

Juba's Dance: An Assessment of Newly Acquired Documentation

Stephen Johnson, University of Toronto

In 1947 the dance and popular culture historian Marian Hannah Winter wrote an article called 'Juba and American Minstrelsy,' in which she traced– and made significant– the life of the black American dancer William Henry Lane, who performed in the United States and in Britain as 'Juba' during the 1840s.¹ That biography portrayed a clear path of rising prominence and influence. Born in the United States, circa 1825, Juba was– according to Winter– performing in dance houses in New York City by the early 1840s, where he was described by Charles Dickens. Juba danced in competitions, variety houses, and with a new phenomenon, the minstrel show, until 1848, when he travelled to England. He appeared at Vauxhall Gardens with the minstrel troupe 'Pell's Ethiopian Serenaders,' where his unusual dance technique drew extravagant praise. Juba remained in England, on tour, until his early death in 1852.

Prior to Winter's article, Juba was a forgotten figure, the only references to him a few lines in histories of minstrelsy.² Winter carved out for Juba a place of importance in subsequent histories of American performance– that he provided integrity to a developing indigenous dance idiom, based on his direct links with an African-American folk culture. His active participation in the development of that idiom– to Winter, he was the progenitor of what became jazz and tap dance– re-appropriated for black cultural history what otherwise was a clear case, in American blackface minstrelsy, of theft. Juba became, in her words, the 'most influential single performer of nineteenth century American dance' (p28) . A 'great man,' historiographically speaking.

There are a number of reasons for re-examining Juba. First, Winter's history is based on relatively few documents (perhaps half a dozen in total); further evidence can add to the complexity and the understanding of this figure– developing the narrative, if you like. Second, much research has gone into the study of theatrical blackface, African American cultural history, and dance, in the decades since Winter's study– by Douglas Lorimer, Hans Nathan, the Stearnses, Lynne Emery, Robert Toll, and more recently by Eric Lott, William Mahar, Dale Cockrell and Brenda Dixon Gottschild (see Works Cited). All these studies explore a greater range of available documents pertaining to the minstrel show, using a variety of theoretical models, that illuminate the deeply ambivalent relationship audiences had with that form– ridicule and sentimental identification,

nostalgia and a carnivalesque rebelliousness. Such work provides a macrohistorical context unavailable to Winter, that can enrich a more focussed study of Juba's dance. Juba represents what microhistorians— and I consider myself one such— call an 'exceptional normal.'³ That is, Juba appears to be accepted within his immediate historical context, but for reasons that we do not understand— a black performer in an otherwise exclusively white medium. Microhistory focuses on just such cracks in our preconceptions of a society, in the hope of enriching our understanding.

The balance of this paper will be divided into four parts: a revised narrative based on additional documentation; a brief look for the kinds of statements these documents might tell us about his dance; a look at the degree to which he manifests the 'Africanist Aesthetic' heralded by Winter and developed by Robert Thompson, among others; and, finally, I want to return to Juba as the 'exceptional normal' with some final thoughts. I hope the brevity of the following will be understood as introductory and not conclusive. Far from it.⁴

First, the revised history: In 1848 a young dancer of colour (he was perhaps seventeen) arrived in London, billed as 'Boz's Juba,' Boz referring to the aforementioned description by Dickens. This youth may very well have been the 'Juba' or 'Master Juba' who appeared in competitions, and on minstrel and variety stages in the north-east from 1845-48; the reference to Dickens is dubious puffery.⁵ This young dancer—whichever he was— did create a sensation at Vauxhall Gardens. I can with some certainty say he was the most-noticed variety performer during the summer of 1848 in London, and London was a crowded field.⁶ Juba appeared with the Ethiopian Serenaders, led by Gilbert W. Pell (or Pelham), who had toured England two years previously to great acclaim, performing with a minstrel troupe for a full year in the St James's Theatre, as well as a command performance for Queen Victoria. This troupe, and Pell in particular, can be credited with making minstrelsy 'safe' for the British middle class—with a 'cleaned-up' act and dressed in tuxedos, minstrels became fashionable. This is significant, since I suspect that, in 1848, Pell made Juba 'safe' (I will return to this subject).

