency of the American political ideology of the time to encourage a homogenizing social philosophy that extolled liberty, equality, and progress.⁴⁶ As America was turning into an open, markedly stratified society, the presence of an ideology as powerful as republicanism functioned as a defense mechanism that rhetorically fostered a collective as well as individual sense of identity, security, and coherence.⁴⁷ Within this context, Brougham's *Met-a-mora* attempts to bring the American audiences face to face with their own need to cling to republican values and democratic heroes in order to counterbalance the cultural stress brought about by a rapidly changing social environment of market economy, ruthless competition, and class hierarchy, as well as a heightened consciousness of individualism. His play disrupts the ideological security of Forrest's stirring rhetoric that raised expectations for a truly democratic social order with a dose of class-awareness. In Brougham's burlesque, the Jacksonian promise for an American society where unity, virtue, and equality reign is placed within a framework of social and cultural difference.

The members of his working-class audience feel comfortable as they recognize elements of their own culture and social environment in his pun-filled verse and local allusions.⁴⁸ The already artificial sense of difference between a white "self" and an Indian "other" is transferred onto a plane of social-class consciousness. Whereas in the Manichean world of Stone's *Metamora*, the conflict between the white settlers and the Indian inhabitants of the land remains on the symbolic level of the powerful juxtaposition between a decadent European civilization and the regenerative climate of Edenic America, in Brougham's burlesque, this juxtaposition is woven into the hierarchical structure of mid-nineteenth-century America. The aristocratic villainy of Lord Fitzarnold, who threatens to take both

the wealth of the new land and Oceana by force, is placed within a social context that interprets foreignness through the prism of class hierarchy and cultural difference. In *Met-a-mora*, Brougham's spectators have the chance to boo Lord Fitzfaddle's foreign affectation—a character reminiscent of the various foreign fops in American drama—who only gets as close to the celebrated American land as to have the honor to die on it by the hand of Metamora:

Enter Fitzfaddle with a parasol over his head

Fitz. Dear me! What sultry weather 'tis for June!
 I fear I soon should be a used-up coon.
 Where is my love, the beauteous Oceana?
 She cuts me in a most peculiar manner.
 But that the thing's impossible, I'd say
 There's probably a rival in the way.
 It is not in the cards for me to fail.
 Who could resist *cette magnifique coup d'oeil*?

Enter Oceana

Comment vous portez-vous ce jour, ma chere?
Je suis ravi de vous voir, by gar!

Oce. Don't talk your foreign gibberish to me.
 Fitz. Don't call it gibberish, *ma belle amie*;
 'Tis French, *ma chere*, a pretty tongue, and gay,
La langue du coeur, l'amour, et liberte.
 Oce. I don't know what you say. Give over, do.⁴⁹

Fitzfaddle's hilarious portrait seems to have sprung from the fashionable culture of mid-nineteenth-century American society and his foreignness acquires class dimensions as it appears to be the product of the new behavioral codes of a fairly prosperous middle class. Brougham's satire of the affectations, of the Americans' obsession with fashionable behavior and manners as an index of social status echoes his criticism of the emerging ideology of respectability imposed by the new market-oriented bourgeoisie. Anything reminiscent of England and the foreign tastes and manners of an American elite is properly parodied in the play to provoke the cheers and applause of the audience. For example, Tapiokee's last-minute rescue from the whites' attack by an enraged Metamora ends with the hilarious refinement of the dialogue between husband and wife:

Tap. Worn up with fatigue the Pollywog must be.
 Shall Tapiokee make a cup of tea?
 Met. No, my love, no; my nerves are too refined;
 They cannot bear excitement of that kind.⁵⁰

*Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage*⁵¹

In his later work, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage*, a two-act musical play, Brougham continues to parody the emerging social and cultural hierarchies in the American society of the time as he explores the comic potential of another type of Indian that formed an essential part of the mythic structure of America. It is the legendary figure of Pocahontas, the famous Indian Princess who willingly renounced her own people and culture, converted to Christianity, and married the English colonizer. The Pocahontas story that so engaged the national imagination of the Americans and that has received various reinscriptions as a colonial fantasy, added a romantic note to the incident of the colonial encounter and the eventual submission of the Indians to the whites' colonizing/"civilizing" power. The half-historic, half-legendary Pocahontas narrative found dramatic expression in a number of early nineteenth-century American plays, which offered a highly melodramatic perspective of Pocahontas' rescue of John Smith from the brink of execution and her marriage to John Rolfe. Plays like James Nelson Barker's *The Indian Princess* (1808) and George Washington Parke Custis' *Pocahontas; or, The Settlers of Virginia* (1830) revolved around a naïve romantic plot, concerned primarily with love, adventure, and marriage, rather than the historical details of the colonial encounter.⁵² In *The Indian Princess*, captain John Smith's account of his brief captivity by the Powhatan Indians and his subsequent rescue by Princess Pocahontas was turned into one of the most romanticized episodes of America's colonial history, while the success of Custis' play was mainly due to the spectacular illusionism of certain scenes which greatly enhanced the melodramatic treatment of the romantic love of Rolfe and Pocahontas. The melodramatic elements of the Pocahontas plays effectively obscured the historical reality of the colonial conquest and contributed to the construction of the image of Pocahontas as the most popular foundational myth of the new nation. Through their romantic love plot and spectacular stage effects,⁵³ these plays provided the terms of a flexible discourse that centered around such broad issues as miscegenation, racial conflict, and colonial expansion, but avoided any form of social criticism.

