

“They Preach, but Practice Not”: The Indian Prophet in Early American Drama, 1800s-1850s

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Abstract

The Indian Prophet is a stereotypical character in American plays of the first half of the nineteenth century. He systematically appears in plays featuring Native Americans ; there is a common pattern in his characterization, and this characterization differs significantly from those of other stage Indians. The Indian Prophet is invariably portrayed as “false”; he uses his spiritual influence to lead his tribesmen into a deadlock and betray them at the crucial moment. The Prophet has a historic prototype – the Indian spiritual leaders who headed native revitalization movements in the first half of the nineteenth century. Their influence at times became a major concern for the U.S. government who fought it both by force and by allegations; in this connection, a new negative stereotype of the American Indian – the Indian Prophet – appeared in the theatre. Given the fact that plays about American Indians were widely popular in the United States for about fifty years, the significance of the character becomes clear: it spread a negative message about individuals who posed a threat to the success of Euro-American colonization.

Keywords: Indian Prophet, American Indian plays, stock character, American theater

1. Introduction: American “Indian plays” and their Popularity in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

The term “Indian plays” is commonly used to name performances about American Indians written by white playwrights; it “always refers to dramas *about*, not by, Indians” (Solors, 1986, p. 104).

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The genre originated in Europe in the 1600s in connection with the early European contacts with the native population of the New World. By the first half of the nineteenth century, it was one of the hottest phenomena on the North American stage (Gaul, 2000, p. 1). There were a number of reasons for such popularity. Historically, the drama reflected the tension between Indians and whites in connection with the Indian Removal policy (Wilmeth, 1989, p. 43-44). From the literary point of view, it satisfied the demand for a unique national literature exploiting native material, including the Indian (Anderson, M. J., 1978, p. 800). Finally, the theme of the Indian was relatively easy to wield because of the famous literary tradition of the savage, the dweller of the wilderness, as opposed to the dweller of civilization. Exploiting this tradition, any hack or amateur playwright could turn out a piece with Indian characters in it and hope to find a producer (Jones, 1988, p. 85).

The term "Indian drama" was coined in the late nineteenth century, when Laurence Hutton distinguished it as one of the five types of American plays in his *Curiosities of the American Stage* (1891) (Sitton, 1962, p. 3). For about fifty years, the plays remained no more than a "curiosity." As S. H. Smith (1997) pointed out in *American Drama: The Bastard Art* (1997), one of the reasons for that was the literary historians' "prejudiced high-cultural attitude" (p. 2) according to which American Indian drama was of low literary quality and, therefore, should be ignored. Another reason was the rarity of the printed materials; many of the plays were issued in a perishable form (Quinn, 1951, p. xi) and existed as a single copy.

For the reasons mentioned above, American Indian plays became the object of literary research only in the second half of the twentieth century. Since that time, however, scholars have proved the significance of the genre in the literary history of the United States and pointed out three stereotypes of American Indians on stage (Anderson, B.J., 1978; Grose, 1979; Jones, 1988): the Noble Savage, the Indian Maiden, and the Ignoble Savage. Scholars have not yet distinguished the Indian Prophet as a separate stereotypical character; however, there is every reason to do so.

2. The "Indian Prophet" in American Indian Plays: a Pattern of Characterization

The Indian Prophet is a sacerdotal figure, a "pow-wow," "powah" or "conjurator," as he is identified in the Dramatis Personae lists. He has not been separated into a distinct category on par with the three other Indian stock characters.

If he was briefly mentioned at all, he was considered as a variation of the Ignoble Savage. However, for a number of reasons, the Indian Prophet should be discussed as yet another stock image of the Indian on stage. First, he makes a systematic appearance in the American Indian plays.² Out of approximately thirty seven extant American plays about North American Indians written in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, he figures in nine. Second, there is a common pattern in his characterization. Third, he differs significantly from the other three stage Indians, sharing at the same time some common features with them.

