

## ***EDWIN FORREST (“SPARTACUS,” “METAMORA”)***

### ***AND THE CULT OF AMERICAN MANLINESS<sup>1</sup>***



“Early in life, I took a great deal of exercise and made myself what I am, a Hercules.”

1. The biographer Richard Moody has characterized this man as “the first actor who refused to subscribe to the nation’s cultural inferiority complex.” We might consider him rather as the actor who made a career out of loud and incessant proclamations of defiance of the idea of the superiority of the British over the American. If we had lived in his era, I suspect, our attitude might well have been “Oh, give it a rest.”



**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

**1806**



March 9, Sunday: [Edwin Forrest](#) was born in Philadelphia.

After seven months in Vienna, Luigi Cherubini departed for Paris.

**THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT**





## “METAMORA”

EDWIN FORREST

1814

→ [Washington Irving](#) served as a colonel in the New York Militia and as an aide-de-camp to Governor Daniel Tompkins. His “Philip of Pokanoket” constructed the sachem [Metacom](#) of the [Wampanoag](#) as “a patriot attached to his native soil — a prince true to his subjects, and indignant of their wrongs — a soldier, daring in battle, firm in adversity, patient of fatigue, of hunger, of every variety of bodily suffering, and ready to perish in the cause he had espoused”:<sup>2</sup>

“KING PHILLIP’S WAR”



METAMORA



While the Mathers had considered Philip a devilish, barbarous villain and even, in Cotton’s words, a “blasphemous leviathan,” Washington Irving recast the Wampanoag leader as an honorable, patriotic hero, nobler than the noblest of Noble Savage. In effect, Irving reversed the version of King Philip’s War that had been popular during the American Revolution. In 1775 Americans had been asked to think of the British as simply “more distant savages” than the Indian neighbors their forefathers had fought in 1675. They had seen King Philip’s War (American colonists vs. redskins) as a crude rehearsal for the American Revolution (American colonists vs. redcoats). Washington Irving disagreed. He asked Americans to identify less with Mather, Church, and Hubbard and more with Metacom and his warriors. Philip, in Irving’s estimation, was a courageous leader struggling to free his people from the foreign tyranny embodied by colonial authorities.

2. Here the actor [Edwin Forrest](#) is posing in his sachem stage costume in the studio of Mathew B. Brady in about 1860 as the tragic hero “Metamora” of the oft-staged play about Metacom designed for him in 1828 by Concord’s John Augustus Stone (*METAMORA: OR THE LAST OF THE WAMPANOAGS*). The pose minimizes the actor’s immense calves, which were notorious in his era. Brady used his impressive Imperial format, with a collodion negative that measures 20 x 17 inches uncropped, a format that needed to be prepared and exposed while still wet. This is a bitmapped image of a modern salted paper print from that original collodion negative, which is a gift of The Edwin Forrest Home at the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.



**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**



“The People make their recollection fit in with their sufferings.”

— Thucydides, HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR



**ESSENCE IS BLUR. SPECIFICITY,  
THE OPPOSITE OF ESSENCE,  
IS OF THE NATURE OF TRUTH.**

1820

→ [Edwin Forrest](#) made his theatrical debut at the Walnut Street theatre in Philadelphia, in the tragedy *Douglas*.



At a demonstration of the effects of [nitrous oxide](#), this 14-year-old continued to recite a long passage from [Shakespeare](#)'s *Richard III* even while under the influence.

ESSENCES ARE FUZZY, GENERIC, CONCEPTUAL;  
ARISTOTLE WAS RIGHT WHEN HE INSISTED THAT ALL TRUTH IS  
SPECIFIC AND PARTICULAR (AND WRONG WHEN HE CHARACTERIZED  
TRUTH AS A GENERALIZATION).

1826

→ [Edwin Forrest](#) was back from the Wild West, where he had been wielding a Bowie knife given to him by Jim Bowie himself, challenging people on paddle steamers to knife fights, etc. His ultra-manly performances at the Park Theatre in New-York in the lead role of [William Shakespeare](#)'s *Othello* were propelling him into a then unparalleled career of critical success and public renown. His loud jingoism was making him especially popular with a certain type of America-Firster theater buff. Privately, Forrest was hanging out with a Choctaw named Push-ma-ta-ha whose savage body he very much admired. He very much enjoyed getting out into the woods with his friend and persuading him to strip and parade naked at night around their campfire. Of course, this was all strictly business, homoerotics were not involved, for the artist was simply preparing himself to enrich his stage presence as the sachem [Metacom](#) of the [Wampanoag](#) and the prototype of a new type on the world stage, the American Ultramanly Man.



METAMORA

**"HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE" BEING A VIEW FROM A PARTICULAR POINT IN TIME (JUST AS THE PERSPECTIVE IN A PAINTING IS A VIEW FROM A PARTICULAR POINT IN SPACE), TO "LOOK AT THE COURSE OF HISTORY MORE GENERALLY" WOULD BE TO SACRIFICE PERSPECTIVE ALTOGETHER. THIS IS FANTASY-LAND, YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF. THERE CANNOT BE ANY SUCH THINGIE, AS SUCH A PERSPECTIVE.**



**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

**1827**



February 7, Wednesday: Maria Szymanowska gave a 2d concert in the National Theater, Warsaw.

