

THE BEGINNINGS OF A DUAL TRADITION: A STUDY OF
THE NEGRO TYPE ON THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AMERICAN STAGE

by

JOSEPH N. WEIXLMANN, JR.

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Approved by:

Walter H. E. King
Major Professor

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Preface

The purpose of this study is to trace the relatively unexplored theatrical rudiments which led to a dual employment of the Negro type on the American stage by the end of the Eighteenth Century: the Negro as a dramatic character and as a minstrel. The former, in the Eighteenth Century and, for the most part, in the Nineteenth, was the product of the white dramatists' conception of the Negro—depicted in seriously conceived drama by white actors performing in blackface for white audiences—and will hereafter be referred to as the dramatic Negro. The latter—portrayed in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries by blackfaced whites or, occasionally, by Negroes—stemmed from the performers' incorporation of plantation melodies and dances and is called, as convention dictates, the Negro minstrel. These two modes will be developed, noting both their similarities and dissimilarities, while pointing to their partial intermingling by the mid-Nineteenth Century.

In order to effect this, some workable generalizations about the Eighteenth Century American stage Negro (i.e., dramatic and minstrel) will be made. These will form the basis upon which to begin an ordered consideration of the character type. A short discussion of some important British drama which precedes and gives meaning to the early American theatrical productions will follow. With these bases firmly established, the ensuing consideration of the American stage Negro should be clearer.

This study is not designed to develop the socio-historical import of the Negro in Eighteenth Century America except in so far as it is

directly concerned with his role as it first appeared on the American stage. And while the development of the stage Negro in Nineteenth Century America will be discussed briefly, it is only included to show how this type was refined from a state which had begun to be evidenced by about 1795.

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Section I: The Stereotyped View of the Negro in America and Its Effects on the Theatre

A glance at a list of Nineteenth Century American theatrical productions reveals such titles as: Bad Breath, the Crane of Chowder; The Great Mutton Trail; Chameel; or, The Feet of a Go-Getter; Ill-True-Bad-Doer; Roman Nose and Suet; Sarah-Heart-Burn; and many other equally bizarre appellations. All of these plays belong to the popular era of the Negro Minstrel Burlesque which experienced great and widespread success on the American stage by the mid-Nineteenth Century.¹ Prior to the success of Negro minstrelsy however, the dramatic Negro did not become a figure of major importance on the American stage.

Early American dramatists perpetrated a stereotyped portrayal of the Negro. Barring one or two exceptions, he "...was not permitted a place on the stage in a role other than that permitted to him in real life. His position was that of a menial, and there he stayed until late in the nineteenth century."² This not only suggests why the Negro remained a character of minor importance, but it gives every indication of how one could expect to see the dramatists of the Eighteenth Century use the dramatic Negro type. Negroes were cast primarily as servants, maids or butlers.³ The automatic association of Negroes with servants can be illustrated even in an all-white play like The Contrast when Jonathan remarks: "Servant! Sir, do you take me for a neger...."⁴ More importantly however, while American playwrights did present their Negro characters in roles which they occupied in real life, the dramatic Negro "...was

never a close copy of the real-life Negro servant."⁵ Nearly every dramatist of the period who wrote a play incorporating Negro characters displayed a lack of concern for both the Negro and his problems. The Negro was not viewed as a real human being with a range of emotions. Instead he became a stock character who was often comic, such as the drunken servant, the clumsy servant, or what was in minstrelsy to become "the most conspicuous figure,"⁶ the old darky. Moody provides a useful generalization on this point: "The realistic conception of a slave, working day after day in the fields, deprived of medical attention, scorned for any sentimental devotion to his own family, was completely overshadowed by the romantic stage-type Negro: placid, full of good humor, not easily brought to anger, loyal, faithful, honest, and with a great respect for and a great desire to emulate his master."⁷ The general validity of this quotation is unassailable.

It is advantageous to note that the last characteristic which Moody attributes to the dramatic Negro, a respect for his master and a desire to emulate him, is especially important since there is little deviation from the use of this trait by any of the early American dramatists, and it is also a tool used by all of them to comment on the slaves' masters. At times, the servant's desire to emulate his master is so strong that he equates himself with his master in his own eyes and, more importantly, in the eyes of the audience. Thus, a good and noble master often possesses a good and noble slave; or, as in John Leacock's The Fall of British Tyranny, the ruthless Lord Kidnapper holds violent slaves who are willing to turn on their former master and kill him.

The generalization that the American dramatists of the period are not concerned with the problems of Negro slaves is also true in most cases. However, in the plays of John Murdock at the end of the century, a real concern for the Negro and a full recognition of his horrible plight is manifest.

The psychology which underlies the dramatists' conception of the Negro as a mere menial is certainly not so cold and biased as a Twentieth Century critic might be led to believe. No one could affirm that the Negro was not treated as a slave in Eighteenth Century America, but the implications of slavery as an accepted social institution during that period shed some illumination on the problem at hand. Francis P. Gaines suggests that until 1900, barring the short abolitionist period in the mid-Nineteenth Century, the popular conception was that race relations were fine and that the Negro was quite happy in his station.⁸ Thus, the early American dramatists did not have any reason to speak out against the horrors of slavery simply because they felt, for the most part, that the Negro was indeed happy. This attitude led to their stereotyped treatment of him. The result of this conception is that the Negro characters in the drama of the period may at times have been involved in plot manipulation, but they never attained the status of major characters in any Eighteenth Century American play.

With this background established, a consideration of the British dramatic tradition which preceded the first American Negro performances can now be made. It will become immediately evident that the British had a somewhat different conception of the Negro than the Americans did. And the following section will also go a long

way toward determining what can be expected from the later Negro minstrels.

Section II: British Antecedents to the Eighteenth Century American Stage Negro

Laurence Hutton begins his study of the stage Negro with a look at Shakespeare's finest Negro character, Othello, "...one of the earliest of the stage negroes, and...one of the best."⁹ Although Othello was acted often in England and America and although many interesting anecdotes surround the play—not the least of which involves the March 7, 1745 performance of the play at Drury Lane¹⁰ in which the famous Shakespearean actor, David Garrick, was hooted off the stage because of the absurd turban which he wore and the incongruous appearance of his blackened face¹¹—, this seems to be an all too arbitrary and meaningless place to begin.