Brougham's burlesque cuts deep into this theatrical tradition and is exactly what it presents itself to be: "a Per-Version of Ye Trewe and Wonderrefulle Hystorie of Ye Rennowned Princesse."⁵⁴ The blatant neglect of historical accuracy that characterized the dramatic versions of the Pocahontas story is humorously redressed by Brougham as he provides the minutest possible details of the specific incident in the Prolegomena:

The deeply interesting incident upon which the Drama is founded, occurred in Virginia, on Wednesday, Oct. 12, A.D. 1607, at twenty-six minutes past 4 in the afternoon.⁵⁵

In the "Song of Pocahontas," that follows his Prolegomena, Brougham, with his familiar satirical style, parodies Longfellow's poem *The Song of Hiawatha*,

which was published in the same year, but more importantly, gives a masterly account of the troubling aspects of conquest: violence, greed, and dispossession. Screened through the filters of humor and irony, Brougham's extensive commentary undermines the basic concepts of colonial discourse according to which the encounter between Europeans and Natives is marked by the notion of white supremacy suggesting the peculiar tensions of racial difference and the idea that the Indians as racially inferior, savage, and child-like are in need of radical readjustment to the "civilized" life of the dominant white culture:

Now the natives knowing nothing
Of the benefits intended
By this foreign congregation,
Who had come so far to show them
All how much they'd been mistaken;
In what darkness they were dwelling,
And how much obliged they were to
These disinterested people,
Who had journeyed to enlighten
Their unfortunate condition,
Through these potent triunited
Anglo-Saxon civiliziers,
Rum, Gunpowder, and Religion.⁵⁶

In the white American imagination, Pocahontas' submission and eventual assimilation comes to stand for the possibility of the Europeans' actually fulfilling their explicit hopes for commercial, religious, and political gains. In Brougham's burlesque, the personal gains that followed as a direct consequence of colonial expansion are not at all underestimated. As Smith reveals to the King, they were carried to these shores only by the prospect of violently acquiring wealth and gold:

King. What *iron* fortune *led* you to our shores?
Smith. *Ironic* Monarch, 'twas a pair of *oars*.
 Between ourselves, though, if the truth be told,
 Our *goal* we'll reach when we have reached your
 gold.
 My very noble and approved good savage,
 That we are come out here your lands to ravage,
 It is most true: for this you see us banded.⁵⁷

Brougham frames his criticism of the imperialistic practices of the Americans with some of his most pointed satire. In his play, he manages to capture the paradox of the "empty lands," that Anne McClintock has so eloquently referred to,⁵⁸ as well as the tension and ambivalence that surrounded the emerging concept

of “Americanness” resulting from the transition of American society from the state of colonized community to that of colonizing empire, appropriating new lands and displacing the already existing inhabitants:

King. Conquering lands without a single resident,
Such a *Republic*’s clearly without *precedent!*⁵⁹

As with *Met-a-mora*, Brougham’s *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas* moves toward the deconstruction of the mythical parameters of a national symbol. The whole play is structured around the de-mythologization of the ideological function of Pocahontas as the nation’s privileged point of origin. A number of scholars have explored the woman/land analogy and the symbolic equation of the female body with the newly-found land. Annette Kolodny, in her landmark study, *The Lay of the Land*, has elaborated on “what is probably America’s oldest and most cherished fantasy: a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine.”⁶⁰ Also, Mary Louise Pratt has used the term “transculturation” to describe the process of inter-cultural negotiation and selection that is a constant feature of what she calls the “contact zone where disparate cultures meet, clash, grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”⁶¹ This “contact zone,” or liminal space where cultural change and exchange takes place can be identified with the body of Pocahontas. It is her body that is inscribed with the dominant ideology, that smoothes over the nuances, the tensions and complexities of the colonial encounter. In this woman/land equation, where colonial and sexual relationships become analogous to each other, the fear of what Freud has called “the dark continent” is sufficiently curtailed as the image of Pocahontas is properly cleansed of almost all traces of savagery and uncontrollable sexuality. This representation of Pocahontas is designed to bridge the irreconcilable differences between “self” and “other,” in order to open up the way for the ensuing national/cultural miscegenation.

