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WILLIAM J. MAHAR

"Backside Albany" and Early Blackface Minstrelsy

A Contextual Study of America's First Blackface Song

Blackface minstrelsy has often been described as America's unique contribution to the comic theater. From the first organized minstrel company performance in 1843 to the fund-raising entertainments used by churches and social organizations into the 1950s, "burnt cork" comedy survived by adapting itself to the ever-changing tastes of its audience. There are, however, relatively few studies of minstrelsy's audience, and most investigations of the pre-1843 repertory do not explain *why* such songs as "Backside Albany" (1815), "Coal Black Rose" (ca. 1827), "Jump Jim Crow" (1828), or "Jim Along Josey" (1838) were so amusing or *how* they were related to the historical and cultural contexts of the period.[1]

In this study I shall examine Micah Hawkins's "Backside Albany" or "The Siege of Plattsburg" (1815)—the earliest known dialect song written by an American—and will argue that (1) the song is a historically accurate account of the famous Battle of Plattsburg (Sept. 11, 1814); (2) the text is a form of Black English and not an illiterate version of a standard English dialect; (3) the tune is an adaptation of a seventeenth-century Irish ballad about the famous Battle of Boyne Water (1690); and (4) the interpretation of the early minstrel repertory must be based on a thorough assessment of the historical, linguistic, musical, and cultural contexts of blackface entertainment.

"Backside Albany" was first performed in Albany (1815) as part of a play, *The Battle of Lake Champlain;* its text was published that same year in *The Columbian Harmonist.*[2] Hopkins Robinson, who may have introduced the role in Albany and who played it often in New York

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City, seems to have specialized in "Negro impersonations." Along with a small group of early nineteenth-century entertainers, Robinson was responsible for establishing some of the conventions of blackface entertainment, and his name was often associated with performances of Hawkins's two dialect songs.[3]

Widely popular at least until the late 1840s, "Backside Albany" has been criticized for its alleged degradation of the black sailor's role in the War of 1812 and for its portrayal of blacks as illiterate. Sam Dennison argued that "the adoption of the pseudo-black narrative style with the absurd dialect pointed to the black himself, rather than the story as being the object of humor."[4] Hans Nathan suggested that the song's popularity was based on the "topical character of the scene and the indigenous flavor of the dialect," with the principal comic effect coming from "the humorous possibilities of a contrast between martial appearance and illiterate speech."[5] But "Backside Albany" does not say anything about blacks, and the song's persona contrasts the incompetence of the British commanders with the courageous actions of the two American leaders.

Since "Backside Albany" deals with one of the few real battles in the highly unpopular War of 1812, readers should recall that one of that conflict's causes was the English navy's kidnapping of five sailors, one Englishman and four Americans (three of whom were black), from the U.S. frigate *Chesapeake* in 1807. While the three black men were returned in 1811, the fourth American died in captivity; President Madison and Congress used Britain's longstanding policy of impressment as one of the excuses for declaring war on England. Because the kidnapping was widely publicized at the time, a good number of Americans must have known that black sailors regularly served in the United States Navy, and audiences of the period would not have been surprised by the appearance of an actor "in the character of a black sailor."[6]

The text of "Backside Albany" consists of four verses without a refrain and is set to an Irish melody in the Dorian mode. Each of the verses contains specific examples of Black English, often called literary Black English because the published example was not recorded by a professional linguist trained in scientific procedures and appeared long before the study of dialects had become a serious scholarly pursuit. There are so many attestations of Black English in such a wide variety of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources that published forms of the dialect are accepted as legitimate evidence by historians of American English.[7]

Verses 1–4 of "Backside Albany" as they appear in *The Columbian Harmonist* are given below, along with variant lines from (a) the 1837 sheet music edition by Thomas Birch and (b) *The Vocal Standard or Star-Spangled Banner* (Richmond: J. H. Nash and T. W. White, 1824). A

comparison of these and several other printed versions reveals significant phonological or lexical differences in the presentation of the song's text.[8]

Verse 1

1 Back side Albany stan' Lake Champlain,
(a) Backside Albany dar Lake Shamplain,
(b) Back side Albany, tan Lake Shamplain,
2 One little pond, half full a' water
(a) One leetle Pon half full a water,
(b) Little Pon, half full a' water,
3 Plattebug dare too, close pon de main,
(a) Plattburg dar too close upon de main,
4 Town small—he grow bigger do hereater.
(a) Town small he grow bigger doe here arter,
(b) Town small—he grow bigger, do herearter,
5 On Lake Champlain
(a) On Lake Shamplain
6 Uncle Sam set he boat,
7 An Massa M'Donough he sail 'em;
(a) An Massa Macdonough he sail 'em,
8 While Gen'ral M'Comb
(a) While Gen'ral Maccomb,
9 Make Plattebug he home,
(a) Make Plattburg he home,
10 Wid de army, who courage nebber fail 'em.
(a) Wid he army whose courage nebber fail 'em.

Verse 2

1 On 'lebenth [or lebenteeth] day of September
(a) Elebenth day Sebtember 1814,
2 In eighteen hund'ed an fourteen,
(a) Gub'ner Probose wid he british army,
3 Gubbener Probose, and he British soger,
(a) Dress 'imself up make all tings clean,
4 Come to Plattebug a tea party courtin;
(a) Cum to Plattburg tea party cortin;
5 An he boat come too
(a) An he boat cum too,
6 Arter Uncle Sam boat,
7 Massa 'Donough do look sharp out de winder—
(a) Massa Donough look sharp out de winder;
8 Den Gen'ral M'Comb,
(a) Den Gen'ral Maccomb,

9 (Ah! he always a home,)
(a) Ah, he alway home,
10 Catch fire too, jis like a tinder.
(a) Catch fire too jiss like tinder.

Verse 3

1 Bang! bang! bang! den de cannons gin t'roar
(a) Bow wow wow den de cannon gin't roar,
2 In Platdebug, an all 'bout dat quarter;
(a) In Plattburg an all 'bout dat quarter,
3 Gubbener Probose try he hand 'pon de shore,
(a) Gub'ner Probose try he han pon de shore,
4 While he boat take he luck 'pon de water—
(a) Wile he boat try he luck pon de water;
5 But Massa M'Donough
(a) But Massa Macdonough,
6 Knock he boat in he head,
(a) Kick he boat in de head,
7 Break he hart, broke he shin, 'tove he caffin in.
(a) Broke he heart, broke he shin, tove he caf in;
8 An Gen'ral M'Comb
(a) An Gen'ral Maccomb
9 Start ole Probose home—
10 Tot me soul den, I mus die a laffin.
(a) Tort me soul den I muss laffin.

Verse 4

1 Probose scare so, he lef all behine,
(a) Probose scart so he lef all behine,
2 Powder, ball, cannon, tea-pot an kittle—
3 Some say he cotch a cole—trouble in he mine
(a) Sum say he cotch he cold, wat perish in he mind,
4 Cause he eat so much raw an cole vittle—
(a) Bloyg'd eat so much raw an cold vittle;
5 Uncle Sam berry sorry,
6 To be sure, for he pain;
(a) Too be sure for he pain,
7 Wish he nuss heself up well an harty—
(a) Wish he nuss imsef up well an arty;
8 For Gen'ral M'Comb
(a) For Gen'ral Maccomb,
9 An Massa 'Donough home,
(a) An Massa Donough, home,
10 When he notion for a nudder tea party.
(a) Wen he notion for nudder tea party.