At the Bowery Theater in [New-York](#), a French ballerina, Mme. Francisque (Francisquay?) Hutin, inaugurated a new era of the ballet — by rising up onto her toes. The quantity of calf that her costume placed on display great consternation and an encore performance.

[Edwin Forrest](#) appeared at the [Boston](#) Theater.

**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,  
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**

## "METAMORA"

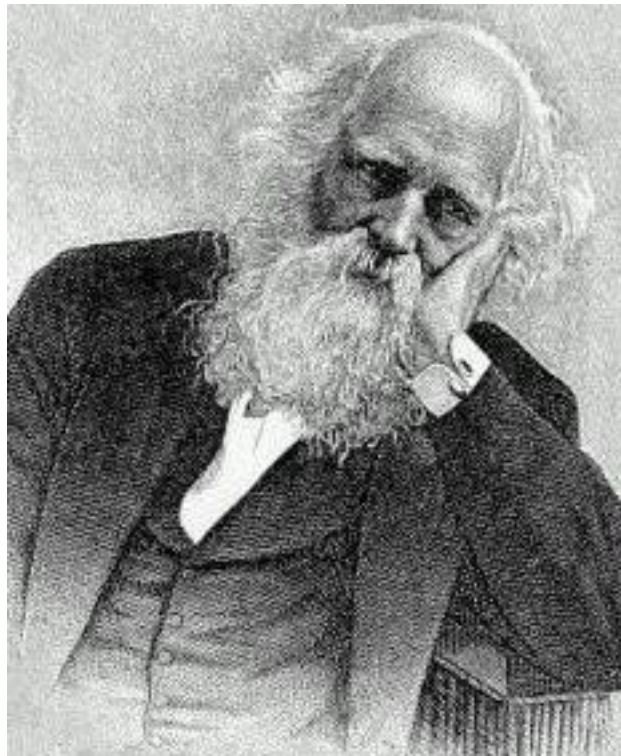
EDWIN FORREST

1828

➡ November 28, Friday: The celebrated American actor [Edwin Forrest](#) advertised in the Critic for a role appropriate to his bulky talents. He would pay, he said, \$500.<sup>00</sup> for "the best tragedy, in five acts, of which the



hero, or principal character, shall be an aboriginal of this country." [William Cullen Bryant](#) headed the committee that evaluated the submissions.



The award went to [Concord](#)'s own [John Augustus Stone](#).<sup>3</sup> He wrote a tragedy about the race tragedy we know

3. A total of 14 plays had been submitted. In a series of such prize competitions, some 200 plays would be offered, and eight other such plays would be rewarded. Included among these eight others would be another play by [John Augustus Stone](#), this one titled THE ANCIENT BRITON.



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## “METAMORA”

## EDWIN FORREST

as “[King Phillip’s War](#),” in which the sachem [Metacom](#) of the [Wampanoag](#) was of course presented as the heroic primary character, suitable for this American to portray. This [METAMORA](#): OR THE LAST OF THE [WAMPANOAGS](#) would be enormously popular on tour from city to city over many years.<sup>4</sup>



METAMORA

4. There are towns named Metamora in Michigan, in Ohio, in Illinois, and in Indiana, as marked in pink on this map:



Here [Edwin Forrest](#) is posed in the studio of Mathew B. Brady in about 1860 in costume as the “[Metamora](#)” of the oft-staged play. Brady used his impressive Imperial format, with a collodion negative of 20 x 17 inches uncropped, exposed while wet.



**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**



“The People make their recollection fit in with their sufferings.”

— Thucydides, HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR



**YOUR GARDEN-VARIETY ACADEMIC HISTORIAN INVITES YOU TO CLIMB  
ABOARD A HOVERING TIME MACHINE TO SKIM IN METATIME BACK  
ACROSS THE GEOLOGY OF OUR PAST TIMESLICES, WHILE OFFERING UP  
A GARDEN VARIETY OF COGENT ASSESSMENTS OF OUR PROGRESSION.  
WHAT A LOAD OF CRAP! YOU SHOULD REFUSE THIS HELICOPTERISH  
OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL PAST, FOR IN THE REAL WORLD THINGS  
HAPPEN ONLY AS THEY HAPPEN. WHAT THIS SORT WRITES AMOUNTS,  
LIKE MERE “SCIENCE FICTION,” MERELY TO “HISTORY FICTION”:  
IT’S NOT WORTH YOUR ATTENTION.**

## "METAMORA"

EDWIN FORREST

1829



December 15, Tuesday: At about the middle of December, [Sam Houston](#) departed for Washington DC as a representative of the Cherokee Nation.

1st staging of [John Augustus Stone](#)'s *METAMORA: OR THE LAST OF THE WAMPANOAGS*, at the Park Theater in New-York, starring [Edwin Forrest](#). In a stunningly sarcastic evocation of chauvinism the audience of Americans was begged, after as well as before the performance, not to disdain this play merely because it had been authored by an American rather than a foreigner.



