

PARODIES OF LONGFELLOW'S SONG OF HIAWATHA

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Have you ever noticed verses
Written in unrhymed trochaics
Without thinking as you read them,
This was swiped from 'Hiawatha'?¹

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW'S *Song of Hiawatha*, upon its publication in November, 1855, created an immense and immediate sensation, not only in America, but in England as well. It was read, it was quoted, it was lauded, it was burlesqued, it was dramatized, it was parodied, and it was attacked as a plagiarism. The novelty of the subject, the rarity of the meter, the beauties of the poetry, the grotesque and difficult Indian names, and particularly the remarkable facility of imitation set almost the entire English-speaking world talking about it. Probably no other poem of the age, certainly no other American poem, made as great or as wide an impression. One suspects that *Hiawatha* was parodied oftener and at greater length, and to hit off a greater variety of subjects, than any other poem ever written in the English language. Apparently there have been few other poems so easy to parody.

Hiawatha was the rage for months after its publication. Poetically-minded parents christened their children by the un-Christian names of Hiawatha and Minnehaha, and shipbuilders gave their crafts the same euphonious names.² Saloons, prize bulls, polkas, pencils, and even sleighs were named after Longfellow's hero. The

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¹ "Longfellow Unsymbolized," *Literary Digest*, LXXVII (May 12, 1923), 29.

² On March 14, 1856, Longfellow went to see a Mr. Gleason, who was carving the figurehead of the *Minnehaha*. Mr. Gleason said that he had never before carved a figurehead in which so much interest had been taken. On March 22, Longfellow witnessed the launching of the *Minnehaha* at Donald McKay's shipyard in East Boston. See Longfellow's Journal, March 14 and March 22, 1856 (MS, Houghton Library, Harvard University). For permission to use the manuscript journals and the letters of Longfellow, I am grateful to the Longfellow House Trustees.

Hiawatha sleighs usually had a scene from the poem painted on the back, representing, let us say, Hiawatha taking leave of his people, or Hiawatha wooing Minnehaha. In New York the latest drink was called a Hiawatha because one was enough to make the imbiber fancy himself in the happy hunting grounds.

Adventurous ladies on the stage recited *Hiawatha* in picturesque Indian costumes, with a background of forest scenery and wigwams.³ Trochaics bid fair to become the everyday language: political speeches, newspaper editorials, sermons, long advertisements, "puffs" of patent medicines, all were modeled on the meter of *Hiawatha*. Even the scandal of the day was reported by the ladies in trochaic measure:

" Goodness gracious! Mrs. Davis,
Have you heard how Mrs. Thompson
Spoilt her new broché this morning?
That sweet thing she bought at Stewart's? "
" You don't say so! Pray do tell me,
How she did contrive to do it;
Was she walking with her shawl on,
When she should have worn a talma? "
Etc., etc., etc.⁴

Likewise, the weather and the stock market were discussed in trochaics by the gentlemen:

" Charming morning, Mr. Wilkins."
" Very. But it's rather chilly."
" 'Tis indeed, but not so cold as
I have felt it in November.
By the way, the rise in Erie
Makes the bears as cross as thunder."
" Yes, sir-ree! And Jacob's losses,
I've been told, are quite enormous."

³ Longfellow noted in his journal, on March 12, 1856, that Grace Darling was reading *Hiawatha* to crowded houses in Philadelphia, and that the evening before, Mrs. Barrow, an English actress at the Boston Theatre, had read "Hiawatha's Wooing" after the play. On the evening of the fifteenth, Longfellow himself heard Mrs. Barrow recite, in costume, "Hiawatha's Wooing," and found her very good "but a thought too theatrical." About three weeks later, on April 4, he wrote to a friend that *Hiawatha* was "rushing onward" in readings, recitations, and the like. On the previous evening he had heard Miss Darling perform in Boston, but had not been favorably impressed. See Longfellow's Journal, March 12, 15 and April 4, 1856 (MS, Houghton Library).

⁴ These lines appeared in the New York *Mirror*, probably early in 1856.