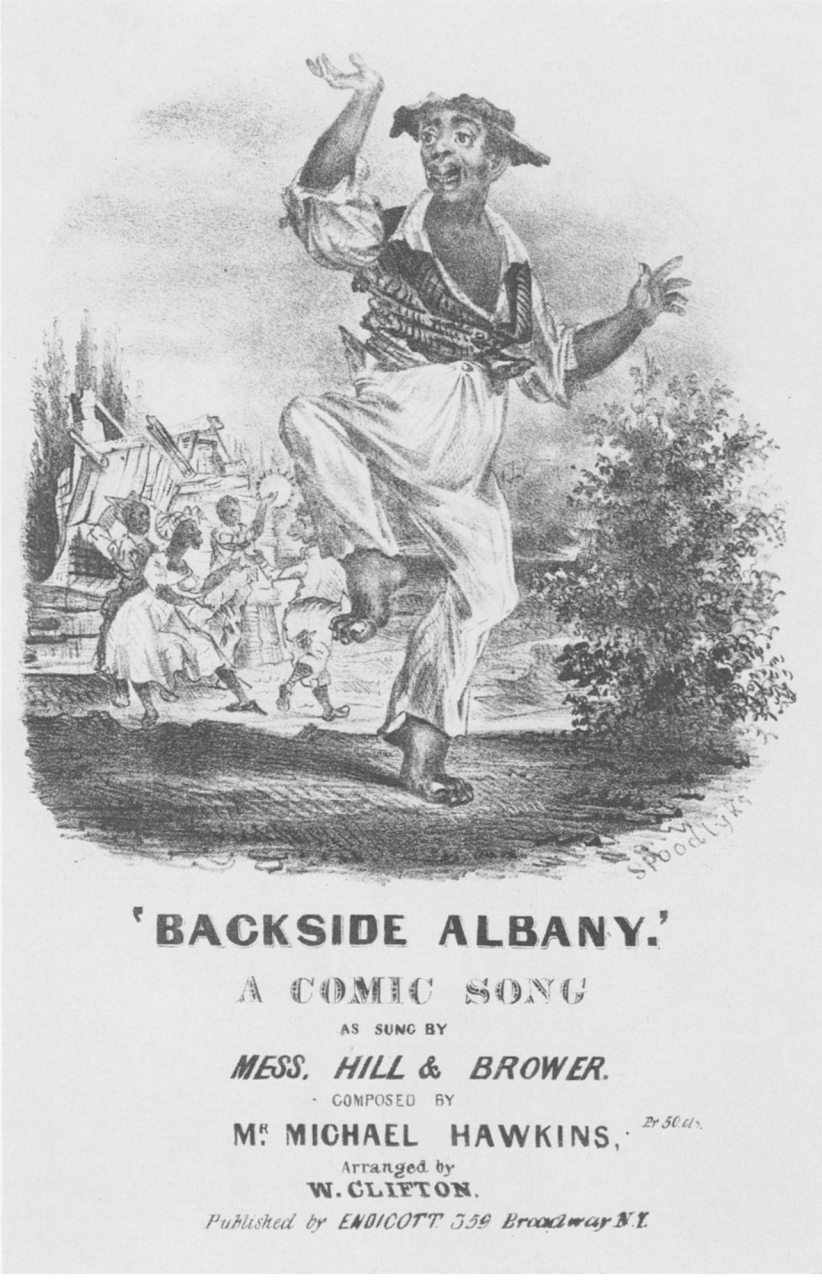


Figure 1. "Backside Albany" (New York: Thomas Birch, 1837). Photo courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University.

BACK SIDE ALBANY,

A

COMIC BALLAD,

as SUNG by

MESSERS HILL AND BROWER,

WRITTEN

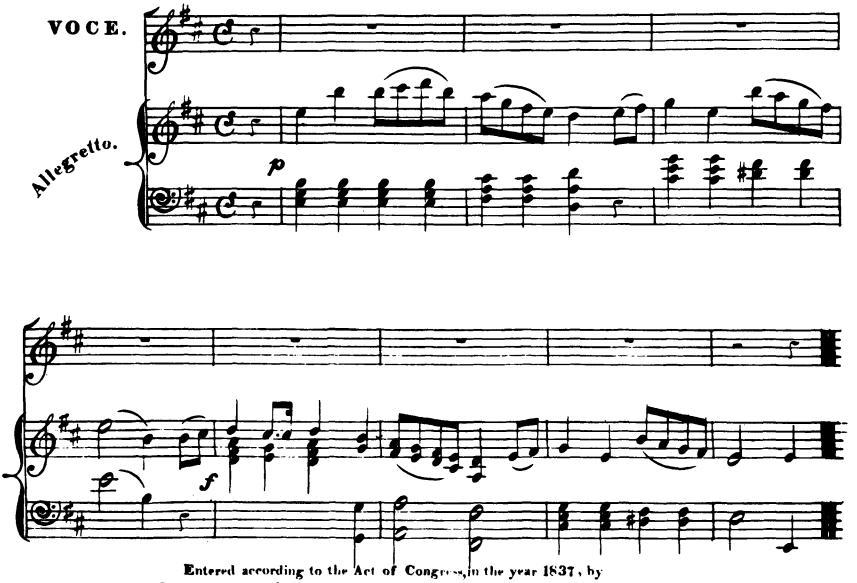
by

MR MICAL HAWKINS,

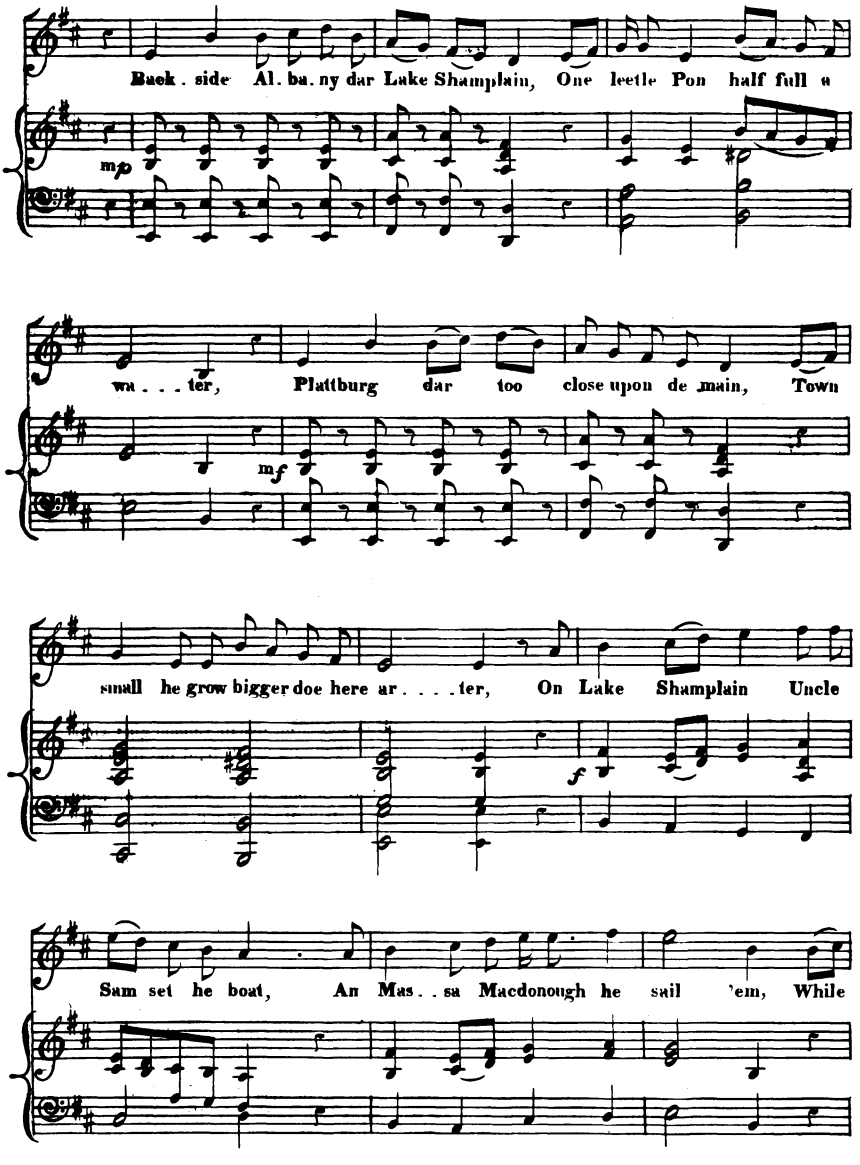
ARRANGED

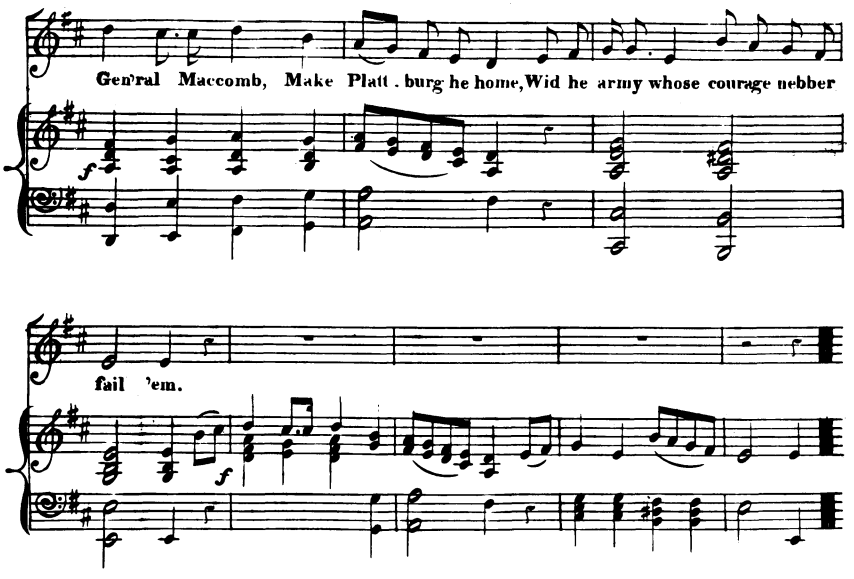
by

WILLIAM CLIFTON.



Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1837, by
Thomas Birch, in the Clerk's office of the District Court, of the Southern District of N.Y.


Back . side Al. ba. ny dar Lake Shamplain, One leetle Pon half full a
mp
wa . . . ter, Plattburg dar too close upon de main, Town
mf
small he grow bigger doe here ar . . . . ter, On Lake Shamplain Uncle
f
Sam set he boat, An Mas . . sa Macdonough he sail 'em, While



2

Elebenth day Sebtember 1814.
Gub'ner Probose wid he british army.
Dress 'imself up make all tings clean,
Cum to Plattburg tea party cortin;
An he boat cum too,
Arter Uncle Sam boat,
Massa Donough look sharp out de winder;
Den Gen'ral Maccomb,
Ah, he alway home,
Catch fire too jiss like tinder.

3

Bow wow wow den de cannon gin't roar,
In Plattburg an all 'bout dat quarter.
Gub'ner Probose try he han pon de shore,
Wile he boat try he luck pon de water;
But Massa Macdonough,
Kick he boat in de head,
Broke he heart, broke he shin, tove he caf in;
An Gen'ral Maccomb,
Start ole Probose home,
Tort me soul den I muss laffin.

4

Probose scart so he lef all behine,
Powder, ball, cannon, tea pot an kittle,
Sum say he cotch he cold, wat perish in he mind,
Bloyg'd eat so much raw an cold vittle;
Uncle Sam berry sorry,
Too be sure for he pain.
Wish he nuss imsef up well an arty;
For Gen'ral Maccomb,
An Massa Donough, home,
Wen he notion for nudder tea party.

Hawkins focused on the major elements of the conflict and treated the British defeat with sarcasm. The battle he described was small by later standards, the naval phase involving some 1,800 men and the land battle nearly 2,000 Americans, who were outnumbered four to one by the British forces.[9] Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough (1783–1825), the American naval commander, directed fire from the twenty-six-gun *Saratoga* and the twenty-gun *Eagle* so effectively that the British naval commander was killed and his flagship destroyed during the first fifteen minutes of the battle. Macdonough's 820-man naval contingent included 10 to 20 percent blacks, and, according to one account, many of them were gunners. He is also credited with replacing his white chaplain, whose moral character had been questioned, with a black steward who offered prayers before the battle.[10]

General Alexander Macomb (1782–1841), the commander of the American land forces (and destined to become the United States Army's commanding general in 1828), did "stay a home." Once his fellow officers realized that they were threatened by a much larger British force, they advised Macomb to abandon Plattsburg's fortifications. His troops held their ground during *and* after the battle. When the British troops retreated, Macomb stayed behind and excused his failure to pursue the fleeing enemy with references to "bad weather" and the "inexperience of his men."[11]

Lieutenant General Sir George Prevost (1767–1816) did "try he hand 'pon de shore." Even though his men were certain of victory—having overrun most of the American positions—he ordered an immediate retreat, leaving huge stores of food and weapons in the field. Writing about the battle, General Frederick Robinson, Prevost's second-in-command, complained bitterly that "never was anything like the disappointment expressed in every countenance. The advance was within shot, and full view of the Redoubts, and in one hour they must have been ours. We retired under two six pounders posted on our side of the ford in as much silent discontent as was ever exhibited."[12]

As the Hawkins song says, "Probose scare so, he lef all behine" and the "trouble in he mine" was attributed to Prevost's cowardice. Using the proven method of humbling an opponent by belittling his resolve, Hawkins contrasts the skill and daring of the American commanders with Prevost's indecision and juxtaposes the courage and skill of the American militia with the "tea party courtin" attitudes of the British regulars. Although the firepower of the principal British vessels equaled that of the entire American fleet, Macdonough's imaginative and gallant offense made him one of the major heroes of the war. Reports following the battle contained vivid evidence of how Macdonough "Knock he boat in he head, / Break he hart, broke he shin, 'tove he caffin in [stove his cabin in]." Historian Allan Everest summarized some of the

eyewitness accounts in the following words: "[Julius Hubbell of Chazy] was allowed to board the *Saratoga,* where he saw the dead neatly stacked and the seams full of blood. He found the *Confiance* 'absolutely torn to pieces' and mutilated bodies in all directions. Simon Doty, a militiaman from Alburg, confirmed the destruction and bloodiness of the scene on the day of the battle."[13]

Because the events mentioned in the song are true, the text says more about ineptness of the British than about racial matters in the United States. The threat of war in the Lake Champlain area had existed for nearly two and one-half years before the actual battle, and people of the North Country (New York, Vermont, and New Hampshire) held the American victory in high regard. There is nothing in the history of this battle or of the War of 1812 that suggests black sailors did not perform their duties in an honorable and courageous manner. As the commentaries quoted below show, the contributions of black seamen were highly regarded both during and after the war. During the speech-making at the New York State Constitutional Convention (1821), one delegate argued that freedom should be granted to all the loyal black veterans of the navy:

> In your late war [of 1812], they contributed largely towards some of your most splendid victories. On lakes Erie and Champlain, where your fleets triumphed over a foe superior in numbers and engines of death, they were manned, in a large proportion, with men of color. . . . They were not compelled to go; they were not drafted. No, your pride had placed them beyond your compulsory power. But there was no necessity for its exercise; they were volunteers; yes, Sir, volunteers to defend that very country from the inroads and ravages of a ruthless foe, which had treated them with insult, degradation, and slavery.[14]

Commodore Isaac Chauncey also defended the valor of black seamen. Responding to Captain Oliver Perry's complaints about the quality of some new recruits, Chauncey replied: "[Black sailors] are not surpassed by any seamen we have in the fleet and I have yet to learn that the color of the skin or the cut and trimming of the coat can affect a man's qualification or usefulness. I have nearly fifty blacks on board of this ship, and many of them are among my bravest men."[15]

From the evidence available one detects no extensive distrust or disrespect for the black sailor's role in the American victory. Given what people of northeastern New York must have known about the role of black gunners, Hawkins's choice of a black sailor as a vehicle for ridiculing British officers was particularly apt.

"Backside Albany" contains a large number of characteristics now known to be essential features of *spoken* Black English as collected by

dialectologists and linguists in the twentieth century.[16] Among the telltale phonological features are the deletion of the word final voiced and voiceless stops /d/ and /t/ in "stan," "a" and "an"; the dropping of the final /g/ in "courtin," where the nasal velar /ng/ appears in standard American English; the frequent substitution of the voiced apicoalveolar stop /d/ for the voiceless or voiced apicodental fricative /th/—the [ð] or [θ] phoneme—in "den," "dare," "wid," and "de"; the use of the voiced bilabial stop /b/ for the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ in "Probose" for *Prevost* or in common words such as "berry" for *very.*[17]

Other identifiable characteristics of Black English include the substitution of /g/ for /ld/ in *soldier,* which illustrates the simplification of consonant clusters between vowels as well as what is known as *l-lessness* (deletion of /l/); the use of the so-called *r-less* feature, that is, the elimination of the /r/ both as a consonant before other consonants and as the last phoneme in word final position. The dropped /r/, the dropped /l/, and the /d/ for /th/ substitution lead to the creation of homonyms that, although perfectly intelligible to black speakers, may lead white listeners to believe they have heard a mispronunciation. Simple examples are *god* for *guard, fought* for *fort, hep* for *help, foh* for *four,* and *tot* for *thought.* In Hawkins's song, the word "Gubbener" for *governor* offers an interesting case. The /b/ for /v/ substitution is obvious, but the final /r/ was probably deleted when the song was performed. Finally, Black English often uses what is known as a nonredundant plural, that is, the deletion of the final /s/ from plural nouns. A good example in the song is the use of "soger" for *soldiers.* The context clearly identifies the noun as a plural without the added /s/.

Lexical differences are not especially noteworthy in "Backside Albany," the use of "massa" as a form of polite address to the American commanders being the only obvious nonstandard word. There are, however, grammatical elements that confirm the Black English derivations of the song. Hawkins captured a linguistic practice or created a text that is characteristic of the transition from a mixed language—say, Creole and English—to a dialect of standard American English. That change is known as decreolization and took place simultaneously with the use of pidgin and other Creole dialects (the Gullah of Georgia Sea Islands is a Creole variety of English) in the New York–New England areas.[18]

Black speakers in the Northeast came from many different African nations, from the Caribbean, or from the South, and all recent studies of the history of Black English show that black American speakers did not then (as they do not now) use only one dialect. The number of black dialects and idiolects (idiosyncratic uses of a particular dialect)

in the early nineteenth century was probably higher than would be found in America today, and one conclusion from that observation is that there would have been a greater variety of dialects available for enterprising songwriters to use. If that hypothesis is valid, it would explain why Hawkins's other dialect song, "Massa Georgee Washington and General La Fayette," uses a pidginized form of Black English.