Pell's Serenaders, with Juba, toured throughout England and Scotland for the next 18 months, playing in legitimate theatres and lecture halls. In the summer of 1850 this relationship—the longest continuous tour of a minstrel show I have found to that date—ended. Juba— in an irrevocable turn in his performative fortunes— is next noticed in a working class music hall, playing solo. For the balance of his career, he appeared as an entr'acte in lesser theatres, and in concert

saloons. In effect, he left both minstrelsy and the middle classes behind, and returned to the locus of his performances in New York. At this point, not surprisingly—but frustratingly for the micro-historian—he all but disappears from the documentary record, which is, after all, serving the literate classes. Where his name is recorded, two features stand out. He is associated with the ‘gallery crowd,’ his popularity there reported with some disdain (his dance is now ‘rougher and less refined’). Also there is reference to something disreputable, dangerous about his dance— he ‘jumps too fast,’ and is advised to be ‘wise in time’ and slow down (unspoken is the phrase ‘or else’).⁷

Then Juba disappears. There is reference to his performance—and possible death—in Dublin in September 1851. Finally, an early posthumous reference to this once-lionized performer, written by T. Allston Brown, places his skeleton on display in Sheffield. Surely a dancer’s hell, if true—and there is circumstantial evidence that it is.⁸

Some documents are more useful, more telling than others. As examples, two extended and quite different accounts express the range of attitudes. The first is a thankfully detailed description from a Manchester newspaper indicating the frame of the performance⁹: the characters were grotesquely dressed, and excited laughter from the audience; there was some embarrassment at the extent of this laughter among the more genteel members of the audience; the performers were highly skilled harmonic singers; Juba is described in near-obsessive detail; and so on. The second review on this page is the only ‘bad’ review of Juba’s performance with the minstrel show.¹⁰ Bad reviews are often reliable, I find, because they sanctimoniously believe that if they simply describe what’s there, everyone will agree with the negative verdict. In this review we have: a walk-around, apparently in a kind of ‘strut’; jumping backwards; shaking thighs; walking on knees; and falling backwards onto the floor. To this the reviewer adds the noise of boots hitting the floor, not a delicate tap, but the loud stamping of oversized boots. Based on these and the other documents, I distinguish a number of broad characteristics about his performance, which I’ll organize into a series of contradictions:

1. He appears to have been fully integrated into the minstrel show, playing the tambourine as the ‘endman’ opposite Pell, singing songs like ‘Juliana Johnson’ and ‘Come Back, Steben.’ He was even involved in audience participation events, like ‘conundrum’ (or pun) contests. On the other hand, in advertising, reviews, and on playbills, he appears to have been quite segregated—I choose the word carefully—from the rest of the company.

2. Juba's three dances took two disparate forms. The first was a 'wench' dance, in drag, to the singing of 'Lucy Long' by Pell. The Manchester review describes a costume of clashing colours which, I believe, argues for a comic-grotesque parody of hand-me-down plantation fashion. This is supported by the presence of the clown-like Pell, with collar so wide his head could disappear inside. 'Wench' dancing was an early fixture of the minstrel show (although advertised as 'new,' which it may have been to this 'new' audience); Juba's presence in it is, in fact, a sign of his integration into the troupe. Tellingly, Juba did no 'wench' dancing outside of the minstrel show.

In contrast, Juba performed 'Festival' and 'Plantation' dances in some kind of formal dress, this time accompanied by Thomas F. Briggs on the banjo. I say in contrast, because I believe the most extraordinary descriptions of Juba's dance could not have been made about someone in a dress, but here, performing with an important early practitioner of this folk instrument. I take this as a serious business, an exhibition, as many critics indicated of 'the dances of his own simple people on festive occasions.' (Manchester review)

3. On the one hand, there is a precision to the descriptions of Juba that is excessive—there are few performers from this period for whom I have height and head size (Manchester review). It is, again choosing my words carefully, anthropological. Just so some descriptions of his dance, which are given to lists of steps and movements (shuffles, double-shuffles, hops, steps, and so on), and a variety of comparisons—with the highland fling, sword dance, Lancashire clog, hornpipe, minuet, polka, as well as whirling dervishes, and the 'willies.'¹¹ And yet—despite the detail—we find the oft-repeated stock phrase that 'any attempt to describe his dancing would be futile.'¹²

