'The Minstrels Parade': Blackface minstrelsy and the music hall

> Oh, he's got a pair of lips, like a pound of liver split,
> And a nose like an injun rubber shoe,
> He's a limpy, happy, chuckle-headed, huckleberry nig,
> And he whistles like a happy killy-loo;
> He's an independent, free-and-easy, fat-and-greasy ham,
> With a cranium like a big baboon;
> Oh, I never heard him talk to anybody in my life,
> But he's happy when he whistles this tune :-
> (Whistles.)
>
> Eugene Stratton, 'The Whistling Coon'

TO TWENTY-FIRST century eyes, the popularity of blackface minstrelsy is perplexing to the point of repugnance. However, as Michael Pickering has forcefully argued, it is essential to get beyond that 'presentism, which allows our understanding and interpretation of the past to be monopolized by contemporary values and preconceptions … [and to engage in] reflexive conversation rather than one-way monologue.'[1] A number of general points needs to be made at the outset. First, the enduring popularity of minstrelsy cannot be explained simply in terms of its dissemination of racial stereotypes. The quality of the songs – from the simple but catchy 'Jump Jim Crow' or 'Oh Dem Golden Slippers' to the sophistication of 'Lily of Laguna'; the ability of the singers, dancers and musicians; and the novelty and excitement of the overall show have to be acknowledged.[2] Second, notwithstanding these musical

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qualities, racial mimicry and stereotyping both reflected and contributed to a growing and persistent belief that the world was better understood in terms of racial, rather than class or gender, differences. Further, in spite of contemporary praise for the 'realism' of certain 'negro delineators,' the stage stereotypes bore no resemblance to the realities of African American life, but made imaginable an idea of 'blackness,' a 'racial pretence' that fulfilled a variety of 'white' needs, from legitimizing imperialism to providing psychological consolation. [3] Finally, while racial stereotyping was a constant and central element, its nature and reception changed over time, particularly as the broader historical context changed from the anti-slavery sentiments of the second quarter of the nineteenth century to the high imperialist views of the final quarter.

Although blacking-up was not unknown in England, blackface minstrelsy was significantly different, and by its very nature, raises questions about the function and meaning of the 'mask.'[4] Any 'mask' creates an 'other' world into which the audience is invited temporarily to leave behind their world and its values; it offers the opportunity, not simply to experience that 'other' world, but to say things that would otherwise be unacceptable. Blacking-up deliberately concealed the ethnic identity of the performer and, at the same time, created a racialized stage figure, which could either reinforce or challenge preconceptions. The most common element in the construction of 'blackness' in Victorian minstrelsy was the depiction of the negro as a carefree, easy-going, though childlike figure; someone who embodied the very opposite of Victorian bourgeois morality with its emphasis on self-control and self-improvement. This served two purposes. First, it confirmed the belief that 'whiteness' was more mature and morally superior and 'blackness' somehow both endearing and funny but also subordinate. Second, while laughing at the figure on stage, the ('white') audience was invited to laugh at its everyday self. Thus, the mask permitted a temporary escape from 'whiteness' but at the same time confirming 'blackness' as something 'other' and, implicitly at least, inferior. The belief in child-like qualities fed into sentimental images of 'smiling picaninnies,' implicitly requiring care. This in turn easily transmuted into images of the down-trodden, mistreated and enslaved 'black,' who needed

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the protection of the stronger and moral 'white.' Similarly, the characterisation of the negro as some form of 'noble savage' played into 'white' self-images of civilised superiority and responsibility for the less fortunate, but also allowed for more sinister images, centring on notions of 'uncivilised.' 'Carefree' could easily become lazy and irresponsible. This was the slippery slope to dishonesty and criminality. The 'savage' was no longer noble, but a figure of threat to 'white' person and property. In other words, 'blackness' comprised a bundle of stereotypes, from which certain elements might be emphasised at any given time. Although belief in the notion of negroes as objects of pity and in need of help, was strongest in the period from the 1830s to the 1850s when anti-slavery sentiments were most prominent, it never disappeared. To the contrary, it was a necessary part of the imperial story being told as more of the world map turned red. Similarly, concern with the 'savage' threat was not confined to the years of imperial conflicts in the late-nineteenth century.