“ Very likely; did you hear that
 Poppleton has sold his Reading? ”
 “ Sold his Reading! What a jackass! ”
 Etc., etc., etc.⁵

To top it all off, an anecdote of the period had a young and timid lover popping the question: “ Will you have me? will you wed me? ” and getting this reply: “ I will answer, I will tell you; I will have you, I will wed you. ”

Longfellow, of course, was fully aware of the great popularity of his latest work, and enjoyed at least some of the multitude of parodies which soon appeared in the newspapers and magazines. On February 7, 1856, for instance, the poet wrote to his very close friend Charles Sumner, thanking him for a parody entitled *Miseh-Ko-da-sa*, but sent him a better one, from the previous evening's *Transcript*, by an unknown author. “ Did you see the one in *Punch*? ” he asked; “ it is very clever, and was written by Mr. Shirley Brooks. ”⁶ The parody in *Punch* seems to have been better known in England, for a time, than *Hiawatha* itself. In reviewing Bogue's edition of Longfellow's poem, in parody form, Brooks referred to his difficulties in putting the poet's name into trochaics:

HENRY WADSWORTH, whose *adnomen*
 (Coming awkward, for the accents,
 Into this his latest rhythm)
 Write we as Protracted Fellow,
 Or in Latin, *Longus Comes*,—

Brooks continued his parody as follows:

Should you ask me, What's its nature?
 Ask me, What's the kind of poem?
 Ask me in respectful language,
 Touching your respectful beaver,
 Kicking back your manly hind-leg,
 Like to one who sees his betters;
 I should answer, I should tell you,
 'Tis a poem in this metre,
 And embalming the traditions,
 Fables, rites, and superstitions,
 Legends, charms, and ceremonials

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Longfellow to Sumner, February 7, 1856 (MS, Houghton Library).

Of the various tribes of Indians,
 From the land of the Ojibways,
 From the land of the Dacotahs,
 From the mountains, moors, and fenlands,
 Where the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gar,
 Finds its sugar in the rushes:
 From the fast-decaying nations,
 Which our gentle Uncle SAMUEL
 Is improving, very smartly,
 From the face of all creation,
 Off the face of all creation.

The review concluded:

Buy the Song of Hiawatha,
 Read, and learn, and then be thankful
 Unto *Punch* and HENRY WADSWORTH,
Punch, and noble HENRY WADSWORTH,
 Truer poet, better fellow,
 Than to be annoy'd at jesting
 From his friend, great *Punch*, who loves him.⁷

But some of the parodies had more "bite" than the one by Brooks. In a letter to Ticknor, his publisher, Nathaniel Hawthorne enclosed the following, much severer parody than the one in *Punch*, which must have been written by one of Hawthorne's friends:

Hiawatha! Hiawatha!
 Sweet Trochaic milk and water!
 Milk and water Mississippi
 Flowing o'er a bed of sugar!—
 Through three hundred Ticknor pages,
 With a murmur and a ripple,
 Flowing, flowing, ever flowing—
 Damn the river!—damn the poet!⁸

Hawthorne observed further:

Everybody seems to be seized with an irresistible impulse to write verses in this new measure. I have received a lampoon on myself (in manuscript) of as much as a hundred Hiawatha lines, some of them very laughable.⁹

This lampoon on Hawthorne by Henry Bright, referring to an event in Hawthorne's private life, i. e., the threats of Mrs. Blodgett's

⁷ *Punch*, January 12, 1856, p. 17.

⁸ Caroline Ticknor, *Hawthorne and His Publisher* (Boston, 1913), p. 161.

⁹ *Ibid.*

maid-servants to kiss Hawthorne under the mistletoe at Christmas time, was entitled "Song of Consul Hawthorne." It began:

Should you ask me, "Who is Hawthorne?
 Who this Hawthorne that you mention?"
 I should answer, I should tell you,
 "He's a Yankee, who has written
 Many books you must have heard of;
 For he wrote 'The Scarlet Letter'
 And 'The House of Seven Gables,'
 Wrote, too, 'Rappacini's Daughter,'
 And a lot of other stories;—
 Some are long, and some are shorter;
 Some are good, and some are better.
 And this Hawthorne is a Consul,
 Sitting in a dismal office,—
 Dark and dirty, dingy office,
 Full of mates, and full of captains,
 Full of sailors and of niggers,—
 And he lords it over Yankees." ¹⁰