4. On the one hand is an admiration for the precision of his movements, and of the sounds of his boots—'in exquisite time,' says one. The bills call for silence from the audience so that Juba's percussive art could be appreciated. He is praised for his clarity and control.¹³ On the other hand, there are frequent descriptions of exuberant, wild abandon. In the following example, I believe the author was trying to capture the rhythm in the prose:

Surely he cannot be flesh and blood, but some more subtle substance, or how could he turn, and twine, and twist, and twirl, and hop, and jump, and kick, and throw his feet almost with a velocity that makes one think they are playing hide-and seek with a

flash of lightning! Heels or toes, on feet or on knees, on the ground or off, it is all the same to Juba; his limbs move as if they were stuffed with electric wires....¹⁴

5. On the one hand, the dance seems to be all about speed; and yet there is reference to a juxtaposing slow movement ‘[T]here is both light and shade,’ says one reviewer, ‘from his most frenzied movement to the most subdued demeanour possible....’ ‘Now he languishes,’ says another, ‘now burns, now love seems to sway his motions, and anon rage seems to impel his steps. Juba's plantation dance is a sort of terpsichorean illustration of Collins's "Ode on the Passions.”’¹⁵

We are at the mercy of the tyranny of these documents in any effort to ‘get to’ the performance—created by middle-class white men, dubious in their reliability, contradictory when not nonsensical. On the other hand, they carry the remnants of the choreography they witnessed—we do what we can with them.

It is possible, first of all, to find similarities between Juba's documentation and other evidence concerning period minstrel dances. I'll note a few examples (using Hans Nathan's itemization), although a closer examination is needed.¹⁶

Iconography shows a drunken man imitating Juba. He performs a high-kick with arms and hat outstretched, mouth wide open, in what looks like high-stepping from a cake-walk. A related caricature shows Juba with one leg raised above the hip, waiting to come down hard on the floor, knees bent and spread apart, his arms in a quintessential minstrel pose, close to the body, splayed out from the elbows. This image appears to be a more extreme version of the position in the most common image of Juba dancing, which shows him with his hands in his pockets (cool torso, hot legs, argues Brenda Dixon Gottschild—an idea I will return to in a moment).¹⁷

A little more imagination must be applied to the eyewitness descriptions. In general I can envision a slow walk-around interrupted by any number of steps: the pigeon wing (the jump and clicking of heels) in the ‘leaps and hops and jumps’ combined with sound; an early form of the ‘Charleston’ maneuver, the repeated crossing of legs forward and backward—when Juba ‘ties his limbs into double knots’; perhaps the strutting of the ‘long-bow J’ or ‘trucking’ or the ‘turkey trot’ in the phrase ‘walking around the stage with an air of satisfaction and his toes turned in’; certainly the stock backward spring is there; and in depictions of aggressive and noisy tap with extreme movement and gesture, perhaps steps like ‘Walking the jawbone’ and ‘Tracking upon the heel.’ Indeed, the words used throughout these documents resonate when compared with period descriptions:

‘he shakes his leg,’ he ‘bounds, whirls,’ leaps, slides, gyrates, turns, twines, twists, twirls, hops, jumps, kicks, throws his feet, jumps, capers, crosses his legs, stamps his heels, ‘whilst his feet still seem upon the ground.’ He’s on his feet, on his knees, on his ankles. His legs are ‘rubber.’ And so it goes. The problem with microhistorians—compounded, as we all know, when dealing with performance—is that we are in the business of making as much as we can with as little as we’re given. I might see any number of dance steps here, if I look longingly enough.¹⁸

The most important of Winter’s assertions—echoed in all discussion of Juba since her article—is that Juba’s dance embodied an Africanist aesthetic, and thus contributed to that which became distinct in American dance. I conclude with three questions concerning this claim. First: to what extent does the evidence support it?

I could argue against it, I suppose. I am unconvinced by the late and spurious documents suggesting that Juba learned to dance from black performers, that he was raised in the Irish-Black cultural hotbed of New York’s Five Points.¹⁹ I am certainly unconvinced by any eyewitness reference to his dances as ‘authentic’ depictions of African American culture. Juba was, first and foremost, in show business, and no doubt compromised mightily to survive in it for as long as he did.