Blackface minstrelsy in England

Blackface minstrelsy developed in England from the mid-1830s, distinct from and more respectable than early music hall, and achieving a cross-class and cross-gender appeal. During its heyday from the 1860s to the 1890s, its distinctiveness was clearly in view in London where the two leading troupes, the more 'English' Mohawk Minstrels and the more 'American' Moore & Burgess Minstrels performed at distinct venues, the Royal Agricultural Hall, Islington and St. James's Hall, Piccadilly.[5] However, the boundary between the two forms of entertainment was more fluid. From the 1850s music halls were looking for 'nigger' entertainers and, increasingly from the 1860s there was movement in both directions, highlighting two important and enduring feature of popular music: the search for novelty and the willingness to absorb new influences and to fuse them into something distinctive. Music hall grew out of different traditions that themselves were fluid and evolving. American minstrelsy was also a hybrid, a fusion of European musical influences, particularly English, Scottish and Irish tunes, and African, notable rhythms and dance moves. Although the emphasis in this chapter is on the incorporation

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of elements of minstrelsy into music hall, there was a two-way flow of material and performers.

From the outset, blackface minstrelsy was a cultural commodity within the wider popular culture. Initially the emphasis was on the individual performer.[6] The appearance of T D 'Daddy' Rice and his hit song-and-dance number, 'Jump Jim Crow' in 1836 created a sensation.[7] In the following decade there was a fundamental shift to the ensemble format that was to characterise minstrelsy into the twentieth century. Dan Emmett and the Virginian Minstrels performed in Liverpool and Manchester as well as London in the early 1840s. They were followed by a variety of troupes, including the (much copied) Christy Minstrels and the Ethiopian Serenaders, with their outstanding dancer, 'Master Juba,' William Henry Lane. His performances, combining elements of Irish jigs, American dances such as the 'Tennessee double shuffle' and what were referred to as 'authentic nigger dances,' dazzled and bemused contemporary observers.[8] The number of troupes increased, varying in size from two dozen to over 60. More importantly, they developed a distinctive and wide-ranging format. Shows initially followed a three-part pattern – overture, olio and walkabout – though later in the century the Moore and Burgess Minstrels presented a two-part show with a short (three minute) interval. Musical entertainment, in various forms, was central, they also included circus elements, such as acrobatics and juggling.[9] Over time the repertoire extended beyond plantation tunes and Stephen Foster songs to include material, such as Harry Hunter's 'The Doctor Says I'm Not To Be Worried,' not dissimilar to those found in music halls.[10] Indeed, by the 1860s, the Mohawk Minstrels included Irish, Scottish and even Old English themed nights.[11]

Minstrelsy and music hall

Songs and performers moved between minstrelsy and music hall. E W Mackney, 'that Prince of Nigger Minstrels,' was a major figure, who had established himself as a popular music hall figure in London in the early 1860s.[12] His skill as a banjo and fiddle player combined with his dancing, singing and comedy made him an outstanding all-round performer. His most popular song was 'Whole Hog or None,' which he sang

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(or had to sing) throughout his career. His repertoire included such predictable tunes as 'Old Dan Tucker,' 'Camptown Races and 'The Darkies' Jubilee' but also ran to Sousa marches, such as 'Liberty Bell' and several traditional British tunes, including 'The Bristol Hornpipe,' 'Monymusk' and 'Tink a Tink,' not to mention 'farmyard imitations on the violin!'[13]

Another who moved to the music-hall stage was the renowned Christy Minstrels' dancer, Joe Brown, noted for his 'Silver Belt Jig and his Happy Uncle Tom Dance … terpsichorean specimens quite unique in their way.'[14] He too was exceptionally talented, but was not alone in appearing in music hall. Adverts for nigger' singers and dancers appeared in the *Era* as early as the 1850s, and were placed not simply from the large cities, such as Birmingham and Liverpool, but also from small, and relatively obscure places, such as Boston in Lincolnshire.[15] Amateur and semi-professional troupes, as well as duos and solo performers, were to be found. Most remain largely unknown. One of 'the greatest attractions' at the Philharmonic Hall, Islington was Barlow, 'a clever, active and quaint Nigger singer and dancer,' noted for his rendition of 'Blue-tail'd fly,' but beyond that, nothing.[16] Others left more substantial footprints in the historical record. The Alabama Minstrels, unusually African-Americans from New York, began touring in the late-1850s, spent much of the 1860s, presenting their all-singing, all-dancing rendition of 'plantation life' to audiences across the north of England and the south of Scotland. As part of their 1864 tour, they performed in Huddersfield, where interest in 'negro melodies' dated back to the mid-1850s.[17] The experience of the town highlights the popularity of minstrelsy. The (so-called) Christy Minstrels performed at the town's Gymnasium-hall and the Philosophical-hall in 1859, 1860 and 1862.[18] John Eagleton's Juvenile African Troupe and Coloured Serenaders delighted audiences in and around the town in the mid-1860s with their mixture of songs that combined Stephen Foster numbers , such as 'The Old Folk at Home' and 'Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair' with English songs, such as 'The Bloom is on the Rye' and 'Gentle Jenny Gray.'[19] Other troupes appeared in the nearby villages – the Juvenile Christy Minstrels at Kirkburton, Butterworth's Christy Minstrels at Marsden, Oliver's Troupe