METACOM  
WAMPANOAG

The performance would be reviewed by the [New York Mirror](#) on December 19th:

METAMORA, OR THE LAST OF THE WAMPANOAGS — This Indian tragedy was performed, for the first time, on Tuesday evening last, for the benefit of Mr. Forrest. A considerable interest having been excited, long before the rising of the curtain, the house was completely filled. The prologue, spoken by Mr. Barrett, was received with enthusiastic applause, and every thing indicated, on the part of the audience, a desire to give the piece a favorable reception. The actors, both male and female, were eminently successful in their endeavors to do justice to their several parts, and during the progress of the play, received the most unequivocal proofs of the approbation of their delighted spectators. Independent of the undoubted merits of *Metamora*, the managers have afforded a gratifying exhibition of scenery, dresses, decorations, etc. We cannot at present particularize respecting the excellence of each actor....

THE TASK OF THE HISTORIAN IS TO CREATE HINDSIGHT WHILE  
INTERCEPTING ANY ILLUSION OF FORESIGHT. NOTHING A HUMAN CAN



**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

**SEE CAN EVER BE SEEN AS IF THROUGH THE EYE OF GOD.**



**"METAMORA"**

**EDWIN FORREST**

**1831**



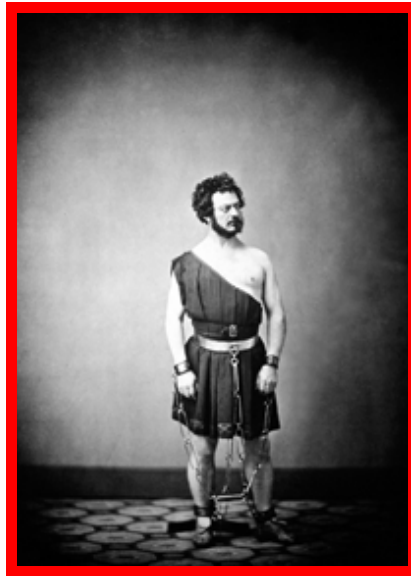
October 13-17: The following, about Robert Montgomery Bird's melodrama *The Gladiator* in which the role of [Spartacus](#) was played by [Edwin Forrest](#), is a snippet from Charles Haskell's REMINISCENCES OF NEW YORK BY AN OCTOGENARIAN:

Late in September, [Forrest](#) was first seen in "The Gladiators," the well-known play written for him by Dr. Bird of Philadelphia. A Mr. Anderson, an English actor, on his arrival here was charged by a fellow-passenger, an American, with having made some very unjust and ill-natured remarks during the passage regarding Americans. Upon the announcement of his engagement at the Park Theatre the charges were publicly reported, and as a result, the house on the evening of his appearance, October 13, was filled with some of our indignant citizens who had individually assembled, without any previous association, and upon the entrance of Anderson on the stage he was greeted with hisses, missiles, etc., so persistently maintained that the performance was arrested. Nevertheless, Anderson was announced for the evening of October 15, in the same part (Henry Bertram, in the opera "Guy Mannering.") On this occasion the theatre was filled to overflowing with men only, who were determined to prevent Anderson's performance. When it was attempted to read his apology, a riot broke out which was not the least diminished by announcement that the actor's engagement had been cancelled and that the play would be changed. As usual in such cases, the riot spread far beyond the designs of its originators and became the causeless, silly, or malicious outbreak of evil-disposed persons. It continued during the next day (Sunday). And in the evening of that day an attack was made on the theatre, the doors and windows being battered in. "Old Hays" and his men after a time restored comparative order, and on Monday the mob was appeased by sight of the front of the theatre covered with American flags, patriotic transparencies, etc., and no further

# "METAMORA"

EDWIN FORREST

violence occurred.



NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT



## "METAMORA"

EDWIN FORREST

1833

November: [Edwin Forrest](#) played the lead in [John Augustus Stone](#)'s *METAMORA*: OR THE LAST OF THE WAMPANOAGS in [Boston](#).



Titillation was created among the white majority of the audience by the presence of a delegation of *Abenaki* (*Penobscot*). These men had come down from Maine to petition that they be allowed to create an independent

## “METAMORA”

EDWIN FORREST

tribal government on their remaining tribal lands:<sup>5</sup>



METAMORA

“KING PHILLIP’S WAR”

WAMPANOAG



The Penobscots’ claims were largely ignored, but while the delegation was spurned by the State House, it was welcomed in the theater district. Instead of regaining their land, the Penobscots were sent on a short walk across Boston Common to attend a performance of *METAMORA* at the Tremont Street Theater.



One may wonder how much excitement was being created in *Concord* by the fact that here was this most famous actor, Forrest, playing in downtown Boston in a prizewinning play written about famous local events by Stone, a favorite son of the town!<sup>6</sup>

5. Here the actor *Edwin Forrest* is posing in his sachem stage costume in the studio of Mathew B. Brady in about 1860 in such manner as to minimize the size of his calves.

6. (Of course, after the fact, with *John Augustus Stone* having committed suicide later and all that, one can understand how it came about that he has now been written entirely out of the town’s history.)





**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

**LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?  
— NO, THAT’S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN’S STORIES.  
LIFE ISN’T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.**



**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

**1834**



June 1, Sunday: Former King Miguel of Portugal boarded a British ship at Sines south of Lisbon and was transported toward exile in [Genoa](#) (thence to Austria).