Bright then described the dwelling of Hawthorne and the manners and customs of this house, where at Christmas:

Mistletoe hangs in the parlors,
 Mistletoe on hall and staircase,
 Mistletoe in every chamber;
 And the maids at widow Todgers',
 Slyly laughing, softly stealing,
 Whisper, "Kiss me, Yankee Captain,—
 Kiss or shilling, Yankee Captain!"
 Slyly laughing, softly saying,
 "Kiss from you too, Consul Hawthorne!
 Kiss or shilling, Consul Hawthorne!" ¹¹

During the years immediately after the publication of *Hiawatha* at least a half dozen parodies, some almost as voluminous as the original, were printed in separate book form, and the number of parodies in fugitive form must have exceeded one thousand. Many of the latter appeared in newspapers, periodicals, and collections

¹⁰ Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife: A Biography* (Boston, 1885), II, 78.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79. In a note referring to this passage Hawthorne wrote: "A fib!" The rest of Bright's verses dealt with Hawthorne's New Year's Eve, and then delineated the character of Hawthorne.

of humorous verse, copies of which Longfellow received "from all quarters, even from California."¹² Of the hundreds of parodies extant, only the most interesting will be mentioned below.

One of the best known parodies to appear in book form was *The Song of Drop o' Wather*, by Harry Wandsworth Shortfellow. Published in London in 1856 by George Routledge and Company, *The Song of Drop o' Wather*, advertised as "A Companion to Longfellow's 'Hiawatha,'" was a "London Legend" in which various characters and incidents from the American poem were transferred to the London gutters. The author of this extremely clever parody was Mary Cowden Clarke, wife of Charles Cowden Clarke, friend of John Keats.¹³ At the beginning of the book appeared an "Apology For There Being No Preface":

Author (*considering*). People expect a preface; and this is the place for one. But there is no preface in the great "Indian Edda" which has occasioned this poem. The author of that work gives his explanation to the public in the Notes and Vocabulary; then, of course, mine also, ought (and is) to be found in the Notes and Vocabulary to "The Song of Drop o' Wather."¹⁴

The book was complete with an introduction, thirteen cantos, notes and a vocabulary.

To appreciate the cleverness of the parody, we have only to compare Longfellow's opening lines in Canto III, "Hiawatha's Childhood," with a passage from "Drop o' Wather's Childhood" describing the birth of Drop o' Wather, who was so named because his mother never touched one in her lifetime.

¹² Journal, February 18, 1856 (MS, Houghton Library). A good example of the parodies received by the poet was Mrs. Lydia H. Sigourney's "Longfellow's Birth-Day," dated Hartford, February 27, 1856, and published in the April, 1856, issue of *Knickerbocker Magazine*. Some others included Phil Goggles (pseud.), *Brode-hed-da: A Song of Slaughter* (Philadelphia, ca. 1856); "The Song of 'Over the Water'" by Professor Strongfellow, published in Edmund H. Yates and R. B. Brough, *Our Miscellany* (London, 1856), pp. 174-76; William N. Lettsom's *The Song of Floggawaya* (London, 1856); *Kwaih! Ong-we-ong-we! Oushat, Halloo! An Indian! Winter* (Albany, 1856); and the *Anglo Ab-Original Sleighing Song; in Five Canters; Written after Longfellow* (New Haven, 1856). Some of these parodies were published as pamphlets and are most difficult to find today.

¹³ The copy of *The Song of Drop o' Wather* in the Longfellow House at Cambridge, Massachusetts, is inscribed: "To his old Friend, Leigh Hunt; From the Author's Friend C. Cowden Clarke."

¹⁴ Harry Wandsworth Shortfellow, *The Song of Drop o' Wather* (London, 1856), p. 5.

HIAWATHA'S CHILDHOOD

Downward through the evening twilight
 In the days that are forgotten,
 In the unremembered ages,
 From the full moon fell Nokomis,
 Fell the beautiful Nokomis,
 She a wife but not a mother.