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of Minstrels at Holmfirth – as did the home-grown Golcar Amateur Coloured Minstrels. Equally striking is the number of 'nigger' performers who appeared at the town's early music halls. The more respectable Argyle music-hall regularly engaged a range of such entertainers from individuals, such as 'G W Edwards, Nigger Vocalist, Banjo and Bones Soloists.'[20] The rival Cambridge music hall offered the Carroll troupe, 'eccentric and successful … Niggers,' who included the locally-born Dick Crowther, as well as a blackface musical troupe, the Chirgwin family.[21] Similar acts, included the Niagara Brothers and the gifted banjo-players, the Bohee Brothers, who appeared at Rowley's Empire in the 1890s, though by then there were fewer 'nigger' acts.[22]

Blackface could be a first step on a musical career ladder. The Great Vance, Dan Leno, Gus Elen and Harry Champion all started in this way, but others went on to make their names as 'negro delineators.' One of the earliest, and undoubtedly the most idiosyncratic, was G H Chirgwin, variously known as 'The White-Eyed Musical Kaffir' or 'The Cockney Coloured Coon.' It was said of him that, 'like the pelican he stood alone' – he 'never copied anyone and no one … attempted to copy' him.[23]

Chirgwin, whose father was a circus clown, first appeared on stage, aged 6 in 1860 as a 'negro' comedian before becoming part of the Chirgwin Family the following year.[24] In his early teens he worked the beach at Margate before joining with his brother Jack in a 'double act on "nigger minstrel" lines' that toured the provinces until the mid-1870s. His solo career started in London in 1877. In 1911 he was honoured in a jubilee concert near the end of his performing career. His musical skills were prodigious. He played the fiddle, banjo, piano, Japanese fiddle, bagpipes and Irish pipes. He was an adept dancer, and it was said to have a melodious voice and a considerable vocal range; sadly, surviving recordings do not do him justice. He was also a comedian, including 'some eccentric business with two clay pipes and a tea tray' which was particularly popular. His patter, delivered in a 'London' accent, with its quick-fire flurry of puns, had more in common with Harry Champion.[25]

Chirgwin's 'kaffir' persona was complex, if not contradictory. Although his highly distinctive make-up was allegedly an

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G H Chirgwin, ‘The White-Eyed Musical Kaffir’ aka ‘The Cockney Coloured Coon’

accident, it had the effect of further confusing the mask he wore. The white diamond had the effect of allowing the white-man-behind-the-mask to peep out at the audience.[26] The illusion of the blackface minstrel was further undermined by the ‘cockneyisms’ in his patter and his regular concluding comment, ‘Could do wiv a drink,’ in what was ‘stock local, not mock “nigger.”’[27] Here was Chirgwin telling his audience that behind the mask was the real Londoner, the man from Seven Dials and that the show/illusion was now over. The matter was further complicated by certain of his songs, which perpetuated the hybrid character, such as ‘The Cockney Coon,’ and ‘A Good Old London Town Girl,’ which asserted his and his girl’s essential London-ness. Both could be read as either transcending simple racial difference and recognising a black British identity; or reinforcing them, through the ‘hilarious impossibility’ of black cockneys.[28]

Chirgwin was on good terms with Harry Hunter, the interlocutor and main songwriter of the Mohawk Minstrels, and performed many of Hunter’s songs, such as ‘Comparisons Melodious,’ which he sang at a benefit concert for Hunter in 1888.[29] Chirgwin was a long-standing and consistent favourite of the music halls.[30] He was best known for two extremely popular songs: ‘The Blind Boy,’ partly written by G W Moore, of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, and ‘My Fiddle Is My Sweetheart,’ written by Harry Hunter. ‘The Blind Boy,’ which

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Chirgwin sang in a high falsetto voice, was unashamedly sentimental.[31]

> I am but a poor blind boy/Still my heart is full of joy
> Though I never saw the light/Or the flowers they call so bright.
> I can hear the sweet birds sing/And the wild bee on the wing
> Bird and bee and summer wind/Sing to me because I'm blind.
> *Chorus*
> They love me, yes, they love me/And to me they are so kind
> They love me, yes, they love me/Because I am blind.[32]

Similarly, 'My Fiddle Is My Sweetheart' was a mainstream music-hall song, which shows the extent to which Hunter had moved towards this genre. Again, the lyrics are sentimental, though with more than a touch of humour.