The first important grammatical feature of Black English is the use of pronouns. Hawkins repeatedly uses the nominative pronoun *he* for the possessive *his,* as in "he boat," "he shin," "he caffin," "he hand," and "he mine." Further mixing of pronoun usage is also obvious when the personal *he* replaces the indefinite *its* in "Town small—he grow bigger." The use of the nominative case *who* for the possessive *whose* in the phrase "who courage nebber fail 'em" illustrates the same procedure. The substitution is not incorrect in Black English because the meaning is clear from the context. Another obvious Black English characteristic is the repetition of the sentence subject, usually referred to as the redundant subject pronoun rule ("And Massa M'Donough he sail 'em" and "Town small—he grow bigger"). The redundant pronoun procedure is still a common feature in black oral narratives.

Black English verb use differs from the six-tense system of standard American English, particularly in its retention of a subtle means of expressing action without reference to a specific time. For example, the past aspect of the present tense appears in "he eat." The persona and the audience know that the battle took place some time ago and would expect the past tense "he ate," which is preferred in standard English usage. The phrase "Town small—he grow bigger . . . hereater" illustrates three important characteristics of Black English: (1) the so-called zero-copula or deletion of the verb *to be* in "Town small"; (2) the use of the future aspect of the present tense in "he grow bigger" instead of *he'll grow bigger* (the deletion of the /l/ or /ll/ is also a common phonological feature of black dialects) to describe the growth of Plattsburg subsequent to the battle; and (3) the deletion of the /s/ suffix in the third person singular "he eat" and "he grow." The elimination of verbs or verb forms can also be seen in "When he notion." The transitive verb *gets* requires an object, for example, *When he gets a notion* or *When he has a notion,* but the phrase can be simplified by deleting the verb altogether. The character makes the statement as a threat to other British commanders, noting that the Americans will be ready if another invasion were to occur. The number of examples clearly shows that the writer of this song was familiar with some subtle grammatical distinctions most speakers of standard American English would have missed.[19]

The song contains several additional phrases characteristic of other American or British dialects. Among the examples that appear in black-

face and stage Yankee dialects are "ater" for *after,* "jis" for *just,* "winder" for *window.* Other expressions are close to British usage, such as " 'pon de main" in place of *upon the shore,* although Hawkins may have chosen a nautical phrase for his sailor character. The identification of the appropriate dialect or geographical distribution of other words or expressions is somewhat more difficult because archaic phrases or expressions may have persisted longer among black speakers, especially in the northeastern United States. "A tea party courtin" and "mus die a laffin" are good examples. The first phrase uses "a . . . courtin" to express purpose as in *come for* or *to* a tea party, while the second uses "a" in place of the preposition *of* (must die *of* laughter), a contraction also found in other American dialects.[20]

Textual analysis reveals the song's dependence on Black English and confirms two important hypotheses. First, there appears to be a stronger relationship between spoken Black English and early nineteenth-century songs than has been reported in the literature. Second, the large inventory of features characteristic of Black English in the song suggests that the greatest number of linguistic variations occurs in the earliest blackface songs. As the number of performers entering the field of blackface entertainment grew during the 1830s and 1840s, the number of lexical, grammatical, and syntactical features borrowed from Black English decreased, leaving only a few phonological elements (e.g., *de, gwine, bery, jis, sich*) typical of the post-1840 repertory.[21]

Since "Backside Albany" borrows such a large number of items from Black English, Hawkins must have had access to speakers who used the dialect. A good deal of circumstantial evidence suggests that he had many opportunities to observe black musicians. The Hawkins family had a black slave named Anthony Hannibal Clapp (1749–1816), who was a devoted friend and musical associate of Micah. When Clapp died, Hawkins wrote a touching epitaph revealing his respect for his "brother musician": "Anthony, though indigent, was most content. Though of a race depis'd, deserved he much respect. . . . Upon the *Violin,* few played as Toney play'd. His artless music was a language universal and in its Effect—most irresistible."[22]

While there is no way of knowing whether Clapp's speech served as a source for Hawkins's work, there is every reason to believe that Hawkins was familiar with other black performers in New York City and rural Long Island. Unfortunately, as M. Hunt Hessler has noted, "Blacks were often illiterate or semi-literate, and although they left a distinct impression on Long Island's culture, they left few records for future generations to discover."[23]

While the extent of black-white social and musical contacts in early American life requires further study, an observation by Hawkins's contemporary Thomas Devoe links the composer directly to the folklife

of the city and shows that interracial contacts were more frequent than have generally been mentioned in any of the writing on blackface minstrelsy. Devoe noted:

> The first introduction in this city of public "negro dancing" no doubt took place at this market [the market area and dancing site were near Catherine Slip in lower Manhattan, where Hawkins's grocery store was located]. The negroes who visited here were principally slaves [manumission occurred in 1821] from Long Island who have leave of their master for certain holidays, among which "Pinkster" was the principal one; . . . then, as they usually had three days holiday, they were ever ready, by their "negre sayings and doing," to make a few shillings more. So they would be hired by some joking butcher or individual to engage in a jig or breakdown, as that was one of their favorite pastimes at home on the barn-floor, or in a frolic.[24]

When Devoe's report is added to others dealing with "Pinkster" festivals, rural music-making activities on Long Island, Hawkins's own impromptu musicales at his grocery store, and general information about musical life in New York City, Hawkins had ample opportunities to collect musical material. This is confirmed by the contents of his *Book of Notes for the German Flute* (ca. 1794) and *Collection of Songtunes, Aires—&c—*(ca. 1802), both of which contain a variety of tunes from American and Continental sources.[25]

Since Hans Nathan's identification of "Boyne Water" as the source for Hawkins's melody, there has been no further investigation of the potential relationships between the tune and its use in "Backside Albany." "Boyne Water" is among the most famous ballads in Irish history, and the fiddle tune version is still played in the United States. As Samuel Bayard observes: "The words of the song . . . used to be sung to the air in southwestern Pennsylvania, and are so inseparably associated with the tune that formerly in western Pennsylvania, the mere singing or playing of the tune could bring on a mass attack by any group of Catholic Irish who happened to be within hearing distance."[26]

The melody had been published in England long before Hawkins borrowed it. "Boyne Water" traveled to the United States with Irish immigrants and circulated in the oral tradition. Sir Thomas Moore used the melody for his "As Vanquish'd Erin," published ca. 1825 in an arrangement by Sir Henry Bishop; he reprinted it in several of his later collections of "Irish Melodies."[27] Because the tune is referred to as the "air" to be used in performing versions of "Backside Albany" printed in period songsters, it seems likely many singers must have known "Boyne Water."

The text of the original Irish ballad could well have provided the basis for a parody of the British performance at Plattsburg. The irony is that "Boyne Water" dealt with a victory by English Protestant forces led by William of Orange (King William III) over an Irish-French army led by King James II, a battle that crushed Irish-Catholic hopes for religious freedom. While the outcome of the Battle of Plattsburg was quite different—the English invaders were repulsed by a smaller American force—both battles had a major effect on the history of their respective countries.[28] Hawkins's transformation of an anti-Catholic ballad into a satirical treatment of the British disaster at Plattsburg supports the theory that America's comic songwriters often turned to Irish materials when creating stereotypes of American blacks. Considering the importance of the original ballad in the Irish folk tradition, the tune was an apt choice for a song dealing with British incompetence. If Hawkins also knew the ballad text, as he probably did because the melody has been found in his *Book of Notes for the German Flute,* the original words might also have been a source for his comic battle song.[29]

The original ballad is composed of four-line stanzas, the meter primarily iambic with seven or eight accented syllables per line and an *a a b b* rhyme scheme. The best-known version favors the Protestant king's (William's) side. After setting the scene—a feature typical of the narrative ballad form—the verse continues with an attack on the Irish soldiers' courage—they collapsed from the "sudden snuff" before the English reached their lines. Focusing on the stereotypical Irishman's love of drink, the ballad blames the Irish defeat on the brandy that "ran so in their heads, their senses all did scatter." Selected verses of the ballad are quoted below.[30]

Verse 1

July the First of a morning clear, one thousand six hundred and ninety,
King William did his men prepare, of thousands he had thirty.
To fight King James and all his foes, encamped near the Boyne Water,
He little fear'd, though two to one, their multitudes, to scatter.

Verse 5

Within four yards of our fore-front, before a shot was fired,
A sudden snuff they got that day, which little they desired,
For horse and man fell to the ground, and some hung in their saddle:
Others turn'd up their forked ends, which we call "coup de ladle."