She was sporting with her women,
 Swinging in a swing of grapevines,
 When her rival, the rejected,
 Full of jealousy and hatred,
 Cut the leafy swing asunder,
 Cut in twain the twisted grape-vines,
 And Nokomis fell affrighted
 Downward through the evening twilight
 On the Muskoday, the meadow,
 On the prairie full of blossoms.
 "See! a star falls!" said the people
 "From the sky a star is falling!"

There among the ferns and mosses,
 There among the prairie lilies,
 On the Muskoday, the meadow,
 In the moonlight and the starlight,
 Fair Nokomis bore a daughter.
 And she called her name Wenonah,
 As the first-born of her daughters.

DROP O' WATHER'S CHILDHOOD

Downward through the darkening
 twilight,

In the days long time ago, now,
 In the last of drunken stages,
 By the Half-Moon fell poor Norah,
 On the pavement fell poor Norah,
 Just about to be a mother.

She'd been tipling with some women,
 Just within the Wine-Vaults' swing-door,
 When her Gossip, out of mischief
 Partly idle, partly spiteful,
 Pushed the swing-door from behind her,
 Pushed in twain the Wine-Vaults'
 door-flap,

And poor Norah tumbled backward,
 Downward through the darkening
 twilight,

On the gangway foul, the pavement,
 On the gangway foul with mud-stains.
 "See! a wench falls!" cried the people;
 "Look! a tipsy wench is falling!"

There amidst the gaping starers,
 There amidst the idle passers,
 On the gangway foul, the pavement,
 In the murky darkened twilight,
 Poor drunk Norah bore a boy-babe.
 Thus was born young Drop o' Wather
 Thus was born the child of squalor.

Episodic in nature, and narrated in thieves' argot, *The Song of Drop o' Wather* celebrated various achievements of the hero and his friends. In Canto II, for instance, Drop o' Wather succeeds in snatching his first purse, although he is nipped by the lady victim's lapdog, Pudgy-Wheezy. In Canto V, "Drop o' Wather's Filching," the author parodies "Hiawatha's Fishing" to perfection. Among Drop o' Wather's friends are Chinny-panpipes, an organ grinder, and the very strong man Queershin, a tumbler and acrobat—parodies of Chibiabos and Kwasind, respectively. And, of course, it is inevitable that Drop o' Wather should fall in love. He woos Minnie Harper, otherwise known as Frisky-Whisky, the daughter of a Drury Lane tassel-maker. They are married and at an uproarious wedding reception, Jack Longbow, a London Iagoo, tells a story of supernatural events observed by some hard drinkers at the Star and Garter, a tavern near Richmond. The rest of the poem concerns Drop o' Wather's friends, including Paw-Paw-

Keeneyes, and excellent take-off on Longfellow's Pau-Pau-Keewis. In the last canto, "Drop o' Wather's Departure," the hero, troubled by dreams of his being hanged, decides to emigrate, and departs for Australia.

Another well-known parody was *The Song of Milgenwater: Translated from the Original Feejee*, by Marc Antony Henderson, D. C. L., Professor of the Feejee Language and Literature in the Brandywine Female Academy. This burlesque of *Hiawatha* was written by George Augustus Strong, later an Episcopal minister and a professor at Kenyon College, and was published in Cincinnati in 1856. Originally read before a literary society in that city, *The Song of Milgenwater* was an instant success and a small edition was printed for the club. At least two other editions of this work were published, under a slightly different title, *The Song of Milkanwatha*. In his Preface the translator deprecated the charge which had been made against Longfellow of having plagiarized *Kalevala*, the Finnish epic:

That, in many of its parts, there is a strong correspondence between it and Mr. Longfellow's last great work, "The Song of Hiawatha," is too apparent to be overlooked. But so far from basing upon this similarity of incident and treatment, a charge of *literary piracy* against Mr. Longfellow, as has been done by some who have discovered a much fainter likeness to a poem of Scandinavian origin—the translator recognizes in it only another evidence of that unity of thought which characterizes the human species, and which is a natural consequence of the unity of the races, of which the great family of man is composed.¹⁵

The translator proposed in jest that a careful comparison between *The Song of Hiawatha* and the poem translated from the Feejee would disclose many curious resemblances in form and feature, which might be thought worthy the attention of men of letters.