Yanked out of the classroom of [Phineas Allen](#) on account of that teacher's anti-Mason activities, [John Shepard Keyes](#) would begin to attend a new private class kept by [Mr. William Whiting \(Junior\)](#) in the upper hall of the same Academy building.

In a year and a quarter I learned more ten times over from Mr. Whiting than I had in the seven years of Mr. Allen, and acquired habits of study and application I had never before imagined possible. Latin became a delight and an actual language instead of a dead and buried tongue. Greek unfolded its mysteries and beauties. French its grace, and Arithmetic and Algebra became the fascinations of exact science. He introduced us to Shakespeare, to Plutarch to Burke and English Literature generally and he made ardent students out of idle boys, and brilliant scholars of bright girls. What a revelation and awakening that time was to me, and to most of the others.

**J.S. KEYES AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

## “METAMORA”

EDWIN FORREST

[John Augustus Stone](#) committed suicide by throwing himself into the Schuylkill River. There were some who were not obviously impressed either by this successful attempt at a play or by this successful attempt at a suicide:



Mr. Stone did what he could to atone for the injury he inflicted upon the world by the production of this play ... he drowned himself on 1 June 1834, in the Schuylkill River. We will accept his presumptive apology.

[Edwin Forrest](#), who had paid Stone \$500.<sup>00</sup> for his play *METAMORA*: OR THE LAST OF THE *WAMPANOAGS*, an often-staged play which usually grossed approximately that amount per night (as well as another \$500.<sup>00</sup> for



### WAMPANOAG

another less performed play entitled THE ANCIENT BRITON), would thoughtfully fund the monument for the grave:

IN MEMORY OF THE AVTHOR OF “METAMORA”  
BY HIS FRIEND, E. FORREST



After the drowning, Stone’s wife, the actress Mrs. Legge, would remarry to N.H. Bannister. During this year Forrest anticipated [Waldo Emerson](#)’s project for American literary independence, to be propounded at Harvard College three years later, in 1837, by declaring with enviable simplicity:

**Our literature should be independent.**

**BETWEEN ANY TWO MOMENTS ARE AN INFINITE NUMBER OF MOMENTS,  
AND BETWEEN THESE OTHER MOMENTS LIKEWISE AN INFINITE NUMBER,**



## **“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

THERE BEING NO ATOMIC MOMENT JUST AS THERE IS NO ATOMIC POINT  
ALONG A LINE. MOMENTS ARE THEREFORE FIGMENTS. THE PRESENT  
MOMENT IS A MOMENT AND AS SUCH IS A FIGMENT, A FLIGHT OF THE  
IMAGINATION TO WHICH NOTHING REAL CORRESPONDS. SINCE PAST  
MOMENTS HAVE PASSED OUT OF EXISTENCE AND FUTURE MOMENTS  
HAVE YET TO ARRIVE, WE NOTE THAT THE PRESENT MOMENT IS ALL  
THAT EVER EXISTS — AND YET THE PRESENT MOMENT BEING A  
MOMENT IS A FIGMENT TO WHICH NOTHING IN REALITY CORRESPONDS.

**“METAMORA”****EDWIN FORREST****1836**

The famous American actor [Edwin Forrest](#) was reported to have been hissing from a balcony seat in a theater in England, during a performance of his British competitor William Macready. Witnessing Macready's effete, reserved, delicate, aristocratic, in a word **effeminate**, style of acting had simply been too much, and the visiting American actor had been unable to moderate his American contempt for woman-like weakness.<sup>7</sup> Attempts to excuse this behavior as some sort of cultural misunderstanding would not be generally appreciated in the British press.



**“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING: HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**

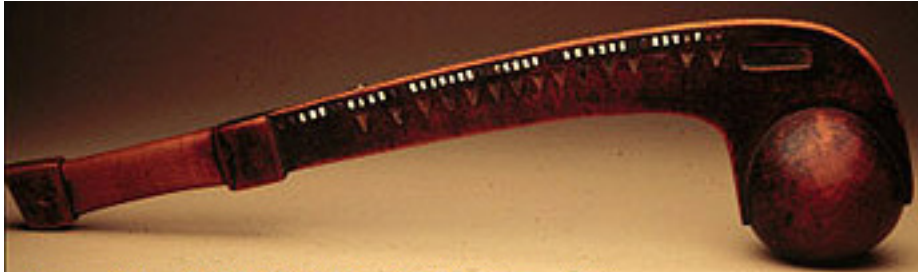
7. Bear in mind that during this period the weakness of the female element and the sexual depletion of the male element were linked in the popular mind, so that an “effeminate” man, seeming to be lacking in proper masculine vigor, would be assumed to be a victim of the “spermatorrhea” associated with the secret vice of [masturbation](#). He had wasted his ammo and his gun was empty. Just as an obese person might be sneered at by pleasure-denying Puritans, as self-indulgent and lacking in self-control in regard to a personal indulgence in regard to eating, so the unmasculine male might be sneered at as self-indulgent and as lacking in self-control in regard to an assumed private manipulation of private parts. (In women, however, the diddling of the passions was believed to so increase sexual energy as to create not an unsuitable weakness but instead an unsuitable strength, to wit, a “furious, noisy and filthy” monster.)