But then I consider this 1838 description of a plantation ‘Juber’ dance, quoted by Lynne Emery, in which ‘the main figure was the banjor-man:

Tumming his banjor, grinning with ludicrous gesticulations and playing off his wild notes to the company.’ The dancers, ‘with open mouth and pearl white teeth, [were] clapping “Juber” to the notes of the banjor...[They] rested the right foot on the heel, and its clap on the floor was in perfect unison with the notes of the banjor, and palms of the hands on the corresponding extremities; while the dancers were all jigging it away in the merriest possible gaiety of heart, having the most ludicrous twists, wry jerks, and flexible contortions of the body and limbs, that human imagination can divine.’²⁰

It is no stretch of the imagination for me to see in this description, Juba and Briggs on stage, the ‘banjor’ man and the ‘clapper’—the words ‘ludicrous,’ ‘twist,’ ‘jerk,’ ‘contortions’ resonate. Even the prominent reference to mouth, teeth, and grinning, compare with descriptions of Juba’s laughs, and ‘trills,’ and

‘screams,’ as he danced.²¹ There is an argument to be made that Juba was performing a quite specific, African-infused plantation dance.

In more general terms, it’s possible to argue that both Juba and this ‘jubar dance’ embody an Africanist aesthetic. If I accept the basic criteria of that aesthetic—outlined by Robert Thompson, among others—I look to the documents for the following attributes²²: the overwhelming dominance of percussion in the structure of performance, even in those parts of the dance that do not involve making noise (as Thompson says [100], ‘percussive flavouring governs the motion of those parts of the body that carry no weight—the gestures—as well as the steps that do.’); ‘the simultaneous execution of several time signatures’ (102), so that ‘the various limbs and members, head, shoulders, and legs are all moving simultaneously, but each in a rhythm of its own....’ (103);²³ a whole-body integration of sound and movement, music, song and dance, the body as instrument (Thompson calls it ‘apart playing’ [104]); and ‘antiphony,’ or ‘call and response,’ in which habitually there is a dualistic competitive structure (106-7). Brenda Dixon Gottschild, following Thompson, adds to this aesthetic ‘high-affect juxtaposition,’ the sudden change of tempo and tone; and ‘ephebism’— the youthful expression of vitality, range, and exuberance. In general, theorists of the Africanist aesthetic talk about the ‘Cool’—as Gottschild puts it, ‘composure’ combined with ‘vitality,’ ‘carelessness cultivated with a calculated aesthetic clarity,’ expressed with an arrogant saunter juxtaposed by a ‘brilliant smile.’²⁴

I see these attributes exploding from the documents describing Juba’s dance. In the chaotic and confused descriptions of Juba I read an effort to describe several things at once—several parts of the body moving simultaneously at different speeds and in different rhythms. I read an effort to come to terms with sudden, unaccustomed changes of tone. In the magnificent failure of description—the flood of words, the exuberant protestations that it is indescribable—I see a reflection of the speed, surprise, and exuberance of the Africanist aesthetic.

The second question: why was Juba allowed to disseminate this aesthetic? He was clearly doing something quite different from his fellow minstrels, and just as clearly did not belong on that stage with them. Winter’s idea that he was simply too good to suppress doesn’t convince me; there are too many instances to the contrary. I believe, instead, that Pell made Juba safe for the middle class by presenting him as an exotic figure ‘on exhibition’—not imitating, not acting, but ‘being,’ on exhibition as surely as were the Kaffir Zulus, the Arab families, the Ojibway warriors, or the Bushmen who were touring at this time, and to the same venues. There was even a touring exhibition of ‘authentic’ southern plantation

slave life at this time—that was later exposed as just another minstrel troupe.²⁵ I note the frequent reference to authenticity, the anthropological precision of descriptions, and in particular the subsequent negative portrayal of him without the context of the ‘exhibition’ within the minstrel show, when he now had to be seen for what he was—a parodic performer of skill and of colour, who appeared to be able to whip the working classes into a frenzy. Not a plantation slave ‘illustrat[ing] the dances of his own simple people on festive occasions.’