It would seem more useful to start by observing that the blackening of faces was a common occurrence in medieval drama and that the practice continued into the Renaissance.¹² Eldred Jones lists approximately forty-five English stage pieces dating from 1510 to 1638 which used African characters. Shakespeare was only one of the Elizabethan and Jacobean contributors: Marlowe, Greene, Chapman, Dekker, Heywood, Jonson, Marston, Middleton, Fletcher, Rowley, Webster, and Massinger are some of the other notables who are on the list.¹³ Most of the Negro characters which one finds in these plays are serious and noble; they are not servant types. This is one of the first indications that the British stage Negro is going to be

in part distinct from the American stage Negro, but similarities do exist.

One of Mrs. Aphra Behn's plays, The Widow Ranter; or, The History of Bacon in Virginia is a Negro-Indian play set in the Colonies. It was produced in 1690 at the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane.¹⁴ The Negroes in the play appear as servants for the English in colonial America, and their main duties in the play are to fan a certain Madam Surelove and carry punch to her parties. While they have no speaking parts and are more ornamental than functional, they may be the first American Negroes in drama. However, Mrs. Behn, as the authoress of The Widow Ranter, is of minor importance to this discussion. One of her novels though provided Thomas Southerne with the material for his 1696 play, Oroonoko, one of the two major influences on American Negro drama.¹⁵

Oroonoko was "...the first play that adopted the 'noble savage' tradition for the stage Negro."¹⁶ The protagonist, a "royal slave" named Oroonoko, speaks lines that ring with natural dignity:

Oroonoko. Live still in fear; it is the Villain's Curse,
And will revenge my Chains: Fear e'en me,
Who have no pow'r to hurt thee. Nature abhors,
And drives thee out from the Society
And Commerce of Mankind, for Breach of Faith.
Men live and prosper but in Mutual Trust,
A Confidence of one another's Truth:
That thou hast violated. I have done.
I know my Fortune, and submit to it.¹⁷

Later on he continues in a like manner: "But there's another, Nobler Part of Me,/ Out of your reach, which you can never tame" (p.16). By the end of the play, even his enemies laud him as a man of "exalted Virtue" (p.84).

The play was produced in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York in

the Eighteenth Century,¹⁸ but the effects of these American productions were minimal at first. The early American dramatists could not easily incorporate a princely figure like Oroonoko into their plays since his type was foreign not only to their drama, but to their continent. Secondly, since Oroonoko spoke in formal verse rather than in a Negro dialect, his speech patterns did not prove useful. Thus, this play had little immediate impact on the American dramatic Negro although it did affect the depiction of some Nineteenth Century characters.

The real importance of Oroonoko for this study is in the fact that the Song of the Negro Boy sung by a certain Mr. Gottlieb Graupner in Negro make-up at the end of the second act in a December 30, 1799 production of Oroonoko at the Federal Theatre in Boston relates directly to the Negro minstrel tradition.¹⁹ Apparently Graupner "...won such applause that he had to bring in his little bench and sing his song over and over again."²⁰ This performance is especially important since it follows shortly after several other movements toward minstrelsy in Boston as will be shown in a later section.

The British production which had by far the greatest influence on the dual American Negro tradition was Isaac Bickerstaffe's The Padlock, a comic opera written in 1766 with a music score by Charles Dibdin who in 1768 played the part of Mungo, the Negro servant, in the first performance.²¹ One reason that this drama had such great impact on the American stage Negro is that "Mungo was essentially a comic-type Negro who, like the Negro of the minstrel show, frequently took over the stage for his own song-and-dance exhibitions."²² This must be true because the most prolific American dramatist of

the period, William Dunlap, notes in his History of the American Theatre that Lewis Hallam, in his representation of Mungo, "...was unrivalled to his death, giving the Mungo with a truth derived from the study of the Negro slave character, which Dibdin the writer [of the music] could not have conceived."²³ From this most lavish praise, one must assume that Hallam, a member of the famous English acting family which came to America in 1752 and marked the "...turning point in the history of the American theatre,"²⁴ did indeed take over the stage by giving his impression of a Negro slave "...modelled...on what he had observed of Negro traits in Jamaica."²⁵

Nearly fifty Eighteenth Century American performances of the play are on record,²⁶ so it is no wonder that one Boston playbill refers to The Padlock as "the favorite Musical Entertainment."²⁷ This huge number of performances speak for both the popularity of the play and, more significantly, its impact in America.

Mungo not only foreshadows the upcoming Negro minstrels, but he paves the way for the dramatic Negro as well. He is a Negro servant who speaks in a Negro dialect and who wants to earn the respect of his master, Don Diego, but is instead rebuked—and rightly so—by Don Diego for his drunkenness and infidelity. Thus two facets of importance are immediately evident. Unlike the noble Croonoko, Mungo speaks a more realistic dialect, and he has a close relationship with his master. One of Mungo's traits that is not typical of the American dramatic Negro though is his infidelity to his master. Most early American dramatists were too predisposed to their conception of the romanticized, stereotyped Negro to make him a rogue.

However, it seems more worthwhile to stress Mungo's positive relationship to the American stage Negro, so consider the following song:

Mungo. Dear heart, what a terrible life I am led,
 A dog has a better that's shelter'd and fed:
 Night and day 'tis de same,
 My pain is dere game;
 Me wish to de Lord me was dead.

What e'ers to be done,
 Poor black must run;
 Mungo here, Mungo dere,
 Mungo every where;
 Sirrah come, Sirrah go,
 Do so, and do so.
 Oh! Oh!

Me wish to de Lord me was dead.²⁸

Clearly Mungo's speech pattern is not perfectly natural since much of it is rhymed and not written in a fully Negro dialect, but it is a movement toward capturing a speech pattern that nearly every Eighteenth Century American dramatist trying to portray a Negro would adopt. And it is not hard to visualize Mungo captivating his audience, much as the later minstrels did, with this delightfully impassioned song.

Therefore, British drama did provide early American dramatists and performers with some foundations upon which to begin developing the Negro type. And, in the process, it afforded Eighteenth Century American playgoers a lot of entertainment.

Section III: The Negro in Eighteenth Century American Drama

There are only eight Eighteenth Century American plays which deal directly with Negro characters, and it has already been stated

that the roles of these characters are invariably minor. Therefore, this section is designed to trace the dramatic Negro character historically and critically to the point where he shows the first signs of becoming more than a completely stereotyped figure.

In 1770, Colonel Robert Munford wrote a play entitled The Candidates; or, The Humours of a Virginia Election,²⁹ but publication did not take place until 1798. The prologue to the 1798 edition gives a slight indication that the play may have been produced, but no record of such a production exists. This is significant since the play introduces a Negro servant named Ralpho who, while he was "...probably the first negro character in American drama,"³⁰ could have made no considerable dramatic impact on the Eighteenth Century American stage even though he does display some of the characteristics of the typical dramatic Negro.