The Song of Milkanwatha consists of an introduction, eight cantos, notes, and a vocabulary; and the scene of the poem is laid on the Island of Chaw-a-man-up, one of the Feejee Group. The mother of Milkanwatha, falling from a plum tree on the planet

¹⁵ Marc Antony Henderson, *The Song of Milkanwatha* (Cincinnati, 1856), p. v. I have used the second edition of Strong's parody (published by Tickell and Grinne), not the first; therefore, I shall use the name Milkanwatha instead of Milgenwater in my discussion of this work.

Venus, into a cornfield on earth, gives birth to Milkanwatha, and at about the same time gives up the ghost. The baby is found and cared for by "the ancient Marcosset." Milkanwatha courts a fair damsel by the name of Pogee-wogee, marries her, and forms the acquaintance of two singular individuals, Silli-ninkum, the sweet piper, and the very fat man Bee-del, both of whom are swept away "by the Watta-puddel, or Rushing River, to the land of Ponee-rag-bag, situated farther downward." His wife, a victim of chills and fever, being supposed dead, is thrown into the river; but, revived by the sudden shock of the water, she is borne in safety to Ponee-rag-bag. Milkanwatha, in a fit of temporary insanity, follows her in his skiff. Reaching Ponee-rag-bag, he finds not only his wife, but his missing friends awaiting him. Their strange preservation suggests the water treatment in disease, and returning with them to his old stamping ground he becomes the founder of the Hydropathic System (a mode of treating diseases by the external or internal use of water).¹⁶

Strong's take-off on "Hiawatha's Wooing" in his *Song of Milkanwatha* is an excellent parody of the familiar sentiments expressed in Longfellow's poem:

HIAWATHA'S WOOING

"As unto the bow the cord is
So unto the man is woman,
Though she bends him, she obeys him,
Though she draws him, yet she follows,
Useless each without the other!"

Thus the youthful Hiawatha
Said within himself and pondered,
Much perplexed by various feelings,
Listless, longing, hoping, fearing,
Dreaming still of Minnehaha,
Of the lovely Laughing Water,
In the land of the Dacotahs.

MILKANWATHA'S COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Just as, to a big umbrella
Is the handle when it's raining,
So a wife is, to her husband;
Though the handle do support it,
'Tis the top keeps all the rain off;
Though the top gets all the wetting,
'Tis the handle bears the burden;
So the top is good for nothing,
If there isn't any handle,
And the case holds vice versa.
In this way, did Milkanwatha
Reason when he was a-thinking,
Thinking of his Pogee-wogee,
Of the blue-eyed Sweet Potato,
In the Village of the Noodles.

¹⁶ During the first decade of the twentieth century there was a curious wave of interest in *The Song of Milgenwater*, numerous people writing about it in various newspapers. According to a correspondent in a Brooklyn, New York, newspaper, some believed that the poem had been written by a college student in Maine or in Boston who disliked or held a grudge against Longfellow, and wanted to throw ridicule on *Hiawatha* and to kill its sale. Others thought Longfellow had written it, had regretted the act, and had suppressed the poem. (A few in this

The most ambitious of all the parodies was *Plu-ri-bus-tah: A Song That's-by-no-author*, perpetrated by Q. K. Philander Doesticks, P. B., and published in New York in 1856. Consisting of twenty-four cantos, it ran to more than 250 pages. The author wrote that the claim of *Plu-ri-bus-tah* to consideration as a poem could not be denied since it included a great many beauties not discoverable in *The Song of Hiawatha*, besides containing several Indian names which were therein omitted. Speaking of Indians, the author wrote:

Mr. Cooper says these red men
 All were daring, brave, and noble,
 Frank, and honest, open-hearted,
 Gentlemanly, proud, and stylish;
 All were tall, and straight, and handsome,
 Handsome, marriageable warriors;
 So that all romantic maidens,
 Who read Mr. Cooper's novels,
 And the song of Hiawatha,
 Think how nice 't would be to marry
 With some noble Indian Chieftain—
 Live with him upon the prairies,
 Live with him within the forest,
 Sleep, at night, beside his campfire,
 And have little Indian babies.¹⁷

In surveying the history of America in this poem, Mortimer N. Thompson, whose nom-de-plume was Q. K. Philander Doesticks, wrote, as he called it, "an inconsistent, impracticable, irreconcilable, paradoxical, trochaical romance."

