Performing Blackness/Archiving Whiteness:

The Y Minstrels, 1927-1951

Roxanne Cornellier

A Thesis

In the Department of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts (Art History)

at Concordia University

Montréal, Québec, Canada

June 2024

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Roxanne Cornellier

Entitled: Performing Blackness/Archiving Whiteness: The Y Minstrels, 1927-1951

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Art History)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

Dr. Joana Joachim Examiner

Examiner

Dr. John Potvin Thesis Supervisor(s)

Thesis Supervisor(s)

Approved by

Dr. Alice Ming Wai Jim Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dr. Annie Gérin Dean Faculty of Fine Arts

ABSTRACT

Performing Blackness/Archiving Whiteness: The Y Minstrels, 1927-1951

Roxanne Cornellier

The province of Québec is often not included or under-studied in research regarding blackface minstrelsy, but it would be fallacious to assume that its underrepresentation in publicly accessible archives equates its non-existence. Blackface minstrelsy is a racist theatrical form in which white actors and musicians, the minstrels, would apply burnt cork to their faces and perform derogatory stereotypes of Black people in front of white audiences. As Cheryl Thompson argues, white Canadians reproduced American minstrelsy, not to soothe class fears, but in response to their fears about Black immigration and their supposed inability to assimilate into Canadian culture. Looking specifically at Montréal, blackness was used as a satirical tool to debase francophone bodies, which were deemed "other" to the Anglo-Saxon English-speaking majority at the time. Henri Julien's *Songs of the By-Town Coons* exemplifies how blackface minstrelsy imagery found its way into mainstream media and the width of its popularity.

Located in the Jewish Public Library archives, the Young Men/Women Hebrew Association (YM-YWHA) and the Irving Silverman fonds contain a plethora of photographs and documents related to their very own minstrels, which were part of their musical programme. Examining the YMHA minstrels as a case study allows for the first in-depth analysis of this troupe and for situating it within the broader context of Canadian blackface minstrelsy. This project then observes the role of the performances and their recording in the Jewish community's own archives as a necessity for self-representation while simultaneously highlighting the pride they took in their performances.

Keywords: Blackface Minstrelsy; Montreal; Twentieth Century; Representation; Critical Whiteness Studies; Anti-Racist Studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands known as Tiohtià:ke to the Haudenosaunee, as Mooniyang to the Anishinaabeg, and as Montréal to many others. The Kanien'kehá: ka Nation is recognized as the custodian of the lands and waters on which I work, learn and research, and importantly, where I wrote this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge that not all people came to these lands as migrants and settlers. Specifically, I wish to acknowledge those who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Transatlantic slave trade and slavery, and who continue to face discrimination in their fight for liberation.

The achievement of this thesis was made possible by many professors, colleagues, and fellow students that I have crossed during my academic path, but also by the unwavering support of family and friends. I first thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. John Potvin, for the feedback, edits, great writing tips and helping me organize my ideas in a concise and effective manner. I am especially grateful for the generous sharing of your knowledge and experience regarding academic tasks and challenges.

Mille mercis to Dr. Joana Joachim for your incredibly pertinent and precise comments, suggestions, and edits. Thank you for allowing me to learn, unlearn, and relearn about Black methodologies, histories and arts as a student in your seminar and a research assistant in your exciting and necessary projects. I am truly grateful for your presence in the department!

I wish to heartily thank Dr. Charmaine Nelson, without whom I would not be where I am today. The content of your courses and mentorship throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies have greatly shaped the student, researcher, and thinker that I am today.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to Dr. Farrukh Rafiq for your attentive ear, precious academic advice, and always-appreciated support at various stages of this project. Working alongside you as a teaching assistant has been a tremendously positive and formative experience.

To Dr. Jesse Bucher, thank you for your mentorship and the valued advice and reviews in the initial stages of this project. Thank you for believing in my abilities as a writer and researcher and allowing me to flourish as an emerging scholar under your supervision and guidance.

This thesis would not have been possible without my dear friend, esteemed colleague and cherished conference buddy, Mélinda Pierre-Paul Cardinal. There are not enough words to express how much your friendship and support have been indispensable to the success of this project and degree. I also wish to profusely thank you and Ali Byers for the careful edits of this thesis, as well as time spent discussing and grappling with theories and methodologies over the course of our program. Thank you both for continuously inspiring me with your critical and creative minds, and the care with which you infuse your work.

Je souhaite également remercier ma famille, soit ma mère Sophie Breault, mon père Steve Cornellier ainsi que ma sœur Caroline Cornellier. Votre support inconditionnel à travers cette épreuve importante de mon parcours fut un baume au cœur.

To my dear friends Chele, Ivey, Chloé, Marilyne, and Thomas; thank you for being present and supportive as I navigated this project and all its challenges. J'en suis tellement reconnaissante!

Lastly, special thanks to my cohort: Mélinda, Ali, Ali, Temple, Caro, Caro, Charlotte, Emma, Marie-Ève, Gina, Grace, Daisy, and Sara. Thank you all for making my MA experience as memorable as it has been and allowing me to keep learning by your side.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CONTENT WARNING

Anti-Black racism, antisemitism, oppressive language, performers in blackface

The following text discusses the racist theatrical tradition of blackface minstrelsy in relation to antisemitic sentiments in Montréal, Québec and Canada and reflects on the construction and reproduction of whiteness. As such, there are mentions of anti-Black racism as it pertains to language, stereotypes, and representations such as caricatures and photographs of performers donning blackface. Because the case study examines a Jewish minstrel troupe within the context of the early twentieth century, there are also mentions of antisemitic sentiments, especially as it pertains to Canadian immigration within the context of the Holocaust. I am conscious and careful about not reproducing harm in my framing of this research content and arguments. When writing outdated, oppressive, and racist language, I use quotation marks. Doing so calls attention to the terms themselves as it is important to know them to avoid repeating them and to recognize the harm they cause. These terms are loaded with oppressive histories and as such, they should not be used outside their context, and they should be avoided when possible. This decision is also informed by my desire to address the erroneous notion that blackface performances are harmless. Recent, recurring "blackface incidents"[1] and their discussions in Québécois media reflect the collective amnesia regarding the histories and legacies of racism expressed in these happenings, performances, and expressions. At its core, this thesis stresses and reaffirms that donning a blackface is dehumanizing, no matter the time or place. Calling out the perpetrators of this racist tradition is not Québec-bashing,[2] it is addressing willful ignorance.

---

[1] Philip SS. Howard, "Timeline of Canadian Blackface Incidents," *Arts Against Postracialism*, 2017. https://www.mcgill.ca/aapr/blackface-canada/timeline.

[2] Sunita Nigam, "Feeling in Public: Blackface as Theatre of Action in Contemporary Quebec," in *Theatres of Affect: New Essays on Canadian Theatre, Volume Four*, edited by Erin Hurley, 38-61. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2014, 46.

INTRODUCTION

Blackface minstrelsy represented both a recognition of Black life and its disavowal at the same time. This contradiction underpins the Canadian consciousness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Cheryl Thompson [3]

As a white Québécois emerging scholar researching and writing about blackface minstrelsy and anti-Black racism in Montréal, Québec, and Canada, I firmly believe it is my responsibility to address the enduring histories of oppression that have been perpetrated by other white Québécois and Canadians. It is our duty to actively participate in the dismantlement of white supremacy, and especially so within the Canadian context.

Having grown up and studied in the Québec education system all my life, I bear witness to the many omissions and gaps that fill our curricula. It was not until my first course with Dr. Charmaine Nelson at McGill University that I learned about Canada's involvement with the Transatlantic slave trade and the histories of enslavement in the country. Although I am grateful to have learnt so much from my four courses with her, I am adamant that I should have been taught about this earlier in my academic career.

As a former drama student with experience in both theater and music, and a marked interest in the performing arts, the tradition of blackface minstrelsy and the harm it still causes is a topic that piques both academic and personal interests. With recent blackface incidents inspiring fiery debates in Québécois media, I have found myself lacking a precise language to

[3] Cheryl Thompson, "*Black* Minstrelsy on Canadian Stages: Nostalgia for Plantation Slavery in the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 31, no. 1 (2021): 74.

argue against the use of blackface; I was ignorant of the deep history behind the racist tradition.[4] Pursuing this thesis research allowed me to not only educate myself on the topic, but also to contribute to the existing scholarly discourse on Canadian blackface minstrelsy by examining the archives of a Montréal-based troupe which was prolific in the twentieth century.

I was first introduced to the tradition of blackface minstrelsy in the research I conducted for a final paper in Dr. Charmaine Nelson's undergraduate course about Canadian art and cultural politics at McGill University. My project discussed the use of blackface in political caricatures in Canadian media, using John Wilson Bengough, from Toronto and Henri Julien, from Montréal as case studies.[5] Cheryl Thompson's "'Come One, Come All': Blackface Minstrelsy as a Canadian Tradition and Early Form of Popular Culture," published in 2018 as part of *Towards an African Canadian Art History: Art, Memory, and Resistance* was not only an indispensable source for this research paper, it also inspired the current thesis project. In her chapter, Thompson demonstrates how the racist theatrical tradition has made its way to Canada and how it was adopted and appropriated from the second half of the nineteenth century to the late 1960s. While Thompson's text discusses blackface minstrelsy in Canada more generally, she focuses on Toronto and Ontario more specifically. She stresses that more research needs to be conducted in other provinces, especially in Québec as the popularity of the genre left traces in

[4] Such incidents that come to mind include the 2013 Gala les Oliviers where Mario Jean donned a blackface in an attempt to impersonate comedian Boucar Diouf; the 2014 Opéra de Montréal *Porgy and Bess* play, which included racist and stereotypical depictions of Black people; the 2015 Théâtre du Rideau Vert skit where an actor donned a blackface in an attempt to impersonate Montréal Habs hockey player P.K. Subban; 2015 annual Bye-Bye show where producer Louis Morissette complained about having to hire Normand Brathwaite for a skit instead of using a white actor in blackface. In 2011 and 2012 respectively, HEC (Université de Montréal's Hautes Études Commerciales) and McGill University launched investigations over blackface incidents at frosh events. To this series, I must add Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's multiple blackface incidents from when he was a kid, a high-school teenager, and as an adult, all of which publicly resurfaced in 2019. See Philip Howard's "Timeline of Canadian Blackface Incidents," (2017).