By turning the Pocahontas story upside-down, Brougham manages to expose the emptiness of the romanticized version of the encounter between Pocahontas and the English colonizers, Smith and Rolfe, and the American playwrights’ license to distort the facts in any way they pleased. At the same time, he breaks the ideological coherence of the body of Pocahontas as a unified national symbol of a mythical origin and “disperses” it within the context of a multi-cultural American society. In his own most incisive way, Brougham probes into the American society of the 1850s and brings its essentially diverse nature into the legend of Pocahontas in an Indian play that constitutes a most interesting pastiche of popular culture elements, contemporary social issues, racial attitudes, and ethnic peculiarities. Brougham’s use of music is extensive and covers a wide range of styles from duets and quartettes to arias and cantatas.⁶² Popular songs like “Widow Machree” and “Pop Goes the Soda” are given new lyrics that convey Brougham’s satiric purposes. Furthermore, the play contains all the

diverse elements of minstrel-show entertainment, relying on minstrelsy's comic wordplay, topical humor, and pointed satire.⁶³ As in minstrel shows, Brougham's burlesque of the fashionable upper-class dramatic styles is directed against European imported traditions and the highly-paid artists who performed in the United States. He draws a distinctive line separating the high culture of foreign drama from the low culture of popular theatre which he invites his working-class spectators to attend in order to see their own world dramatized on stage:

Now all you nice folks as are fond of a play,
And like to be amused in a sensible way,
Don't you be deluded by fashion's sheep-bell,
But come *here* where our language you understand well.⁶⁴

For Brougham's audience, making fun of foreign tastes and performers was an entertaining way to divert attention from a class-bound sense of cultural inferiority. In the play, the vibrant combination of popular culture elements, which led to the ridicule of European cultural products and the fashionable tastes of an emerging middle class, sustained a pervasive feeling that an indigenous national culture was being made from the diverse American urban landscape. Brougham's parody of the manners, style, and dramatic preferences of a fashionable middle class framed the psychological distancing of the play's working-class spectators from those in positions of social power and economic security into a consolidating sense of a distinct social and cultural identity.

Po-Ca-Hon-Tas draws heavily on the essentially heterogeneous picture of the American society of the time where an interesting conglomeration of social and ethnic types provided ample material for comedy and satire. Brougham handles with tremendous ease the comic potential of the popular representations of such ethnic types like the Irish and the Dutch. For example, the second song of the play, set to the tune of "Widow Machree," is sung with the famous Irish brogue, while John Rolfe is turned into a most comic Dutch stereotype who speaks with a characteristically strong accent and delivers a most hilarious Cantata:

Oh peutivol girl,
Mein brave Indian bearl,
Love runs like a squirrel
 Meine heart up and down
Oh don't look so freezy,
Uneezy and breezy,
Meine vrow you must be see
 In spite of your vrown.⁶⁵

An "outsider" himself, an Irish immigrant who arrived in the United States at a time when the nation was facing one of the most pressing instances of the imperative to maintain political and cultural stability in the face of racial and

ethnic diversity,⁶⁶ Brougham quickly sensed the American society's tendency to promote a political discourse that smoothed over the rough edges of an essentially capitalist, multiethnic context with an insistence on America's romantic promise for equal opportunities for all.⁶⁷ American society in the 1840s and 1850s was witnessing what Matthew Jacobson has termed a "fracturing of monolithic whiteness" that eventually led to the increasing hierarchical ordering of American society as well as to the more crucial distinction between "white" and "Anglo-Saxon."⁶⁸ Although from early in American history, cultural and racial pluralism had been a reality, as the nineteenth century progressed, ethnic diversity along with the new economic conditions and social hierarchies became a more complex phenomenon, more immediate and undeniable.

The members of Brougham's audience witnessed the increasing stratification and spatialization of their society and recognized—though not entirely comprehending—an essential paradox: on the one hand, the inevitable mobility and fluidity of a rapidly changing market society, and, on the other, the rigid cultural boundaries that distinguished among social classes and ethnic groups. They were also caught in the middle of the more general discrepancy between the ideology of republicanism, which prompted Americans to view themselves as a people committed to the communal well-being of a democratic society, and the ideology of liberal individualism that encouraged aggressive, materialistic behavior as the only way to secure advancement in an increasingly fragmented and competitive society.

In the play, what becomes evident is Brougham's criticism of the market-oriented cultural standards of the new bourgeoisie that relied on hard work, perseverance, and temperance in the hope of achieving self-made success in an increasingly capitalist society. Through his parody of contemporary social issues,⁶⁹ Brougham touches upon the wider industrial morality and the ideology of respectability of the emerging middle class which forged the class conflicts of American society and inevitably led to the segregation and differentiation among social and ethnic groups. The new museum theatres, like P. T. Barnum's American Museum, and the preference for moral-reform plays and sensation melodramas attested to this differentiation and reflected the middle-class' overwhelming need to feel secure within their own social and cultural boundaries where they could set the standards for a new concept of honor and public morality that rewarded men with social distinction and economic success and women with social approbation for virtuous behavior.⁷⁰ In Brougham's burlesque, there is an explicit parody of the melodramatic conventions of the middle-class' favorite moral-reform plays. The scene of Smith's rescue by Pocahontas is so humorously presented that any sense and effect of the melodramatic aesthetic that surrounded the supposed dignity of her action disappear and give their place to what must have been roars of laughter:

- Smith. It's a hard pill—but a much harder pillow!
 [*Reclining. Pocahontas rushing in heroineically
 distressed and dishevelled, followed by sailors.*]
- Poca. Husband! For thee I *scream!*
- Smith. *Lemon or Vanilla?*

Brougham also satirizes the middle-class women's growing gender awareness and their increasing participation in the male public sphere of activity in the name of morality and social virtue. Women's militancy against social evils, such as alcoholism and prostitution, as well as their struggle for equal social and political rights⁷¹ is blown out of proportion with the presence of the "Anti-marry-folks-against-their-will-society"⁷² of Indian women who identify themselves as "gladiators" in their aggression and determination to save Pocahontas from an unwanted marriage.