> My fiddle is my sweetheart, and I'm her faithful beau
> I take her to my bosom, because I love her so
> I clasp her gently round her neck, her vocal chords I press
> I ask her if she loves me, and she answers "Yes, yes, yes"[33]

More straightforward were the stage personas of Eugene Stratton, 'The Whistling Coon' and his successor, the Rochdale-born G H Elliott, 'The Chocolate Coloured Coon.' Stratton, who was born in Buffalo, had a background in circus but made a name as an Irish jig and clog dancer. In 1878, aged 17, he joined Haverley's Minstrels before coming to London two years later, where in 1881 he joined the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, working his way (literally) to the front of the stage, where, as cornerman, he sang what was to become his signature tune, 'The Whistling Coon.'

Although Stratton sang various songs, including comedy numbers such as 'The Cats in Our Backyard' and 'Polly Cockatoo,' he was best known for his "coon" songs, of which

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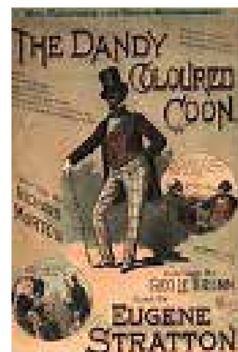
Eugene Stratton, 'The Whistling Coon'



'The Dandy Coloured Coon' and 'The Whistlin' Yellow Gal' were the most popular.

Having made his name with the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, he moved to the variety stage because of 'the prospect of making more money.'[34] Initially he met with limited success, in no small measure because of a decision to abandon blackface. Even as a blackface singer, he was not well received at certain provincial concerts, though his popularity with London audiences remained high.[35] His partnership with Lesley Stuart resulted in a series of hit songs, including 'Little Dolly Daydream,' 'My Little Octroon' and especially 'Lily of Laguna.' As well as highly attractive songs, Stratton's performance, as singer and dancer, were highly regarded. There was no escaping the racial stereotyping in his songs. His well-known song, 'The Whistling Coon,' is about a 'very funny, queer old coon … [who is] a knock-kneed, double-jointed, hunky-plunky moke, and he's happy when he whistles this tune.' With grotesquely 'others' features, he is clearly inferior, at best childlike, at worse like a baboon.

Even 'Lily of Laguna' is 'de same old tale of a palpatatin' niggar,' but the chorus, 'She's ma lady love, she is ma dove, ma baby love … She is de Lily of Laguna, she is ma Lily and ma Rose,' combined a sing-along tune with sentimental lyrics. The effect was further enhanced by Stratton's stage performance.[36] In addition, through its association with 'coon' songs, Stratton was an important figure in the introduction of ragtime music, not least with the controversial ragtime song 'All Coons Look Alike to Me.' Finally, he was a major influence on G H Elliott,

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'The Chocolate Coloured Coon,' who took over many of Stratton's song and ensured that the popularity of this genre was sustained after Stratton's death (1919) and through the inter-war years. Elliott tended to sing more sentimental songs, such as 'By the Light of the Silvery Moon,' as well as the less overtly (or viciously) racist "Dixie" songs that had become popular in the early twentieth century.[37]

Constructing 'the nigger' in song[38]

One of the most striking characteristics of 'coon' songs across the years is the evocation of a rural arcadia, set on a southern plantation where the corn is ripe, birds singing, picaninnes playing and masters and slaves happy. In 'Carry Me Back to Old Virginny,' (written 1878), the audience is told 'no place on earth do I love more sincerely than old Virginny, the state where I was born.' In 'The Old Folks at Home,' (written 1851) the singer is 'longing for the old plantation' as much as 'the old folk at home.'[39] The (supposed) reciprocal affection between slaves and masters creates a sense of an organic, hierarchical society with everyone happy in their rightful place. Negro man are hard-working and obedient, but respected and loved.[40] 'When Old Ned die Massa [and Missis too] take it mighty hard,' we hear in ' Uncle Ned,' (written 1848), but it is the affection for masters that is most striking. 'All de darkies am a weeping, Massa's in de cold, cold ground.' (written 1852). Such reassuring images sat uneasily with the depiction of slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which enjoyed considerable popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, and make more problematic the response to minstrelsy in England, though the evocation of a stable rural society may have had an appeal at a time when many observers were aware of the threat posed by urban society. Similarly, the image of racial harmony may have become more attractive as fears of the 'uncivilised savage' from 'Darkest Africa' became more common.

As individuals, the negro is often child-like and happy, delighting in music (the banjo-playing singer of 'Oh! Susannah'), dancing (Oh! Dem Golden Slippers' or 'De Great Cake Walk') and even gambling ('Camptown Races').[41] They are comic characters, often, dating back to the grotesque 'Jump Jim Crow.'[42] Certain physical characteristics, clearly on view on stage, are

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stressed in the lyrics. Sal, in 'Polly Wolly Doodle,' has 'laughing eyes and curly hair,' the subject of 'Kentucky Babe' is instructed to 'lay yo' kinky, wool head on yo' mammy's breast,' but poor 'Uncle Ned,' as well as having no teeth and being blind, has 'no wool on de top of his head.' Most blatantly, 'old fickle Ruth,' the subject of 'She's A Thoroughbred', is summed up in language more commonly associated with livestock and their breeding qualities. The lyrics detail her stereotypical characteristics: 'with big thick lips and a big, flat nose, She's inky black witch-hazel eyes and a mammoth mouth.'[43] All in all, she's 'a Thoroughbred and the best in town. She's not a regular nigger, just a chestnut brown.' Inky black or chestnut brown, it is clear that it is her physicality that defines her. As humans were seen as a higher life form than animals, so whites (especially white men) are superior to those with coloured skins.