[5] Roxanne Cornellier, "Blackface Minstrelsy Imagery and Political Caricatures: John Wilson Bengough, Henri Julien & the Complicity of Canadian Newspapers," *Asterisk* Journal of Art and Art History*, Yale University 2, (2020): 14-18. asteriskjournal.org/fall-2020.

the archives.[6] Such traces include the McCord archives containing *La Rue's Minstrels and Hamall's Serenaders* wood engraving (figure 1), a photograph of the Hayseed Carnival Group (figure 2) and William Notman's photographs of performer Mr. Fred Hickey (figure 3), as well as other archives containing Henri Julien's political caricatures *Songs of the By-Town Coons* (figure 4),[7] as well as multiple newspaper clippings either announcing or reviewing performances in the city. This gap in the literature on Canadian blackface minstrelsy, as identified by Thompson, sparked my curiosity, and eventually inspired this thesis.

My interest for the history of blackface performances and their legacies in caricatures and advertisement encouraged me to pursue two internships at the Center for Studying Structures of Race (CSSR) in Salem, Virginia to work with the Maurice Berger Memorial Archive and Library collections. During the summers of 2022 and 2023, while working under the supervision of Dr. Jesse Bucher, I had the privilege of accessing and browsing their entire archival collections as much as I desired. The Center also contained a library with materials related to the content of the collections which deepened my knowledge and understanding of not only blackface minstrelsy in the United States, but also on segregation and Jim Crow laws, histories of the Ku Klux Klan and United Daughters of the Confederacy. I am privileged to have spent my working days alongside the collection manager and archivist, Ivey Kline, observing and learning about how archives are built and managed. This experience confirmed my desire to keep working with archival material while remaining critical of how they operate and the silences they create by centering certain narratives over others—typically upper-class white male voices. My engagement with the Center for Studying Structures of Race's various activities and my time

---

[6] Cheryl Thompson. "'Come One, Come All': Blackface Minstrelsy as a Canadian Tradition and Early Form of Popular Culture," in *Towards an African-Canadian Art History: Art, Memory, and Resistance,* edited by Charmaine A. Nelson, 95-121. Concord: Captus Press, 2018, 101.

[7] Henri Julien, "Songs of the By-Town Coons, By the Go-As-You-Please Quartette," Reproduced from The Montréal Daily Star, 1899, 24. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.11152

spent working and thinking through the *Racist & Stereotypical Materials* collection guided my reflections about blackface minstrelsy in the Canadian context and shaped most of my initial thoughts which inspired my research questions for this thesis project.[8] Such questions include: How did Canadian blackface minstrelsy differ from the American tradition? How are Québec and Montréal different/similar in the production of blackface minstrelsy comparing to their Canadian and American counterparts? Were minstrel troupes performing only in English in Montréal, or are there examples of French-speaking troupes as well?

Considering that the YMHA minstrels were active in Montréal in the early twentieth century, but especially throughout the interwar period when antisemitic sentiments were ever so present and impeding Jewish immigration, I ask: How did these performances and their records in the archives reflect the racial and social anxieties Montréal at the time the troupe was active? Considering the context of the Second World War and the Holocaust, what did it mean for Jewish actors to perform anti-Black racist stereotypes in Montréal, and more broadly in Canada? How important was the performance of anti-Black racist stereotypes for a marginalized religious group and oppressed minority, and what does it reveal about how whiteness is constructed and redefined? To address these questions, I turn to critical whiteness studies, also referred to as anti-racist scholarship, which interrogates what it means to be white and aims to reveal and share new knowledge about the "under investigated social phenomenon" that is the construction of whiteness.[9] Because this thesis would not exist without the Jewish Public Library Archives'

[8] The collection was initially titled *Black Americana*, but was later changed to Racist & Stereotypical Materials. The director of the CSSR, Dr. Jessy Bucher, explained that the former name emphasized the collectability of the items and wanted to avoid the wrongful perception that they were collecting racist memorabilia. The updated collection name references the problematic nature of the archived materials by labelling it as racist and stereotypical. The presence of this collection alongside others such as Black History, United Daughters of the Confederacy and Contemporary Art support the Centre's mission to examine how race is constructed and how racism is structured.
[9] Teresa J. Guess "The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence." *Critical Sociology* 32, no. 4 (2006): 653.

records, I rely heavily on theories that critically examine how archives are constructed and wield power, which allows me to examine the Y Minstrels' performances and archives as a case study.

In my initial research about blackface minstrelsy in Montréal, the references often mentioned the Young Men Hebrew Association (YMHA) minstrels as proof that the tradition was alive well-into the 1960s. This recurring mention of the YMHA minstrels, paired with the absence of any in-depth analysis or description of that specific troupe guided my inquiries which directed me to the Jewish Public Library Archives website, where online researchers can see the titles, dates, and very brief and general descriptions of the objects, but without any images. During my first on-site visit, while still fine-tuning my thesis proposal, the archivist, Veronica Della Foresta informed me that the Irving Silverman and the Young Men and Young Women Hebrew Association collections would be the most relevant based on my research interests.[10]

To contextualize, the Young Men Hebrew Association and the Young Women's Hebrew Association were both founded in 1910 to serve the social, cultural, recreational, physical and intellectual needs of the Jewish community in Montréal.[11] Both the YMHA and YWHA were amalgamated in 1950 and became commonly referred to as the "Y." Their community centre has had many locations over the years, including on St. Urbain, Mont Royal and the current location on Westbury Avenue, also known as the Snowdon Y.[12] The singing minstrels were part of their musical programme, and according to the records, the first show took place in 1927 and had no name and only a Star-of-David flag for scenery.[13] The Y Minstrels went on to create at least one

---

[10] The Irving Silverman fonds contains mostly cast photographs and materials specifically related to the minstrel troupe while the YM./Y.W.H.A. fonds contains a myriad of materials related to the associations; only a few folders concern the minstrels.

[11] Finding Aid, YOUNG MEN'S-YOUNG WOMEN'S HEBREW ASSOCIATION, Fonds 1256. Courtesy of the YM-YWHA Collection, Jewish Public Library Archives, Montréal.

[12] Ibid.

[13] "Flashbacks: Twenty-Five Years of Minstrel Show History in Words and Pictures," *Tech It Easy* Programme, 1951, Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, 4-3F, file 00231, location JPL 4-3B CTN.009.

major production yearly, with an increased number of performances during the Second World War as the troupe was touring around the province and the country to boost morale. Most of the shows recorded are produced by Sam Miller, with Peter Rubman as the musical director. This prolific duo was partially responsible for the popularity of the Y Minstrels, with critics in the newspapers praising them over the years for the quality of their productions. For example, *The Daily Star* on April 10, 1948, states that:

> 'You Sleigh Me' is the name of this year's production and it brings together again, for the eleventh successive year the producing combination of Sam Miller and Peter Rubman. Their combined efforts have resulted in a transformation of the minstrel show as it is commonly known today.[14]

Going through the fonds was generative because they are both well-documented, which allows the examination of the Y minstrels as a case study. The two collections include mostly group portrait photographs of the performers on stage the day of their annual shows, but also newspaper clippings, list of members, reports of expenses, correspondence, souvenir programmes, music sheets, stage directions, group reunions and much more. Here I am primarily examining the cast photographs, souvenir programmes, newspaper clippings and the records pertaining to their minstrel war entertainment unit. Importantly, the souvenir programme for their silver anniversary production in 1951 includes a section dedicated to "Flashbacks: Twenty-Five Years of Minstrel Show History in Words and Pictures," (figure 5, 6 and 7)[15] which allows me to track the evolution of their shows as well as contextualize some of the other materials present in the fonds.[16]

---

[14] "Minstrel Show Opens Tonight," The Daily Star, Saturday, April 10, 1948. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, item 00044, location 4-1C, CTN.001.

[15] "Flashbacks: Twenty-Five Years of Minstrel Show History in Words and Pictures," Courtesy of the YM-YWHA Collection, Jewish Public Library Archives, Montréal.

[16] This thesis projects reflects on the fonds materials directly engaging with blackface minstrelsy. While other activities were practiced at the Y.M.H.A. such as public speaking workshops, sport tournaments, orchestras, evening high school etc., they are not considered here as they simply lack relevance to this specific topic. I have also excluded from my analysis any materials related to the general administration, staffing and governance of the

I argue that the blackface performances of the Y Minstrels and their presence in the Jewish Public Library Archives reflect the racial, social, political and cultural anxieties in Montréal in the early twentieth century vis-a-vis the construction and (re)definition of whiteness and inform us on the utilization of the archives as a site where social power is negotiated.[17] The first section, "Performing Blackness", looks at the Y Minstrels performances and the context of their production and examines how blackface minstrelsy was adopted in Montréal and used as an outlet to express racial anxieties in the twentieth century, with a focus on the interwar period and the Second World War. This section situates the Y Minstrels performances within the broader social context in Montréal and examines how linguistic and religious politics inform and affect the way race and whiteness are constructed. Put differently, I argue that the racialization of the French-Canadian identity in Montréal and the province of Québec affected the treatment of Jewish refugees in the interwar period. The appropriation of blackface minstrelsy into local themes and popular culture effectively demonstrates the utilization of the black mask to differentiate from the asserted white Jewish Canadian identity.

The second section, "Archiving Whiteness", investigates the Montréal Jewish community's desire for self-representation as a marginalized group and the subsequent negotiation of their whiteness and social power through an examination of the extant archival records. Situating the performances within the complex social, political, and cultural context of the city first helps understanding the Y Minstrels' wielding of the archives to affirm their position as white Canadians. Performing in blackface allowed them to maintain control over

---

association, unless it directly concerned the minstrel troupe. However, it is pertinent to consider the abundance of materials archived, and the impact of that accumulation in the archives on the construction of a Jewish Canadian identity.

[17] M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science: International Journal on Recorded Information - Incorporating 'archives and Museum Informatics'* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 1.

Black representations, while simultaneously utilizing the opaque makeup to emphasize the whiteness of their skin in the archives with black and white photographs and a plethora of documentation about their nationalist war efforts. By capitalizing on an American racist tradition, Jewish Montrealers effectively secured their white Canadian status and managed to "be recognized and accepted" as white after the Second World War.[18] The contrast in the archived photographs is striking; 1920s and 1930s photographs depict only white men in blackface while the late 1940s and 1950s ones contain male and female performers and most of them are not donning blackface. This visual strategy of pairing a white person (or white people) with Black caricatures and stereotypes recalls visual materials supporting scientific racism and eugenics, which was especially virulent at the peak of the Transatlantic slave trade. In the interwar period, similar strategies were also tied to growing antisemitic sentiments.