My last question is this: Did Juba pass whatever was original about his dance on to the general culture? Was he a ‘great man’? Perhaps not. The absence of evidence about him after he left the minstrel show indicates a declining influence. The brief, vividly racist biographies of him prior to Winter’s article indicate a concerted effort to diminish him. In the history of minstrelsy, Pell’s date of death and the location of his grave site are known, and this is not unusual. Minstrelsy was a brotherhood, to which Juba’s sad, brief narrative served as a negative moral example.²⁶ I would further suggest that, based on these documents, Juba’s dance was both extreme and *sui generis*. Africanist it may have been, and mesmerizing; but it reminds me more of ‘eccentric,’ than of mainstream tap or jazz. I have to wonder if, as time passed, without further African infusions of culture and talent, Juba’s influence moved to the margins.

Nevertheless, I believe Winter. After all, where does cultural transmission take place—in the word or in the body? Juba was extraordinarily popular. ‘Juba’ dancers and ‘juba’ dancing became a descriptive in variety houses.²⁷ The antidote to Allston Brown’s demeaning comment rests in the first posthumous reference to Juba, in Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, in which the author transcribes an interview with a street-minstrel, just four or five years after Juba’s death (Vol 3, p191).²⁸ Having disappeared from the written culture, Juba appears here, on the streets, embedded in a performative culture. Mayhew asks where the minstrel learned his craft. It was from Pell’s Ethiopian Serenaders, says the minstrel: ‘Pell’s gang was at the top of the tree.’ Then, I like to imagine, the speaker paused for a moment to reflect, and his next statement took an unexpected turn: ‘Juba was along with Pell. Juba was a first class— a regular A1—he was a regular black, and a splendid dancer in boots.’

ENDNOTES

1. Winter, Marian Hannah, 'Juba and American Minstrelsy,' in *Dance Index* 6.2, February 1947 28-47.
2. See Rice, Edward LeRoy. *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*. New York: np, 1911, p 42, 48; and Day, Charles H. *Fun in Black; with The Origin of Minstrelsy by Col. T. Allston Brown*. New York: DeWitt Publishing House, 1893, p 9; among other examples.
3. 'Exceptional normal' is used by Edoardo Grendi (quoted in Levi, p 109). Other related terms include: 'an opaque document,' in Robert Darnton, p 5); a 'dissonance,' in Carlo Ginzburg, p xix; and a 'contradiction of normative systems,' in Giovanni Levi, p 107). See Works Cited.
4. The original talk, of which this publication is a record, included a handout of document excerpts. A selection of these will be incorporated into subsequent endnotes. As I indicated in the talk, I would be interested in any commentary on the documents and their reading here: my email address is stephen.johnson@utoronto.ca . Note that some materials on this subject have been written about in another context; see Works Cited.
5. As the most widely disseminated description of African-American dance, written by England's most famous writer, any appropriate performer coming to England would refer to it as a matter of course in advertising. The American 'Juba' became 'Boz's Juba,' and the Dickens' description quoted widely. It was a relationship that no one—including Dickens—would have been able to confirm or deny. There are questions concerning the dancer's age as well, in a discussion of his relationship with Dickens. The quotation is printed in Winter's original article, and is available in Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (London: Oxford, 1957, pp 90-1).

'Five or six couples come upon the floor, marshalled by a lively young negro, who is the wit of the assembly, and the greatest dancer known. He never leaves off making queer faces, and is the delight of all the rest, who grin from ear to ear incessantly....suddenly the lively hero dashes in to the rescue....Single shuffle, double shuffle, cut and cross-cut; snapping

his fingers, rolling his eyes, turning in his knees, presenting the backs of his legs in front, spinning about on his toes and heels like nothing but the man's fingers on the tambourine; dancing with two left legs, two right legs, two wooden legs, two wire legs, two spring legs--all sorts of legs and no legs--what is this to him?....'

6. The following brief itinerary is based on a reading of accumulated recent documentation taken from a variety of sources, only a selection of which will be cited here. Other sources will be published in due course.

7. *Era*, 4 August 1850: '[Juba is] jumping very fast at the Colosseum, but too fast is worse than too slow, and we advise [Juba] to be wise in time. It is easier to jump down than to jump up'; *Era*, 11 August 1850: 'Juba has jumped away--by the way of an earnest yet friendly caution, let us hope that he will not throw himself away. Be wise in time is a wholesome motto'; *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 30 November 1850: 'The performances of Boz's Juba have created quite a sensation in the gallery, who greeted his marvellous feats of dancing with thunders of applause and a standing *encore*. In all the rougher and less refined departments of his art, Juba is a perfect master.'