## “METAMORA”

EDWIN FORREST

1842

Apparently an object that was being purported to have been *Metacom*'s war club was at this point known to be in the possession of the descendants of the Reverend *John Checkley* of *Providence, Rhode Island*. Whether this object representing the gradual decay and extinction of a most marked race, recording a chapter in the world's history, that of the fate of the Indian race, than which there is no more saddening, had been inherited from the Reverend Checkley or had been acquired by some other family member from some other source is unknown. It is not known from whom the purchase had been made, or when. Whether the object in question ever was King Phillip's war club is of course quite unknown, but obviously as of 1842 it was already serving its purpose, its purpose of course being to allow members of the surviving white race, viewing it, hefting it, secure in victory, no longer under any threat, to be appropriately saddened at the slow retreat of the wigwam and the tomahawk and the onward progress of the axe and the log cabin.<sup>8</sup>



In this year the actor *Edwin Forrest* was depicted in costume for his *Metamora* role in the play “Last of the Wampanoag” (on a following screen).

**THE FALLACY OF MOMENTISM: THIS STARRY UNIVERSE DOES NOT  
CONSIST OF A SEQUENCE OF MOMENTS. THAT IS A FIGMENT, ONE WE  
HAVE RECOURSE TO IN ORDER TO PRIVILEGE TIME OVER CHANGE,  
A PRIVILEGING THAT MAKES CHANGE SEEM UNREAL, DERIVATIVE, A  
MERE APPEARANCE. IN FACT IT IS CHANGE AND ONLY CHANGE WHICH  
WE EXPERIENCE AS REALITY, TIME BEING BY WAY OF RADICAL  
CONTRAST UNEXPERIENCED — A MERE INTELLECTUAL CONSTRUCT.  
THERE EXISTS NO SUCH THING AS A MOMENT. NO INSTANT HAS EVER  
FOR AN INSTANT EXISTED.**

8. This object, which purports to be a native American war club 22 inches in length and weighing 28<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ounces, was made from the ball root of a maple tree. A ball root is something that develops when the root system of a tree hangs over a stream bank in such a way as to expose the roots and cause them to grow at an angle. The object is inlaid with white and purple wampum. White wampum is made from the central column of a whelk shell. Purple wampum is made from quahog shell. There are also several triangular horn pieces inlaid along one side of the club. The holes were made to fit individual beads. There are two lines of wampum along the top width of the club, although most of this wampum is missing. Also, there are two bands of wampum along the adjacent surfaces of the handle, 44 beads to a side. Then on one side there were spots for 15 triangular inlaid horn pieces, two of which are still in place. Also, on the other side, there is a lower band of wampum beads, only partially completed. Two parallel lines can be detected in the wood, that were made with something sharp, clearly to outline where the bead inlay was to be continued. There are also three rectangular sections engraved into the club near the ball, perhaps for a brass inlay that is now missing.



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## **“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**





**“METAMORA”****EDWIN FORREST****1845**

[Edwin Forrest](#) was mercilessly hissed by British audiences while touring as the male lead in *MacBeth*, bellowing the lines of [William Shakespeare](#) in his trademark Americanist style. He alleged that his competitor, the British actor William Macready whose performance he had been observed to have hissed in 1836, was responsible for this critical reception, and initiated a vitriolic and very public feud that would play itself out, in a manner exacerbated by jingo sentiments on both sides, between mobs of theater fans.



(One thing you should definitely grasp about the United States of this period is that it had embraced [Shakespeare](#) as its own. For instance, in camp awaiting action against the Mexican army in Texas, a young lieutenant named Ulysses S. Grant took up the role of Desdemona in Shakespeare's play *Othello*.)



**FIGURING OUT WHAT AMOUNTS TO A “HISTORICAL CONTEXT” IS WHAT**





**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

THE CRAFT OF HISTORICIZING AMOUNTS TO, AND THIS NECESSITATES  
DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE SET OF EVENTS THAT MUST HAVE  
TAKEN PLACE BEFORE EVENT E COULD BECOME POSSIBLE, AND MOST  
CAREFULLY DISTINGUISHING THEM FROM ANOTHER SET OF EVENTS  
THAT COULD NOT POSSIBLY OCCUR UNTIL SUBSEQUENT TO EVENT E.

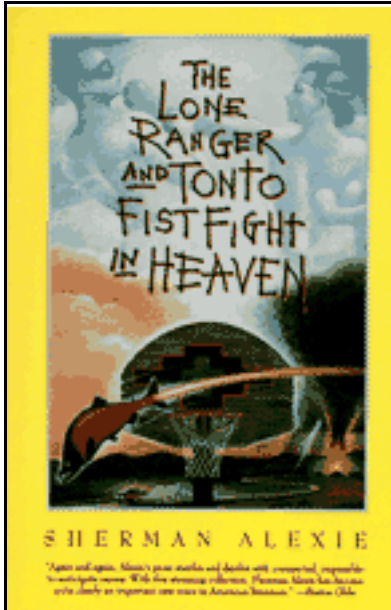


**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

**1847**

November 29, Monday: In retaliation for a measles epidemic that had decimated their tribe, Cayuse warriors killed the Oregon missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and their group of 12 settlers.