Ralpho appears in Munford's three-act comedy as a member of the servant class as do several other Negroes who are of no real significance since they have no speaking parts and only come into view in one scene. He is more than happy to assist his kind master, Mr. Wou'dbe, in any way he can which includes helping him win a seat in the Virginia general assembly. The following speech is only one example of Ralpho's love for Wou'dbe: "God bless your honour! what a good master! who would not do every thing to give such a one pleasure?"³¹

Ralpho and Wou'dbe have a mutual respect for one another, and it is not hard to see why Wou'dbe feels the way he does about Ralpho. He is truly sincere and, unlike the drunken Mungo, is not only concerned with advancing in his master's eyes but with saving his mas-

ter's household from financial ruin. Ralpho serves as a stabilizing force for Wou'dbe who is going all out to win an election:

Ralpho. Master, we ought to be careful of the rum, else 'twill not hold out, (aside) it's always a feast or a famine with us; master just got a little Jamaica for his own use, and now he must spill it, and spare it till there's not a drop left (p.24).

Thus, Ralpho acts carefully to safeguard his master's possessions and never has a malicious response for Wou'dbe. He possesses an economic wisdom which gives him dignity as does the prose he speaks. With the exception of his ennobled speech, Ralpho exhibits all the qualities of the previously defined stereotype.

A much more realistic portrayal can be found in John (or Joseph) Leacock's³² The Fall of British Tyrenny; or, American Liberty Triumphant. One of the editors of this 1776 play, Montrose J. Moses, classifies it as "...the first example that we have of an American chronicle play" and adds that it is "...the first literary piece in which George Washington appears as a character."³³ The intent of this five-act chronicle play is to show the corruption and meanness of the British officers as opposed to the heroism and nobility of Generals Washington, Lee, and Putnam and their forthcoming revenge for "...the insult offer'd to the immortal Montgomery, and brutal treatment of the brave Allen."³⁴

The Negroes in the play are runaway slaves who are seized by one of the most scurvy British officers, Lord Kidnapper (in real life, Lord Dunmore). The Negroes are more than willing to fight for Kidnapper because he promises them emancipation and equality. So, the "black regulars" join with Tories and convicts to form Lord Kidnapper's force.

In order to gain the Negroes' total support, Kidnapper confers the rank of major on Cudjo, the spokesman for the twenty-two Negroes; and he makes Cudjo state that he would kill his former master, Colonel Thompson, if he saw him. Then, after making a slave turn on his own master—a deed incriminating enough—, Kidnapper shows the audience that he still does not trust the Negroes in the least or view them as his equals:

Kidnapper. Serjeant to-morrow begin to teach those black recruits the exercise, and when they have learn'd sufficiently well to load and fire, then incorporate them among the regulars and the other whites on board; we shall in a few days have some work for 'em, I expect—be as expeditious as possible. (Aside to him.) Set a guard over them every night, and take their arms from them, for who knows but they may cut our throats (333).

Lord Kidnapper is no Major André.

In trying to assess the distinct significance of these particular Negroes, one must realize that they are atypical stage Negroes and that Leacock is using them to underscore the corrupting, scurvy nature of Lord Kidnapper rather than comment on the average Negro. As Moody puts it: "The Negro slaves in this play were kidnapped by Lord Dunmore. Since they were ignorant and credulous, they readily consented to kill their masters when they were promised release. None of them was very clearly defined, and the entire group was presented as savages with no redeeming quality."³⁵

Once again, there is no reason to conclude that the play was produced, although Paul L. Ford did just that: "The piece is...apparently hopeless from a stage point of view; yet a prologue and epilogue, with the names of the speakers, indicate that it was acted before it was printed. The only contribution it made to dramatic literature was in the introduction of the negro as a comic charac-

ter."³⁶ One must agree with Ford's initial assertion; it is a hopeless stage piece. Tyler went so far as to call it "...a huge and very Gothic drama..." for which "...no claim of artistic merit need be supposed."³⁷ Ford's whole argument then rests on the fact that the speakers of the prologue and epilogue were named. Their names are very telling indeed. The prologue was to be spoken by Mr. Peter Buckstail, and the epilogue—which is about slavery—was spoken by none other than Mr. Freeman. The author, who signed the dedication to the play with the name "Dick Rifle" after having addressed his readers as "My Lords and Gentlemen Buffoons," would scarcely have counted on such a lack of wit in any member of his audience. It goes without saying that Buckstail and Freeman are merely two more of the names concocted by the playful Mr. Leacock.

However, the American dramatic Negro finally stepped onto the stage in 1777 in an anonymously written play published in Danvers, Massachusetts and "Lately acted in Connecticut" entitled The Down-fall of Justice; and The Farmer just return'd from Meeting on Thanks-giving Day.³⁸ It is a comedy containing only a prologue and one scene; yet, while it may not be the most lengthy and accomplished drama of the Eighteenth Century, it is the American play in which Jack, a Negro servant who speaks in a distinctly Negro dialect, is introduced to the American stage.

An insight into the content of the play and into the attitude of Jack's master toward Negroes may be gained by reading the following section of the Prologue:

Father being fond of Jack,
Permitted the poor puppy in,
To lap the gravy spilt—quite clean,
Master and Jack always agreed,

He taught him well to say his creed,
 And all the words that e'er they had,
 Was Paper Money's being had.
 Master insists and makes it so,
 That Paper Money would no do:
 Jack he insists, and says no more,
 But such examples hurts the Poor.³⁹

Jack's status is not extraordinarily high, and he does indeed act with no more force than to respond blandly in the affirmative to everything his master says except when it comes to the subject of kindness to the poor.

Jack's master, the Farmer, insists on selling his crops to the townspeople at premium prices, yet he claims to be a very religious man. When Jack suggests his hypocrisy, the response is explosive:

Jack. Well Masser, I don't tink 'tis fair ting when poor fok he canno get no noting in he belly; Masser got every ting, I do no no what Masser mean; he pray.... Lord pity poor ebery where; he no give, he no selle; What he du? Masser got rye enuf, wheat enuf, cyder enuf, ebery ting enuf; Jack he trash, he trash, dis bin full, dat bin full, ebery bin full, poor fok he no lefte have, what he du, what fok du; ah Masser! Farmer. Why you black Bastard, haven't you victuals enough to stop your mouth?
 Jack. Yesse, Sir, only pity poor fok cause he got no round dollar (p.7).