2.1 Egotism

The characterization of the Indian Prophet is fairly uniform. The Prophet is egotistical and inconsiderate of the other Indians' welfare. In the words of a character of one of the plays, his love, "so far from embracing all mankind, does not include even the whole Indian race, not the whole of his own tribe, nor all the members of his own family; it does not extend beyond his own miserable person" (*Tan-go'-ru-a* [1856], part III, section iv). The Prophet of Emmons's *Tecumseh; or, The Battle of the Thames* (1836) "never yet held woman to his heart—never his eye was known to fool with tears" (I, iv). Prophet Kaweshine in Stone's *Metamora* (1828) becomes a traitor to his people: for a bribe, he shows the settlers a secret path to the last Indian stronghold and is among the attackers in the scene of *Metamora's* defeat.

2.2 Aggression

The Indian Prophet is aggressive; he is prepared to wage war against all white Americans until their total extermination. Prophet Elkswatawah in Jones' *Tecumseh and the Prophet of the West* (1844) wanders "about the Tribes,/ Inciting them to war with the Pale-face" (II, i). Kaweshine in *Metamora* (1828) craves the blood of the white race which he "will drink till [he is] full" (III, ii). The Prophet in *Tecumseh; or, The Battle of the Thames* (1836) "never spared a [white] victim" (I, iv). In Barker's *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808), priest Grimosco wishes all the newcomers to be destroyed (II, i). The priest's militancy, however, is not concomitant with his personal courage. Advising the tribal chiefs in favor of the war, he keeps away from the battlefield. Prophet Elkswatawah in *Tecumseh and the Prophet of the West* (1844) will, while the battle is going on, "from his altar, view the strife, and peal forth the battle-song" (III, iv).

² See the Appendix.

The pow-wow Weerahochwee in *Tan-go'-ru-a* (1856) "would send his own people blind-fold to destruction," yet "is careful never to expose himself to danger" (Part III, section iv).

2.3 Jealousy

The Prophets are fiercely jealous towards potential rivals. Yet they seldom get into a direct confrontation with them; for the most part they act behind their backs, devising plots. In *Tan-go'-ru-a* (1856), the pow-pow Weerahoochwee is scheming to bind the chief's love for the missionary's daughter to his purposes, then break allegiance to Tangorua³ and become the sole ruler of the tribe. In Rogers' *Ponteach* (1766), an Indian conjurer agrees with a French priest to pump the Chief for his secret plans in respect to the white settlements. The stratagem of prophet Elswatawah in *Tecumseh and the Prophet of the West* (1844) is to lead the battle at Tippecanoe in Tecumseh's absence so that the chief's "giant warrior-name would then be join'd/ To that of Prophet" (III, i), and Elswatawah would become the first in the tribe. Revealed and disgraced, the Prophet contemplates another plot in revenge—he bribes the renegade Indian Winnemac to kill Tecumseh's bride Melindah.

2.4 Hypocrisy

Indian medicine men are hypocritical and cunning—they "preach, /But practice not" (*Tecumseh and the Prophet of the West* [1844], III, iii). They are also atavistic—a leftover from the earlier stages of human development, which shows in their appearance and ritual behavior. The conjuror in Rogers' *Ponteach* (1766) pretends to await a reply from the invoked deity. Having finished "smiting on his Breast, groaning, and muttering in his Cloak or Blanket," he "falls down upon the Ground, beats his Head against it, and pretends to listen; then rises, and [speaks] with a rumbling hideous Voice" (III, ii). Robert Dale Owen, avoiding any characterization of the Powah's appearance in the text of his *Pocahontas* (1838), nevertheless quotes John Smith's description of an Indian priest in the Notes to the play: "A great grim fellow, all painted over with coale, mingled with oyle, and many snakes' and weasels' skinnes, stuffed with mosse . . . with a hellish voyce, and a rattle in his hand" (215).

³ The sachem's name in the text of the play is not hyphenated.

3. Juxtaposition of the Indian Prophet to other American Indian Characters

The Indian stage characters acknowledged by scholars of American Indian drama are the Noble Savage, the Ignoble Savage, and the Indian Maiden. The Noble Savage is handsome and athletic, stoic, eloquent, courageous, and patriotic, but intractable to the European ways of living and, therefore, doomed to die. The Ignoble Savage is a fierce, cruel and bloodthirsty creature. When placed in contact with the Euro-Americans, his depravity doubled: in addition to the vices of his race, he absorbed the vices of the white people without balancing them off with their virtues. The Indian Maiden is virtuous and saintly; she is a friend of the white people, and usually a converted Christian. The Indian Prophet markedly differs in his characterization from all three of the mentioned personages.