For Brougham's audience, the middle-class standards of emotional control and composed manners are sharply juxtaposed to their own distinct vision of democratic behavior that associated coarseness with a new interpretation of republicanism and celebrated community solidarity, honor and manly independence.⁷³ His working-class spectators find much to applaud in *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas*, a play that reflects their own social and cultural reality. And, it is this reality that Brougham wants to emphasize in an attempt to break any illusory sense of social and cultural unity and homogeneity in mid-nineteenth-century urban America. The image of the Indian is transferred onto the diverse urban American society of the time thus blending the essential ambivalence surrounding the Indian presence as too alien to become part of the American reality but crucial in embodying the potential of the new continent itself with the major contradiction in the American political ideology which, on the one hand, promised assimilation and mobility for all social and ethnic groups, while, on the other, forcefully asserted a distinctly monocultural sense of an American identity that was always conceived to be at a point of profound crisis.

Notes

1. Both burlesques proved immensely successful. Even ten years after *Met-a-mora*'s initial production, the reviewer for the *Spirit of the Times*, Sept. 20, 1857 enthusiastically noted that it was "full of life, fun, local and pointed hits at men, manners, customs and the passing topics of the day." He also praised Brougham's parody of Forrest's acting who "gives a delicious and life-like imitation of the eminent tragedian, which provokes shouts of laughter." Furthermore, according to Richard Moody, Brougham's later Indian burlesque *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas* continued to be played in American theatres until 1884. Richard Moody (ed.), *Dramas from the American Theatre, 1762-1909* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969) 401. Finally, Bruce A. McConachie has pointed out that the number of performances of plays by specific authors in all Philadelphia theatres in the period between 1856 and 1878 indicates that Brougham's burlesques ranked among the most popular plays of the time as they enjoyed a total of 829 performances. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 241, 242.

2. *Met-a-mora* and *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas* are totally American in material and tone, and deal with issues, personalities and behaviors from the American social and cultural landscape. Furthermore, the extensive use of music in these pieces, especially in *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas*, set to the tune of popular American songs, contributed significantly to the development of the American musical.

3. Once in America, Brougham became famous immediately for acting principally in Irish character roles. He appeared at several theatres in the country, became stage manager at Burton's Chambers Street Theatre (1848), briefly managed Brougham's Broadway Lyceum Theatre (1850-2) and the old Bowery (1856-7), and was employed as actor-playwright at Wallack's for several seasons. The critics of the time immediately praised him as a "lively actor" who "never fails to bring out the rollicking fun and humor of the character which he represents." "The Drama," *The Knickerbocker* XX (Nov. 1842), 493. He quickly distinguished himself as playwright of satiric comedy. According to Walter J. Meserve, "farce and burlesque were areas of expertise in which he revealed an inexhaustible supply of wit and a tongue that matched the sharp fancy of his mind." Meserve, *Heralds of Promise: The Drama of the American People in the Age of Jackson, 1829-1849* (New York: Greenwood, 1986) 161. Perhaps it is not accidental that most, if not all, American theatre historians have cited Laurence Hutton's famous statement that "if America has ever had an Aristophanes, John Brougham was his name" (64). Hutton's most enthusiastic praise of Brougham's work concludes his account on the American burlesque with the words: "if American burlesque did not die with John Brougham, it has hardly yet recovered from the shock of his death" (74). Hutton, "The American Burlesque," *Harper's Magazine* 81 (June 1890): 59-74.

4. Before coming to America, Brougham had spent twelve years in the company of Mme. Vestris in London, a popular light comedienne, who staged primarily burlesques and extravaganzas written by the resident playwright for the troupe, J.R. Planche. After studying Plache's works, Brougham began writing his own burlesques in 1840. Among his most popular burlesques and extravaganzas that appeared on the American stage were *Met-a-mora; or, The Last of the Pollywogs* (1847), *A Row at the Lyceum; or, Green Room Secrets* (1851), *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage* (1855), *Columbus el Filibustero: A New and Audaciously Original Historico-Plagaristic, Ante-national, Pre-patriotic, Omni-local, and Comic Confusion of Circumstances Running Through Two Acts and Four Centuries* (1857). He also wrote plays that offered a satiric view of contemporary social life while following the melodramatic aesthetic, like *The Game of Life*, an original comedy in five acts (1853), *Life in New York: Tom and Jerry on a Visit*, a comic drama in two acts (1856), *Temptation; or, The Irish Immigrant*, a comic drama in two acts (1856).

5. According to Constance Rourke, through the 1840s and 1850s, "the legitimate theatre came to a standstill; [. . .] a vigorous burlesque had usurped the stage turning the serious drama upside down." Rourke, *American Humor* (New York: Harcourt, 1931), 129.