The hypocrisy theme is then carried to the peak of irony when the Farmer defends himself by twisting the scripture which he has just heard cited at the Thanksgiving Day sermon: "'He that withholdeth the corn the people shall curse him'" (p.8).

Thus, while this playlet remains in form an insignificant didactic sketch, a Negro who has some reasonably intelligent message to communicate and who is as much a character as anyone else in the play has appeared on the American stage speaking an American Negro dialect by 1777.

Not until 1785, when Sans Souci, Alias Free and Easy; or, An

Evening's Peep into a Polite Circle was published in Boston, does another American dramatist make use of the Negro. The play is described on its title page as an "Entertainment In Three Acts," and it has been attributed by some historians to Mercy Otis Warren because one of the dramatis personae is a certain Mrs. W——n. No production of the play has been recorded, and the fact that there was not a theatre in Boston until August, 1792 (which was not legally sanctioned until 1797)⁴⁰ provides one added reason to believe that the play was never produced.

Sans Souci is a satire which attacks the elite Boston society clique for their assimilation of English affectations and their frivolous devotion to playing cards in public for money. Mrs. W——n speaks out against the goings on of this group, and her saneness in the matter seems to lend support to the view that she—Mrs. Warren that is—is the authoress of the drama.

The Negro servants, Cuffy and Jack, appear in only one scene, and they comment on the time spent by their masters on frivolity. However, the use of the Negro servants here, although sparse, is unique and sophisticated. Cuffy is an old servant who comments on the past days of sanity while the youthful Jack is overjoyed by the stylishness of his masters and the freedom afforded by their absence. It seems that affected insanity has spread to the servant class too:

Cuffy. What klok Jack?

Jack. Pass twelbe klok.

Cuffy. Dis be no lik ole Massa times—ten klok, go bed—de gate shot—go prarrs—all de serbants go bed—Massa put out de fire.

Jack. Yesse, Cuffe—but you be ole fello—I like bery vel setin up—Massa and Misse brod—gate open all nite—why you fool, what optuntty for serbants? But when Massa and Misse kep hom all de etning, go bed ten klok, what time for poor serbant dronk.

Cuffy. Massa and Messe cone hom twelbe klok, scold and hangry—

poor serbants pay for all—find falt wid ebery ting—noting rite.

Jack. You neber been Mingland Cuffe—dar sin tins—presenly Bosson lik it—masserades—pantons—no litle Cornshort-mal for gentry—presenly panton—tea trays—flambeau—no dribe wid one poor hosse and sha—but tree serbants—no one poor debel lik y uself—bud libry serbants.

Cuffy. Me be owl felo Jack—but I frad too tru—me here notin now but Sam and Susy⁴¹—me dont no wat dey meen—but me here dem say, we go Sam and Susy to night—d—n baboon.

Jack. Baboon—usse wat you say?—Balloon you mean.

Cuffy. Hah, balloon—wel no mater for dat.⁴²

The coupling of the serious commentary and the broadly comic banter which is effected by contrasting the two servants in this way furnishes American drama with another way in which Negro servants can be used. The most important American dramatist to be discussed in this study, John Murdock, will employ this technique thirteen years after the publication of Sans Souci.

However, only seven years later, J. Robinson's two-act farce, The Yorker's Stratagem; or, Banana's Wedding, was written and produced for the first time with four Negroes in the dramatis personae. The play must have been popular because after the April 24, 1792 and May 24, 1792 productions of the play in New York,⁴³ it moved to Philadelphia for a June 15, 1792 showing.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Daily Advertiser of May 14 noted that The Yorker's Stratagem was extremely entertaining, that it "...exhibits a variety of very striking characters, and what is rarely found in a modern production, those characters have novelty to commend them."⁴⁵

One of the novelties, of course, was the presentation of Negro characters, but these Negroes are in part distinct from those created by previous American dramatists because they are natives of the West Indies, where the drama takes place. As a result, The Yorker's Stratagem is a different sort of play since, to mention

only one thing other than the unusual setting, the Negroes and whites live together as one people and feel perfectly free to intermarry.

One of the Negro characters, Banana, and his mother hold a fairly large estate in the West Indies; and so a white landowner, Mr. Fingercash, who refuses to give his daughter, Louisa, any of his money until both he and his wife die, decides to marry Louisa to Banana because he could easily support her. Mrs. Banana is overjoyed with the proposition because if Banana were to marry a white girl, the Bananas would be able to improve their social standing in the community. Banana however loves a Negro girl, Priscilla, and so he does not want to marry Louisa. The plot is resolved when Ledger, Louisa's real love, disguises as Banana and marries Louisa thereby freeing Banana to stay with Prissy.

From this brief summary, it should be evident that most of the generalizations about the dramatic Negro which have been offered break down here since there is no emphasis placed on the role of the Negro as a menial. Also, while the Negro parts are still minor ones, they are much more substantial. Both of these phenomena can be explained by remembering that these Negroes are not American, and so they cannot be expected to conform to American strictures. But instead of belaboring the atypical features of the play, it might be better to merely enjoy a bit of the humor and the Negro dialect in which the play abounds.

The first Negro encountered in the play is Mr. Fingercash's servant:

Servant. Masa Acid dere want for see you, he hab two Yankeys wid he.

Mr. Fingercash. How do you know they are Yankeys?
 Servant. Dem san so, dem hab salt fish in one hand, and trokey
 in todder.⁴⁶

The dialect is fairly realistic here, and it picks up the added dimension of being hysterically funny when spoken by the ranting Mrs. Banana who is chastising her son for his sloth:

Mrs. Banana. You hab de face for tell me so? you hab no more amminition in you than one hog. Looksee dere (shows a letter) da from Mr. Fingercash; call de obarseer, he will read him for you (p.18).

The letter happened to be an expression of Mr. Fingercash's desire to have Banana marry his daughter, and after listening to his mother's glee at the invitation, Banana trudges off and speaks the following soliloquy:

Banana. Poor me one, my mumma tink she hab sabby in she head. Egad, she fool more dan poor me; she want a me for marry de fine lady, to make my head grow big like a guaba bush. Niber mind, I will marry de fine lady for please my mumma, and go lib wid Prissey and poor Quacka for please myself (p.19).

The atypical qualities of The Yorker's Stratagem and The Fall of British Tyranny remain modes of the past however when one moves on to the plays of John Murdock whose Negroes are drawn with a warmth of passion and devotion to their masters unsurpassed in the British or American drama of the Eighteenth Century and for some time after that.