[18] Dyer, "Coloured White, Not Coloured," 45.

Blackface Minstrelsy: A Brief Overview

Blackface minstrelsy is a theatrical form in which white actors and musicians (minstrels) apply burnt cork to paint their faces black and perform derogatory stereotypes of enslaved Black people in front of white audiences (figure 8). This theatrical tradition gained popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in the United States after the Civil War and in Britain and was later exported to other countries such as Canada and Australia, eventually making its way into the European and African continents. This racist tradition and its performers were notoriously described by American social reformer and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass as "the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens."[19] In his seminal text *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, Eric Lott explains that the inspiration for blackface minstrelsy performances was the theft of black cultural forms, as minstrels would visit plantations and listen to what was sung in spaces such as the cotton and sugarcane fields and the tobacco factories, and base their melodies on these songs.[20] For their performances, minstrels wore oversized clothes, often with enormous shooting collars and shoes several sizes too big and would talk using stump speech as a way to make a mockery of the accent and dialect of Black people.[21] The characters were almost the same in every play as they were based on specific and recurring anti-Black stereotypes, which also meant that the audience would easily identify them. The characters included the end-men (often called Tambo and "Brudder" Bones),[22] the interlocutor, and the stereotypes of the Zip "Coon," and the Sambo.[23]

---

[19] Frederick Douglass cited in Eric Lott, "'The Seeming Counterfeit': Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy," *American Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1991): 223. https://doi.org/10.2307/2712925. 1991.
[20] Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 41.
[21] Lott, *Love & Theft*, 143.
[22] The endmen's names refer to the instruments they would typically play; Tambo plays the tambourines and Bones "rattles the bones" (a pair of clappers).

The end-men were part of the ensemble and portrayed Black people as lower class with their oversized and worn-down clothing, and as illiterate in their use of a bastardized English.[24] The "Sambo" character was depicted as a perpetual child, lazy, but loyal and content servant; the "Sambo" was used to defend both slavery and segregation.[25] In contrast, the "Coon" or "Zip Coon" was characterized by his "uppity" manners and unlike "sambo," he was unhappy with his status, but was too lazy or cynical to do anything about it.[26] Kenneth Goings, esteemed scholar of African American studies and author of *Mammy and Uncle Mose: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping*, describes the "Sambo" as one of the most enduring stereotypes, which was transmitted through "music titles and lyrics, folk sayings, literature, children's stories and games, postcards, restaurant names and menus, and thousands of artifacts."[27]

Prior to emancipation, blackface minstrelsy was a medium that allowed for the purging of anxieties that resulted from the constant fear of slave uprisings and which inspired the laughter of cruelty and white self-affirmation.[28] After emancipation, the performances expressed white anxieties and fear about the place of Black people in an industrialized society;[29] the white

---

[23] Thompson. "'Come One, Come All,'"104-107. For further information about the different types of racist caricatures, see David Pilgrim's Jim Crow Museum website, and Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, 4th ed. New York: Continuum, 2001.

[24] Thompson, "*Black* Minstrelsy on Canadian Stages," 88.

[25] David Pilgrim, "The Coon Caricature," Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University. Retrieved March 17th, 2024. https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/coon/homepage.htm.

[26] Ibid.
These stereotypes as well as minstrel characters were so popular that they were adopted into advertisements. Some of the most famous examples of minstrel characters include Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and the Coon Chicken. See Kenneth W. Goings, *Mammy and Uncle Mose: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994; David Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice*. Oakland: PM Press and Ferris State University Press, 2015.

[27] Goings, *Mammy and Uncle Mose*, 1994.

[28] Lorraine Le Camp, "Racial Considerations on Minstrel Shows and Related Images in Canada," PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2005, 57.

[29] Thompson. "'Come One, Come All,'" 97.

working class felt threatened regarding their own position on the social ladder, and blackface minstrelsy was a way to maintain the subjugated position of the Black body.[30]

While minstrelsy was at its peak of popularity in the nineteenth century, the tradition was alive and thriving well-into the twentieth century, despite some noticeable changes in the audience. The nineteenth-century audience was composed primarily of white men; however, later crowds were more diverse as the shows were considered "good, clean fun,"[31] as minstrel shows were seen as fun for the whole family.[32] The presence of families in the audience infers that children were exposed to racist ideologies and portrayal of Black people from a young age and would pick up on these "social codes of implicit racism as forms of morals and acceptable behaviours."[33] Blackface minstrelsy expanded to different media at the turn of the century; professional stage minstrelsy declined as vaudeville, radio and television shows gained in popularity. However, amateur troupes kept the tradition alive after the Second World War and up until the Civil Rights Movement,[34] when it was increasingly criticized and generally viewed as distasteful.

American theatrical companies brought minstrel shows in Canada as they were touring in the late nineteenth century, and local amateurs appropriated the genre.[35] According to Thompson, white Canadians reproduced American minstrelsy, not to soothe class fears, but in response to their fears about Black immigration and their supposed inability to assimilate to

---

[30] Id., 99.
[31] Tim Brooks, *The Blackface Minstrel Show in Mass Media: 20th Century Performances on Radio, Records, Film and Television*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2020, 23.
[32] Colleen Quigley and Melissa Templeton, "Performing Blackface on the Newfoundland Stage: The Rossleys, Transnational Connections, and Early Twentieth Century Theatre in St. John's," *Theatre Research in Canada* 41, no. 1 (2020): 64.
[33] Le Camp, "Racial Considerations on Minstrel Shows and Related Images in Canada," 334. Children literature also exposed its readers to racist ideologies early; Philip Nel argues that some aspects of Dr. Seuss' "The Cat in the Hat" are derived from racist blackface performers, especially the white gloves and the neckwear. See Philip Nel, *Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: The Hidden Racism of Children's Literature, and the Need for Diverse Books*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.
[34] Brooks, *The Blackface Minstrel Show in Mass Media,* 26.
[35] Thompson. "'Come One, Come All,'" 98.

Canadian culture.[36] Moreover, white Canadians considered Black immigration and presence as a threat to modernity, and thus, turned to southern neighbours on how to "handle blacks, adopting and adapting Jim Crow to fit into Canada's own political archetype."[37] Thompson concludes that the adoption of blackface minstrelsy in Canada was supported by both *negrophobia*, the fear of Black people and *negrophilia*, the love of Black culture.[38]

It is hard to ascertain the exact moment when the tradition of blackface minstrelsy ended in Montréal or the province of Québec. However, despite its absence on theatre's stages, the racist tradition never really died; Philip SS Howard's timeline of blackface incidents in Canada can attest to the fact.[39] In the specific case of the Y Minstrels, the archival records show the prominence of blackface minstrelsy until the end of the Second World War. The stark contrast from productions made before and after the war reveal that despite the name "minstrel shows," post-war performances abandoned the black mask.

[36] Thompson, "*Black* Minstrelsy on Canadian Stages," 72.
[37] Id., 74.
[38] Id., 71.
[39] Philip SS Howard, "Timeline of Canadian Blackface Incidents," *Arts Against Postracialism*, 2017. https://www.mcgill.ca/aapr/blackface-canada/timeline.

SECTION I

Performing Blackness: *White Skin, Black Masks*

Alentour le Blanc, en haut le ciel s'arrache le nombril, la terre crisse sous mes pieds et un chant blanc, blanc. Toute cette blancheur qui me calcine…

Frantz Fanon [40]

Situating the tradition of blackface minstrelsy within Montréal's socio-political context reveals how the city was struggling to define its identity at the turn of the twentieth century as it endured rapid changes.[41] Historically, Montréal has been a contested territory for settlers, especially after the British defeated the French and their Indigenous allies, and the territory of New France became the British province of Québec in 1763. Since then, the province had to grapple with hosting a predominantly Catholic Francophone majority, while dominated by an Anglo-Protestant minority.

Montréal was often described as the home of the *two solitudes*, as popularized by Hugh MacLennan's 1945 novel of the same name.[42] The concept of the *two solitudes* refers to a perceived lack of will to communicate between English and French Canadians and further highlights the social and cultural isolation from one another. In *Fear of a Black Nation*, David Austin points out that the popularization of this "myth" of solitudes helped conceptualize these two identities as *races*, and completely erased Indigenous presence and made *unvisible* the Black population in Montréal.[43] The conceptualization of linguistic identities as races explains why French Canadians considered themselves racialized as they were conflating oppression with

---

[40] Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952, 111.
[41] Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*, Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010, 24-25.
[42] Hugh MacLennan, *Two Solitudes*, Toronto: M&S, 2008.
[43] David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal*, Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013, 38. Here, I chose to leave "unvisible," as this is how Austin poignantly refers to the active act of erasing Black presence in the city. Black Canadians were not invisible—the myth of the two solitudes deliberately aimed to invisibilize them. Austin's use of the prefix "un" calls attention to the process of erasure; white Canadians made Black Canadians invisible.

racism. The racialization of the French-Canadian identity was a way to negotiate their otherness and alienation by using blackness as a means of expressing their oppression, namely by casting themselves as "*nègres,*" and deploying the writings of Caribbean anticolonial thinkers such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. It was not until the 1960s through the Quiet Revolution that Québécois "became white" themselves.[44] This important shift in status also coincides with a distancing from the term *Canadien français* and the adoption of a newly affirmed *Québécois* identity. In a study on the timeline of adoption of the term *Québécois*, researchers Jean Quirion, Guy Chiasson and Marc Charron affirm that

> Le terme Canadien a désigné historiquement les colons de Nouvelle-France et leur descendance. Par la suite, au 19e siècle, l'expression Canadien français en est venue à représenter un francophone du Canada, par opposition à Canadien anglais. Ainsi, l'abandon de Canadien français signale à la fois une rupture significative avec les autres collectivités francophones du pays et avec la communauté anglophone; c'est une affirmation identitaire catégorique, qui nomme ou, mieux, renomme (comme le faisait jadis Canadien) sans recours à l'épithète.[45]

The abandonment of the term *Canadien français* in favor of *Québécois* highlights the deliberate distancing from Canadian society and culture and marks the shift for the increasing nationalist and separatist sentiments in Québec. With the Quiet Revolution came the declining significance of the Catholic Church's authority, a liberal administration under [Jean] Lesage and the emergence of the Québécois new left, which, combined, profoundly shaped Québec society.[46] Austin argues that, through the assertion of their anti-colonial and nationalist position, the Québécois identity was constructed through racialization.[47] This Black racial persona,[48] as defined by Austin was further reinforced by instances of French-speaking Montrealers being told

---

[44] Sunita Nigam, "Feeling in Public: Blackface as Theatre of Action in Contemporary Quebec," in *Theatres of Affect: New Essays on Canadian Theatre, Volume Four*, edited by Erin Hurley, 38-61. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2014, 52.
[45] Jean Quirion, Guy Chiasson and Marc Charron, "Des canadiens français aux québécois: se nommer à l'épreuve du territoire?" *Recherches sociographiques* 58, no 1 (2017): 150. https://doi.org/10.7202/1039934ar.
[46] Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation,* 44.
[47] Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation,* 44.
[48] Ibid.

to "speak white," or to speak English. Michèle Lalonde's 1968 poem *Speak White* provides an insightful example of how Québécois nationalists were drawing inspiration from Black resistance such as the Haitian revolution, colonialism in Congo and segregation in the United States, to reinforce this Black racial persona.[49] Infamous Québecois nationalist figure Pierre Vallières also drew inspiration from the *Négritude* movement, as defined by Caribbean scholar Aimé Césaire, when he wrote his controversial 1968 essay *Nègres Blancs d'Amérique*, which posited Québécois as the white n— of America.[50] Still, French Canadians or Québécois were not the only group facing ostracization in twentieth-century Montréal; the Jewish community also bore the brunt of the city's intolerance to difference, especially throughout the economic depression which exacerbated racial tensions.