6. The fashion for American burlesque began in 1839 when William Mitchell took over management of New York's Olympic Theatre and delighted his mostly working-class audiences with light comic entertainment and burlesques of plays, stories, novels, even ballet. One of his earliest and most popular burlesques took on New York fashionable society's craze for romantic ballet. Based upon *La Tarantula*, performed by Fanny Ellsler at the Park Theatre in May 1840, Mitchell presented his own comic burlesque ballet, titled *La Mosquito*, in which he made his first appearance as "*une Première Danseuse*, and show[ed] his agility in a variety of terpsichorean efforts of all sorts in the genuine Bolero-cachucacavonienne style" (Hutton, "American Burlesque," 62). Such was the appeal of burlesque to American audiences in the 1840s that, despite the economic problems faced by many theatres during the depression years that followed the panic of 1837, Mitchell's Olympic Theatre was the "only one that prospered." Mary C. Henderson, *The City and the Theatre* (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White, 1973) 79. When Mitchell's Olympic Theatre closed in 1850, another successful actor and theatre-manager, William E. Burton, followed in his footsteps. Burton took over Palmo's Opera House, a small theatre on Chambers Street, which he renamed as Burton's Chambers Street Theatre. He delighted his audiences as actor in memorable comic roles and as manager with farces, burlesques and light comedy. Burton's theatre operated successfully without visiting stars but with such company members as Henry Placide, Lester Wallack, and John Brougham, who wrote several pieces for Burton. Laurence Hutton talks about "the humorous productions and the laughable performances of Burton and Brougham, [. . .] their impromptu wits, their unexpected gags" (63).

7. Burlesque thrived on the American stage at about the same time with minstrelsy. A number of scholars have drawn connecting lines between minstrel shows and burlesque. William J. Mahar, for example, argues that "minstrelsy's success owed as much to the burlesque creations produced by Mitchell and Burton as to depictions of plantation life or mimicry of African Americans living in northern urban centers." Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 11. Raymond Knapp also contends that "besides indulging tastes for comic exaggeration, mockery of high culture, and cross-dressing, burlesque resembled minstrelsy in its obsessive use of puns, malapropisms, and other comic wordplay, and in its reliance on topical humor." Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 61.

8. According to Henderson, "the Bowery Theatre acted as a magnet for theatrical entrepreneurs, to whom the theatre's fall from fashion meant very little. What they saw was a large local population of small means but seemingly unquenchable appetite for musical and variety shows, melodramas and spectacles" (*The City and the Theatre*, 65).

9. *Ibid.*, 69.

10. Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 207.

11. Bruce McConachie has eloquently traced the gradual legitimization of middle-class cultural hegemony to the emerging concept of respectability that placed class relations within a framework of new rules of etiquette and decorum (*Melodramatic Formations*, 198). Also, in the words of Richard Butsch, respectability "may well have been stimulated as a symbolic barrier, a backlash to the rising tide of working-class republicanism in the Jacksonian era." Butsch, "Bowery B'hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theatre Audiences," *American Quarterly* 46 (September 1994): 374-405, 385.

12. The popularity of burlesque marked the growing distance between "high" and "low" culture and reflected the emerging "subculture" of the American working class that promoted a "coarse" version of republicanism and social progress and relied upon a kind of plebeian heroism and class solidarity. During the hard times of the late 1830s and early 1840s, working-class audiences began to demand more spectacle and characters they could more easily identify with, which the Bowery provided, especially with Louisa Medina's tempestuous melodramas. Although the characters in plays like Medina's *Nick of the Woods* (1838) and Jones' *The Carpenter of Rouen* (1837), for example, bear some similarities with Forrest's heroes in their adherence to republican values, they differ in that their portrayal reflects less ideological ambiguity as they rely much less on the generalized rhetoric of political independence and focus on personal trials of honor. These characters appeal to a working-class mentality and culture through their background and their fight against class oppression and economic antagonism.

13. It is worth mentioning that minstrel shows, which became popular at about the same time, had a similar impact on their working-class spectators. By depicting "happy" slaves and encouraging racist prejudices, these minstrel shows played out nostalgia for pre-industrial times and displaced their audience's anxieties over unemployment onto contempt for blacks in the "Old South," thus consolidating their identity as "whites." For more information, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

14. Burlesque in America existed long before Lydia Thompson and her controversial female troupe of "British Blondes" transformed it into a purely feminine spectacle with elaborate stage effects in 1868. The American burlesque tradition begins in 1750 when John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, "written in ridicule of the musical Italian drama," was produced in New York (Hutton, "American Burlesque," 60). Before the Revolution, David Douglass' "American Company" presented Fielding's *Tom Thumb*; or, *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, while in 1828 John Poole's travesty of *Hamlet* ushered the way for what Hutton has called "the legitimate burlesque" in the United States ("American Burlesque," 61). With John Brougham, American burlesque developed a more thematically focused style that extended from punning verbal humor to social criticism.

15. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 87.

16. Bearing in mind Jeffrey D. Mason's statement that theatre is "an intricate and reflexive exercise in cultural self-definition," I have tried to embark on an examination of Brougham's Indian burlesques not only as an index of some of the most popular theatrical entertainment that was enjoyed and supported by the American audiences of the time, but also as a reliable register of the social, political, and cultural context of mid-nineteenth-century American society. Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 2. In this paper, it will be argued that the thematic concerns and the satire in Brougham's Indian burlesques move on a diversity of levels. More specifically, the plays' parody is directed against 1) the mythologizing of the Indian as Noble-Savage and as a point of mythic origin for the American nation, 2) Forrest's stilted acting style and his preference for heroic roles that enhanced his "democratic" public image, 3) Stone's dramatic discourse that encouraged a vague nationalist rhetoric, 4) the general tendency of the political ideology of the time to refuse to acknowledge the reality of an increasingly diverse and essentially stratified American society.