3.1 The Indian Prophet and the Noble Savage

Like the Noble Savage, the Indian Prophet excels other tribesmen in terms of his intellect and ability to lead; at this point, however, the similarity ends. In all other respects, the Indian Prophet is what the Noble Savage is not: an egotist, a coward, and a schemer. Although the Indian Prophet is superior to other Indians, he is not isolated from them, as the Noble Savage is, for he is not alone in his ways of thinking and behavior. On the contrary, he is actively spreading his ideas among other Indians; endowed with spiritual authority and the power to lead, he is able to influence the lives of the whole Indian population of the play.

There is a considerable tension between the "upright" Indian warrior and the "crooked" Indian priest (Dowd, 1992, p. 309): the chief and the prophet view each other with suspicion. Tecumseh, while being still on brotherly terms with Prophet Elkwatawah, is always cognizant of his twin brother's double nature: "The White-Plume [Tecumseh] is a warrior,—truth he speaks;/ His brother, the calm Prophet,—he doeth preach!" (*Tan-go'-ru-a* [1856], II, i). Priest Kaweshine in *Metamora* (1828) loses the chief's trust because he interprets his vision of a dying panther as a sign of futility of the fight against the whites. However, when it is the Noble Savage who pronounces the struggle against the whites useless, he is entitled to the sympathy of the audience. King Powhatan in *The Forest Princess, or, Two Centuries Ago* (1848) lays down arms because he hears his dead father's "prophesying spirit speak/ In the low moanings of the forest trees:/ He bids me end a struggle useless now:/ The red man's portion is —decay!" (I, iii).

This decision does not make King Powhatan a fraud or a traitor because, unlike Kaweshine's, his premonition is considered to be a sign of divine interference.

3.2 The Indian Prophet and the Ignoble Savage

The nature and extent of the Prophet's influence on the tribe is the main point that distinguishes the Prophet from the Ignoble Savage. While the Indian Prophet is a sacerdotal figure endowed with spiritual authority and the power to lead, the Ignoble Savage is a mass killer undifferentiated from others of his kind who murder, mutilate, and torture. Even if he has once had considerable weight among his fellow-tribesmen, it is long gone. Prophet Elkwatawah in *Tecumseh and the Prophet of the West* (1844) is contemplated with "with awe and reverence" [I, ii] by his tribesmen; on the contrary, the Ignoble Savage Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1849) reaches the last degree of humiliation when, after having bartered away for liquors "the land of his nation" (II, ii), he was whipped "like a dog" by a white Colonel.

The Prophet is as cruel and bloodthirsty as the Ignoble Savage, and he is just as much bent on the destruction of the whole white race; yet he never blindly strikes but devises schemes for the extermination of his enemies. In *The Indian Princess, or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808), the "fiend-like priest" (III, iv) organizes a friendship banquet for the white colonists with the intention to trap and massacre them. Fickle themselves, the priests make their chiefs fickle. In Owen's *Pocahontas* (1838), Chief Powhatan is about to break his promise of kinship and land bequest to Captain Smith because his Powah (Priest) threatens him with eternal divine vengeance.

Finally, the Prophet is not "acculturated" to the white people, as some of the Ignoble Savages are. He might hypocritically display signs of friendship towards Euro-Americans, but he is never their ally or servant. Accordingly, he does not get the abuses of the Western world, notably alcoholism; he is greedy, cowardly, devious, and treacherous, but never drunk.

3.3 The Indian Prophet and the Indian Maiden

A figure that has a comparable with the Indian Prophet's degree of cultural influence among her tribe is the Indian Maiden, yet the ideas they spread are vastly dissimilar. The Indian Maiden accepts Christianity and wishes her people to convert to it so that they would become "brothers" to the Europeans.