There are also elements of the characterisation, which while still stereotypical, reflect more of a desired other. Open expressions of sentiment, especially regarding children, are to be found well before it became acceptable for white singers to do so. 'A Lovesick Nigger' and 'A Lovesick Coon' appeared at least twenty years before Bing Crosby. Fatherhood was also celebrated. 'I'm the Father of a Little Black Coon,' while in 'Poor Old Joe' the old man reflects on 'the children so dear that I held on my knee,' 'The Little Alabama Coon' is rocked to sleep: 'go to sleep, my little picaninny.' The death of a child, in particular, evoked outpourings of grief, as in 'Baby Boy Has Passed Away' and 'Close the Shutters, Willy's Dead.' The same sense of a desired other can be found in songs that dwelt on the easy-going negro, indifferent to the Protestant work ethic but it was easy to slip from wistful desire of a release from the rigours of everyday work into 'The Idler' or 'The Lazy Coon's Dream.' And it was but one further step to the negative stereotype of 'The Cunning Little Coon.'

'Coon' songs perpetuated a view of society expressed in terms of an organic, racial hierarchy. Society was contented and in equilibrium, in song at least, and everyone knew their place and fulfilled their roles. Several songs mocked the ludicrous pretentions of 'The Black Philosopher' and 'The Coon Ambassador' but behind the mockery – how could one seriously think of a black man as a philosopher? – was a fear,

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however poorly articulated, that the 'natural order' was not immutable. The denigration of black people on stage, by 'black' people, before a white audience was a powerful assertion of authority but which, at a time when the British Empire was coming under challenge, reflected a degree of anxiety behind the self-confidence. The myth of Dixie-land served a purpose, not just in post-Civil War America.

Minstrelsy outside the music hall

Awareness of the minstrel repertoire was not simply confined to those who attended a minstrel show or a music hall. Sheet music increased its availability, partly as prices fell by the end of the century, and partly as the second-hand music trade grew. As well as specific songs, there were a growing number of compilations. Well into the twentieth century the *People's Song Book* contained Nigger minstrel songs, alongside favourites from across the United Kingdom.[44] Earlier, Regondi produced a series of 'sixpenny concertina books,' which included '60 of Christy's Minstrels Songs' and '60 Collin's Christy's Songs.'[45] However, much more important in the dissemination of popular songs and tunes was the plethora of street musicians and itinerant performers who played a crucial role, bringing music to a much wider audience than ever attended a concert hall.[46]

Charles Mackay, commenting specifically on the 'Jump Jim Crow' craze, noted black-faced street urchins performing 'the uncouth dance … in its full perfection on market nights in any great thoroughfare, and … the words … piercing above all the din and buzz of the multitude.'[47] According to Mayhew, Ethiopian serenaders, comprising the 'better class of ballad-singers,' appeared on the streets of London in the 1840s, inspired by Pell's troupe and the inimitable Juba.[48] 'Our opening chorus,' one Ethiopian serenader informed him, 'was 'The Wild Racoon Track' and we finished up with the 'Railway Overture.' In between times, came songs such as 'Old Joe,' 'Dan Tucker' and 'Going Ober de Mountain.' What he did not mention was the speed with which these songs crossed the Atlantic.[49] The sheer amateurism of the early troupes was striking – 'all thumping and whistling, for nobody knew how to play the banjo then' – as was the necessity to perform whenever and wherever money could be made. 'Regent-

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street, Oxford-street and the greater part of St. James's are our best places' but not always welcoming, whereas Whitechapel was more so but less lucrative. The best pitch was outside a house in which someone was ill. 'We don't move on for less than a shilling … We generally get our two shillings.' More generally, 'the gentry are our best customers,' men more than woman, and the occasional 'gent's wedding' paid well indeed. Saturday night was the time 'to get money from the working people' in the regular markets, especially in 'Cleveland-street … Carnaby-street [and] Edgeware-road.' And there was always work on the Thames steamers, outside public houses or in 'cheap concert rooms' such as the Albion in the notorious Ratcliff-highway.