17. Alexander Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology," *Locating American Studies*, ed. Lucy Maddox (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 114-39, 128. Reprint from *American Quarterly* 27 (March 1995): 3-28.

18. Edward Said distinguishes between beginning and origin in order to show that part of the Americans' nationalist project was to turn the nation's historical beginning into a myth of "divine," "privileged" origin. Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), xiii.

19. Although as early as 1958, Constance Rourke had pointed out that *Met-a-mora* "struck not principally at Stone's play but at the false romanticism of American sentiment for the Indian" (*American Humor*, 104), most scholars and theatre historians consistently focused on Brougham's parody of the stylistic devices of Stone's play.

20. John Brougham, *Met-a-mora; or, The Last of the Pollywogs* (Boston: H.W. Swett, 1859), 3.

21. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

22. Stone, *Metamora*, I, i. John Augustus Stone, *Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags*, in *Metamora and Other Plays*, ed. Eugene R. Page (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941).

23. *Ibid.*, 10.

24. *Ibid.*, 11.

25. The prevailing rhetoric of assimilation and exclusion, or to use Lucy Maddox's words, the discourse over the great dilemma of "civilization" or "extinction," stressed the denial of racial difference in favor of homogeneity as the best means of guaranteeing democracy and equality in American society. Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). In the Founding Fathers' vision of the new nation there seems to have been no room for cultural pluralism. John Quincy Adams declared in 1811 that the new continent was "destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs" (quoted in Drinnon, 235), while Thomas Jefferson, who encouraged the displacement of Native Americans and associated liberty and prosperity with territorial expansion and the acquisition of new lands in the West, seems to have been wondering in his Second Inaugural Address whether it was not "better that the opposite bank of the Mississippi should be settled by our own brethren and children than by strangers of another family?" (quoted in Burstein, 113). Andrew Burstein, *Sentimental Democracy: The Evolution of America's Romantic Self-Image* (New York: Hill, 1999); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* (New York: Schocken, 1990).

26. Bearing in mind Benedict Anderson's statement that "if nation-states are widely conceded to be new and historical, the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of the immemorial past and, still more important, glide into a limitless future," it becomes easy to understand the white Americans' need to ground their national history in an Indian background. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 11-12.

27. Anthony Pagden, "Shifting Antinomies: European Representations of the American Indian Since Columbus," *Visions of America Since 1492*, ed. Deborah L. Madsen (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 28.

28. This idea of American Indians as a national legacy providing the new nation with a sense of mythical origins—but far from engaging the reality of the Indians' place in American culture—was soon incorporated into the nineteenth-century literary and dramatic works. From James Fenimore Cooper's frontier novels to Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok* (1824) and Catherine Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827), and from the first American play on an Indian theme, Major Robert Rogers' *Ponteach; or, The Savages of America* (1766), to the most successful *Metamora* (1829) and the *Pocahontas* series, there seems to have been an explicit tendency to use—or rather misrepresent—the Indians in order to establish a sense of national heritage and identity in the face of the nation's own complex and conflicted relationship to its past. For a most detailed account of the significance of myths in the conception of America and the formation of a unique national character, see Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (orig. 1973; New York: Harper Perennial, 1996).

29. In their effort to reconstruct their national self-image, post-revolutionary Americans used the raw material offered by the new land to formulate their myths and cultural stereotypes. The Indians, as the natural inhabitants of America's new Eden began to be used in a literary sense to symbolize liberated existence and attachment to pristine nature. Paradoxically enough, as Philip J. Deloria has argued, "the contradictions embedded in noble savagery have themselves been the precondition for the formation of American identities." Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4.

30. This seems to have been a general tendency in the new nation's effort to construct an essentially white Anglo-Saxon identity of the desirable American. Alexis de Tocqueville, in his famous *Democracy in America* (1848), repeatedly used the ethnic label "Anglo-Americans" to refer to the "English race in America." Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1848, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper Perennial, 1988), 31-49. Historian Barbara Solomon explains that "in the process of solving American problems, the native conception of democratic society became somewhat Anglicized. The country which had received all the European nationalities, as well as the Chinese, Japanese, and Negroes, was offered another higher image of the American: Anglo-Saxon in coloring, lineaments, and physique; Protestant in religion; masterly in nation-building." Barbara M. Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 207. John Carlos Rowe has also argued that "from the moment the original colonies defined themselves as a nation, there was an imperial project to restrict the meaning of the American by demonizing foreigners, in part by identifying them with the 'savagery' ascribed to Native and African Americans." Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

31. Timothy Powell, in his interesting book on *Ruthless Democracy*, has called the new nation's persistent denial and deep-seated fears of its own inextricably multicultural identity "a peculiar kind of 'American' psychosis" that eventually gave way to "the white cultural backlash of fear and racism." Timothy B. Powell, *Ruthless Democracy: A Multicultural Interpretation of the American*

Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3. Ironically enough, this persistent tendency toward cultural exclusion became justified within the context of the regenerative powers attributed to American republicanism. Robert E. Shalhope speaks of a "blind egocentrism, a faith in republicanism's ability to regenerate all under its purview" that impelled Americans unwittingly to destroy other cultures. Shalhope, *The Roots of Democracy: American Thought and Culture, 1760-1800* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 130.