The Indian Prophet, on the contrary, disseminates among his fellow-tribesmen the “savage superstitions” of the Indian worship, enjoying complete trust on their part. At the instigation of Prophet Elkswatawah in *Tecumseh and the Prophet of the West* (1844), his wards burn to death several Delawares as an offering to the Deity. The priest in Custis’ *Pocahontas, or The Settlers in Virginia* (1830) demands, and in all likelihood gets, the sacrifice of one hundred Indian youths for soliciting the Great Spirit’s help in the war against the invaders. Pow-wow Weerahochwee in *Tan-go’-ru-a* (1856) “send[s] his own people blind-fold to destruction” (Part III, section iv) in the Tippecanoe battle. Thus, far from working towards the reconciliation of the two races, the Prophet raises hostility towards the white people, perpetually instigating the strife between them and the natives.

4. Visions and Prophecies in Characterization of Stage American Indians

Visions, or dreams, were “the largest and most basic concept of Indian religion” (qtd in Irwin, 1994, p. 3), and the white population was well aware of that, because they are pointed out as central to the Indian worldview as far back as the earliest ethnographic records (Irwin, 1994, p. 4). The role of prophetic visions in Indian worship was of no small interest to the white audiences, perhaps because of the entrenched feelings of their own insecurity: around the turn of the eighteenth century, the United States was in a state of “social and political convulsions” (qtd in Gardner, 1998, p. 30) caused by a number of national and international events, including Britain’s hostilities and search of alliance with militant Indian tribes (Gardner, 1998, p. 31). At these threatening times, visionaries who could predict the future and thus offer a kind of emotional stability (Young, 2002, p. 273) were in large demand.

Unlike visions, which had been a part of the natives’ life even before the Europeans met them, the phenomenon of Native American prophecy appeared under direct influence of white American culture—through the acquaintance with the Bible, missionary teachings, enthusiastic conversions, and the Great Awakening “with its characteristic apocalyptic and millennial expectations” (Johnson, 1996, p. 583). Indian prophecies gave rise to the eighteenth-century movements of revitalization, which sought to revive the national spirit by restoring or reordering elements of culture (Voget, 1956, p. 250).

Like visions, and perhaps for similar reasons, prophecies were of considerable public interest: there existed a multitude of popular literature about them, including sermons, public orations, and essays. One example is George Washington Parke Custis' "Memoir of the Indian Prophecy" attached to his play *The Indian Prophecy* (1825), apparently to give more weight to the culminating scene: an Indian chief comes to Colonel Washington's camp in 1772 and predicts to the future president the fate of "the founder of an empire, comprising the New World" ([no page numbers in the original]).

4.1 The Indian Prophet's Prophecies are "False"

A major device in the prophets' claims for authority is their pretense to visions and divine revelations; all of them, without exception, are fraudulent. Pow-wow Weerahoochwee in *Tan-go'-ru-a* (1856), knowing of the sachem's love for the white missionary's daughter, invents a dream in which Tangorua kills the whole white race and marries Miriam (the only one spared), by whom he begets generations of great chiefs (Part I, section III). The priest Grimosco in *The Indian Princess, or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808) avers that his hatred of the white race has come to him from the Great Spirit:

when last night our village shook with the loud noise, it was the Great Spirit who talk's to his priest; my mouth shall speak his commands: King, we must destroy the strangers, for they are not our God's children; we must take their scalps, and wash our hands in the white man's blood, for he is an enemy to the Great Spirit. (II, i)

The dark prophecies of the priest Grimosco in *The Indian Princess, or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808) warn about the instruments of the Great Spirit—the white people, sent to avenge the lack of faith among the Indians: "from the face of the waters will he send them, in mighty tribes, and our shores will scarce give space for their footsteps" (II, ii). If the King turns a deaf ear to the conjuror's instigations to kill the strangers, he will be despoiled of his crown and "hunted from the land of his ancestors. ... His exiled, solitary spirit will forever houl [sic] on the barren heath where the wings of darkness rest. No ray of hope shall visit him; eternal will be his night of despair" (II, ii). In the plays, the prophets are shown to be craftily using their people's superstitions—the "error[s] in the understanding of the sacred" (Goddard 196) to inspire them to the war against the colonizers.