There were also attractive opportunities elsewhere, 'the watering places,' or Brighton, as well as one-off but profitable events such as a review at Portsmouth to which 'we walked down … a-purpose.' A similar observation was made by a contributor to the *St. James's Magazine* in 1868, who noted 'various bands [of negro minstrels] wandering throughout the country.'[50] If Mayhew's respondents were correct, the number of 'negro serenaders' were in decline, as the returns, once 5s or 6s a day, shrunk to £1 a week; but they never entirely disappeared from city streets, as they relocated, during the summer at least, to resorts such as Margate and Ramsgate, Yarmouth, Scarborough and Blackpool. G H Chirgwin and Gus Elen were two of the more successful music-hall artists whose early career took them to the south coast as minstrels. Others, such as 'Uncle Bones' at Margate became fixtures in a lifetime career on the beach.[51] Such was the growth of seaside musical entertainment that the 'negro minstrel' became a stock figure in the satirical press. *Punch* estimated facetiously, 'twenty-three barrel-organs, eleven troupes of nigger minstrels and four blind beggars with fiddles' in Smellington-super-mare.[52] More soberly, *Cycling*, recommended Bournemouth because 'nigger minstrels are rarer than otherwhere.'[53]

The infiltration of minstrelsy into other aspects of popular music is less easy to establish but scattered evidence points to it's influence being widespread. Robert Whinham, the itinerant Northumbrian fiddler and dance master, wrote variations on the Stephen Foster song, 'Old Folks At Home' soon after it was

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'Uncle Bones,' Margate beach

heard in this country.[54] Feargus O'Connor, better known as a Chartist, boasted of having danced the 'Jim Crow hornpipe.'[55] There were also several 'Jim Crow Quadrilles,' dating from the late-1830s.[56] Unlike their American counterparts, 'Crow Quadrilles,' English 'Jim Crow Quadrilles,' did not use tunes such as 'Zip Coon,' but favoured popular English and Irish tunes such as 'Shepherd's Hey' and 'Dingles [*sic*] Regatta.'[57]

Some concluding observations

Blackface minstrelsy was an important part of Victorian and Edwardian popular music in its own right and had a wider influence on other forms. It developed an entertainment style and a corpus of songs that remained popular in this country until the 1970s. It added to the diversity of popular music and, particularly through its association with ragtime, minstrelsy contributed to one of the major developments of twentieth century popular music – the internationalisation of popular music, which brought with it an ever-increasing 'Tin Pan Alley' influence. More broadly, through its changing stereotypes, it contributed to the way in which English society viewed itself and the world, particularly during the late-nineteenth century years of imperial expansion, in terms of (alleged) racial differences and which left a problematic legacy that was to have a significant impact after the second world war.

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Endnotes

1 M Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy in Britain*, London, Routledge, 2016, p.3. Earlier, (p. xii) he makes the point that, like this study, his 'book operates at an analytical distance from the stereotypical images and views it discusses.'

2 See also J Mullen, 'Anti-Black Racism in British Popular Music (1880-1920).' *French Journal of British Studies*17(2), 2012

3 See for example, Winifred Johnson, speaking of Eugene Stratton, and praising 'his Negro impersonations [as] … quite the most lifelike. [He] had never been so like a Nigger as in his "Dandy Coloured Coon."' *Era*, 'A Chat with Winifred Johnson,' 30 March 1895.

4 For a more detailed discuss see Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, chap. 4 'British Masks' and chap. 5 'Racial Mockery', on which the following paragraph is heavily dependent. See also J S Bratton, 'English Ethiopians: British Audiences and Black-Face Acts, 1835-1865,' *Yearbook of English Studies*, 11, 1981, pp.127-142.

5 Bratton, 'English Ethiopians,' p.139 Both had touring companies that traversed provincial England. The Moore and Burgess Minstrels evolved out of the touring Christy Minstrels.

6 Clearly, blackface music in England did not begin in the 1830s were Some fifty years earlier, Charles Dibdin had included 'negro impersonations' and songs such as 'The Negro and His Banjer' in his *Table Entertainments*, which were well received not only in London. The first volume of Fairburn's *Universal* Songster, a compilation of over one thousand songs, which appeared in 1825, contained eight 'negro' songs. Four of these – 'The Negro Woman's Song,' 'The Desponding Negro Slave,' 'The Negro's Soliloquy' and 'The Negro Mother' – were essential about the eponymous figure's plight. Three others affected 'negro' language but, particularly 'The Negro Drinking Song,' portrayed an infantile figure. In contrast 'Opossum Up a Gum Tree,' which was described as 'a real negro melody' was an authentic slave song, which had been popularised in England by Charles Mathews, who probably performed blackface, after his visit to America and was also associated with the distinguished African-American actor, Ira Aldridge. M Pickering, ''A Jet Ornament to Society:' Black Music in Nineteenth-century Britain' in P Oliver, ed., *Black Music in Britain: Essays on the Afro-Asian Contribution to Popular Music,* Buckingham, Open University Press, 1990 and Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, pp.1-12. For the emergence of American minstrelsy in the 1820s and 1830s see D Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, Cambridge University Press, 1997 and (the idiosyncratic) W T Lhamon, *Raising Cain*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1998.