The Adelphi Theater of Boston featured a burlesque version of “[King Phillip’s War](#)” titled [METAMORA](#); OR, THE LAST OF THE *POLLYWOGS*. This marginally humorous, inanely derogatory, and offensively racist performance was marked by the repeated popping of popguns and the repeated resort to the use of the word “Ugh.” At the culmination of the dying scene, the sachem [Metacom](#) of the [Wampanoag](#) was made to leap lightly to his feet and exclaim directly to the audience, as the curtain fell, “Confound your skins, I will not die to please you!”



“The People make their recollection fit in with their sufferings.”

— Thucydides, HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR



**NEVER READ AHEAD! TO APPRECIATE NOVEMBER 29TH, 1847 AT ALL ONE MUST APPRECIATE IT AS A TODAY (THE FOLLOWING DAY, TOMORROW, IS BUT A PORTION OF THE UNREALIZED FUTURE AND IFFY AT BEST).**

1849

May 7, Monday: There was an uproar in front of the [New-York](#) opera house in Astor Place which was, ultimately, about whether a British actor, as a foreigner, would be allowed to play a role when there was an American actor available for this work. The demonstration of this date had its ties to an inflammatory book by Ned Buntline, THE MISTERIES AND MISERIES OF NEW YORK, which blamed the city's problems on its recent waves of immigrants. Down with immigrants! Jobs are for Americans! The popular American actor [Edwin Forrest](#), an outspoken [Know-Nothing](#), had been attracting chauvinists as, excuse my French, flies gather to merde.



NO-ONE'S LIFE IS EVER NOT DRIVEN PRIMARILY BY HAPPENSTANCE





## "METAMORA"

## EDWIN FORREST

May 10, Thursday: [Edwin Forrest](#)'s 20-year rivalry with the British actor William Charles Macready put the torch to a powder-keg of [nativist](#) sentiment when –due to head-on competition between simultaneous [New-York](#) productions of [William Shakespeare](#)'s *Macbeth*, and due to Macready's status as a mere foreigner, and due to Forrest's Americans-first [Know-Nothing](#) jingoism– that professional rivalry induced a riot of 25,000 nativists at the Astor Place Opera House during which 22 of his manly fans were killed by the police and the 7th Regiment of the militia, and 36 very seriously wounded.



Commenting on the Scorsese movie "Gangs of New York":  
"In my own research of New York history, through first-person accounts and newspaper reports, I have found that our past was often at least as violent and squalid, if not more so, than the movie depicts."

– Kevin Baker



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## "METAMORA"

EDWIN FORREST



Though Edwin Forrest was only indirectly responsible for the [New-York](#) militia's having fired into this mob he had so endeavored to create, as his manly fans attempted to invade and disrupt Macready's effete performance, his reputation would suffer, and then he would fall further in the eyes of his public due to a protracted and, once again, very public attempt at divorce.

For Edwin Forrest, reenacting "[King Phillip's War](#)" was a step on the path toward an American national drama. Like so many other artists of his generation, Forrest appropriated Indianness and Indian ancestors to make himself American, to distance himself from all that was English. In this he exactly reversed what writers like Increase Mather and [William Hubbard](#) had tried to do so furiously -and so prolifically- a century and a half earlier. Late-seventeenth-century colonists had tried to purify themselves of the contamination of America's indigenous inhabitants and make themselves more English. Early-nineteenth-century Americans tried to take on the attributes of Indianness to make themselves less English.