8. Juba's last reported appearance (from the documentation accumulated to date) was in Dublin: 'DUBLIN--CITY TAVERN, CAPEL-STREET...Boz's Juba appears here nightly and is well received' (*Era* 14 Sept 1851). A performer with a (frustratingly) similar name ('Jumbo') is reported as dying in Dublin two weeks later. The report of Juba's exhibition after death follows: '[Juba] married too late (and a white woman besides), and died early and miserably. In a note addressed to Charley White, Juba informed him that, when next he should be seen by him [White], he would be riding in his own carriage. It has been said that in 1852 his skeleton, without the carriage, was on exhibition at the Surrey Music Hall, Sheffield, England' (Col T. Allston Brown, *New York Clipper*, 4 November 1876). I have discussed this document's potential accuracy, and what it might tell us about Juba's life and death, in a paper for the American Society for Theatre Research (November 2002). The subject-- on early minstrelsy, Juba, and Anatomical Museums-- is being rewritten for publication elsewhere.

9. Extended Documentary Sample--review of Juba as Lucy Long: *Manchester Guardian*, 18th October 1848 FREE-TRADE HALL.-- "Juba" and the

Serenaders.— A party of serenaders, under the leadership of Mr. G. W. Pell, late of St. James's Theatre, gave one of their peculiar exhibitions on Monday evening in the Free-trade Hall. They are six in number, and are mostly happy in the possession of nigger-like physiognomies. The "making up" of their leader was extremely ludicrous. With literally a yard of shirt collar and frill, it was scarcely possible to witness his extravagant grimaces, without a most undignified unbending of the facial muscles, and many were the handkerchiefs employed to conceal the smothered laughter of their fair owners. The party have some good voices among them, and they harmonize well together; indeed, the melody of several of the chants, and other concerted pieces, was so pleasing to the ear, that they were loudly encored. But the great feature of the entertainment, and that which we imagine attracted the large and respectable audience present, was undoubtedly "Master Juba," the immortalized of Boz. This "phenomenon" (as the bills describe him) is a copper-coloured votary of Terpsichore,— the Monsieur Perrot of Negro life in the southern states; and possesses the additional attraction of being a "real nigger," and not a "sham," like his vocal associates. He is apparently about eighteen years of age; about 5 feet 3 inches in height; of slender make, yet possessing great muscular activity. His head is very small, and his countenance, when at rest, has a rather mild, sedate, and far from unpleasing expression. His first performance was "Miss Lucy Long, in character." With a most bewitching bonnet and veil, a *very* pink dress, beflounced to the waist, lace-fringed trousers of the most spotless purity, and red leather boots,— the ensemble completed by the green parasol and white cambric pocket handkerchief,— Master Juba certainly looked the black demoiselle of the first ton to the greatest advantage. The playing and singing by the serenaders of a version of the well-known negro ditty, furnished the music to Juba's performance, which was after this fashion:— Promenading in a circle to the left for a few bars, till again facing the audience, he then commenced a series of steps, which altogether baffle description, from their number, oddity, and the rapidity with which they were executed. The highland fling, the sailor's hornpipe, and other European dances, seemed to have been laid under contribution, and intermixed with a number of steps which we may call "Juba's own," for surely their like was never before seen for grotesque agility, not altogether unmixed with grace. The promenade was then repeated; then more dancing; and so on, to the end of the song. His other performances were called the "marriage festival" and "plantation dances," in which, in male costume, he illustrated the dances of his own simple people on festive occasions. They were even more extraordinary than the first,— the

grotesque element, in the character of the steps, largely predominating, and the physical exertion apparently much greater. The same peculiarity, of the alternate promenade and dance, was observable in both. To us, the most interesting part of the performance was the exact time, which, even in the most complicated and difficult steps, the dancer kept to the music. He appears to be quite an enthusiast in his art, and every round of applause he received seemed to stimulate him to fresh exertion. Altogether, Master Juba's Terpsichorean performances are well worth a visit.