Verse 6

Prince Eugene's regiment was the next, on our right hand advanced,
Into a field of standing wheat, where Irish horses pranced—
But the brandy ran so in their heads, their senses all did scatter,
They little thought to leave their bones that day at the Boyne Water.

Hawkins did not use the ballad stanza or the typical rhyme scheme, but he did retain the narrative character of the ballad form. Most versions of the ballad melody are in the Dorian mode, the same mode found in the 1837 piano-vocal edition of "Backside Albany," but as shown in example 1, Mixolydian and natural minor variants are also common. The modal quality of some examples may account for some of the negative evaluations of the song's "musicality."[31]

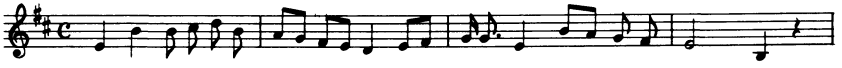
The various versions of the source tune show the normal range of variations for a melody transmitted through folk tradition. The overall pitch content of the original is preserved, and some of the variants are merely transpositions required for the fiddle. The original folk basis of the tune may account for its popularity up to the 1850s and for its availability to Hawkins.

This study has explored the sources and the contexts of "Backside Albany," but concern for those elements can easily obscure other important questions. The song does not exist in a class by itself; it is a battle song, similar in many respects to those published during the Revolutionary War. Examples of such songs include "The World Turned Upside Down," "The Old Soldiers of the King," "The Battle of the Kegs," and, for the War of 1812, "The Battle of New Orleans."[32] Those selections belong to a larger class of humorous and topical songs that mock the values, legality of the enemy's right to wage war, or specific behaviors of soldiers or commanders (tea drinking, marching, battle maneuvers) that might provoke a laugh. The success of "Backside Albany," like the songs just cited, depends on the audience's shared knowledge about the battle and the focus (usually a critical feature in any effective work of humor) on small details that symbolize the differences between the audience and the enemy.

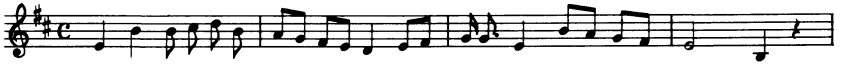
The illiterate or marginally literate Irish sailor stereotype provided the model for Hawkins's comic seaman. The similarities already noted between descriptions of the Irish and of American blacks are striking, indicating that a tradition of highlighting national or racial differences by quoting or inventing linguistic behaviors was deeply rooted in the Anglo-American theater. British satirists and scholars argued about the differences between their own culture and the cultures of Ireland, Scotland, and Africa. Early nineteenth-century scientists emphasized

Example 1. "Boyne Water" and "Backside Albany" tunes

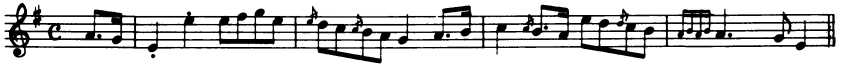
a. "Backside Albany" (1837 Birch sheet music edition), E Dorian with an E harmonic minor harmonization.



b. "Backside Albany" (1837 Birch sheet music edition, after Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 36), E Dorian.

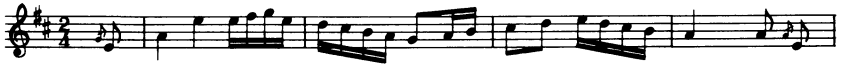


c. "Boyne Water" (from the Bunting Collection of 1809), E natural minor.

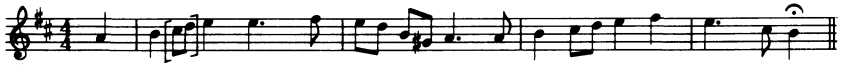


d. Fiddle tune (after Bayard, ed., *Dance to the Fiddle, March to the Fife*, no. 317A), E Dorian, transposed to upper tetrachord of E scale.

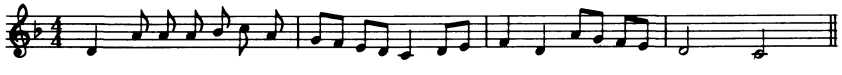
e. Fiddle tune (after Bayard, ed., *Dance to the Fiddle, March to the Fife*, no. 317B), A Mixolydian, tune in upper tetrachord of D scale.



f. Fiddle tune (after Bayard, ed., *Dance to the Fiddle, March to the Fife*, no. 317D), E Dorian, transposition of first phrase includes raised G-sharp before A.

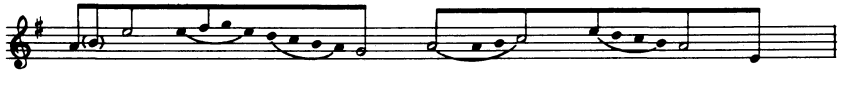


g. "Backside Albany" (1845 edition, after Lomax and Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, 510), D Dorian.

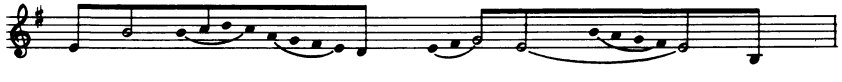


h. Reduction of "Backside Albany" and variants.

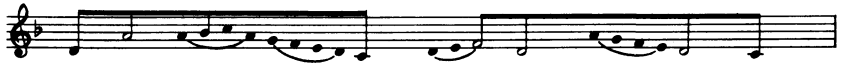
Fiddle tunes on A



Piano-vocal version on E



Vocal version on D



the physical distinctions among the world's peoples and attributed Irish and black behaviors to racial rather than cultural differences. Unable (or unwilling) to consider the common features of language use or the different functions of social customs in other cultures, English authors looked upon other peoples as deficient in the qualities truly "civilized" people shared. Lebow summarized the whole process quite well in his investigation of the British stereotyping of the Irish:

> While they [English accounts] describe such widely differing environments and peoples as those of Ireland and Indonesia, Algeria, Black America, Burma, and Nigeria, the characteristics that colonizers attributed to the natives are remarkably uniform from one picture of the native to another. . . . Colonial natives are described as indolent, self-complacent, cowardly but brazenly rash, violent, uncivilized and incapable of hard work. . . . They are characterized as hospitable, good natured, possessing a natural talent for song and dance, and frequently curious but incapable of a prolonged span of attention.[33]

While Anglo-Americans have often looked disdainfully on all lower-class, nonwhite, or foreign persons, they have also shown a strange fascination for the cultural differences exhibited by other peoples and races. That fascination has often been expressed in the choice of characters introduced into popular English plays, especially the lower-class "types" of sailors, soldiers, barbers, waiters, and other service providers, whose behaviors could be compressed into stereotypical roles.[34]

Historians of minstrelsy have generally associated stereotyping with the small number of relatively unimportant roles given to black characters in early American operas, plays, or farces. But the later stereotypes—the urban dandy and plantation-hand characters of the 1840s—which have often been interpreted as negative and offensive, are not the same as the social types appearing in the preminstrel entr'actes or solos. Hawkins adapted such a low-class type for the persona found in "Backside Albany" and later in his "Massa Georgee Washington and General La Fayette," but the personae of those songs are not the same as the ones found in Thomas Rice's "Jim Crow" or George Washington Dixon's "Old Zip Coon" in which the self-reflexive quality of the lyrics calls attention to a first-person presentation of exploits or opinions. The shift from an emphasis on the curious features of lower-class linguistic or social behaviors—social typing—to the stereotyping that occurred during the 1830s and 1840s was accompanied by changes in American attitudes toward blacks.[35] At the same time, American authors tried to capture the differences between this country's various nationalities and social classes, the result being the presentation of those typically American characters embodied in stage

Yankees, frontiersmen, riverboatmen, Broadway B'hoys, and other "real" Americans.[36]

The change from the occasional "characteristic songs" of the 1820s to the racially stereotyped "characters" found in post-1843 minstrel songs has not received adequate study. Because musicologists have focused on the negative effects of stereotyping, they have failed to appreciate the deeper significance of the use of stereotypes in Anglo-American musical theater. There are at least two characteristics of stereotyping relevant to early blackface comedy. First, there is the justly criticized derogatory image of black Americans presented by a character who speaks or acts in ways that blacks resent, even though some of the depicted behaviors have a basis in reality. Language differences are often the most obvious markers used in comic characterizations, the assumption being that those who use nonstandard forms are comical or possess some intrinsic cultural deficit. That was the guiding principle in the English treatment of the many types of French, Irish, and Scotch who spoke odd dialects or curious forms of English.[37]