Based on their alleged occult experiences, prophets ascribe themselves special powers. The pow-wow Weerahochwee in *Tan-go'-ru-a* (1856) convinces his wards that he can command the spirits and talk with deities. The Powah in Owen's *Pocahontas* (1838) claims to be a negotiator between Great Spirit Manitto and his votaries; he promises to appease the mighty Spirit if Powhatan sacrifices to him enough corn and game (II, iii). The priest in Custis' *Pocahontas, or The Settlers in Virginia* (1830) promises that the Europeans' guns will be rendered harmless: "their lightings may flash, their thunders roll, but they will be no more than the rumbling and glare from the summer cloud, where no bolt descends to shiver the pine" (II, iii).

4.2 Prophecies of the Noble Savage and the Indian Maiden are "Genuine"

The Noble Savages and Indian Maidens in American Indian plays also make prophecies and have visions. However, their divine inspirations, unlike those of the Prophets, are recognized as real experiences and considered to be a sign of grace, especially if they concern the advancement of the white people in North America and the achievements of the United States. In *The Forest Princess, or, Two centuries Ago* (1848), the "[s]ouls of the prophet-fathers of [her] race" (III, v) send to the dying Pocahontas a vision of the union between England and the United States

O'er the path
Of Ages, I behold Time leading Peace.
By ties of love and language bound, I see
The Island-Mother and her Giant Child,
Their arms extend across the narrowing seas,
The grasp of lasting friendship to exchange! (III, v)⁴

Chief Menawa in Custis' *The Indian Prophecy* (1825) comes to Washington's camp and says about the future president: "The Great Spirit protects that man, and guides his destiny.

⁴ "Visions" of all kinds were so popular that they were often used for theatrical effects—in the form of tableaux. An example is the opening scene of Nathaniel H. Bannister's *Putnam, the Iron Son of '76* (1859) which shows "ethereal firmament, filled with silver stars," which is gradually habituated with the heraldic eagle and lion, and the God or War and Goddess of Liberty. This vision is replaced by the scene of signing of the Declaration of Independence succeeded by a military council with General Washington at the head. The tableau end with the American flag discovered in flat.

He will become the Chief of Nations, and a people yet unborn, hail him as the founder of a mighty Empire!" (II, iii). By the time the two plays were written, the "predictions" had already "come true," which undoubtedly was used by the playwrights to strengthen the prophetic status of their characters.

The "authenticity" of Indian dreams and visions for the most part depends on the fact whether or not they confirm the ultimate victory of colonization in North America; the prophecies in favor of the white settlement are regarded as genuine and coming from characters endowed with veritable prophetic powers. King Ponteach in Rogers' play of the same title (1766) relates to his suit a dream which "disturb'd [his] weary anxious Mind,/ And must portend some signal grand Event" (II, ii): a gigantic elk was attacked by numberless beasts of prey but dispersed them all in combat and was left the master of the plain (II, ii). The interpretation of the dream expected of the white audience is obviously the victory of white America over numerous Indian tribes. Chief Oneactah in Bannister's *Putnam, the Iron Son of '76* (1859), has a vision which presages the outcome of the fight between Britain and its colony: a gigantic bird (Great Britain) has lost a battle against an eagle (United States) and, fallen to the ground, is turned into a dead lion (II, iii). The titular hero in Henry Rowe Colcraft's *Alhalla, or The Lord of Talladega* (1843) sees a monstrous bear, "with claws of steel, and fiery hair" (Canto IV) emerging from the sea; shortly afterwards a beauteous bird sings a joyful song. A stranger who appears from the clouds expounds the bear as a symbol of the power of the white race and the bird's song as an appeal to the natives to assimilate.

So, the premonitions and prophecies of the Indian lay persons are genuine; those of the Indian divines are false. When the warrior Tecumseh says that he heard his mother's voice predicting to him the fall "beneath the murd'rous hand of the White-man" (*Tan-go'-ru-a* [1856], I, ii), we are expected to believe him, first, because Tecumseh is a noble military chief, and second, because the Indian defeat is a bitter price for the spread of civilization. On the contrary, when Prophet Elkswatawah professes that the Mighty Spirit has approved his path (*Tan-go'-ru-a* [1856], I, ii), the audience knows this arrogation to be false because it comes from a priest⁵ and goes contrary to the idea of the unswerving march of progress in North America.