From an economic standpoint, from the late nineteenth century up until the 1930s, Montréal remained the metropolis of Canada, gradually ceding its role to Toronto.[51] This shift reflects how hard the Great Depression affected Montréal's economy, which largely depended on exports, and eventually led to a housing crisis.[52] Toronto, although negatively impacted by the crisis too, survived it better than Montréal thanks to its high economic diversification.[53] At the same time, Montréal became the Canadian *cultural* metropolis, "with its radio and television networks, publishing houses, and concert promoters… [drawing] talent from throughout Québec and [exporting] its cultural products province-wide and beyond."[54] Still, the interwar period in Canada was spent trying to curb the devastating effects of the Great Depression on the economy

---

[49] Michèle Lalonde, *Speak White*, Montréal: L'Hexagone, 1974. Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation,* 51.
[50] Pierre Vallières, *Nègres Blancs D'amérique : Autobiographie Précoce D'un "terroriste" Québécois*, Nouv. éd. rev. et cored, Montréal: Éditions Partis Pris, 1969.
[51] Jean-Pierre Collin, "Montréal, Depictions of a Mid-Size Metropolis," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 12, no. 1 (2003): 1. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44320745.
[52] Michèle Dagenais, "Montreal in the Twentieth Century: Trajectories of a City Under Strains," in *New World Cities: Challenges of Urbanization and Globalization in the Americas*, edited by John Tutino and Martin V. Melosi, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019, 183.
[53] Dagenais, "Montreal in the Twentieth Century," 183.
[54] Collin, "Montréal, Depictions of a Mid-Size Metropolis," 2.

and the job market. With over thirty percent of Canadians out of work, job-hungry immigrants were not welcomed with open arms.[55] This reluctance became increasingly problematic when the logic of protectionism against immigrants was extended to Holocaust refugees. The interwar period marked a rise in antisemitism, which was especially felt in both Europe and North America. Prior to and after the First World War, several thousands of immigrants from Eastern Europe, including a large percentage of Jewish Europeans, fled famine and poverty, and increasing persecution to find refuge in Canada.[56] Assimilating into Canadian society proved to be quite difficult as the majority of these recent immigrants spoke neither French nor English.[57] In Montréal, the Jewish community was not permitted to have a separate school board and thus the majority chose education in English Protestant schools.[58] Considering that the Jewish community made up the third largest group in the city,[59] their assimilation into English Canadian culture created a greater perceived threat for French Canadians in the city. This fear explains why French Canadians were especially antagonistic to the idea of welcoming Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust. Indeed, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King told his cabinet that, allowing Jewish refugees into Canada, "may cause riots and would surely exacerbate relations between the federal government and the provinces."[60] King feared that Québec would react violently to the admission of Jewish refugees; "Almost every French-language newspaper had warned the government against opening Canada's doors to European Jews," including *Le Devoir*,

---

[55] Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, New York: Random House, 1983, 5.
[56] Jacqueline Clemency, "Brief History of Antisemitism in Canada," *Montréal Holocaust Museum*. Montréal: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2015. https://museeholocauste.ca/app/uploads/2018/10/brief_history_antisemitism_canada.pdf, 13.
[57] Clemency, "Brief History of Antisemitism in Canada," 13.
[58] Dagenais, "Montreal in the Twentieth Century," 179.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, 17-18.

La Nation, *L'Action Catholique* and *L'Action Nationale*.[61] Fed by the hopelessness caused by the devastating effects of the Depression, right-wing ideologies circulated and fascism gained in popularity in both Europe and in Canada. Mackenzie King praised the good character and politics of the dictator of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler,[62] which also signaled the concerning and rapid spread of antisemitism in the country. With Montréal being home to the largest Jewish population in the country at that time,[63] Jewish Montrealers increasingly became targets of hate crimes. In Québec, beliefs in a Jewish-led conspiracy proliferated in the 1930s, born from a fear that they aimed to dismantle the leadership of the Catholic Church.[64] Additionally, Jewish people were often "scapegoated [for the Depression] and accused of controlling finances and dominating the fragile job market."[65] The election of the Union Nationale Party in 1936 marked the era notoriously referred to as the *Grande Noirceur* in Québec, a period dominated by Maurice Duplessis' fervent Catholicism and conservatism.[66] Duplessis "openly accused Jews of being communists, sparking anti-Jewish sentiment amongst the people of Québec during a fragile time.[67] It is during this period of increased antisemitic sentiments that the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) Minstrels started performing in blackface on Montréal's stages. Considering that the popularity of professional minstrel troupe was declining during the 1920s in Canada,[68] it is notable that the from the 1920s to the 1940s was the most prolific period for the troupe.

---

[61] Ibid. The *Grande Noirceur*, or Great Darkness is a pejorative metaphor used principally in the province of Québec to describe Prime Minister Maurice Duplessis' second term (1944-1959). Duplessis, a fervent Catholic and notorious anti-communist and anti-unions, appealed to anti-Semitism and was against Québec welcoming Jewish refugees.
[62] Abella, 36-37.
[63] Clemency, "Brief History of Antisemitism in Canada," 14.
[64] Clemency, 13.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Clemency, 15.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Thompson. "'Come One, Come All,'" 97.

The Y Minstrels & Montréal's Minstrelsy

According to Thompson, in Montréal, blackness was used as a satirical tool to debase francophone bodies, which were deemed "other" to the Anglo-Saxon English-speaking minority.[69] This use of satire is particularly apparent in Henri Julien's *Songs of the By-Town Coons* (figure 4), a series of caricatures published in the *Montréal Daily Star*, and which aimed to ridicule and insult French-Canadians politicians by depicting them as minstrels.[70] Julien frequently attended minstrel performances in the city,[71] and was thus familiar with the genre tropes, including the burnt-cork makeup, the oversize clothing, the use of stump speech, and the use of anti-Black stereotypes for the characters. The racist presumption of Black inferiority was so widespread that its use as a caricatural tool in the newspaper required no explanations; simply through the lyrics and the appeal to the visual culture of minstrelsy, readers knew that the blackface was a deliberate slight to the caricatured people's intelligence and character.

Thompson posits that the few photographs of blackface actors taken in Notman's studio (currently held at the McCord Museum) reveal two things about minstrelsy in Montréal: first, performers and audiences enjoyed bigger and more professional productions just as much as in private settings and social clubs, and second, the shows were exclusively performed in segregated spaces, thus maintaining the colour line.[72] As the popularity of the genre declined and professional blackface troupes slowly stopped touring the country, amateur troupes such as the Y Minstrels became responsible for keeping the tradition alive and thriving. Minstrel shows were considered fun for the whole family in an era when much of the entertainment world catered to

---

[69] Cheryl Thompson, "'Come One, Come All': Blackface Minstrelsy as a Canadian Tradition and Early Form of Popular Culture," in *Towards an African-Canadian Art History: Art, Memory, and Resistance,* edited by Charmaine A. Nelson, 95-121. Concord: Captus Press, 2018, 101.
[70] Thompson, "'Come One, Come All,'" 75.
[71] Dominic Hardy, *Drawn to Order: Henri Julien's Political Cartoons of 1899 and his Career with Hugh Graham's Montreal Daily Star, 1888-1908*, Peterborough: Master Education, University of Trent, 1998, 114-115.
[72] Thompson, "'Come One, Come All,'" 111-12.

sex and smut.[73] Minstrel shows' appeal to more general audiences ensured their popularity even after the decline of professional troupes touring. Children were not only part of the audience but were also performing in minstrel shows. The cast photograph from 1940s (figure 9)[74] includes three children, wearing the same costumes as their adult counterparts and smiling proudly for the immortalisation of this moment. Their makeup is not the typical opaque blackface and resembles the "aggressive tan" makeup worn by female minstrel performers (figure 10). Still, their presence on minstrel stages incites reflections on children witnessing and participating in racist performances, as they pick up on these "social codes of implicit racism as forms of morals and acceptable behaviours."[75]

The appropriation by amateur performers marked a slow abandonment of popular and archetypal themes; instead, the performances addressed local themes, and were reactive to current events. For example, in January 1939, the YMHA put on the play *Birthright*, performed for the benefit of the German refugees at their auditorium (265 Mt. Royal Ave. W), and which included four Nazi Storm Troopers.[76] *Birthright* then portrayed the fear of rising antisemitism, the Nazi threat, and the realities faced by Jewish refugees. Songs such as "Hip Hip Hooray" and "That Russian Winter," which are part of the YMHA's Department of Education records of

---

[73] Colleen Quigley and Melissa Templeton, "Performing Blackface on the Newfoundland Stage: The Rossleys, Transnational Connections, and Early Twentieth Century Theatre in St. John's," *Theatre Research in Canada* 41, no. 1 (2020): 64. Tim Brooks, *The Blackface Minstrel Show in Mass Media: 20th Century Performances on Radio, Records, Film and Television*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2020, 23.