Murdock's The Triumphs of Love; or, Happy Reconciliation is a four-act comedy which was acted on May 22, 1795 at the New Theatre in Philadelphia⁴⁷ and published in Philadelphia later in the same year. Pollock observes that The Triumphs of Love was one of two new American plays produced in the 1795 season in Philadelphia.⁴⁸

The play revolves around a character named George Friendly, Jr. who has to prove to his father that he is a worthy son. George

proves himself by his kindness to other people, including his Negro slave, Sambo, whom he frees for his sense of true loyalty to his master. Speaking a splendid dialect, alternately laughing and crying, but always communicating his pathos, Sambo is lovable in the extreme. He is the dutiful servant, the honest servant, and a real, feeling human being, all in one.

Quite early in the play, George has just finished getting all dressed up in order to keep a rendezvous with a lady, and Sambo remains in the room after George leaves:

Sambo. Eh, eh, eh, dare he go sing like a mockey bird. Massa George berry fine young man; berry good to poor foke; he gib great deal money away; but he drom rogue for gall; he keeps tings berry close too: he no tell Sambo he secrets; but Sambo be drom cunning for all dat...he be a drom rogue among the fair sex too (Looks at himself in the glass.). I tink I berry handsome fellow:—look much like a gemmen; we negro improbe berry much.⁴⁹

From this short speech, the reader gathers that Sambo is dutiful, that he respects his master, and that he takes a certain pride in himself as an individual. It seems appropriate to note in passing that this particular dramatic technique—having the master stand before the mirror and then having the servant repeat his master's action—was used by Bickerstaffe in The Padlock, and it evokes a good servant-good master equation here.

In the next act, George, who is somewhat of a playboy, is in his closet disguising himself so that he can get into a lady's house when Sambo comes upon him and accosts him as a thief. But, George tells Sambo that he is a poor man whose wife is sick and whose children have smallpox and that he came to beg for some money from Master Friendly. Having heard this, Sambo breaks into tears:

Sambo. Tay—(wipes his eyes) poor souls—(takes money out of

his pocket) here—(puts it into Geo. Friendly, jun's hands) here, take dis: go home quick to you wife and childre, so fere dey starve or die fo you get there (pp.41-2).

To this George Friendly replies in an aside: "...You are a good black" (p.42). Sambo's generosity touches George and the audience, and by this time Murdock must have felt that he had made the audience love Sambo so much that he dared to strike out against slavery—a controversial thing to do in those days—a few scenes later.

George Friendly is secretly watching Sambo as he stands in front of the mirror:

Sambo. Sambo, what a gal call a pretty fellow...Sambo tink himself handsome. He berry complish'd to; he sing well; he dance well. He tink; he berry often tink why he slave to white man? why black foke sold like cow or horse. He tink de great somebody above, no order tings so.

G. Friendly, jun. (solus). Be softened as thou wilt, still, slavery, thy condition is hard. The untutored, pathetic soliloquy of that honest creature, has more sensibly affected me, than all I have read, or thought, on that barbarous, iniquitous slave trade.... It is cruel. It is unjust, for one creature to hold another in a state of bondage for life. Sambo, thou shalt be free (pp.51-2).

When Sambo returns to the room, Friendly does free him and allows him to stay on with wages. Sambo's reaction is true to his character:

Sambo. (In a reverie—then becomes extremely elated, jumps about; kisses the skirt of his master's coat;—kisses his hand.) O massa George, I feel how I neber feel before. God bless you. (Cries.) I muss go, or my heart burst (p.53).

After this scene, Sambo appears in the play only one more time.

In his last appearance, he has been out celebrating his freedom and has had a bit too much wine to drink. George and a servant try to help Sambo up to bed while he repents his drunkenness:

Sambo. Yes, Sir. Massa George, you forgib Sambo. Sambo die for you. (As he is going, servant takes hold of him.) Tan off, I say; I say you coundrel tan off. I go myself. Liber-

ty and quality, heighup, for eber.
 Careless. So much against liberating those people. The greatest number of them, after they are set free, become vicious. Geo. Friendly, jun. That, by no means, authorizes their being detained in a state of slavery. Much is to be said in favour of them, for their want of education (p.69).

Even in his soporific state, Sambo remains true to his master, and Murdock continues to lash out against slavery.

Thus, as early as 1795, a minor abolitionist note has been sounded; the Negro's plight has been shown on stage; and the dramatic stage Negro has found himself in a significant role. Sambo stands as a theatrical landmark because he is the first well-developed American dramatic Negro. Several decades will pass before a Negro character of more significance appears in American drama.

Two more Eighteenth Century plays remain. The year 1798 witnessed the production of William Milns' (or Milne's)⁵⁰ comic prelude, All in a Bustle; or, The New House, which was first produced on January 29th at the opening of the New Theatre in New York.⁵¹ This dramatic piece describes the utter chaos surrounding the New Theatre and its company including the comic antics of a "black wench" who manages to smear a goodly amount of freshly painted scenery. Since the black wench does not actually appear in the play but is merely alluded to in a conversation, All in a Bustle does not require further discussion here.

The main dramatic contribution of the year for the purposes of this study is another Murdock play entitled The Politicians; or, A State of Things. It is likely that this 1798 two-act commentary (as Murdock termed it) was not produced due to the stir caused by The Triumphs of Love, which had been withdrawn after one performance because it was apparently too controversial for its Eighteenth Cen-

tury audience.⁵² But The Politicians is important since it once again presents Sambo, who is still faithful to the wishes and thoughts of his master. This time though, he is a decidedly minor figure who appears in merely two scenes and only speaks about twenty lines, and his lines are spoken as he converses with other Negroes. However, his opinions are clearly superior and in perfect accord with the political position favored by Murdock.

The play has an historical basis which Quinn relates: "The country was torn with dissension on account of the treaty with England in 1794 and the consequent refusal of the French government to receive Charles C. Pickney, when he succeeded James Munroe as Minister of the United States to France in December, 1796."⁵³ The play, then, centers around upper class, middle class, and Negro characters who argue whether to be friendly with England or France or, in the case of the character Conciliate, to be friendly with both.