Of the parodies which appeared in book form, two others may be mentioned. *Wa-wa-wanda: A Legend of Old Orange*, consisting of twenty-nine cantos written in Hiawatha verse, was published in

group, for some curious reason, apparently thought that Longfellow had got his inspiration for *The Song of Hiawatha* while writing *Milgenwater*.) It was also asserted that Longfellow and his friends had paid the author of *Milgenwater* well for suppressing its circulation and permitting the purchase of all copies, and that they were able to buy up all copies except one, which could not be located. Excerpts from this supposedly unique copy were printed in the early 1900's and elicited favorable comments on the wit and humor of the parody.

A more realistic and more informed attitude toward this early parody was shown by correspondents writing to a Boston newspaper.

¹⁷ Q. K. Philander Doesticks, *Plu-ri-bus-tah: A Song That's-by-no-author* (New York, 1856), pp. 53-54.

1860. *The Song of Higher-Water*, by James W. Ward, written three days after the publication of *Hiawatha*, was first published in a Cincinnati newspaper, and then in separate form in 1868. The author's reason for having his parody reprinted in more presentable form thirteen years after its original composition was that "some person, from motives, the rectitude of which [was] not self-evident" had "surreptitiously published an imperfect edition of it" and was selling it for his own profit.¹⁸

Turning to another field of literature, we find that less than two months after the publication of *Hiawatha* John Brougham wrote the following Prolegomena for his satiric play *Pocahontas; or, the Gentle Savage*, which was presented at Wallack's Theatre, in New York, on December 24, 1855:

The deeply interesting incident upon which this Drama is founded, occurred in Virginia, on Wednesday, Oct. 12, A. D. 1607, at twenty-six minutes past 4 in the afternoon, according to the somewhat highly colored and boastful narration of Capt. John Smith, the famous adventurer, backed by the concurrent testimony of contemporaneous history; but subsequent research has proved that either he was mistaken, or that *circumstance* had unwarrantably plagiarized an affair which transpired at a much earlier date; for, upon examining the contents of a wallet found in the vest pocket of the man in armor, dug up near Cape Cod, an entire *epic poem* was discovered upon the very same subject, which was written by a Danish poet, the Chevalier Viking, *Long Fellow* of the Norwegian Academy of Music, who flourished Anno Gothami, 235.

The poem contains several square yards of verse, a fragment of which is subjoined to show its peculiar *Finnish*.¹⁹

Then followed "The Song of Pocahontas," written in lines of trochaic tetrameter, after which Brougham got to his play proper.

The enormous vogue of *The Song of Hiawatha* is shown by the fact that a year later Charles M. Walcot capitalized on the popularity of Longfellow's poem by writing a musical extravaganza, in two acts, called *Hiawatha: or, Ardent Spirits and Laughing Water*.²⁰

¹⁸ James W. Ward, *The Song of Higher-Water* (New York and Cincinnati, 1868), p. iv. Ward sent an autographed copy of his book to Longfellow in 1870.

¹⁹ "Pocahontas, or The Gentle Savage," in *Brougham's Dramatic Works*, selected by R. Shelton Mackenzie (New York, n. d.), p. 3.

²⁰ The copy of this musical extravaganza at the Longfellow House is inscribed: "To Professor Longfellow with the profound contrition of Chas. M. Walcot."

The continuing popularity of *Hiawatha* as the subject for parody on the stage

This hilarious play was first produced at Wallack's Theatre in New York on December 25, 1856. A list of the leading characters gives a fairly good idea of the tone of the play:

- Hiawatha—a character strikingly more in the style of a Short-Boy than a Long-Fellow
 Nukkleundah—a creation, à la Frankenstein
 Yenadizzi—the original Young New York
 Dammidortur—a-n-arrow-minded person, father of Minnehaha
 Minnehaha—surnamed "Laughing Water"
 Poopoomammi—an indescribably self-willed young lady
 No-go-neiss—Hiawatha's grandmamma
 Hianakite—Poopoomammi's mother