7 The commercialization of 'Jump Jim Crow' would have delighted Disney. There were Jim Crow hats, pipes and cigars as well as a collection of children's songs, *Jim Crow's Alphabet*, and even an autobiography – a considerable achievement for 'a lame old nigger' celebrated in a 'stupid song.' See also W T Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2003.

8 https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/~w3minstr/featured/eyewitness_juba_content.html More generally, see S J Graham's entry on Lane in Grove Music

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Online https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2285115 Moore and Burgess's star dancer was Joe Brown. *Era* 22 November 1857.

9 For more detail see Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, pp.15-7.

10 D Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1989, p.90 and Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, pp.36-8

11 Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, p.31

12 *Era* 20 December 1863. He was performing at the South London music hall. Mackney started his career in Bristol in the mid-1840s. later playing Manchester, Salford, Sheffield and Birmingham before appearing in London.

13 'Monymusk. was a well-known reel or strathspey, with links to both Scotland and Ireland, and 'Tink a Tink,' which was collected by Cecil Sharp as an English country dance tune, was also included in, for example, *Scottish Dance Tunes from the Isles of Man* (!), 1804. Information from Mackney's Banjo Tutor, 1863 at https://archive.org/details/MackneyTutorCopy

14 *Era* 22 November 1857. See also 20 May 1866 which referred to 'one of those peculiar jigs which "champions" usually delight.' Brown's great rival was Wash Norton, a member of Moore & Bryant's Minstrels, who won a disputed victory in a championship 'Grand Match Dance' at the Cambridge music-hall in 1870. As well as the title a bet of £100 a side was at stake. *Era* 22 May 1870

15 The Dolphin Inn Music Hall advertised for 'a good Nigger Singer and Dancer' *Era* 9 December 1855 and again 18 October 1857.

16 *Era* 19 March 1865

17 The following references are drawn from a more thorough examination of the *Huddersfield Chronicle* and *Huddersfield Examiner* than the collection of newspaper clippings consulted by Pickering. Henry Phillip's 'Original American Entertainment' at the town's Philosophical-hall is the first recorded performance of 'negro melodies' in the town. *Huddersfield Examiner*, 24 December 1853.

18 A troupe calling themselves The Original Christy Minstrels also appeared at the Gymnasium-hall in 1872, which was somewhat surprising as the 'Farewell Visit of the Real and Original Christy Minstrels' had taken place in the town in 1869. In addition, Ramsey & Newcomb's Minstrels, an eighteen piece troupe, the Campbell Minstrels, a mere thirteen in number, the Harry Templeton troupe and Buckley's Serenaders all played in the town.

19 Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, pp.59-60

20 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 22 January 1865 and 17 July 1864. See also 24 April 1864 ('The Great Ben Ray'), 29 October 1865 ('The Brothers Graham, Nigger Vocalists and natives of Huddersfield') and 16 January 1869 ('the oldest organized troupe of Christy Minstrels')

21 *Huddersfield Chronicle,* 10 December 1864 & 4 February 1866, and 4 February 1866 and *Era* 29 October 1865. The Carrolls and Dick Crowther were a regionally successful troupe who toured throughout the north west and north east of England but also appeared (once) in London.

22 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 7 April 1891 and 25 September 1897

23 *Stage* 11 May 1911. This was not strictly true as there were Chirgwin imitators.