As Quinn suggests, "Murdock was evidently in favor of the action of the government and was a strong supporter of Washington."⁵⁴ In other words, Murdock favored neither France nor England; he favored the United States. The last speech of the play gives a summary statement to this effect:

O'Callaghan (solus). God save us, what a combustion here? is a subject for the most shallow-pated to moralize upon: Americans enrolling themselves under the banners of foreign powers, now, upon my conscience, I think the sons of Columbia should observe more dignity, than to suffer themselves to be divided by governments across the Atlantic; would be more to their honour, to parade in favor of their own government....⁵⁵

Sambo begins his defense of the United States at the end of the first act of The Politicians when he is talking with Caesar and Pompey, two of his Negro friends who were referred to as "mischievous

rogues" by the anti-Negro Careless in The Triumphs of Love:

Sambo. Any ting new to day, gemmen?
 Pompey. Trong talke French war.
 Caesar. Dam French.
 Pompey. Dam English.
 Caesar. What you dam English, for?
 Pompey. What e debil you dam French, for?
 Caesar. Cause I don't like 'em.
 Pompey. Why you no like 'em?
 Caesar. Cause my massa no like 'em.
 Pompey. My massa no like English—I hate 'em too—drom proud---
 so conceit coxcomb---look like ebery body tunk in e nose.
 Caesar. Ten hundred time better den French, drom fribble, buf-
 foon, ape, monkey; English, fine, manly fellow; besides French
 come cut our throat, I like English: English for eber!
 Pompey. France for eber! France git liberty to slabe liberty;
 and, France for eber! my massa for France---so I, who you for,
 Sambo?
 Sambo. I go we massa too.
 Pompey. He for France.
 Sambo. No.
 Pompey. For English.
 Sambo. No.
 Caesar. Who debil he for den?
 Sambo. He for he country!
 Pompey. For he country!
 Sambo. Ah, for he country! massa say, dam French, dam English;
 he say, let em fight and be dom'd (pp.20-1).

Thus, Sambo expresses an intelligent solution—and Murdock's solu-
 tion—to the problem. Another point can also be made in regard to
 this passage which transcends the political issues at hand. Sambo,
 Caesar, and Pompey all had related sources for their opinions—their
 masters! Thus, one more manifestation of the servant's desire to
 emulate his master has been presented.

Act Two, scene four finds Pompey and Caesar quarreling again,
 and this time an old Negro, Cato, is trying to point out the road
 to harmony to them while Sambo plays the eiron:

Sambo. He, he, he! two black fool go fight (aside) citizens,
 you go too fast, you go too fast, citizens.
 Cato. Caesar and Pompey, take advice of an old man, neber
 quarrel bout politic, it bring you much trouble, what you
 do wid such tings? it seem to me, Negro head got quite

wrong now-a-day, you must all be genmen, must dress in fashion, talk high flow, must have cue-and-wool powder, dat foolish, only make your face look more black, however, let me advise you no quarrel bout politic, I wish all e world like my massa, Conciliate; he good man, he seek how he do good, if any body be in distress, he help em, he neber quarrel bout politic—if a man be an aristocrat, and for English, he no fight him, he no argue wid any body, for what dey tink, he ebery body friend, and nobody enemy, he so good, he no hurt cockroach.

Sambo. I suppose he no kill a fly when he bite im.

Pompey. No, I see him many time brush a fly of he leg when he bite him.

Sambo. He no shoot a bird.

Cato. No, he tink dat cruel.

Sambo. He eat him when he dead?

Cato. O yes, he eat him when he shot.

Sambo. Ha, ha, ha! dat make a me laugh, dat put me in mind of a person who preach against eating good tings, afterwards go home and tuff e gut like a debil.

Cato. Ah! you young fool, Sambo.

Pompey. Massa Conciliate a bery good man; I know him bery good man, but I like a man take some part for all dat.

Sambo. Oh! drom me, I sick of politic, let us go (pp.30-1).

Clearly Murdock favored a firm pro-government position, and so while Sambo refutes the wishy-washy, hypocritical position of Cato, he is also refuting the position of Cato's master, Conciliate.

This further consideration of Murdock's truly representative dramatic Negro character, Sambo, and his friends lends credence to Quinn's assertion that in The Politicians "The negro characters are again drawn with a skill in which Murdock surpassed anyone for many a year...."⁵⁶ And so, by the end of the Eighteenth Century, substantial Negro characters had been on their native stage; and, while they had not yet reached the proportions of central characters, they had become more than romanticized, stereotyped puppets in the hands of a dramatist who showed no concern for their dilemma.

In fact, it was not until Charles Weston Taylor's stage adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin in August of 1852 that the Negro became a full-fledged focus of attention. Moody

points out the wonder of the occurrence even at that late date: "This was the first time Negroes were presented as the central figures in an American drama and the first time an abolitionist's document reached the stage. The combination came as something of a bombshell."⁵⁷ Several adaptations of Stowe's Dred in 1856 and Dion Boucicault's The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana (1859) quickly followed upon the success of Uncle Tom's Cabin, but even though the Negro had become a central figure in a few plays by the time of the Civil War, no truly realistic portrayal of the Negro occurred until the last decade of the Nineteenth Century.⁵⁸

Therefore, one must conclude that Murdock's The Triumphs of Love was several decades ahead of its time and that the American dramatic Negro had taken his first big step forward by 1795.

Section IV: The Beginnings of Negro Minstrelsy in America

Blackface minstrels had little more in common with their European predecessors than a genuine love of song and verse. The blackface repertory included such distinctly native themes that Negro minstrelsy has to be viewed as an art form indigenous to the United States. The fact that it was little understood or appreciated outside of America also lends credence to this assertion.⁵⁹

The Negro's natural fondness for rhythmic and musical expression, which one can still find evidenced in a contemporary look at Africa such as Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson, seems to be a primary motivating force underlying the Negro minstrelsy tradition. The spontaneous "...crooning melodies sung to the accompaniment of guitar or

banjo by the plantation blacks, and their peculiar shuffling dances were the models upon which the first blackface performers patterned their acts."⁶⁰

About the same time that Hallam began to perform in America (August and September, 1753), Antony Joseph Dugee, a young Indian, and a young Negro gave a series of gymnastic and dancing performances in New York.⁶¹ Dugee and his group exist more as curiosities than as figures informing the Negro minstrelsy tradition though. But in April and May, 1767—two years prior to the first American production of The Padlock—at the new John Street Theatre in New York, the third part of a Bayly and Hymes variety show ended with "'a Negro Dance in Character'" by a certain Mr. Tea, the clown of the company.⁶² This is the first known stage record of a Negro impersonation in the minstrel vein in America, and presumably the actions of the plantation blacks served as the model upon which Mr. Tea constructed his act.