[74] This is the only cast photograph from the collection that does not disclose a specific date or year, or even the title of the show. Female performers started to be slowly included in Y Minstrel shows after 1936; Based on the research compiled in Annex A, the documented shows that are not associated with any cast photographs or visuals after 1936 are either 'Sea n' Sights' (1937), 'I'se Right' (1943), 'On the Double' (1944), 'Soot 'n' Boots' (1945) or 'How's Business' (1950). The Silver Anniversary Program states that 'Sea n' Sights' had a nautical/pirate theme, which does not correspond to the stage mural and the costumes; The program also discloses that 'How's Business' introduced the audience to the new auditorium, but the photograph appears to have a similar stage to the cast photograph of 'Five-ll Get Yuh Tan' (1949). Based on these observations, I speculate that the untitled cast photograph was taken sometimes between 1943-1945.

[75] Lorraine Le Camp, "Racial Considerations on Minstrel Shows and Related Images in Canada," PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2005, 334.

[76] Birthright, Souvenir Programme, 1939. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, file 00008, location 4-1C CTN.001.

1943, make explicit references to the war. “Hip Hip Hooray” is a call for “all of you able men [with the] strength to lift up a gun”[77] to join the Canadian army while “That Russian Winter” mocks “the man with the little mustache”[78] for failing to consider the brutal Russian winter. The Y Minstrels also borrowed songs from other plays; “It Ain’t Necessarily So” came from *Porgy and Bess*, a jazzy folk opera which was first performed in Boston in 1935 and later on Broadway, and which featured an entire cast of classically trained African-American singers.[79] The composer of *Porgy and Bess’* music and lyrics, George Gershwin categorically refused to employ white performers in blackface to portray the Black characters even if it did cost him the Metropolitan Opera for the premiere.[80] Ironically, the Y Minstrels performed “It Ain’t Necessarily So” with an exclusively white cast with actors donning blackface. The influence of jazz from both the original opera and the Montréal Black community cannot be omitted. David Austin describes the importance of jazz music as an extension of Montréal’s Black community:

> These institutions, which reflect both local and transnational aspirations, were a central part of the social lives of many Blacks in Montreal, providing something of a shield against the hostility that confronted them in the wider society while tending to their cultural and even economic needs.[81]

An important part of the hostility faced by Black Montrealers include both bearing witness to the degrading blackface performances as well as segregation which was especially enforced in entertainment spaces, which is seen in the cases of three Black Montrealers: Mr. Frederick Johnson was refused access to his orchestra seats at the Montréal Academy of Music

---

[77] Stage Directions and Minstrel Song Sheets, YMHA Department of Education, 1943. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, file 00041, location 4-1C CTN.001.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Robert Wyatt and John Andrew Johnson, *The George Gershwin Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 196.
[80] Wyatt and Johnson, *The George Gershwin Reader,* 200. A Black cast would not have been allowed on the Metropolitan Opera stage at that time.
[81] Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation,* 40.

in 1898,[82] Mr. Reynolds was refused his seat of choice at Loews theatre in 1919,[83] and Mr. Christie was refused access to the York Tavern at the Montréal Forum in 1936.[84] In the notorious case of Christie v. York (1939), the Supreme Court of Canada sided with the York Tavern and argued that freedom of commerce prevailed, and thus the tavern could refuse service to whomever they pleased.[85] Entertainment spaces of early twentieth century—and specifically theatres in Montréal were segregated loci where Black presence was not tolerated unless it was through the mediation of the minstrel mask. Racist themes, jokes, songs, and any kind of stereotypical representations were not only encouraged, but well-appreciated and attended by white patrons, as demonstrated by the popularity of Y Minstrel shows. Black jazz clubs, as argued by Austin, shielded their customers and employees —even for a brief instant, from the anti-Black hostility of the city which was especially virulent in entertainment spaces and protected by law, as seen in the Christie v. York case.[86]

---

[82] "Contesting Racial Inequality: Revisiting the History of Black Montrealer's Quest for Justice," Center for Research-Action on Race Relations, February 2nd, 2015. Accessed January 9th, 2024. http://www.crarr.org/?q=node/19660

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Eric M. Adams, "Errors of Fact and Law: Race, Space, and Hockey in Christie V York," *University of Toronto Law Journal* 62, no. 4 (2012): 464-466.
It was not until 1975 that Quebec enacted its *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, finally putting a legal stop to discrimination based on race.

[86] Jonathan Montpetit, "Finding Fred Christie: The legacies, big and small, of Canada's reluctant civil rights hero," CBC News, December 17th, 2019. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/fred-christie-supreme-court-canada-racism-montreal-forum-1.5397730.
Fred Christie immigrated from Jamaica in 1919 and worked as a private chauffeur in Montréal; he married Julie Osler and they both settled on Galt Street in the Verdun neighbourhood, where the York Tavern is also located.

Jazz, Minstrel Shows & Bourgeoisie

Montréal gained the reputation of entertainment capital, famous for its vibrant nightlife culture (figure 11). At the height of the jazz craze, "Montréal was the only large city on North America to avoid total Prohibition on the sale and consumption of alcohol,"[87] which was exacerbated by an influx of American gangsters organizing major smuggling operations.[88] The booming nightlife was especially fruitful for musicians and performers who wished to make a living in the entertainment world as bands of all sizes were in high demand.[89] Importantly, Thompson and Jabouin stress the role of jazz as "an outlet to resist anti-Black sentiments."[90] Performing jazz was also one of the few ways to make a living in the city aside from being hired as railway porters. Because the Montréal Black community was relatively small at the time compared to today, the success of jazz also depended on the presence and enjoyment of white patrons who had no choice but to recognize Black musical excellence. The booming jazz scene and the flourishing of both Black and white jazz clubs attest to that success. However, when Duplessis' Union Nationale party came to power in 1936, nightclubs like Rockhead's Paradise, the only Black-owned nightclub in the city at the time,[91] became sites of suspicion and surveillance. As the owner Rufus Rockhead recalls it: "All the licenses for 'Negroes,' Jews and Chinese were cancelled at the same time."[92] A similar situation occurred many years later in the 1950s when Montréal Mayor Jean Drapeau, promised to "clean up the city," by starting with

---

[87] John Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montréal*, 2nd ed. Victoria, B.C.: Ellipse Editions, 2011, 29.
[88] Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 30.
[89] Gilmore, 29.
[90] Cheryl Thompson and Emilie Jabouin, "Black Media Reporting on Theater, Dance, and Jazz Clubs in Canada: From Shuffle along to Rockhead's Paradise," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* (2021). https://doi.org/10.1177/01968599211042579, 13.
[91] Thompson and Jabouin, "Black Media Reporting on Theater, Dance, and Jazz Clubs in Canada," 14. The Rockhead's Paradise was located on the corner of St. Antoine St. and Mountain St. (now de la Montagne) and was opened by Black entrepreneur Rufus Rockhead in 1928.
[92] Thompson and Jabouin, 15.

nightclubs, especially Black-owned nightclubs.[93] Drapeau aimed to redress the city's ill-reputation for corruption, prostitution, smuggling and gambling, which was infamously controlled by organized crime.

Although Black patrons were not allowed in the white jazz clubs, Jewish and white Montrealers frequented Black clubs, especially popular and successful ones like the Rockhead's Paradise.[94] Both minstrel shows, and white jazz clubs had a segregated audience and catered to upper economic classes, which meant that minstrel shows attendees were likely aware of the popular dances and styles of music played in those jazz clubs. The attention to the class status of both audience and performers is relevant here as this is one of the many ways where Montréal minstrelsy differs from the American tradition. In *Love & Theft,* Eric Lott argues that the white American working-class used blackface to appeal to white bourgeois.[95] In Montréal, and in the case of the Y Minstrels, Jewish blackface performers were generally considered to be part of the elite integrated English-speaking Montrealers as opposed to their Yiddish and Hebrew-speaking working class.[96] In this case, being able to perform in English to an English-speaking audience implies a certain level of class privilege. Considering the racialization of French speakers in Montréal, it is worth examining the function that language, and class played in the construction of race. To that matter, it is worth returning to Lalonde's poem *Speak White* which speaks to classism and the association of the English language with the ruling class:

---

[93] Ibid.
[94] Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 53.
[95] Eric Lott. "'The Seeming Counterfeit': Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy," *American Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1991): 226. https://doi.org/10.2307/2712925
[96] Abella, 10.

> un peu plus fort alors speak white
> haussez vos voix de contremaîtres
> nous sommes un peu durs d'oreille
> nous vivons trop près des machines
> et n'entendons que notre souffle au-dessus des outils [97]

The poem links whiteness to colonizing forces when Lalonde writes: "parlez un français pur et atrocement blanc/ comme au Vietnam au Congo,"[98] which this time implies that whiteness is maintained by the French language. The fluctuation in the perception and understanding of whiteness suggests that "speak white," becomes an insult towards any colonized subjects who have not assimilated and learned the language of the colonizer.

Applying this theory to minstrel shows, the deliberate use of stump speech reflects the classism behind the butchering of the English language while in blackface for comedic relief. In his chapter on *Le Noir et le langage*, Fanon defends that speaking "petit-nègre," or in a bastardized language to a Black person is necessarily trapping them or fixing them in a primitive and uncivilized position,[99] which ensures that they are reminded of their position in the social hierarchy. Blackness remains fixed as perpetually uncivilized which allows whiteness to fluctuate and constantly redefine itself based on colonizing powers. It is pertinent to consider how blackface minstrelsy was used as war entertainment by a Jewish troupe while the blatant antisemitism of the 1930s-1940s Montréal ostracized the Jewish community. Performing racist stereotypes for entertainment speaks to a desire to appeal to a white bond—or a desire to be perceived as white(r) by further oppressing the Black community and ensuring their fixed social status.

---

[97] Lalonde, *Speak White*, 29-33.
[98] Lalonde, 75-76.
[99] Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 29. French speaking minstrel troupes are not as well-recorded in institutional archives as they likely happened in more private and informal settings such as smaller clubs or church basements instead of theaters. We know they existed, but they either left few traces in the records, or those records are still hidden in white francophones' attics.