32. Produced in 1829, almost a year before Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act (1830), Stone's play revolved around the ideological dilemma of the American society of the time that wavered between the political decisions of Indian assimilation and Indian elimination.

33. Brougham, *Met-a-mora*, 7.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 6.

36. *Ibid.*, 11

37. Forrest's immense popularity was mainly because the American public readily identified him with the characters he chose to play. The republican sentiments that *Metamora*, *Spartacus*, and *Jack Cade* voiced were quickly translated into an idealized image of Forrest's own "Americanness" and his power, like another Andrew Jackson, to fight for the people's right to republican equality and liberal progress. Such was Forrest's impact on the American public that his fans violently chased the English star William Charles Macready off the American stage in order to vindicate their hero's honor and safeguard his image as the symbol of American honorable masculinity against the representative of European aristocracy. Following Forrest's own insult at Macready when he hissed him in Edinburgh in 1845, Forrest's supporters violently disrupted Macready's opening performance at the Astor Place Opera House in 1849 instigating a riot that led to the death of at least 22 people.

38. As Bruce A. McConachie has pointed out, "the elite aside, a demographic profile of Forrest's audience in the Northeast would include nearly all other social and economic groups of theatergoers." And, he continues adding that "by the mid-1830s Forrest was already attracting significant numbers of working-class fans in New York. He played as often at the Bowery as at the Park; and even when performing at the higher-priced Park Theatre, Forrest drew workers there to watch him, as is evident from elite comments on their loss of control to "the people" at that theatre and elsewhere" (*Melodramatic Formations*, 92).

39. Stone, *Metamora*, I, i.

40. Theatre historian Bruce McConachie has explored the significance of *Metamora* as the embodiment of nineteenth-century ideals of American character and the various contradictions such an embodiment raises. In a most interesting analysis, McConachie points out that the play's essential contradictions stemmed from a series of binaries between republican and liberal values, democratic equality and charismatic authority, history and utopia, and eventually contends that the ideological contradictions of his representation are subsumed in his ability to produce a "generalized patriotic ritual" (*Melodramatic Formations*, 116).

41. Stone, *Metamora*, V, iii.

42. Both self-made men with agrarian roots, Jackson and Forrest were worshipped by the American public as symbols of the American values of simplicity, virtue, and independence, as appealing directly to the people's principles and vindicating their democratic rights. According to Bruce A. McConachie, "the image of heroism perceived by Forrest's fans was the same image seen in Andrew Jackson by worshipful Democrats" (*Melodramatic Formations*, 88).

43. Stone, *Metamora*, III, ii.

44. *Ibid.*, 15.

45. *Ibid.*, 18.

46. In his widely acclaimed work on the creation and spread of nationalism, Benedict Anderson contends that nation is "imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (*Imagined Communities*, 7). The creation of the American nation and the spread of American nationalism in the late-18th century relied heavily upon a homogenizing social philosophy that rhetorically united all citizens in the promotion and demonstration of civic virtue. As early as 1790, the need to define themselves against racial and ethnic "others" led to the enactment of the Naturalization Law by the Federalist government of the nation. Eight years later, in 1798, the Alien and Sedition Acts confirmed the nativist exclusiveness of the American society of the time and the rigid boundaries of the American political identity. According to Ben-Atar and Oberg, the Alien and Sedition Acts "reflected the Federalists' growing fear over their shrinking authority in an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse society." Doron Ben-Atar and Barbara B. Oberg (eds.), *Federalists Reconsidered* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 4.

47. Historian Robert E. Shalhope has eloquently observed that, "ironically, eighteenth-century republican traditions formed a fertile seedbed within which nineteenth-century liberal commitments to possessive individualism, a competitive ethos, and economically self-interested politics would flourish" (*The Roots of Democracy*, 167).

48. For example, the reality of the whites' practice of intoxicating Indians with rum and whiskey is given local allusions and a social-class dimension. The members of Brougham's audience recognize their familiar urban places :

- Tar. Splice my old pumps, you really take it cool!
Weigh anchor and sheer off, you tarnal fool!
There's a whole crowd of whites a-bearing down,
Scouring each Indian settlement and town;
They're steering here on your very track!
- Met. The Pollywog will never turn his back,
Say, where is Whiskee Toddi, skilled in talk?
- Tar. Gone in the lager bier line in New York (Brougham, *Met-a-mora*, 8).

49. *Ibid.*, 12.

50. *Ibid.*, 14.

51. John Brougham, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage* (New York: Samuel French, 1855).

52. Years later, in 1848, Charlotte Barnes wrote *The Forest Princess*, a play not as vigorous as the previous ones in terms of melodramatic aesthetic, but which presented another version of the well-known story insisting on historical accuracy.