These performances were followed, as has been noted in the second section, by numerous productions of the immensely influential English comedy, The Padlock. Other than this imported comic opera though, there were no Negro minstrel performances on the American stage until 1786, but the intervening years did witness spontaneous singing and dancing acts by groups of Negroes in the streets of many of the major Eastern cities, probably with banjo accompaniment.⁶³

In 1786, an anonymously written pantomime entitled Robinson Crusoe was introduced to the American stage. There is some learned speculation that the famous English dramatist, Richard Brinsley

Sheridan, developed this piece from its original crude state; and, in any case, it was then presented in Drury Lane in 1781 and 1782 with the Negro character, Friday, wearing blackface make-up.⁶⁴ Friday's humorous actions often interrupted the progress of the sketch,⁶⁵ so Robinson Crusoe is important merely for the exposure it gave to the Negro character. This importance becomes further magnified when one considers that the pantomime was played no less than four times in New York (from 1786 to 1793)⁶⁶ and no less than fifteen times in Philadelphia (from 1787 to 1799)⁶⁷ in the Eighteenth Century. It is by far the most significant minstrel-type stage piece of the period.

A trip to Boston is necessary in order to view the last Eighteenth Century performances in the Negro minstrel tradition. Gottlieb Graupner's song during the 1799 performance of Oroonoko has already been noted, but the way to the production of a play with Negro characters in it had to be paved by several antecedent occurrences before the conservative citizens of Boston could be led to accept Oroonoko. It has already been pointed out that no one was allowed on a Boston stage prior to 1792 regardless of skin color, so it should not be shocking to find out that racial prejudice also existed there. A Negro Minstrel Band appeared in Boston in July, 1795, but when it was discovered that "...the music performed by men of colour had been disagreeable to some Ladies,"⁶⁸ the group was dismissed. On January 11, 1796 however, Joseph Tyler sang "the admired song of the Poor Negro Boy," a pathetic ballad about the torments of slave life.⁶⁹ It may have been done in blackface.⁷⁰

Thus, the Negro minstrel began to emerge on the American stage at about the same time as his dramatic counterpart, and as the minstrel progressed into the Nineteenth Century, he became a widely acclaimed figure. Even today, one can picture him as the theatre-goers of the Nineteenth Century did: "He is lazy, shiftless, and happy-go-lucky, loves watermelon, carries a razor, emits a peculiar odor, shoots craps, grins instead of smiles—is noisily religious, loves red, dresses flashily, loves gin, and can sing. On the stage he is presented lying easily, using long words he does not understand, drinking gin, stealing chickens, and otherwise living up to the joke book tradition."⁷¹ The names of "Pot Pie" Herbert, "Zip Coon", "Jim Crow" Rice, the Christy Minstrels, and Stephen Foster help to bring the era even closer, but the racial turmoil of the Twentieth Century has seemingly reversed the humorous, romanticized trend.

Footnotes

¹Richard Moody, America Takes the Stage: Romanticism in American Drama and Theatre, 1750-1900 (Bloomington, 1955), pp.265-70.

²Ibid., p.60.

³Lettie Jo Cotton, "Negro in the American Theatre," Negro Hist. Bulletin, XXIII (May 1960), 172.

⁴Royall Tyler, "The Contrast," American Plays, ed. Allan Gates Halline (New York, 1935), p.20.

⁵Moody, America Takes the Stage, p.61.

⁶Francis P. Gaines, The Southern Plantation: A Study in the Development and Accuracy of a Tradition (New York, 1925), p.3.

⁷America Takes the Stage, p.61.

⁸The Southern Plantation, p.17.

⁹Curiosities of the American Stage (New York, 1891), p.89.

¹⁰Arthur H. Scouten, ed., The London Stage 1660-1800, 3, II (Carbondale, 1960), 1157.

¹¹Margaret Barton, Garrick (New York, 1949), p.65.

¹²Eldred Jones, Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama (London, 1965), p.28.

¹³Ibid., pp.145-9

¹⁴Montague Summers, ed. with an intro., "The Widow Ranter; or, The History of Bacon in Virginia," The Works of Aphra Behn, IV (New York, 1967), 219. [Reprinted from the 1915 London edition.]

¹⁵Moody, p.62.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Thomas Southerne, Oroonoko (London, 1696 as reprinted in Three Centuries of Drama: English 1642-1700, ed. Henry Willis Wells), p.15. All subsequent references to this play will occur parenthetically in the text.

¹⁸Moody (p.34) and Hutton (Curiosities, pp.99-100) give the record of the Boston performance. The New York performance is noted in George C. Odell's Annals of the New York Stage, I (New York, 1927), 230. And the record of the Philadelphia enactment can be found in Thomas Pollock's The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century (Philadelphia, 1933), p.416.

¹⁹Moody, p.34; Hutton, pp.99-100; Carl Wittke, Tambo and Bones: A History of the American Minstrel Tradition (New York, 1968), p.10. [Reprinted from the 1930 Durham edition.]

²⁰Wittke, p.10.

²¹Hutton, p.93; Moody, p.62.

²²Moody, p.63.

²³Dunlap, History of the American Theatre and Anecdotes of the Principal Actors, 2nd ed., Improved Incorporating a list of early plays and "A Narrative of his connection with the old American Company 1792-1797" by John Hodgkinson, I (New York, 1963), 58. [Based on the 1832 New York edition.]

²⁴Oral S. Coad and Edwin Mims, Jr., The American Stage (New York, 1929), p.17.

²⁵Odell, Annals of the New York Stage, I, 151.

²⁶While only one Boston performance is acknowledged in William W. Clapp's A Record of the Boston Stage (Boston, 1853), p.53, Odell noted no less than fourteen New York performances from 1769-1794, mainly by Hallam and Co.; and Pollock records thirty-two enactments in Philadelphia from 1769-1799 (The Philadelphia Theatre, p.416).

²⁷Clapp, A Record of the Boston Stage, p.53.

²⁸The Padlock (London, 1768 as reprinted in Three Centuries of Drama: English 1751-1800, ed. Henry Willis Wells), p.11.

²⁹Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama: from the Beginning to the Civil War (New York, 1923), p.55.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹The Candidates (Petersburg, 1798 as reprinted in Three Centuries of Drama: American, ed. Henry Willis Wells), p.16. All subsequent references to this play will occur parenthetically in the text.

³²Montrose J. Moses, ed. with an intro., "The Fall of British Tyranny," Representative American Plays by American Dramatists, I (New York, 1918), 279-81. Moses presents an interesting discussion about the attributed author of the play, John Leacock. He found spellings of Leacock, Lacock, and Laycock recorded for the last name and alternate first names of John and Joseph. He settled on the name John Leacock, but to appreciate the full extent of the confusion surrounding the author of the play, Moses' three page treatment of the topic should be read in toto.