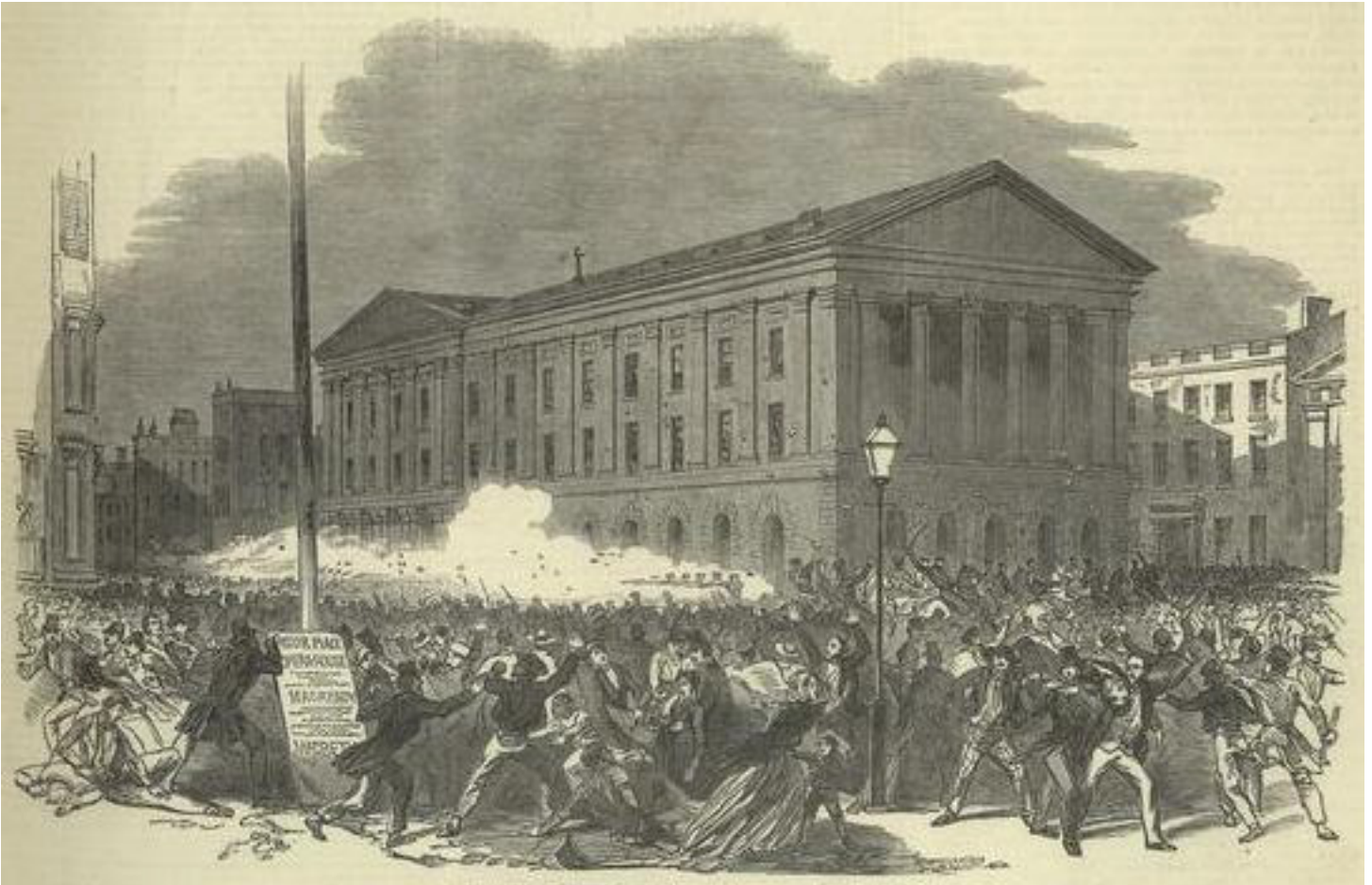


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## “METAMORA”

EDWIN FORREST

On the 2nd of June, the Illustrated London News would be providing its readership with a front-page illustration of the rioting in front of the New-York opera house, complete with the powder smoke from the police volley into the crowd:



THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





## “METAMORA”

EDWIN FORREST

May 10, 11, 12: A 3-day riot outside the Astor Place Opera House in [New-York](#):



New York in 1849 was a very different city from the one [Lydia Maria Child] had known when she first came there eight years earlier. The economy had rebounded and a building boom was underway. On lower Broadway the private residences which had once lined this elegant promenade had either been converted into business establishments or torn down and replaced by new and bigger buildings. Here the first great American department store of Alexander T. Stewart had opened in 1846. Here also stood the new luxury hotels complete with gas lighting, interior plumbing, and steam heat. With the spreading commercialization of lower Manhattan, the well-to-do moved their homes farther and farther uptown; Fifth Avenue began to replace Broadway as the fashionable heart of the city. While growth and expansion were clearly benefiting the rich in New York, the same could not be said for the poor, whose numbers were added to yearly by the thousands of immigrants who poured off the docks and into the city in search of housing and employment. Wages remained low while rents rose as the value of property increased. City residents became particularly alarmed during the winter of 1846-1847 when a flood of homeless, destitute foreigners sought charity from the already overcrowded almshouses and other public institutions. At mid-century, New York gave the appearance of two hostile cities – one rich, progressive, and Protestant, the other poor, foreign, and Catholic. Less than two months after Maria returned, the latent hostility between the two classes erupted into open warfare. The occasion was the appearance of the famous English actor William Macready at the Astor Opera House on May 10, 1849. For some time a feud had been raging between Macready and Edwin Forrest, a popular, if crude American actor whose great public following did not include the rich and fashionable. Forrest was an ardent democrat and promoter of a national “American” theater. He scorned the aristocratic and European influence which Macready represented, and so, with the help of the Sixth Ward boss, Isaiah Rynders, Forrest deliberately goaded his supporters to form a mob outside the Opera House where Macready was appearing in Macbeth. For three days the mob raged, setting fire to the Opera House and tearing up the pavement outside. Not until soldiers were brought in was order finally restored.

[William Mackay Prichard](#) had been among the prominent citizens who had signed a petition encouraging the English actor William Charles Macready to go ahead and perform as “Macbeth” despite all the threats of violence that had been loudly proclaimed by [nativist](#) supporters of American manly-man’s actor [Edwin Forrest](#).

ONE COULD BE ELSEWHERE, AS ELSEWHERE DOES EXIST.  
ONE CANNOT BE ELSEWHEN SINCE ELSEWHEN DOES NOT.  
(TO THE WILLING MANY THINGS CAN BE EXPLAINED,  
THAT FOR THE UNWILLING WILL REMAIN FOREVER MYSTERIOUS.)