⁵ According to D. R. Edmunds (1984), the same tendency to champion the Indian warrior while dismissing or denigrating the Indian priest is typical of the historical literature about American Indians. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, both Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa strove to create a confederacy among the Indian tribes. Yet it is Chief Tecumseh, not Prophet Tenskwatawa, who is credited with the organization of the movement (p.223).

Overall, the Indian priesthood as an institution is shown in the plays to be invalid. First, it is compromised by the personal depravity of its members: self-love, aggression, cowardice, deviousness, hypocrisy, and atavism. But ultimately it is not the personal corruption of the priests but the falseness of their creeds that calls for the elimination of the entire profession. Indian religion is fraudulent because it is based on superstition, and Indian Prophets are “false” because they are no prophets; they pretend to divine inspirations that they never get and to spiritual powers that they do not have.

5. Historical Background and Prototypes

Unlike the Noble Savage, the Ignoble Savage, and the Indian Maiden, the Indian Prophet does not have a long literary history. If it can be grounded in any tradition at all, it is the tradition of the melodramatic villain who plots, chooses, initiates treacherous acts, makes and alters plans, and devises snares (Booth, 1965, p. 18). However, the Prophet has a historic prototype: the Indian spiritual leaders who in the late 1700s and early 1800s headed the native revitalization movements – the organized attempts to resist European influence and “to create a more satisfying culture” (Wallace, 1956, p. 279) for the native people. Many Indian prophets had a considerable number of followers. Around 1761, hundreds of Ohio Indians became disciples of the Indian visionary Neolin. His ideas of spiritual resistance were used by Pontiac and his allies as a unifying ground for the organization of a confederacy of tribes for a coordinated attack against the British in 1763. About forty years later, the Shawnee Prophet Tenskwatawa and his half-brother Chief Tecumseh started to work together towards creating an all-Indian unity, and their success in this pursuit was such that it became a cause of major concern for the U.S. government. Pequot Indian William Apess (1992) preached against the “nameless cruelties, extortions, and exterminations inflicted upon the poor natives of the forest” (106); in 1833, he inspired and headed the Mashpee Revolt meant to provide the Mashpees with self-government. Alongside the well-known figures, there existed scores of anonymous native preachers who, in the words of the Moravian missionary David Zeisberger, “were held in great regard and had a considerable following withersoever they went. . .” (qtd in Jacobs, 1995, p. 48). Euro-Americans both despised and feared Indian prophets, with the main argument that the native priests had always been hostile towards the colonizers and therefore perpetually instigated the strife between them and the aboriginal population.

As the traveler Calvin Colton wrote in 1833, "The most bloody Indian wars of America, among themselves, and against the whites, have been instigated under the influence of prophetic decisions and mandates" (p. 2, 21-22). In view of the danger Indian prophets presented to the success of colonization, it is small wonder that the image of an Indian priest created by white authors was entirely negative. The public was encouraged to either abhor, despise, or ridicule him. With their "sleight of hand," the prophets were said to inspire terror and awe among their ignorant tribesmen; with their "pretence" of occult powers, they "enrich[ed] themselves at the expense of the credulous and foolish" (Heckewelder, 1876, p. 233). Disloyal to the interests of their own people and devious in their dealing with the American government, they were invariably portrayed as bad patriots, cowardly warriors, and treacherous allies. Biographer Benjamin Drake (1850) thus described Tecumseh's brother Ellskwatawa (Tenskwatawa) the Prophet: he was a vain, loquacious and cunning man, of indolent habits and doubtful principles. Plausible but deceitful, prone to deal in the marvelous, quick of apprehension, affluent in pretexts, winning and eloquent, if not powerful in debate, the Prophet was peculiarly fitted to play the imposter, and to excite into strong action, the credulous fanaticism of the stern race to which he belonged. (p. 223-24)

Samuel Drake (1832) in his *Indian Biography* called Ellskwatawa an "imposter" who spread "infatuation among his countrymen" (p. 303).