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24 Biographical information gleaned from *Era 10 October 1896, Stage* 11 May 1911, 16 November 1927 and 27 July 1995 and *Music Hall and Theatre Review* 13 February 1897. See also S Featherstone, 'Chirgwin, George' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 at https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/70293
25 He combined musical skill and comic ability to create another white-face stage character, an 'intensely funny … piping Scotchman whose Highland costume [was] highly ludicrous.' *Era* 7 October 1881
26 Mullen, 'Anti-Black Racism,' p.64
27 Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, p.98
28 Mullen, 'Anti-Black Racism,' p.10
29 *Era* 13 October 1888. Hunter was an important composer who wrote songs ranging from 'Dixie pastoral ('My Dear Old Cabin Home') to 'motto' songs ('Do Not Nurse Your Anger' and 'Seek To Do the Right Thing') but also included anti-feminist numbers, such as 'I've Got the Ooperzootic,' which ridiculed Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, pp.37-50 and Scott, *Singing Bourgeois* pp.90-2.
30 Indeed, there was a point in the early 1880s when he was criticised for not varying his act. *Stage* 25 November 1881
31 See for example, 'Skylark, Skylark' discussed in chapter 10.
32 A 1911 recording can be heard at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xq3pbPrRXJ4
33 A very scratchy, and almost inaudible recording can be heard at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbciBbYaDIU
34 *Era*, '"The Whistling Coon" At Home,' 4 March 1893
35 He appeared at various venues in the midlands and north of England. In 1895 he appeared twice in Hull. The first time he was 'not well received by the pitgoers in Hull' but the second was better received. *Hull Daily Mail* 27 & 28 February and 13 March 1895.
36 Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy*, draws attention to the incongruity of many 'coon' love songs.
37 Mullen, 'Anti-Black Racim,' p.6 and p.10
38 The following draws in part on Mullen, 'Anti-Black Racism' but the bulk of the songs quoted are from readily available well into the second quarter of the twentieth century in published community song books.
39 See also C A Whites 'I'se Gwine back to Dixie.'
40 The importance of self-control emerges clearly in motto songs, such as 'Do Not Speak the Angry Word' and 'Do Not Nurse Your Anger.'
41 See also 'Happy Little Sam,' 'The Laughing Darkie' and 'Happy Am de Boys Down Here.'
42 T Scriven, 'The Jim Crow Craze in London's Press and Streets, 1836-39,' *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 19(1), 2014, pp.93-109
43 She is also a large woman: 'And on her bed because she's stout, There's sandpaper sheets so she can't slide out.'
44 Cited in Mullen, 'Anti-Black Racism,' p.4
45 *Era* 22 December 1867. Also in the series were '40 of 'The Great Vance's Comic Songs' and '60 Standard Scotch and Irish Tunes.' Regondi was best known as a classical guitarist but was also a virtuoso on the concertina.

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46 G F Rehin, 'Blackface Street Minstrels in Victorian London and its Resorts: Popular Culture and its Racial Connotations As Revealed in Polite Opinion,' *Journal of Popular Culture*, 1981, 15(1), pp. 19-38.) The seemingly minor importance of street music is misleading as it links in with a number of larger debates. The debates about street musicians (especially in London) in the 1850s and 1860s relate to question of social space, urban order and the role of the state in general and the police in particular. In broader terms the topic raises more fundamental questions about 'hearing history.' For differing attitudes towards street music see the debates on the Bill for the Better Regulation of Street Music within the Metropolitan Police District especially, *Hansard* vol.172, 17 July 1863 (Lord Fermoy) and vol. 175, 9 June 1864 (Thomas Hankey).
47 C Mackay, *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds,* 'Popular Follies in Great Cities,' London, 1841, p.146 at https://vantagepointtrading.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Charles_Mackay-Extraordinary_Popular_Delusions_and_the_Madness_of_Crowds.pdf
48 H Mayhew, 'An Ethiopian Serenader' in P Quennell, ed., *Mayhew's Characters*, London, Spring Books, 1951, pp.259-65
49 'The Wild Raccoon Track' was written in 1843, the same year as 'Old Dan Tucker' was popularised by the Virginia Minstrels and Dan Emmett's 'I Gwine Ober de Mountain' was published in America.
50 Cited in Rehin 'Blackface Street Minstrels,' p.22
51 In many resorts by the turn of the twentieth century blackface minstrels had been replaced by whiteface pierrots.
52 *Punch* 3 September 1898. See also its observations on Slopsea-super-mare (23 August 1882) and Starmouth (10 & 17 September and 1 October 1887). Similarly, *Fun,* 18 August 1896, included in its 'Don'ts for the Seaside' the following advice: 'Don't encourage nigger minstrels on the sands' as well as 'Don't cycle in your bathing costume.'
53 *Cycling* 16 December 1893
54 The T Armstrong manuscript is dated c.1850. G Dixon, *Remember Me: The Fiddle Music of Robert Whinham*, Wallace Music, Pathhead, Midlothian, 1995, p.54. 'Old Folks At Home' was written by Foster for the Christy's Minstrels in 1851. They appeared in England for the first time in 1857. The Armstrong manuscript also contains Whinham's variations on 'Meg Merriles' as well as original compositions, such as 'The Dolsimor Waltz' and 'The De'ils in the Fish' and 'This Is No My Ain Lassie,' both with variations.
55 *Morning Post*, 4 June 1852' O'Connor referred to it as a once-popular dance.
56 *Norwich Mercury*, 19 August 1837 and a general reference in *Era*, 16 December 1838
57 For Crow Quadrilles see Library of Congress *https://www.loc.gov/resource/sm1837.010990.0?st=gallery* For Jim Crow Quadrilles see http://richardrobinson.tunebook.org.uk/list/Tune?searchterms[andfields]=1&searchterms[simple][text]=jim%20crow nos. 1 & 3

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