Since the earliest parodies of *Hiawatha*, countless others have been published through the years, both in books and periodicals;²¹ and renowned writers, as well as obscure scribblers, have made their contributions. Foremost among the better known parodists of *Hiawatha* is Lewis Carroll. In November, 1857, he wrote "Hiawatha's Photographing," a mild parody, which was published in *The Train*, December, 1857; it was later reprinted with slight alterations in *Phantasmagoria*, and with many alterations and some omissions in *Rhyme? and Reason?*²² In his parody Carroll used the trochaic meter of *Hiawatha* in describing the afflictions suffered by the photographer in photographing one by one all the members of a family. This parody has lost most of its appeal to modern readers, for photography is no longer an innovation and having one's picture taken is not the ordeal it was in the 1850's. The brief introduction to the poem will bear reading aloud, for the author presented it to his readers as prose:

In an age of imitation, I can claim no special merit for this slight attempt at doing what is known to be so easy. Any fairly practised writer, with the slightest ear for rhythm, could compose, for hours together, in the easy running metre of the "Song of Hiawatha." Having, then, distinctly stated that I challenge no attention in the following little poem to its merely

is attested to by the production of E. E. Rice's burlesque *Hiawatha* in New York during February and March, 1880.

²¹ In 1879, twenty-four years after the appearance of Longfellow's "Indian Edda," the editor of the London *World* offered two prizes for the best parodies of *The Song of Hiawatha*, the subject selected being *The Hunting of Cetewayo*, and the contest attracted one hundred and thirty-five competitors.

²² Roger L. Green (ed.), *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll* (London, 1953), I, 129.

verbal jingle, I must beg the candid reader to confine his criticism to its treatment of the subject.²³

Space does not allow for more than brief mention of two other familiar figures who parodied *Hiawatha*. In 1865 Captain George H. Derby, better known by his pseudonym of John Phoenix, published, in his *Squibob Papers*, "The Song of Nothin' Shorter," by H. W. Tallboy.²⁴ This epic of gold-rush days in California celebrated "an ancient Digger Indian," his daughter "Tipsydoosen, or ye grass-hopper eater," and her husband, Amos Johnson. An amusing skit parodying *Hiawatha* was also contained in W. S. Gilbert's libretto to his unsuccessful *Princess Toto*, which was first produced at the Standard Theatre in New York on December 13, 1879, and bowed its way out on January 3, 1880.²⁵

So popular was *The Song of Hiawatha*, with its contagious meter, that it became an epidemic, the newspapers and magazines being fairly pockmarked with imitations of it.²⁶ The following skit by an anonymous writer is by far the best known and the most striking example of *Hiawatha* parodies. It has been published by so many newspapers over the years, and in such a variety of versions, that its original source has been lost. *Current Literature* for March, 1890, however, credited it to the *Western Journalist*.

Skin Side Inside

He killed the noble Mudjokivis,
With the skin he made him mittens,
Made them with the fur side inside;
Made them with the skin side outside;
He to get the warm side inside,
Put the inside skin side outside.

²³ Lewis Carroll, *Rhyme? and Reason?* (New York, 1884), p. 66.

²⁴ John Phoenix, *The Squibob Papers* (New York, 1865), pp. 190-97.

²⁵ See George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York, 1939), XI, 48.

²⁶ Some conception of the extent and kinds of burlesque *Hiawatha* has inspired may be obtained by consulting the following selected items: Walter Hamilton (ed.), *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors* (London, 1884-1885), I, 71-80; 95-99; and II, 14-16; 24; 253-55; L. H. W., *Field-gar-a-Jim* (Chicago, 1880); Carolyn Wells, "Hiawatha's Shopping," *Browning's Magazine* (December, 1903); William F. Kirk, "Hiawatha," *Fleeting Fancies* (Boston, 1904); Milt Gross, *Hiawatta, Witt No Odder Poems* (New York, 1926); C. B. M. Heywood, "Hiawatha at Cambridge," *London Mercury*, XXVII (November, 1932), 6-30; Owen Rutter, *Tiadatha* (London, 1935), a revised edition of two works, *The Song of Tiadatha*, 1919, and *The Travels of Tiadatha*, 1922.

He, to get the cold side outside,
 Put the warm side, fur side inside.
 That's why he put the fur side inside,
 Why he put the skin side outside;
 Why he turned them inside outside.