³³Ibid., 281.

³⁴The Fall of British Tyranny, 349. All subsequent references to this play will occur parenthetically in the text.

³⁵Moody, p.63.

³⁶"Beginnings of American Drama," New England Magazine, n.s., IX (1894), 682.

³⁷Moses Coit Tyler, The Literary History of the American Revolution, II (New York, 1900), 199.

³⁸The date for this play is a reconstruction, but unanimous approval has been given to the date 1777: Walter J. Meserve, Outline History of the American Drama (Totowa, 1965), p.33; Frank Pierce Hill, American Plays Printed 1714-1830 (Stanford, 1934), p.24; and Henry Willis Wells, ed. "The Downfall of Justice," Three Centuries of Drama: American 1741-1830 (New York, 1956). This is especially noteworthy because the appearance of an American Negro on his native stage in 1777 supercedes Quinn's assertion (A History of the American Drama: from the Beginning to the Civil War, p.125) that Sambo, in Murdock's The Triumphs of Love (1795), "...was the first native negro character on the American stage."

³⁹The Downfall of Justice (Danvers [Mass.], [1777] as reprinted in Three Centuries of Drama: American 1741-1830, ed. Henry Willis Wells), 2nd ed., p.5. All subsequent references to this play will occur parenthetically in the text.

⁴⁰Clapp, A Record of the Boston Stage, pp.7-13; Francis C. Wemyss, Wemyss' Chronology of the American Stage, from 1752 to 1852 (New York, 1852), p.12.

⁴¹"Sam and Susy" is Cuffy's imperfect pronunciation of Sans Souci, one of the favorite card games of his masters, and the passage is used for the comic purpose of showing that he is quite unaware of what his masters mean by the words.

⁴²Sans Souci (Boston, 1785 as reprinted in Three Centuries of Drama: American 1741-1830, ed. Henry Willis Wells), pp.20-1.

⁴³Odell, Annals, I, 305-6.

⁴⁴Pollock, The Philadelphia Theatre, p.421.

⁴⁵Odell, I, 306.

⁴⁶The Yorker's Stratagem (New York, 1792 as reprinted in Three Centuries of Drama: American 1741-1830, ed. Henry Willis Wells), p.9. All subsequent references to this play will occur parenthetically in the text.

⁴⁷Pollock, p.420; Quinn, A History of the American Drama, p.123.

⁴⁸The Philadelphia Theatre, p.58.

⁴⁹The Triumphs of Love (Philadelphia, 1795 as reprinted in Three Centuries of Drama: American 1741-1830, ed. Henry Willis Wells), p.19.

All subsequent references to this play will occur parenthetically in the text.

⁵⁰Dunlap gave the name both as Milns (History, I, 298 and 305) and as Milne (II, 12 and 26), so it is hard to know which spelling is correct. Most later critics and historians—Odell, Quinn, and Wells included—have settled on Milns as the probable spelling. One can be sure, at any rate, of the fact that Milns was an English author who came to America and became a good friend of the famous Mr. Hodgkinson (History, I, 298).

⁵¹Ibid., II, 12.

⁵²Quinn, p.124; Pollock, p.58.

⁵³Quinn, p.124.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵The Politicians (Philadelphia, 1798 as reprinted in Three Centuries of Drama: American 1741-1830, ed. Henry Willis Wells), pp. 36-7. All subsequent references to this play will occur parenthetically in the text.

⁵⁶Quinn, pp.125-6.

⁵⁷Moody, p.70.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp.77-8.

⁵⁹Wittke, Tambo and Bones, p.5.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp.6-7.

⁶¹Odell, Annals, I, 48.

⁶²Ibid., I, 102-3.

⁶³Wittke, p.9.

⁶⁴Hutton, Curiosities, pp.94-5.

⁶⁵Julian Mates, The American Musical Stage before 1800 (New Brunswick, 1962), p.159; Gaines, The Southern Plantation, p.97.

⁶⁶Odell, I, 241, 275, 299, 325.

⁶⁷Pollock, p.418.

⁶⁸Isaac Greenwood, The Circus: Its Origin and Growth prior to 1835, with a Sketch of Negro Minstrelsy, 2nd ed. (New York, 1909), p.122.

⁶⁹Ibid.; Gaines, The Southern Plantation, p.97.

70Wittke, p.9.

71Gaines, p.17.

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THE BEGINNINGS OF A DUAL TRADITION: A STUDY OF
THE NEGRO TYPE ON THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AMERICAN STAGE

by

JOSEPH N. WEIXLMANN, JR.

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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This four part study traces the theatrical inception of the dual Negro type as it was employed on the American stage by the end of the Eighteenth Century: the Negro as dramatic character and as minstrel.

The first section emphasizes that the acceptance of slavery as a social institution in Eighteenth Century America led the dramatists of the period to view the Negro as a stereotyped menial whose feelings rarely extended beyond the desire to emulate his master. Section II adds background material of another sort. Here, the British plays which contain the dramatic Negroes who served as models for subsequent American authors are discussed. Thomas Southerne's Oroonoko (1696), which first applied the noble savage tradition to the dramatic Negro, and Isaac Bickerstaffe's popular comedy, The Padlock (1768), which gave increased theatrical prominence to the Negro servant, are treated at some length.

The following Eighteenth Century American plays which include Negro characters are considered in the third section:

Robert Munford's The Candidates; or, The Humours of a Virginia Election (1770)
John Leacock's The Fall of British Tyranny; or, American Liberty Triumphant (1776)
The Downfall of Justice; and The Farmer just return'd from Meeting on Thanksgiving Day (anon., 1777)
Sans Souci, Alias Free and Easy; or, An Evening's Peep into a Polite Circle (anon., 1785)
J. Robinson's The Yorker's Stratagem; or, Banana's Wedding (1792)
John Murdock's The Triumphs of Love; or, Happy Reconciliation (1795)
Murdock's The Politicians; or, A State of Things (1798)
William Milns' All in a Bustle; or, The New House (1798)

The argument is that, although most of the drama involving Negroes deals merely with stereotypes, Murdock's The Triumphs of Love makes more of the Negro-master relationship and looks forward to the ele-

vated status of the Negro as a major character by the mid-Nineteenth Century. The last section balances the historical treatment of the Eighteenth Century American stage Negro by outlining the rise of Negro minstrelsy, emphasizing the impact of the often acted pantomime, Robinson Crusoe, which delighted its audiences with song and dance routines.