Second, stereotyping is not of itself essentially negative but is part of the normal process of classifying individuals of different nations, regions, or races to understand how those other peoples fit into the larger and more familiar patterns of human behavior. When the effort to *understand* people changes to a desire to *exclude* them from membership in one's own group, that is, when a dominant class accepts derogatory presentations of minorities as a means of stressing its own alleged social or cultural superiority, stereotypes may have totally negative effects. At the same time, the majority may actually admire the minority group's behaviors and thus stereotype them to bring such behaviors to an even larger audience. Traits that the majority judges as deficits, such as a perceived inability to use a standard language or adopt traditional forms of dress, are actually incorporated into its own behaviors and attitudes.[38] In the theater, audiences can admire the ways in which stereotypes violate accepted majority behaviors or social conventions. Outside the theater some Americans found that behaving like stereotypical characters gave them the opportunity to overcome their own inhibitions. The theater audience and the "street theater" performers were borrowing from a different culture and adapting behaviors for their own comic ends.[39] Such borrowing is a form of cultural plagiarism, and "Backside Albany" shows that the practice began long before the Anglo-American and Afro-American musical styles were as closely intertwined as they have become in the twentieth century. While opportunities for blacks were gradually restricted after the War of 1812, features of black culture were already being absorbed into mainstream American theater. By reducing cultural differences to useful (and exploitable) generalizations, the "burnt cork" comedians demonstrated

that "minstrelsy was theatrical celebration of how deeply American racism, vicious as it certainly was and is, was embedded into a sense of racial and class affection and even envy, and of mutual racial need."[40]

It is difficult to view stereotyping in a detached and objective manner because negative portrayals of a particular group can be offensive. Nonetheless, burnt cork comics discovered that audiences enjoyed seeing and hearing the satirical criticism of the values that they may publicly cherish but privately doubt. For example, while the dominant social group may be quite willing to accept the caricature of a minority group as indolent or shiftless, the majority may also find great satisfaction in the comic portrayal of individuals who find the work ethic quite useless.[41] The laziness attributed to stage blacks may have contributed to the mistaken impression that some black people lacked true industry. But it also had the deeper significance of reflecting the white workingman's desire to avoid the rigors of manual labor, and the alleged insults to conventional morals and manners exhibited by a blackface character could be seen as dramatized and entertaining behaviors that white audiences publicly approve *only* in the environment of the popular theater. Given that interpretive context, it is easier to understand why nineteenth-century audiences found such pleasure in the oversimplified, grossly exaggerated, and patently absurd "characters" who represented homegrown comic types.

The persona in Hawkins's song does not represent a "real" black seaman, but his language and his dress transform him into the quintessential clown whose demeanor and makeup give him a special place in the world of comedy. Because the real-life speakers of pidgin, Creole, and Black English lacked political power and social distinction, they were outsiders in Anglo-American culture and were forced into deferential roles both in real life and in the theater. Their nonthreatening status made them particularly useful models for stage characters who could criticize society with relative impunity. Black English dialects, which emphasized different and usually more creative uses of language, were chosen by the early comics as vehicles for that criticism. Indeed, the stereotypes of the late 1820s and 1830s used language as a simplistic indicator of cultural difference and, by emphasizing what appeared to be language errors, adapted it as a satirical weapon for clever verbal assaults on those who used standard American English, especially preachers, rhetoricians, politicians, and others respected for their persuasive discourse.

While Hawkins was not the first to recognize the potential humor in adapting low-comedy types to the American stage, he appears to have been the first to combine the patriotic and comic song with the growing American interest in "stock" types. When "Backside Albany" is placed in its proper historical and cultural context, it does not exploit

the harmful potential of racially motivated humor as much as it adapts English conventions to the American satirical song.

What, then, was so amusing about "Backside Albany?" The song was topical, took advantage of a regional distrust of the British military presence in Canada, and praised the victory that ended long-standing threats to commerce on Lake Champlain. While the song's humor has not stood the test of time, its historical importance rests in its adaptation of Irish material—the "Boyne Water" melody and ballad—its transformation of the British low-class stereotype into a vehicle for blackface comedy, and its use of Black English—probably the earliest use by an American composer—for satirical purposes. This study of "Backside Albany" shows that the dialect and the black mask did more than serve as vehicles for racist views. Perhaps this contextual approach will help musicologists understand the historical significance of "our unique contribution to the comic theatre" as well as suggest a few answers to the deeper question of why minstrelsy itself was so popular.

NOTES

1. For an overview of the minstrel show tradition, see Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), which reviews all the standard sources in the field. For two excellent review-essays of Toll's book, see George F. Rehin, "The Darker Image: American Negro Minstrelsy through the Historian's Lens," *Journal of American Studies* 9 (1975): 365–73; and William F. Stowe and David Grimsted, "Review Essay: White-Black Humor," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 3 (1976): 78–96. The best study of minstrel show music is Robert B. Winans, "Early Minstrel Show Music, 1843–1852," in *Musical Theatre in America: Papers and Proceedings of the Conference on the Musical Theatre in America* (1981), ed. Glenn Loney (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), 71–98.

2. *The Columbian Harmonist; or, Songster's Repository, Being a Selection of the Most Approved Sentimental, Patriotic, and Other Songs* (Albany, N.Y.: G. Loomis and Co., 1815). The compilation is also known as *The Songster's Museum* and *The Minstrel* (1822) and is indexed in Irving Lowens, *A Bibliography of Songsters Printed in America before 1821* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1976), 145, no. 487. Hawkins's life and work receive a brief mention in Richard J. Wolfe, *Secular Music in America, 1801–25: A Bibliography*, 3 vols. (New York: New York Public Library, 1964), 1:350–51. For a thorough discussion of Hawkins's work, see Vera Brodsky Lawrence, "Micah Hawkins, the Pied Piper of Catherine Slip," *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 62 (1978): 138–65. For Hawkins's relationship to the musical life of New York, see Peter G. Buckley, " 'The Place to Make an Artist Work' Micah Hawkins and William Sidney Mount in New York City," in *Catching the Tune: Music and William Sidney Mount*, ed. Janice Gray Armstrong (Stony Brook, NY: Museums of Stony Brook, 1984), 22–39. Hawkins's song is not the only composition dealing with the battle of Lake Champlain. Francesco Masi published his *Battle of Lake Champlain and Plattsburg: A Grand Sonata for the Piano Forte* (Boston, 1815); see Wolfe, *Secular Music* 2:546–47. Richard Penn Smith's *Triumph of Plattsburg* (Philadelphia: Chestnut Street Theatre, Jan. 8, 1830) was reprinted in *Representative*

American Plays, ed. Arthur Hobson Quinn, 3d ed. (New York: Century, 1925), 165–80, where it continued to appear until the 6th ed. (1938) according to Quinn's *History of American Drama: From the Beginning to the Civil War*, 2d ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1943), 396. Quinn noted (p. 208) that the play used a number of special effects, including " 'a view of the Arrival and Capture of the British fleet,' " and a "clever comedy scene" to set up an American officer's escape from the British.

3. Lawrence, "Hawkins," 153–54, reviewed the very contradictory evidence concerning the first actor to play the role and concluded that Hopkins Robinson (called Robertson in some accounts) introduced the song in Albany. Richard Moody's discussion of early blackface entertainments includes the following significant, but unverified, comments: "The Negro actor Andrew Allen was one of these early performers [blackface entertainers]. He later became more famous as a cook and dresser for Edwin Forrest; but in 1815, in an Albany theatre, between the acts of *The Battle of Lake Champlain*, he sang 'Back Side Albany Stands Lake Champlain.' " See Richard Moody, ed., *Dramas from the American Theatre, 1762–1898* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), 475. Both Lawrence and I agree that Moody was mistaken because there is no other evidence supporting the view that Allen was black. Moody did not discuss the matter in his biography of Forrest, nor did Forrest's earliest biographer mention Allen's race. Since Allen was noted for his extravagant behavior, his contemporaries would surely have noted his color. See Richard Moody, *Edwin Forrest: First Star of the American Stage* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1960), 187–89; and James Rees, *The Life of Edwin Forrest, with Reminiscences and Personal Recollections* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Bros., 1874), 206–8.

4. See Sam Dennison, *Scandalize My Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (New York: Garland, 1982), for arguments about the negative effects of blackface comedy. For a more balanced view, the following are most helpful: George F. Rehin, "Harlequin Jim Crow: Continuity and Convergence in Blackface Clowning," *Journal of Popular Culture* 9 (1975): 682–701; and Constance Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (1931; repr. New York: Doubleday, 1953). For a recent study incorporating folklore and material culture studies, see John D. Mercier, "The Evolution of the Black Image in White Consciousness" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1984). Cecil L. Patterson's "Different Drum: The Image of the Negro in Nineteenth Century Popular Song Books" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1961) is still a standard for discussions of songs and songsters.

5. Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 9.

6. For a brief discussion of the event, see Michael Cohn and Michael K. H. Platzer, *Black Men of the Sea* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1978), 120–22.