10. Juba's Only (Known) Bad Review with the Minstrel Show: From *The Puppet-Show* 12 August 1848: 'The principal feature in entertainments at Vauxhall is Juba: as such at least he is put forth—or rather put first—by the proprietors. Out of compliment to Dickens, this extraordinary nigger is called 'Boz's Juba,' in consequence, we believe, of the popular writer having said a good word for him in his *American Notes*: on this principle we could not mention the Industrious Fleas as being clever without having those talented little animals puffed all over London as being under the overwhelming patronage of the *Showman*. Juba's talent consists in walking round the stage with an air of satisfaction and with his toes turned in; in jumping backwards in a less graceful manner than we should have conceived possible; and in shaking his thighs like a man afflicted with palsy. He makes a terrible clatter with his feet, not owing so much to activity on his part as to stupidity on the part of his boot-maker, who has furnished him with a pair of clumsy Wellingtons sufficiently large for the feet and legs of all the Ethiopians in London: besides this, he sometimes moves about the stage on his knees, as if he was praying to be endowed with intelligence, and had unlimited credit with his tailor. As a last resource, he falls back on the floor.... [*Describing a colleague*] When again we saw him he was labouring (like a horse—or, rather, an ass) under the influence of champagne. We understood that he was imitating Juba, and he behaved so ridiculously that he may actually be said to have surpassed him.' [*an illustration accompanies this quotation*]

11. See Manchester review, above; also *Era*, 18 June 1848: '...it is the most wonderful conglomeration of every step that was ever thought of, and reminds the spectator more of one of the "dancing dervishes," or fabled willis, than anything else he can think of....'

12. *Era*, 18 June 1848.

13. *Birmingham Journal*, 16 December 1848: ‘all is in character, all in keeping, and in exquisite time.’ *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 28 October 1848: ‘Mr. Pell would take it as a great favour if the Audience will keep as quite [sic] as possible during Master Juba's Dances; by doing so, they will hear the exact time he keeps with his extraordinary steps.’ See also *Manchester Guardian*, 18 October 1848: ‘To us, the most interesting part of the performance was the exact time, which, even in the most complicated and difficult steps, the dancer kept to the music.’

14. *Manchester Examiner*, October 17, 1848.

15. *Birmingham Journal*. 16 December 1848; *Morning Post*, June 21st, 1848.

16. See *Dan Emmett and the rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy*, Chapter 5, pp70-97.

17. The first two images are associated with the review of Juba's performance at Vauxhall Gardens published in *The Puppet-Show*, 12 August 1848. The third is from the *Era*, 18 June 1848, and is the most widely published image; it is in Winter's original article. The reference to Gottschild is from *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance*, p98-9.

18. *Liverpool Journal* 11 November 1848 (‘...whilst his feet still seem upon the ground, he contrives to beat distinctly through all the variations of a popular and fashionable tune. He bounds, whirls, and astonishes, by his unexpected and graceful gyrations, which are always, however, in strict accordance with the harmony which it is the province of his activity to exemplify.’); *The Mirror and United Kingdom Magazine*, July 1848 (‘Such mobility of muscles, such flexibility of joints, such boundings, such slidings, such gyrations, such toes and such heelings, such backwardings and forwardings, such posturings, such firmness of foot, such elasticity of tendon, such mutation of movement, such vigour, such variety, such natural grace, such powers of endurance, such potency of pastern....’); *Morning Post* 21 June 1848 (‘He jumps, he capers, he crosses his legs, he stamps his heels, he dances on his knees, on his ankles, he ties his limbs into double knots, and untwists them as one might a skein of silk....’); *Manchester Examiner*, October 17, 1848 (‘how could he turn, and twine, and twist, and twirl, and hop, and jump, and kick, and throw his feet’—see above note). References to

specific dances are to Nathan Chapter Five.

19. Winter's source for this information appears to be a *New York Herald*, August 11, 1895 reminiscence.

20. Quoted in Lynne Emery, *Black Dance: From 1619 to Today*, p96. Her citation reads: William B. Smith, 'The Persimmon Tree and the Bear Dance,' *Farmer's Register VI* (April 1838), cited in Bruce Jackson, ed. *The Negro and his Folklore in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals, Vol. XVIII, Publications of the American Folklore Society, Bibliographical and Special Series*, Kenneth S. Goldstein, ed. (Austin: UofTexas Press, 1967) p7.

21. *Morning Post*, 21 June 1848: 'He trills, he shakes, he screams, he laughs, as though by the very genius of African melody.'