These lines obviously are heavily indebted to Strong's *Song of Milkanwatha*, Canto II:

From the squirrel-skin, Marcosset
 Made some mittens for our hero,
 Mittens with the fur-side, inside,
 With the fur-side next his fingers
 So's to keep the hand warm inside;
 That was why she put the fur-side—
 Why she put the fur-side, inside.²⁷

Various versions of "Skin Side Inside" have appeared in recently published anthologies of American literature. Robert P. Falk included "What Hiawatha Probably Did" in his *American Literature in Parody*, a collection of parodies, satires, and literary burlesques of American writers, published in 1955; and James N. Tidwell included still another version of the same parody in his *Treasury of American Folk Humor* published in 1956. It is interesting to note that in choosing material for his collection Tidwell picked only those selections which he felt would be funny to an American of 1956. The parody of *Hiawatha* which met this test was the following newspaper version of "Skin Side Inside"; Tidwell quotes it from Fred Lewis Pattee's book *The Feminine Fifties*:

He had mittens, Minjekahwun,
 Buckskin mittens made of deerskin;
 Mittens with the fur-side outside,
 Mittens with the skin-side inside.
 When he turned them inside outside,
 When he turned them outside inside,
 Then the warm side, fur-side, in was,
 And the cold side, skin-side, out was,

²⁷ Robert P. Falk, the editor of *American Literature in Parody*, attributes "What Hiawatha Probably Did," a version of "Skin Side Inside" with minor variations, to George A. Strong. There is not much doubt that the author of *The Song of Milkanwatha* was the originator of this most often quoted parody of Longfellow's poem. See Robert P. Falk (ed.), *American Literature in Parody: A Collection of Parody, Satire, and Literary Burlesque of American Writers Past and Present* (New York, 1955), p. 71.

When he turned them outside inside,
When he turned them inside outside.²⁸

"Outside" of these two examples, perhaps the best testimony of the enduring hold *Hiawatha* has on the world is supplied by such news items as the one in the *London News Chronicle* of a few years ago, which included an anonymous poem, in *Hiawatha* meter, on a report that Sir Winston Churchill inherited a touch of Indian blood from his American mother. A few lines from this poem will suffice as evidence of *Hiawatha's* continuing popularity as a medium for parody:

In the wigwam of the wise ones
Squats the old Chief Winniehaha,
Squats and issues his instructions
To the lesser chiefs around him.

On the basis of this brief survey of the parodies of Longfellow's poem, a survey which does not pretend to be complete, we can conclude that the *Hiawatha* parodies consist of various degrees of imitation, ranging from the closest of verbal parodies, in which only a few words have been changed in some passages, to parodies of style and sense. Some of the parodies are simple and innocent burlesques whose purpose is not to make fun of the original but merely to entertain and amuse without deriding. Others, of which the following parody by J. W. Morris is a further example, are bitter, written to criticize and to reprove:

Do you ask me what I think of
This new song of Hiawatha,
With its legends and traditions,
And its frequent repetitions
Of hard names which make the jaw ache,
And of words most unpoetic?
I should answer, I should tell you
I esteem it wild and wayward,
Slipshod metre, scanty sense,
Honour paid to Mudjekeewis,
But no honour to the muse.²⁹

²⁸ James N. Tidwell (ed.), *A Treasury of American Folk Humor* (New York, 1956), p. 532; see also Fred Lewis Pattee, *The Feminine Fifties* (New York, 1940), p. 171.

²⁹ See Robert P. Falk, *op. cit.*, p. 73; see also Walter Hamilton, *op. cit.*, I, 71-72.

In the notes to her *Song of Drop o' Wather*, Mary Cowden Clarke wrote that "the mere fact of burlesquing a work avouches its excellence—certainly its popularity." Bombarded as he was by parodies of *Hiawatha*, some mild, others not so mild, Longfellow had this one consolation: he could be sure that *Hiawatha* was well known to the literate public; otherwise it could not have served the purpose of those who burlesqued or ridiculed it. And of course he realized that, as a promoter of sales, a good parody was worth far more than a publisher's "puff." The profits from the resulting sale of *Hiawatha* consoled him for all that he suffered at the hands of "biting" parodists.