53. The American audiences of the time watched breathlessly the most spectacular scene of the play where Pocahontas struggling with the waves warned the English against the Indians' impending attack:

(*A flash of lightning*) Ha! A storm is brewing, and how will these little hands, us'd only to guide the canoe in sportive race on a smooth and glassy surface, wage its struggling way, when raging billows uprear their foamy crests? Brave English, gallant, courteous Rolfe. (*Thunder*) Night comes on apace—Oh, night of horror! (*Clasps her hands and looks up to heaven as if in prayer*) Thank thee, good Spirit; I feel thy holy influence on my heart. English Rolfe I will save thee, or Pocahontas be no more (Brougham, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas*, II, vi).

54. Brougham, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas*, 1.

55. *Ibid.*, 3.

56. *Ibid.*, 3-4.

57. *Ibid.*, 9, 10.

58. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

59. *Ibid.*, 8.

60. Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 4.

61. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 137.

62. Rita M. Plotnicki states that "there are twenty-one different songs, in the seventeen page script" (426). Plotnicki, "John Brougham: The Aristophanes of American Burlesque," *Journal of Popular Culture* 12 (1978): 422-31.

63. According to Richard Moody, "the beginning of the first scene in the play reads like the opening routine of a minstrel performance: The Warriors of the Court of Tuscarora enter and sing the praises of their King. When they have finished, Powhatan congratulates them in a speech that bears a strong resemblance to the opening addresses of the interlocutors." Moody, *America Takes the Stage* (Millwood, NY: Kraus, 1977).

64. *Ibid.*, 14.

65. Brougham, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas*, 22.

66. Especially after the 1830s and during the potato famine years, Irish immigrants constituted the "first ethnic minority" in America, laying the foundations for the ethnic question by disrupting the pervasive sense of homogeneity of an essentially "Anglo-American" resident population. Lawrence McCaffrey refers to them as the "pioneers of the American urban ghetto" (164). David R. Roediger, in his seminal study on white working-class racism in America, refers to the ready identification of Irishness and Blackness" (133). And, in his book on *How the Irish Became White*, Noel Ignatiev explores the Irish immigrants internalization of their racial difference and their conscious attempts, on the one hand, to distinguish themselves from the African-Americans and, on the other, to emphasize their identity as white Americans. This idea coupled with Orlando Patterson's rather extreme remark that "no 'white' person in his right mind considered the Irish 'white' up to as late as the 1920s," mark the position of the Irish on the periphery of the American political identity and racial ideology. Furthermore, the emergence of the pseudo-sciences of phrenology and physiognomy

contributed significantly to the representation of the Irish as inferior aliens, as they legitimized the application of "'race' to white ethnic groups and helped make it commonplace to connect particular physical characteristics with behavior/condition/character matrices" (Knobel 105). Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Dale T. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1986); Lawrence McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992); Orlando Patterson, *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's "Racial" Crisis* (Washington, DC: Civitas/Counterpoint, 1997); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (London: Verso, 1991).

67. Idealizing the all-inclusive rhetoric of the Revolution and enshrining republican values did not solve the tensions and uncertainties arising from societal, cultural, and economic transformations. The impetus for a feeling of unity or consensus among Americans seems to have arisen as a response to the inherent paradox in the political discourse of republicanism in which its viability was essentially threatened by the misuse or overuse of the ideals it celebrated, while its success could be undermined by the people it supposedly welcomed and who aspired to share its utopian vision of a unified, homogeneous, egalitarian society. As Werner Sollors has argued, "though the revolutionary ideals of *égalité* or the Declaration of Independence provided the popular slogans for the termination of aristocratic systems, new hierarchies immediately emerged, often in the name of ethnicity." Werner, Sollors (ed.), *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), xii.

68. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 41.

69. Contemporary social issues, such as the Tammany Hall graft and corruption and the fluctuating price of the Erie railroad stock, as well as the emerging social movements like the Temperance movement, which encouraged moderation and self-control, do not escape Brougham's attention.

70. For example, P. T. Barnum's museum theatre attracted primarily middle-class audiences and encouraged family attendance as it excluded prostitutes and liquor in an attempt to offer a more "respectable" form of entertainment. Also, moral-reform plays like William H. Smith's *The Drunkard* (1844) and George L. Aiken's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) appealed to the new middle-class mentality of moderation and perseverance.

71. Pocahontas' filial disobedience—contrary to melodramatic convention—is accompanied by a direct reference to one of the most well-known female reformers of the day, Mrs. Beecher Stowe (Brougham, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas*, 21).

72. *Ibid.*, 30.

73. If the "legitimate" theatre of the time promoted a set of values that depended on restraint and moderation, popular entertainment cultivated a sort of riotous egalitarianism. This explains the immense popularity of Benjamin A. Baker's *A Glance at New York* (1848), who introduced Mose "the fire b'hoy," a heroic fire fighter, a boaster and brawler. Mose instantly caught the public fancy with his style, language, mannerisms and outrageous behavior. As a "true son" of Jacksonian democracy, he sprang from and appealed to the lower classes of American society, and quickly became the people's hero.



Welcome to America: Annah Lu Chenguang Miller and Emma Lin Xianglan Miller sing along with “Dancing Queen” as they watch a Swedish video of ABBA on YouTube. Courtesy of author.