22. All quotations are from Robert Farris Thompson, 'An Aesthetic of the Cool: West African Dance,' in *The Theatre of Black Americans*, edited by Errol Hill (see works cited), 99-111. Originally published in *African Forum*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 1966), pp85-102.

23. Thompson, quoting Deborah Bertonoff, *Dance Towards The Earth* (Tel Aviv: Alytiros, 1963), p46.

24. See 'First Premises of an Africanist Aesthetic,' Chapter Two of *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance*.

25. The exhibition of plantation life is noted in the *Era*, 9 November 1851, at the Linwood Gallery, London, a venue that often 'exhibited' exotic cultures (see, for example, a review of a 'Mahomedan Family' in *Era*, 7 December 1851). The same exhibition appears to be performing in Dublin, Music Hall, Abbey Street, as 'real negroes,' but noted as in fact 'mixed' and therefore 'fit for penny booth or the free singing tap,' and not this venue (*Era*, 21 December 1851). During the summer of 1851, Pell appeared at Cremorne Gardens in London at the same time as an exhibition of 'Bosjesmen' (see *Era*). See *Sheffield Times*, 27 March 1852 for an exhibition of 'Kaffir Zulus.' See Richard Altick, *The Shows of London*, for many examples of the exhibition of culture.

26. There was a Minstrel Fund Association, a relief organization, in existence in 1860, according to the *New York Clipper* (fugitive clipping, Harvard Theatre Collection); T. Allston Brown's histories of minstrelsy note Pell's burial location and date of death (*Clipper*, fugitive clipping, possibly 30 March 1912).

27. See, for example, *Theatrical Journal*, 27 March 1851, for reference to 'Mr and Mrs Dwight, Negro Melodists and Juba Dancer'; and *Era*, 23 November 1851, for reference to 'Messrs. Busby and Brandon, Negro Melodists and Juba Dancers,' and 'D. Hodgson, the female Juba.'

28. 'It must be eight years ago...since the Ethiopian serenading come up--ay, it must be at least that time, because the twopenny boats was then running to London-bridge, and it was before the 'Cricket' was blown up....I used to wear a yellow waistcoat, in imitation of them at the St. James's Theatre. ...The first came out at St. James's Theatre, and they made a deal of money. ...Pell's gang was at the top of the tree. Juba was along with Pell. Juba was a first class--a regular A1--he was a regular black, and a splendid dancer in boots.'

WORKS CITED

- Altick, Richard. *The Shows of London*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1978.
- Bean, Annemarie, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, eds. *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 1996.
- Burke, Peter. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Cockrell, Dale. *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Darnton, Robert. *The Great Cat Massacre*. NY: Random House, 1984.
- Day, Charles H. *Fun in Black; with The Origin of Minstrelsy by Col. T. Allston Brown*. New York: DeWitt Publishing House, 1893.
- Dickens, Charles. *American Notes and Pictures of Italy*. London: OxfordUP, 1957.
- Emery, Lynne Fauley. *Black Dance: From 1619 to Today*. London: Dance Books Ltd, 1988 (1972).
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms*. NY: Penguin, 1982.

- Gottschild, Brenda Dixon. *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- Hill, Errol, editor. *The Theater of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays*. NY: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1980, 1987.
- Johnson, Stephen. 'Past the Documents, To the Dance: The Witness to Juba in 1848,' in *The Performance Text*, edited by Domenico Pietropaolo. Ottawa: Legas Press, 1999.
- Levi, Giovanni. 'On Microhistory,' in Peter Burke ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. pp 93-113.
- Lorimer, Douglas A. *Colour, Class and the Victorians*. Leicester UP: Holmes and Meier, 1978.
- Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.
- Mahar, William J. *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor*. Vol 3. New York: Dover, 1968; from London: Griffin, Bohn, and Co., 1861-2.
- Nathan, Hans. *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962/77.
- Rice, Edward LeRoy. *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*. New York: np, 1911.
- Stearns, Marshall and Jean. *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*. NY: Macmillan Co., 1968.
- Thompson, Robert Farris, 'An Aesthetic of the Cool: West African Dance,' in Hill, Errol, editor. *The Theater of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays*. NY: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1980, 1987.
- Toll, Robert C. *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1974.
- Winter, Marian Hannah, 'Juba and American Minstrelsy,' in *Dance Index* 6.2, February 1947 28-47. See also Bean.