For a time, white people deemed Indian prophets to be more dangerous than Indian military commanders (Tilton, 1994, p. 140), because their preaching was rightfully perceived to be a form of spiritual resistance to the ideology of white America. Especially resented was the trust the native population put in their leaders. According to Moravian missionary John Heckewelder (1876), this trust accounted for a singularly large influence of the preachers on the tribesmen:

There was a time when the preachers and prophets of the Indians, by properly exerting the unbounded influence which the popular superstitions gave them, might have excited among those nations such a spirit of general resistance against the encroachments of the Europeans, as would have enabled them, at least, to make a noble stand against their invaders, and perhaps to recover the undisturbed possession of their territory. (p. 290)

Thomas Jefferson noted that despite his expectation to the contrary, the number of Ellskwatawa's followers increased to the extent that the British thought of using him as an ally (qtd in Drake, B., 1850, p. 220). However, in the long run the corruption of the native prophets prevailed: egotism and personal ambitions prevented them from leading the struggle for tribal unity to the end (Heckewelder, 1876, p. 290). The prophets turned out to be the false ones.

6. Conclusion

In the American Indian plays, the depiction of the Indian Prophet follows the political tradition of the time: the Prophet is invariably a "false" one. He agitates among Indians for patriotism, national freedom, and self-determination, yet he does not believe in these goals; therefore, he is always ready to sacrifice them for personal gains. In this manner of dramatic presentation, the entire order of individuals who could inspire their people to national goals appears to be a sham; the Indian Prophets are shown as corrupt and unfit to rule their people.

The Indian Prophet plays a significant part in early American drama featuring Native Americans. His role on stage is comparable in importance to those of the Noble Savage, the Ignoble Savage, and the Indian Maiden. Like the three other Indian stereotypes, the image of the Prophet was created as yet another ideological construct of the time to better deal with the pressing Indian question.

Appendix

I examined the character of the Indian Prophet on the material of the plays written between late 1760s and late 1850s, but predominantly in the first half of the nineteenth century, when American Indian drama enjoyed the most of its popularity. The texts were chosen from *The Tentative checklist of Indian plays (1606-1987)* by D. Wilmeth (1989). Almost all the pieces selected for analysis were produced, with the exception of two closet dramas: Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's *Alhalla, or The Lord of Talladega* (1843) and Henry C. Moorehead's *Tan-go'-ru-a* (1856). The information about the plays' productions and publications comes from B. J. Anderson's (1974) doctoral dissertation *Image of the American Indian in American drama: from 1766 to 1845*.

The following is an alphabetical list of the American Indian plays used in the article. It includes title, author, dates first published, dates first performed, and locations of production and publication.

- Alhalla; or, the Lord of Talladega. Henry Row Schoolcraft. Published 1843 (New York and London). No record of performance exists.
- The Forest Princess, or Two Centuries Ago. Charlotte M.S. Barnes. Published 1848 (Philadelphia). Performed 1848 (Philadelphia).
- The Indian Princess; or La Belle Sauvage, an Operatic Melodrama in Three Acts. James Nelson Barker. Published 1808 (Philadelphia). Performed 1808 (Philadelphia and Baltimore).
- The Indian Prophecy. George Washington Parke Custis. Published 1828 (Georgetown). Produced 1827 (Philadelphia).
- The Last of the Mohicans. Anon. Unpublished manuscript (1849). Performed 1831 (New Orleans and New York).
- Metamora, or the Last of the Pollywogs. John Brougham. Published 1850s (New York). Produced 1847 (Boston).
- Pocahontas: A Historical Drama. Robert Dale Owen. Published 1837 (New York). Produced 1838 (New York).
- Pocahontas; or, the Settlers of Virginia; the National Drama in Three Acts. George Washington Parke Custis. Published 1830 (Philadelphia). Performed 1830 (Philadelphia and New York).
- Ponteach; or the Savages of America. Robert Rogers. Published 1766 (London). No record of performance exists until 1975 (New York).
- Tan-go'-ru-a. Henry C. Moorehead. Published 1856 (Philadelphia). No record of performance exists.
- Tecumseh and the Prophet of the West. George Jones. Published 1844 (London). No record of performance exists.
- Tecumseh; or the Battle of the Thames. Richard Emmons. Published 1836 (New York). Performed 1836 (Philadelphia).

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