7. See Joey Lee Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1972); idem, ed., *Perspectives on Black English* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975); and idem, *All-American English* (New York: Random House, 1975). Attestations can be found in George Phillip Krapp, *The English Language in America*, 2 vols. (1925; repr. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1960), esp. 1:255–73; John Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Dillard, *Black English;* Dillard, ed., *Perspectives on Black English;* and William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972). For examples from stage works, see Montrose Moses, ed., *Representative Plays by American Dramatists* (1918; repr. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), vol. 1, *1765–1819*. For a discussion of characters speaking Black English in those plays, see Richard Walser, "Negro Dialect in Eighteenth-Century American Drama," *American Speech* 30 (1955): 269–76, which concludes that "the plays provide us with definite proof that Negro dialect in eighteenth century America possessed a distinctiveness which has never been lost."

8. There is no standard text for this song because neither songwriters nor printers

seem to have agreed on the conventions for presenting Black English and because the printed text represents a reconstruction of a still relatively unknown performance practice. No sheet music edition of the song was published during Hawkins's lifetime, the earliest printing with words and music being the 1837 Thomas Birch edition, which, according to the title page, was published in New York by Endicott. The verse lines from *The Columbian Harmonist* are quoted from Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 37; variant readings from the Birch edition are based on the copy formerly in the collection of Lester Levy and now in the Johns Hopkins University library. In addition to the readings shown above, comparison was made with texts found in the *Negro-Forget-Me-Not Songster* (ca. 1850) as reprinted in Dennison, *Scandalize*, 28–29; *The National Song Book*, pt. 1, *Naval* (Philadelphia: William McCarthy, 1842), 189–90; and *The Negro Singer's Own Book* (Philadelphia: Turner and Fisher, ca. 1850). I am grateful to Lester Levy and M. C. Beecheno, curator of Special Collections at Johns Hopkins for sharing copies of the song with me. The song is also discussed in Samuel Foster Damon, "The Negro in Early American Songsters," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 28 (1934): 132–63. "Backside Albany" seems to have been popular for slightly longer than one generation, appearing some eleven times in songsters printed from 1815 to 1830. Most of the examples show the dialect version, but a fourteen-verse ballad published in 1836 also seems to have been popular. A sample will illustrate the differences between the two songs:

Sir George Prevost, with all his host,
March'd forth from Montreal, sir,
Both he and they, as blythe and gay,
As going to a ball sir;
The troops he chose, were all of those
That conquer'd Marshall Soult, sir,
Who, at Garonne (the fact is known)
Scarce brought them to a halt, sir.

Original from *The American Songster*, comp. John Kenedy (Baltimore: n.p., 1836), 202–4.

9. See C. S. Forester, *The Age of Fighting Sail: The Story of the War of 1812* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956); John K. Mahon, *The War of 1812* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972); and Allan S. Everest, *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1981). Hawkins's song was not the only blackface piece composed during the war. Damon cites "The Guinea Boy" (published ca. 1816), a song "inspired by Admiral Cockburn's depredations in the Chesapeake in 1814." The text of this piece is a Caribbean pidgin (enclitic vowels, e.g., /ee/ as a suffix; use of the objective pronoun *me* for the personal *I* throughout; and vowel or consonant substitutions consistent with that dialect). See Damon, "Negro in Songsters," 144–45.

10. Lorenzo Greene noted that "the gunnery of the American fleet was devastatingly accurate. And a large proportion of the gunners were Negroes." See Lorenzo J. Greene, "The Negro in the War of 1812 and the Civil War," *Negro History Bulletin* 14 (Mar. 1951): 133. Other useful background sources on the role of blacks in the war include Joseph T. Wilson, *The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro Soldiers of the United States in the Wars of 1775–1812, 1861–'65* (1890; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1968); and Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1974). According to the 1810 census, blacks made up about 19 percent of the population, and 90 percent of all blacks lived in the South. In the War of 1812, most estimates agree that the black-white ratio in all the services was about one to six. For census data, see Charles Marden and Gladys Meyer, *Minorities in American Society*, 4th ed. (New York: Van Nostrand, 1973), 145. Harold Langley reported that, "according to one 19th century account, Commodore [*sic*] Thomas Macdonough was shocked by the morals of the chaplain on his ship and refused to use him for any religious functions. Instead he called upon a pious colored steward to offer prayers, and especially those

said immediately before the battle of Lake Champlain." Harold Langley, "The Negro in the Navy and Merchant Service, 1789–1869," *Journal of Negro History* 52 (July 1967): 277.

11. See the entry on Macomb in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone, vol. 6 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), 155–57. Quotation from Everest, *War of 1812*, 189.

12. Everest, *War of 1812*, 186.

13. Ibid., 185.

14. William C. Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1855), 148–49; quoted in William L. Katz, *Eyewitness: The Negro in American History* (New York: Pitman, 1968), 148.

15. Quoted from Alexander Slidell MacKenzie's *Life of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1840), 1:186–87, in Wilson, *Black Phalanx*, 79. Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 22, notes that "blacks had participated in the undeclared war with France, and since the Act of March 3, 1813, permitted the enlistment of free blacks, they flocked into the navy." Even the captains of American privateers had praise for their black seamen. Reporting on an engagement between his vessel and a British ship in January 1813, Nathaniel Shafer noted that "the name of one of my poor fellows who was killed ought to be registered in the book of fame. . . . He was a black man by the name of *John Johnson;* a 24 lb. shot struck him in the hip . . . in this state the poor brave fellow lay on the deck, and several times exclaimed to his shipmates, 'Fire away my boy, no haul a color down.' The other was also a black man, by the name of *John Davis*, . . . he fell near me, and requested to be thrown overboard, saying, he was only in the way of the others." From *Niles' Weekly Register*, Feb. 26, 1814, 430, as quoted in Katz, *Eyewitness*, 66. Note the use of the characteristic Black English form of a negative imperative in "no haul" and the nonredundant plural "boy" for *boys* in the quotation.

16. Especially useful in this area are Roger D. Abrahams and Rudolf C. Troike, eds., *Language and Cultural Diversity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972); John Baugh, *Black Street Speech: Its History, Structure, and Survival* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Deborah Sears Harrison and Tom Trabasso, *Black English: A Seminar* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1976); and William A. Stewart, "Sociolinguistic Factors in the History of American Negro Dialects," and "Continuity and Change in American Negro Dialects," in *Perspectives on Black English*, ed. Dillard, 222–32 and 233–47. Stewart's essay "Acculturative Processes and the Language of the American Negro," in *Language and Its Social Setting*, ed. William W. Gage (Washington, D.C.: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1974), 1–46, is most helpful in establishing the intellectual backgrounds of Black English studies.

17. A good basic guide through introductory linguistics is Ronald W. Langacker, *Language and Its Structure: Some Fundamental Linguistic Concepts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967).

18. A good discussion of the differences between the various forms of Black English (written with the layman in mind) is Elizabeth Closs Traugott, "Pidgins, Creoles, and the Origins of Black Vernacular English," in *Black English*, ed. Harrison and Trabasso, 57–94. Hawkins himself provided a perfect example of his own familiarity with the differences between various dialects of Black English. His "Massa Georgee Washington and General La Fayette" (New York: Riley, 1824) uses the enclitic /ee/ that is characteristic of pidgin and proves that pidgin and Creole literary dialects coexisted as the languages used for black characters on the American stage. Other features important to the historical aspects of Black English are discussed in William A. Stewart, "On the Use of Negro Dialect in the Teaching of Reading," in *Language and Cultural Diversity*, ed. Abrahams and Troike, 262–74.

19. For a discussion of early dialect songs and speeches, see William J. Mahar, "Black

English in Early Blackface Minstrelsy: A New Interpretation of the Sources of Minstrel Show Dialect," *American Quarterly* 37 (Summer 1985): 260–85.

20. If Hawkins had intended to give an impression of an unusual dialect, he only needed to use the same superficial phonological elements that the later minstrel show songwriters used. This song shows a recognition of the deeper features of Black English.

21. Charles Hamm noted this dialect change in *Yesterdays: Popular Songs in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 137–40, but his observation is true only of the sheet music of the period. Songsters contained more dialect texts than sheet music. My observation is based on Cecil L. Patterson, "A Different Drum," 43–44.

22. Quoted in Martha V. Pike, "Catching the Tune: Music and William Sidney Mount," in *Catching the Tune,* ed. Armstrong, 13.

23. M. Hunt Hessler, " 'Rusticity and Refinement': Music and Dance on Long Island, 1800–1870," in *Catching the Tune,* ed. Armstrong, 48. Hessler also notes that "the popular culture of New York's markets, taverns and theaters remained an important conduit of cultural innovation long after Micah Hawkins's death in 1825" (p. 33).