Behind the Burnt Cork: The Minstrel Mask

These performances and their thorough documentation support Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire's claim that in the initial struggle for liberation, oppressed people tend to become sub-oppressors,[100] while reinforcing the malleability and social construction of whiteness. Painting the actors' blackfaces accentuates the performers' real skin colour. Performing "blackness" calls attention to the actors' whiteness; if they were Black, they would not be *performing*. Yet, as American novelist Toni Morrison reminds us, "minstrelsy had virtually nothing to do with the way black people really were," and was purely a white construction."[101] As Morrison also chiefly points out, minstrelsy was a social power tool disguised as entertainment for the white masses. Thus, to solidify the proximity between English-speaking Jewish Montrealers and the English-speaking ruling minority, the minstrel mask acted as a distancing tool between the subject (white actor) and the object (racist stereotype) performed.[102] Blackface-wearing Y Minstrel performers are always photographed with actors not donning blackface makeup; the black and white photographs exacerbate the contrast, and the white faces appear even clearer and whiter. With blackface makeup, the exaggerated and overlined lips create a focal point around the much paler mouths, which in turn accentuates the mask-like quality of the makeup that differentiates Black skin from blackface. Blackface performers, despite painting their skin black, aim to emphasize their own perceived whiteness. The black mask then emphasizes the Black body against a disembodied whiteness. Cultural Studies scholar Richard Dyer explains that "[w]hites must be seen to be white, yet

---

[100] Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition*, Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018, 45.
[101] Toni Morrison, *The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019, 37.
[102] Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 51.

whiteness as a race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as power is maintained by being unseen."[103] Being *seen* as white is to have one's body read as such; it is contingent upon others perception of it, yet Dyer maintains that true whiteness is non-corporeal.[104]

Dyer's argument resonates with the troubling image of the minstrel mask, defined by both the opaque and shiny blackface, and the lighter brownish makeup (figure 10) that resembles an aggressive tan that is more often found on white women, also referred to as Minstrellettes.[105] The cast photograph from the 1940 "Spillin' the Beens" performance (figure 12) highlights the different makeup techniques. The (white male only) orchestra occupies the front row, with some of them smiling in their tuxedos while staring directly at the camera and proudly posing with their respective musical instrument. Their polished look highly contrasts with the second and third rows of minstrels; in comparison, their oversize costumes appear even more excessive and caricatural. In the second row, the white hair bows worn by the female minstrels accentuate the fabricated brownness of their makeup, which highly differs from the burnt cork makeup worn by the male actors in the row behind them. The last two rows of this cast photograph contain mostly white performers, with an important mention of the few male actors cross-dressing and posing on each side.[106] They can be identified by the deliberate odd positioning of their blond wigs as well as the V-shaped collar of their dresses in lieu of the usual "Zip Coon" minstrel suit. The eye is natural drawn to the white figure sitting in the center of the

---

[103] Richard Dyer, "Coloured White, Not Coloured," *White*. New York: Routledge, 1997, 45.
[104] Ibid.
[105] It is important to note that this type of makeup, the lighter blackface, was not exclusively worn by female actors. As seen in figure 10, male actors also wore it at times, but Minstrellettes rarely if ever wore the typical mask-like blackface.
[106] The fixation on the Black body paired with the hyper sexualization of Black men and the supposed sexual threat they posed for white women were a subject of fascination for nineteenth and twentieth-century audiences. The "degenerate and threatening" sexuality of the Black man inspired laws against miscegenation, and those fears were expressed via minstrel performances. There is significant evidence to suggest that both (white male) performers and audiences enjoyed the homoeroticism provided by cross-dressing (white) actors performing *white* femininity and blackface male actors. Tomasz Filip Mossakowski, "The sailors dearly love to make up": Cross-Dressing and Blackface during Polar Exploration," PhD diss., King's College, London, 2014, 40-41.

photograph, surrounded by a sea of strikingly anti-Black caricatures. The confident pose and attire which includes a top hat suggest the dominance —or supremacy of the central figure over the blackface characters around. White Canadians viewed Black people as immoral and sinful, yet they found pleasure in performing in blackface as it allowed them to live vicariously through their supposed lack of civility.[107] The black mask acted as both a protective and distancing tool from the actions performed by the actors, which allowed them more freedom to enact risqué or immoral scenarios such as cross-dressing, interracial relationships, and homoeroticism.[108]

According to late nineteenth-century and early twentieth century directions from Jack Haverly's *"Negro" Minstrels,* blackface makeup used either burnt cork,[109] and an under layer of grease (Vaseline, cocoa butter, or cold creams made from Crisco or olive oil) or greasepaint; the burnt cork resulted in the opaque mask-like makeup while the greasepaint provided lighter coverage and allowed for layering as a means of achieving different shades.[110] Since the Y female performers and children's makeup are lighter in shade and more translucent, they most probably used greasepaint (figure 9). The greasepaint-wearing actresses were not all donning the same skin shade; every additional layer created a darker shade which reveals the careful deliberateness behind every single skin tone. Another advantage of using greasepaint besides its more "life-like" appearance was that its ability to ensure the actor's sweat.[111] Burnt cork makeup smudges more easily and is therefore messier. The crisp delineations of the black makeup inform

---

[107] Cheryl Thompson, "*Black* Minstrelsy on Canadian Stages: Nostalgia for Plantation Slavery in the 19th and 20th Centuries." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 31, no. 1 (2021): 76.
[108] Mossakowski, "The sailors dearly love to make up," 39-40.
[109] The method historically used for burnt cork makeup was to take a couple of corks, douse them in alcohol and then light them on fire until they burn to a crisp and mash them into a powder. Then, the performer or the makeup artist would mix the cork powder with a water, apply a layer of grease (Vaseline, cold cream, cocoa butter, etc) to the face before applying the paste over it. It was also possible to buy the prepared mixture from theatrical makeup companies. Post 83
[110] Jack Haverly, *Negro Minstrels: A Complete Guide* of *American Humorists Series*, Upper Saddle River, N.J: Literature House, 1969, 6-7. Tina Post. "Williams, Walker, and Shine: Blackbody Blackface, or the Importance of Being Surface," *TDR (1988-)* 59, no. 4 (2015): 83.
[111] Post, "Williams, Walker, and Shine," 84.

us that cast photographs were probably taken before performances, when the blackfaces were still freshly done. Doing so ensured the best results for photographs, even more so considering they were taken in black and white, which at first glance tends to obscure the blackface performers as it takes some time for the eyes to adjust and differentiate the faces from the dark background and costumes. The blurring of background and faces highly contributes to the prominent visibility of the white performers' skin which also renders the black figures almost invisible. The deep black pigment of the burnt cork was also laborious to wash off the skin after performances which is why actors usually started with an under layer of grease to make easier the cleaning process. Still, in a 1945 report of expenses states that 25.82$ were spent on towels and soap, assumedly to remove the makeup after the shows.[112] Adjusted for inflation, this amount would be worth around 450$ in 2024,[113] which is a relatively large amount to spend on towels and soap, even for a whole troupe; this suggests that despite the layer of grease, it took several towels and lots of soap to remove the greasy, messy, sticky blackface.

Because the makeup is not applied evenly on the body or even on the face of the performers, the blackface makeup effectively emphasizes the white skin of the actor underneath as well as the whiteness of other actors not donning blackface, as seen in many cast photographs (figures 13, 14 and 15). The uneven painting of the face also accentuated the eyes and lips of the actor, which typically mocked and exaggerated the performer's facial features which paired with the mask's shine resulted in a troubling racist image. White blackface performers' obsession with shiny skin remains a direct consequence of transatlantic slavery's objectification and commodification of the Black body as enslaved people were routinely greased up at the auction

[112] Statement of Income and Expenses, Minstrel Show, April 9, 10, 11, 12 & 14th, 1945. Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, file 00259, location 4-3B CTN.009.
[113] "CPI Inflation Calculator," Accessed December 15th, 2023. https://www.in2013dollars.com/canada/inflation/1945?amount=26

block to increase their *appearance* of health as well as obscure any scars or imperfections.[114] This strategy maximized profits for the sellers. Burnt cork pigment mixed with grease ensured maximum shine, especially with bright stage lights reflecting on the artificially black surface of the skin.

It is worth noting that "shine" was a term used in the twentieth-century America to pejoratively refer to a Black person. In "Williams, Walker, and Shine: Blackbody Blackface, or the Importance of Being Surface," Tina Post postulates that the term is either a remnant of the auction block, or the association of African Americans with shoe-shining and boot-blacking jobs.[115] Examining the case of blackface performers Williams and Walker, a duo composed of one white and one black actor, Post defends that, both blackness and shine inform the construction of blackness and the black body as reliant on compulsory visibility.[116] In the case of blackface performers, the shine reduces the black skin to a *thing*,[117] an objectified surface to be exploited.

---

[114] Post, 94; Krista Thompson, "The Sound of Light: Reflections on Art History in the Visual Culture of Hip-Hop." *The Art Bulletin* 91, no. 4 (2009): 488.
[115] Post, 96.
[116] Post 98; Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010, 12.
[117] Post 97. For this argument, Post engages with Anne Anlin Cheng's theorization of the skin. See Anne Anlin Cheng and Josephine Baker, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Pride, Profit, Popularity

The Y shows were not free,[118] which implies that attendees had to have disposable income for leisure activities such as minstrel shows. Despite the cost of attendance, their shows were so popular that in the late 1940s, they had to change the location from the Snowdon Y to Her Majesty's Theatre in downtown Montréal,[119] as seen in the ad below published in *The Gazette*, *The Herald*, and *The Montréal Star* in February 1945:

> In order to accommodate our many friends who were unable to obtain tickets for the YMHA Minstrel Show in the past years, advance reservations are now being taken for the 1945 Minstrel Show to be held this year at His Majesty's Theatre, Monday to Thursday, April 9th-12th, and Saturday, April 14th,1945. All seats are reserved. Write or phone the Y.M.H.A., 265 Mt. Royal Ave. West, PL. 8422. [120]

In 1930, the report of expenses state that the minstrel shows presented from January 18-20 sold 1400 tickets at seventy-five cents each (1 050$); the expenses totaled 420,25$, for a profit of 629,75$.[121] In comparison, the shows presented from April 9-12 and 14,1945 made a net gain of 3643.87$.[122] The 1945 report provides a detailed account of the expenses, including rent, the crew, costumes insurance, makeup, publicity, tickets production, gift photographs to cast members, etc. The details presented hint at the efforts, coordination, and profits that came with performing such shows. Additionally, the letter sent to the Education Committee to thank

---

[118] According to the report of expenses from 1945, tickets were sold for 0.57, 1.13, 1.7, and 2.25$. Statement of Income and Expenses, Minstrel Show, April 9, 10, 11, 12 & 14th, 1945. Details of Ticket Sales for the Minstrel Show. Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, file 00259, location 4-3B CTN.009.