**1851**

Guess what, there was a sexual double standard — and it wasn't even the 20th Century yet!

Up to this point in time, the statistic is that legislative divorces were being granted to just under 70% of (white) American husbands who had charged their (white) wives with having committed adultery with a black man but to only 55% of (white) American wives who had charged their (white) husbands with the keeping of a black mistress.

The very popular and very wealthy Americanist actor [Edwin Forrest](#) involved himself in a very public and very nasty attempt at divorcing his wife, the actress Catherine Sinclair, the very unsavory ramifications of which would severely damage his standing in the eyes of his fans. The court having been unpersuaded that he had any ground to put his Catherine aside in favor of a live-in mistress, he would be constructing legal appeal after legal appeal, unable to take no for an answer, from his dark mansion in Philadelphia, for all of the following 18 years.



**YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT EITHER THE REALITY OF TIME OVER THAT OF  
CHANGE, OR CHANGE OVER TIME — IT'S PARMENIDES, OR  
HERACLITUS. I HAVE GONE WITH HERACLITUS.**



**“METAMORA”****EDWIN FORREST****1860**

At around this point in time, [Edwin Forrest](#) commissioned the Matthew Brady studio to depict him in his most popular roles. Portraits of Forrest attired for his roles as Macbeth and as [Spartacus](#) and as [Metamora](#) (the sachem [Metacom](#) of the [Wampanoag](#)) reveal how, in very different costumes, he presented one unchanging heroic image, an image which this bulky actor preserved even when attired for the street. He was the man's man, the John Wayne, of that era. When the actress Fanny Kemble saw him as Spartacus in “The Gladiator,” she called Forrest “a mountain of a man!” He became famous not only for his outsized heroes but also for his accumulating wealth and his estate on the palisades of the Hudson River, and over the years the formula that had brought this success was never altered.<sup>9</sup>



“What the American public always wants is a tragedy with a happy ending.”

— William Dean Howells



Daniel Pierce Thompson (1795-1868)’s THE DOOMED CHIEF; OR, TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, about [“King Phillip’s War”](#), was published in Philadelphia.

9. Here Forrest is posed in the studio of Mathew B. Brady in costume as the tragic hero “[Metamora](#)” of the oft-staged play about Metacom designed for him by Concord’s John Augustus Stone ([METAMORA: OR THE LAST OF THE WAMPANOAGS](#)). Brady used his impressive Imperial format, with a collodion negative that measures 20 x 17 inches uncropped, a format that needed to be prepared and exposed while still wet. This is a bitmapped image of a modern salted paper print from that original collodion negative, which is a gift of The Edwin Forrest Home in our National Portrait Gallery.



**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**



“The People make their recollection fit in with their sufferings.”

— Thucydides, HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR



**IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT IT IS MORTALS WHO CONSUME OUR  
HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS, FOR WHAT WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO DO IS  
EVADE THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE HUMAN LIFESPAN. (IMMORTALS,  
WITH NOTHING TO LIVE FOR, TAKE NO HEED OF OUR STORIES.)**

## "METAMORA"

EDWIN FORREST

1865

Increasingly debilitated by sciatica, dragging a bent leg, [Edwin Forrest](#) would seldom again be making appearances on stage. The actor whom the gods would destroy, having always been mad, had been rendered unsightly.



CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT

**1871**

This is how [Edwin Forrest](#) projected American Manliness at age 65:



**WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND  
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**



**“METAMORA”**

**EDWIN FORREST**

**1872**

December 12, Thursday: [Edwin Forrest](#) died in Philadelphia. Today he is remembered not for his larger-than-life masculism or his larger-than-life estate or his larger-than-life divorce petition against actress Catherine Sinclair but for his larger-than-life rivalry with British actor William Macready, which in 1849 had put the torch to a powder-keg of [nativist](#) sentiment and induced a riot at the Astor Place Opera House which had resulted in the deaths of a number of his manly fans.

**THE AGE OF REASON WAS A PIPE DREAM, OR AT BEST A PROJECT.  
ACTUALLY, HUMANS HAVE ALMOST NO CLUE WHAT THEY ARE DOING,  
WHILE CREDITING THEIR OWN LIES ABOUT WHY THEY ARE DOING IT.**

**1877**

The Reverend [William Rounseville Alger](#)'s, and his cousin [Horatio Alger, Jr.](#)'s, [LIFE OF EDWIN FORREST](#), THE AMERICAN TRAGEDIAN, WITH A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE DRAMATIC ART was published in 2 volumes in Philadelphia by the firm of J.B. Lippincott & Company.



Cousin Horatio had done most of the research and writing in regard to the career of Forrest, while Cousin William had supplied the materials dealing in general with the history of the American theater.

### **LIFE OF EDWIN FORREST**

I don't know the year in which this happened, and am therefore inserting the material quite randomly: at some point [Horatio Alger, Jr.](#) discussed his sexual preferences with the psychologist [William James](#).

**DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.**



## "METAMORA"

EDWIN FORREST



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: March 23, 2016





**"METAMORA"**

**EDWIN FORREST**

# **ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT**

## **GENERATION HOTLINE**



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.

Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in





## **"METAMORA"**

**EDWIN FORREST**

the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary "writerly" process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.