24. Buckley, "The Place to Make an Artist Work," 26. Devoe's mention of "Pinkster" celebrations suggests that whites had the opportunity to observe black social activities and that studies of such contact situations are needed. Especially relevant for this study are the "Pinkster" festivities in New York City and Albany. See Edwin Olson, "Social Aspects of the Slave in New York," *Journal of Negro History* 26 (1941): 66–77, esp. 71–72; Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 66–68; James Eights, "Pinkster Festivities in Albany" [1867] in *Collections on the History of Albany, from Its Discovery to the Present Times,* ed. Joel Munsell, vol. 2 (Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell, 1867), 323–27, which is reprinted in Eileen Southern, ed., *Readings in Black American Music,* 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 41–48.

25. For more on Hawkins's New York years and the collections listed, see Lawrence, "Hawkins," 142–48.

26. Samuel P. Bayard, ed., *Dance to the Fiddle, March to the Fife: Instrumental Folk Tunes in Pennsylvania* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 273. Bayard also cites numerous other settings of the air for many different types of songs. Among the better-known sources are George Pullen Jackson, *Spiritual Folk Songs of Early America* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1937), nos. 47 and 237; John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 510 (not 150 as Bayard has it); and other collections. The version given by John and Alan Lomax came from "an old newspaper, *Brother Jonathan,* published by Wilson and Company, New York, July 4, 1845, to the tune of 'Boyne Water.' " "Backside Albany" has been recorded recently on side 2 of *The Early Minstrel Show,* New World Records NW 338.

27. The tune's publication history in England and its place in Irish folklore is discussed in D. J. O'Sullivan, "The Bunting [Edward Bunting, 1773–1843, whose original collections was published in 1809] Collection of Irish Folk Music and Songs," *Journal of the Irish Folk Song Society* 27 (1936): 53–61; the various volumes of this journal were rebound and reprinted by Dawson and Co. (London, 1967), and O'Sullivan's article appears in vol. 6 of the later publication. The Moore citation is from Wolfe, *Secular Music* 1, nos. 569–70, 790. The tune has also been cited in Kate van Winkle Keller and Carolyn Rabson, comp., *The National Tune Index* (New York: University Music Editions, 1980), no. E10.5, from an 1807 manuscript collection of John W. Stiles. In addition to the *National Tune Index* citation, three other pre-1800 examples have been located in American music manuscript collections; see James Fuld and Mary Wallace Davidson, *18th Century American Secular Manuscripts: An Inventory,* MLA Index and Bibliography Series, no. 20 (Philadelphia: Music Library Association, 1980), nos. 2:52 (1777), 5:55 (1786), 37:26 (1790). Nathan, *Dan Emmett,* 35n.12, cites P. W. Joyce, *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs* (Dublin, 1909), as another reference for the tune. The best-known appearance of

"Boyne Water" in symphonic music is in the fourth movement of Sir Hamilton Harty's *Irish* Symphony (1904), which is still available on the Chandos label.

28. Information on the Boyne battle taken from Ruth Dudley Edwards, *An Atlas of Irish History*, 2d ed. (New York: Methuen, 1981), 39, 65–66.

29. See Lawrence, "Hawkins," 148.

30. Text quoted from Kathleen Hoagland, ed., *1000 Years of Irish Poetry* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1962), 249–50. Another version can be found in Charles Gavan Duffy, ed., *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland* (1869; repr. Delmar, N.Y.: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1973), 133. Duffy describes the text I've quoted as the older version of the ballad. As a few representative lines will show, the later rendition follows a more stylized meter and rhyme scheme. The first stanza as quoted by Duffy is as follows:

July the first, in Oldbridge town
  There was a grevious battle,
Where many a man lay on the ground,
  By cannons that did rattle.
King James he pitches his tents between
  The lines for to retire;
But King William threw his bomb-balls in
  And set them all on fire.

31. Lawrence, "Hawkins," 154, writes that "a distinctively Irish air, 'The Boyne Water,' is a curiously inappropriate choice of musical vehicle for the text it is meant to convey" and that Hawkins's transcription of the tune is "crude." But the relationship between the Irish and American blacks is a key factor in the song. The Irish, occupying a low status in English society, provided models for those who wished to use the same comic device—the low-class stereotype or the parvenu without proper class and bearing—in American society.

32. For texts and backgrounds on these and other songs, see Oscar Brand, *Songs of '76: A Folksinger's History of the Revolution* (New York: M. Evans, 1972). See also *The Birth of Liberty*, New World Records NW 276, side 1, bd. 2, for a performance and the album notes for the text of "The King's Own Regulars."

33. Richard New Lebow, "White Britain and Black Ireland: The Anglo-Irish Colonial Relationship" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1968), 411. The treatment of the Irish as "Africans" in English popular literature was discussed by John F. Szwed, "Race and the Embodiment of Culture," *Ethnicity* 2 (1975): 19–33; and L. P. Curtis, Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971). The strongest evidence for the Irish-to-black stereotype conversion process can be found in two versions of the same humor book, *Irish Diamonds; or, A Theory of Irish Wit and Blunders* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1847), and *Black Diamonds; or, Humor, Satire and Sentiment Treated Scientifically . . .* (New York: A. Ranney, 1855). Another example of the interchangeability of stereotypes occurred in the American version of John O'Keefe's *Poor Soldier*, first performed in the United States in 1787. The stereotypical Irishman, Patrick, and his comical companion, Darby, appeared with a character called Bagatelle, a French barber. As Susan L. Porter noted in her recent discussion of the play, the French barber part was replaced "by a Negro valet, Domingo, 'with a song in character,' in performances at the Federal Street Theatre" [Boston]. See Susan L. Porter, "English-American Interaction in American Musical Theater at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," *American Music* 4 (Spring 1986): 14. For a study of the *Darby's Return* and *Poor Soldier* play cycle, see Patricia H. Virga, *The American Opera to 1790* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 263–76. While I know of no inventory of sailor songs for the 1750–1820 period, a quick survey of one standard source suggests that they were very popular. See *The American Musical Miscellany* (1798; repr. New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), which contains several "jolly sailor" songs.

34. For an introduction to the many "characters" of American comic and serious dramas, see David Grimsted, *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

35. The changes referred to here are the gradual disenfranchisement of black voters after the repeal of slavery and the hostility toward blacks as expressed in the various urban riots of the 1830s as well as the growing antiabolition sentiments in northern cities. Additional information on this matter can be found in Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People of the United States*, vol. 1, *From Colonial Times to the Civil War* (New York: Citadel Press, 1968); and Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *The Burden of Race: A Documentary History of Negro-White Relations in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

36. See Richard M. Dorson, *Jonathan Draws the Long Bow* (New York: Rockland Editions, 1939); idem, *America in Legend: Folklore from the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1973); and Francis Hodge, *Yankee Theatre: The Image of America on the Stage, 1825–1850* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964).

37. Szwed also cites an 1885 article by John Beddoe that suggests an "index of Negrescence" be adopted to show "the people of Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, and Ireland to be racially separate from the British. . . . [Beddoes argues] that those from Western Ireland and Wales were 'Africanoid' in their 'jutting jaws' and 'long, slitty nostrils,' and thus were immigrants from Africa." Szwed, "Race and the Embodiment of Culture," 21. Such racial "similarities" were often shown in nineteenth-century English caricatures of the Irish.

38. My discussion of stereotypes is based on Roger D. Abrahams's "Stereotyping and Beyond," in *Language and Cultural Diversity*, ed. Abrahams and Troike, 19–29, and John F. Szwed's "Race and the Embodiment of Culture." Noting white fears about the pollution of their culture by blacks, Szwed calls the process of cultural transformation *minstrelization*, a "process by which the low are characterized or emulated within a carefully regulated and socially approved context. Thus, on the nineteenth century stage, English and American white minstrels could publicly display the extent to which they had mastered Negro cultural forms and behaviors and, for a short time at least participate in what they conceived of as Negro life" (p. 27). Abrahams's description of the essential ambivalence of stereotypes is most revealing when applied to blackface comedy. In "The Negro Stereotype: Negro Folklore and the Riots," in *The Urban Experience and Folk Tradition*, ed. Americo Paredes and Ellen J. Steckert (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 68–69, he argues that "the force of the negative stereotype arises from its ambivalence, that is, from its ability to promulgate high values through their negation, to use the improper actions in a cautionary fashion, to impute rejected activities to a subordinate group, to maintain social distance and rationalize subservience, and all the while vicariously enjoying the exercise of the otherwise forbidden motive."

39. For a study of public behaviors during urban celebrations in Philadelphia, see Susan G. Davis, " 'Making Night Hideous': Christmas Revelry and Public Order in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia," *American Quarterly* 34 (1982): 185–99.

40. Stowe and Grimsted, "Review Essay," 95.

41. An excellent study of the attitudes toward work among the various nineteenth-century social classes and ethnic groups is Herbert F. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815–1919," *American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 531–87.