[119] S.L. Bernstein to Mr. Dave Randolph, Minstrel Committee Annual Report, May 3, 1945. Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, file 00598, location 4-2G CTN.017.
Her (His) Majesty's theater opened in 1898 and was demolished in 1963. Because the name of the theatre changed with the sex of the monarch of Canada, the theatre was known as His Majesty's Theatre from 1901 until 1953, and then reverted to the title of Her Majesty's Theater upon the accession of Elizabeth II in 1952.
The theater was located on Guy Street where Concordia University's EV building now stands (figure 16).

[120] Notice, February 1945. Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, file 00594, location 4-2G CTN.017.

[121] Adjusted for Canadian inflation in 2024, the YMHA made a profit of 10, 953.72$.
"CPI Inflation Calculator," Accessed December 15th, 2023.
https://www.in2013dollars.com/canada/inflation/1945?amount=26

[122] Minstrel Show, January 18-19-20, 1930, Disbursements. Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, file 00580, location 4-2G CTN.017.
Adjusted for Canadian inflation in 2024, the YMHA made a profit that would nowadays represent 63, 242.32$

them for the financial support highlights the community support garnered through those performances, even outside the minstrel committee.[123]

In his chapter "The Matter of Whiteness," Dyer states that there are gradations of whiteness which suggests that some (white) people are whiter than others; he argues that Latins, Irish and Jews, for example, are less securely white than other groups such as Anglos or Nordics.[124] Dyer adds that it was in the nineteenth century and through the establishment of the American identity that emerged a white sense of belonging, which was defined in opposition to both indigeneity and blackness.[125] Whiteness, Dyer posits, has been much more effective and successful than class in "uniting people across national cultural differences."[126] The blackface performers' appeal to whiteness thus detracts from their religious, linguistic, and economic differences. Considering that in early twentieth-century Montréal, Jewish people were not considered white, the black mask effectively served as a tool for acquiring social power by distancing the subject from a fixed blackness.[127] Minstrel shows were an effective example of divide and conquer tactics that set oppressed groups against each other, which could indicate that performers felt they had moved up the social ladder and thus moved away from the stigma of being considered foreign or Other.[128] However, the signing of the performers' name as their characters indicate a certain pride in their performances and a complete adoption of their role as perpetuators of anti-Black stereotypes on stage (figure 21). For example, in a congratulations message printed in the "Spillin' the Beens" programme, Joe Rubin refers to the "grand performers of yesterday" such as "Sambo Rubin," "Joe Tambo Schwartz," "Big-Bozo Brown,"

---

[123] S.L. Bernstein to Mr. Dave Randolph, Minstrel Committee Annual Report, May 3, 1945. Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, file 00598, location 4-2G CTN.017
[124] Dyer, 12.
[125] Dyer, 19.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Fanon, 113.
[128] Le Camp, "Racial Considerations on Minstrel Shows and Related Images in Canada," 257.

and the "Old Master himself Joe Horwitz."[129] These visual traces in the archives allow a close examination to what was deemed important enough to be remembered and preserved for future generations via the archival records. Since the Y Minstrels' performances were not recorded on video, researchers must rely on photographic evidence and written documentation to provide context. Unfortunately, the lack of information in the provided archives' finding aids forces an interdisciplinary approach that considers at once the racial, social, political and cultural context of the city, as well as the norms of the racist tradition of blackface minstrelsy to draw conclusions on the specificity of this local amateur troupe.

[129] Spillin the Beens, Souvenir Programme, 1940. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, file 00004, location 4-1C CTN.001.

SECTION II

Archiving Whiteness: "a tool of hegemony, a tool of resistance"

> *It is the awareness of the blackness in our whiteness, and the whiteness in our blackness, that most confuses us, disrupting our complacent fantasy that our racial and ethnic identities will always be manifest, simple, and pure. Whiteness, like blackness, is not an immaculate, concrete truth but a social construction designed to mark the boundaries of race.*
>
> Maurice Berger [130]

Based on the Y Minstrels blackface performances and the context of their productions, it is pertinent and necessary to examine the traces left in the archives as well as to reflect on the creation and utilization of the Irving Silverman and YM/YWHA fonds. As an art historian, my interest is principally on the visual components of these fonds; photographs are the surviving evidence of these performances along with the souvenir programmes. The camera is never neutral and wields a power that is never its own;[131] the resulting photographs reflect the context of their productions, which is why, despite the abundance of photographic material, it is the amalgamation of song, lyrics, reports of expenses, newspaper clippings that, combined with the photographs become a generative window on the past. It is worth adding how photography in the interwar period was weaponized by Nazis aiming to document and prove the superiority of the Aryan race, which was achieved through the dissemination of stereotypes against other races, but specifically anti-Black and antisemitic caricatures.[132]

---

[130] Maurice Berger, *White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999, 206.
[131] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988, 63-64. Cited in M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science: International Journal on Recorded Information - Incorporating 'archives and Museum Informatics'* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 4.
[132] Vanessa Rocco, *Photofascism: Photography, Film, and Exhibition Culture in 1930s Germany and Italy*, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020.

In "Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," the authors Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook posit the archives as records, sites, institutions and most importantly as social constructs that are all about maintaining the power of remembering over forgetting.[133] Importantly, they argue against the passivity of archives and posit that them as "active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, confirmed."[134] Applying this theory to the Y Minstrels specifically, and the Young Men/Women Hebrew Association more generally, I argue that the Jewish community was successful in wielding the archives to construct and memorialize a white Jewish Canadian identity by the end of the Second World War, by utilizing black and white photography paired with anti-Black stereotypes to claim both their whiteness and their Canadian identity.

Before examining the YMHA's utilization of the archives in negotiating social power, it is necessary to define what constitute archives as well as the power they produce and reproduce. Randall C. Jimmerson, former president of the Society of American Archivists, describes the archives as a place of knowledge, memory, nourishment, and power that both protect and preserve records, legitimize, and sanctify certain documents while negating and destroying others.[135] From his perspective, archivists control who has access to selected sources as well as the "researchers and conditions under which they may examine the archival record."[136] Put differently, archivists have power over the preserving of and access to knowledge, the production of collective memory and the control over its access and its interpretation. Importantly, the "power of sanctifying and destroying" crafts a narrative that will always empower and privilege its creator. As such, they play a pivotal role in shaping collective memory through the process of

[133] Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power," 3.
[134] Id., 1.
[135] Randall C. Jimerson, "Embracing the Power of Archives," *The American Archivist* 69, no. 1 (2006), 20.
[136] Ibid.

appraisal; they select what is preserved and what will ultimately be forgotten.[137] Archivists are the bearers of societal and cultural values which dictate what is worth recording and whose records are worth keeping. Schwartz and Cook argue that

> [archives and archivists] both reflect and constitute power relations. They are a product of society's need for information, and the abundance and circulation of documents reflects the importance placed on information in society. They are the basis for and validation of the stories we tell ourselves, the story-telling narratives that give cohesion and meaning to individuals, groups, and societies.[138]

In other words, archives reflect the importance that knowledge and information have on society, and how the curation of records shape our collective memory and identity as not all records are deemed valuable. Archives control what is recorded currently; they shape the future's past.

Schwartz and Cook also explain how archives have the power to privilege and to marginalize, and to be both a tool of hegemony and resistance.[139] Because archives are generally created and maintained by a powerful minority or institution, they tend to privilege their own voices and narratives while simultaneously displacing and silencing marginalized communities. To that effect, senior archivist Lisa Darms observes that "state repositories have typically ostracized 'radical or minority communities,' which as a result, have been self-documenting, creating their own archives, libraries and oral histories."[140] For the YMHA, because they were ostracized by both English and French-speaking Montrealers, creating their own archives was a necessity. This desire for self-representation within the archives also speaks to what Jacques Derrida refers to as a desire for origins that is paradoxically projected into the future.[141] For the Montréal Jewish community, considering that many had immigrated to Canada as Holocaust

---

[137] Jimerson, 24.
[138] Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power," 13.
[139] Schwartz and Cook, 13.
[140] Linda Morra, ed. *Moving Archives*, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2020, 3.
[141] Morra, *Moving Archives*, 3.

refugees,[142] desiring origins in their adoptive land is anything but paradoxical. Having suffered the loss of family, homes, and parts of their culture to genocide, archiving and self-documenting become a way to resist cultural erasure. Notably, it allows for certain control over how their present, that is the future's past, is narrated and represented.

Considering their responsibilities, archivists can either be the bridge or the barrier between a researcher and the materials. In the case of the Jewish Public Library Archives (JPLA), as is the case in other archives, the archivist takes the boxes out for the researcher to scope; they decide what is accessible or not. For an academic researcher looking within specific collections and with a good knowledge base about the subject matter, navigating the archives and negotiating the role of the archivist will be straightforward; they know what they want to consult. Yet, as is the case with someone less experienced or simply wanting to explore the archival records, they both entirely depend on the archivist's interpretation of their needs. This important responsibility is often forgotten, yet their interpretation shapes and has profound impacts on the production and dissemination of research. Schwartz and Cook aptly describe the power of interpreting the records and the users requests: "When power is denied, overlooked, or unchallenged, it is misleading at best and dangerous at worst. Power recognized becomes power that can be questioned, made accountable, and opened to transparent dialogues and enriched understanding."[143] Especially with racist materials, the archivist has a certain responsibility to educate users; otherwise, they risk unintentionally reproducing harm. For example, the finding aids provided by the JPAL lack crucial context, especially for the collections related to blackface minstrelsy. Upon my first visit in February 2023, the only source of reference for blackface

[142] Jacqueline Clemency, "Brief History of Antisemitism in Canada," *Montreal Holocaust Museum*. Montréal: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2015. https://museeholocauste.ca/app/uploads/2018/10/brief_history_antisemitism_canada.pdf, 13.
[143] Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power," 2.

minstrelsy pointed to a general Wikipedia page.[144] I did notice that after my subsequent appointment, the finding aids directed users to both the Wikipedia page for "Minstrel Shows," and Philip Howard's "Arts Against Post-Racialism" page, hosted on McGill University's website (Figure 17).[145]

On Representation and Liberation

In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire warns that "in the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors or "sub-oppressors,"[146] because they have internalized the image of the oppressor as the ideal and "their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression.[147] Applying Freire's theory to the Y Minstrels, it can be argued that two *oppressed* groups, French Canadians and Jewish Canadians in twentieth-century Montréal identified Québec's period of social change and effectively capitalized off of the context to negotiate their social status; French Canadians became Québécois and white through the Quiet Revolution. [148] For Jewish Canadians, especially Montrealers, we have rely on visual evidence from the YMHA and Irving Silverman fonds to analyze how they ameliorated their social status by themselves, thus becoming *sub-oppressors* by weaponizing racist entertainment.

---

[144] "Minstrel Shows," *Wikipedia*, Accessed February 20th, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minstrel_show.
[145] Philip S.S. Howard. "Arts Against Post-Racialism," McGill University, Accessed February 20th, 2024, https://www.mcgill.ca/aapr/
I also noticed that the finding aids for the two collections I am working with, which were forwarded by email by the reference archivist, were published and revised the same day that I had visited the archives. Since I was more advanced in my project than the prior visit, I naturally had more inquiries and requests for specific details which were either missing or poorly organized. Furthermore, the revised publication date on the finding aids indicate that they were probably not updated or revised until my appointment.
[146] Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition*, Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018, 45.
[147] Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 45.
[148] Sunita Nigam, "Feeling in Public: Blackface as Theatre of Action in Contemporary Quebec," in *Theatres of Affect: New Essays on Canadian Theatre, Volume Four*, edited by Erin Hurley, 38-61. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2014, 52.

Post-World War II Y Minstrel shows did not utilize blackface makeup; performers appear in their "white skins," a significant contrast to previous performances, especially the interwar minstrel shows. For example, the cast photograph from "Hotel Chez Piro" (1946) contains a large group of performers, yet not a single actor is donning blackface (figure 18). This difference could be based on multiple factors; in the years leading up to the Civil Rights movement, it was increasingly considered *mauvais goût* to perform in blackface.[149] However, the fact that they stopped using the black mask could also indicate that members of the Jewish community successfully posited themselves as *white* Canadians, which would justify the marked nationalism in both their minstrel shows and archives. The lyrics of "Hip Hip Hooray" emphasizes their status as Canadians via the repetition of both the words "Canadians" and the plural pronoun "we".

> I'm calling on all of you able men / ten-shun / If you've got the strength to lift up a gun / ten-shun /All you recruits lace up your boots / Get in there while you may / Stand up and shout we're on our way […] *Canadians* will always say / *W*e like it here stand up and cheer / Hip Hip Hooray.[150]

The emphasis on their nationality is evidenced by the repetition of the Y Minstrels participation in war time entertainment and war effort such as the addition of captions next to cast photographs in their Silver Anniversary programme. For example, the "Blitz in Hits" photograph's caption stresses that it "was a war show too, [with] lots of girls and a thin line of 4-F males," but also that the show went on as troop entertainment too.[151] In fact, the Young Men Hebrew Association prided themselves in the number of shows performed since the outbreak of

---

[149] Brooks, 26.

[150] "Hip Hip Hooray," Stage Directions and Minstrel Song Sheets, YMHA Department of Education, 1943. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, file 00041, location 4-1C CTN.001. Emphasis mine.

[151] Blitz in Hits, 1942. "Flashbacks: Twenty-Five Years of Minstrel Show History in Words and Pictures," 1941-1950. *Tech It Easy,* Silver Anniversary Programme, 1951, Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, 4-3F, file 00231, location JPL 4-3B CTN.009.
4-F means the men were registered but were unfit for military service.

the war.[152] This paragraph taken from the Y Minstrels annual War Services Committee Annual Report for 1944-1945 indicate the minstrels' extensive involvement during the war and hints to their pride in being presented with War Services pins for providing entertainment.

> Our 'Y' Minstrels continued to [enhance] the fine reputation and continued to perform under the Montréal War Services Co-Ordinating[sic] Council Entertainment division. During the year they were honoured by the Co-Ordinating[sic] Council when they were presented with War Services pins indicating that they had given *over one hundred war shows since the outbreak of war*. During the past year they put on twenty-one shows for the War Services Co-Ordinating[sic] Council at military camps and also put on two shows for the war finance committee in aid of the victory loan bond drives. They traveled a total of approximately 18,000 miles with a cast of *sixty members*. Already the committee is planning a change and its programme for the coming year so that they can provide the necessary entertainment to hospitals and convalescent centers when the need for entertainment in military camps is at an end. The association can very well be *proud* of the fine work done by the Minstrel Committee.[153]

The deliberate saturation of the archival records with nationalist pride and their wartime efforts ensures they are remembered and represented as Canadians, while hiding behind black masks to do so. This choice affirms Freire's theory about the oppressed becoming sub-oppressors in their striving for liberation; "the black mask offered a way to play with collective fears of a degraded and threatening—and male—Other while at the same time maintaining some symbolic control over them."[154] As part of a marginalized minority themselves, the Y Minstrels knew the power of (self) representation. By performing blackface caricatures, they maintained a symbolic control over Black representations in Montréal and Canadian societies.

---

[152] This pride is further evidenced by the repetition of the Y Minstrels as representative of the Jewish Community, as seen in the note by Sam Miller in the Hotel Chez Piro programme: "In representing the 'Y' we represent you, the Jewish community. We have done so in peacetime as the 'Y' Minstrels and in wartime as the 'Y' War Entertainment Unit, always bearing in mind the fact that we represented you. We hope you are proud of the manner in which you have been represented."
Sam Miller, "This is Your Show", *Hotel Chez Piro*, Souvenir Programme, 1946. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, file 00006, location 4-1C CTN.001.

[153] The War Services Committee Annual Report for the Year, April 1st/1944 to April 30/1945. Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, file 00598, location 4-2G CTN.017.
Emphasis mine.

[154] Lott 25.

Despite the differences in location, Black Montrealers, much like Black Torontonians, had "good reasons to apprehend annoyances and insults, in the matter they endeavor to make the Coloured man appear ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of their audience."[155] The sheer displeasure expressed by the "sensible and well-thinking inhabitants of this community" indicates that the minstrels were most likely aware that their performances harmed Montréal's Black community by misrepresenting their characters. Yet, the Y Minstrels' social status depended on their relentless misrepresentation and oppression. The presence of nationalist songs such as "Hip Hip Hooray" and racist ones like "That's Why Darkies Were Born"[156] in the same "Y.M.H.A. Dept. of Education" folder substantiates the claim that their whiteness depended on the fixity of Black oppression. Consequently, they understood the necessity for being in absolute control of their representations in and out of the archival records, which is why the use of photography as visual traces is strategic. Since black and white photography was the norm in early to mid-twentieth-century Montréal, the opaque and shiny mask produces a stark contrast with the white skin of the actor under the makeup, as well as their fellow performers not donning a blackface. Knowing they were *not* considered white at the turn of the century, the accentuation of their skin by the black and white photography paired with the racist caricatures and song lyrics deliberately produces a white(r) identity within the archival records.

---

[155] "Petition from People of Colour Residing in the City of Toronto to His Worship the Mayor of Toronto," James Johnson and 28 others, 14 October 1841, Series 1081, Item 785, City of Toronto Archives, Toronto, Canada.

[156] "That's Why Darkies Were Born," Stage Directions and Minstrel Song Sheets, YMHA Department of Education, 1943. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, file 00041, location 4-1C CTN.001. "Someone had to pick the cotton, Someone had to plant the corn, Someone had to slave and be able to sing, That's why darkies were born [...] Sing! Sing! Sing when you're weary and sing when you're blue, Sing! Sing! That's what you taught all the white folks to do."

The Watcher, the Watched, and White Supremacy

The utilization of photography to fabricate a "white passing" image of the sitter is anything but new. In the late nineteenth century, darker-skinned sitters often requested as much exposure and light when having their portraits taken to whiten the appearance of their skin.[157] Caricatures such as *Darkness and Dawn* (Figure 19) used humor as an outlet for racial and social anxieties related to Black integration after emancipation; the use of greater exposure to pass as white(r) in photographs escalated those anxieties as they challenged the socially constructed and mutable boundaries of race. *Darkness and Dawn* aimed to accentuate the fabrication of whiteness through photography by depicting the sitters in pitch-black skin, recalling the minstrel mask. The photographer, in despair, explains that there will never be enough light in his studio to do justice to the family—to *make them white* for the photograph. Yet, the Y Minstrels used this exact tactic to successfully "achieve whiteness" by the end of the twentieth century; they efficiently used the combination of photography, written documentation, and blackface performances to posit themselves as white Canadians.

Interestingly, both French Canadians and Jewish Canadians *performed blackness* while striving for more social power. While the Y Minstrels routinely performed blackface caricatures, Québécois nationalists casted themselves as the white n— of America, borrowing from anti-colonialist discourse emerging from Black Caribbean intellectuals,[158] to plead for their cultural oppression within Québec and Canada. Both strategies simultaneously reinforced anti-Black stereotypes and further contributed to the *invisibilization* of Black Canadians by saturating the visual field with blackface performances and caricatures. The saturation of images and tropes

---

[157] Tanya Sheehan, "Comical Conflation: Racial Identity and the Science of Photography," in *No Laughing Matter: Visual Humor in Ideas of Race, Nationality, and Ethnicity*, Edited by Angela Rosenthal et al. Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2016, 218.

[158] Pierre Vallières, *Nègres Blancs D'amérique : Autobiographie Précoce D'un "terroriste" Québécois*, Nouv. éd. rev. et cored, Montréal: Éditions Partis Pris, 1969.

"reveals the underlying anxieties" surrounding the porous boundaries of whiteness and racial taxonomies.[159] This overreliance on caricatures and stereotypes supports the claim that whiteness is defined by negative differentiation,[160] or by what it is not, its opposite. Because whiteness defines itself in opposition to the so-called inferior Others, racism is necessary for the maintenance of a white identity.[161] As such, the visual sphere acts as a scene of punishment in which Black subjugation continues by reproducing denigrating racial stereotypes that allow white people to define themselves as the opposite of those reductive caricatures.[162] Similarly, painter Roland Rood describes negative differentiation in his theorization of the colour white. Rood explains that, because white is the colour of light, it is omnipresent and thus we don't perceive its colour, just like air has no smell and water has no taste; the constant stimuli impede our senses from noticing them. [163] Thus, the paradoxical nature of whiteness as both a colour and colourlessness makes it that we define it by opposition to black; white is light and black is the lack thereof.[164]

This violence encapsulated in visuality echoes what American writer and political activist, Amiri Baraka describes as: "The torture of being the unseen object, and the constantly observed subject." [165] Baraka's observation recalls the use of visual reproductions to justify scientific racism. There are alarming similarities between racist illustrations such as "Types of

---

[159] Conrad Jr. Pruitt, "Jemimas, Jockeys, and Jolly Banks: The Racial Discourse of Black Collectibles," PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2022, 15.
[160] Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, 13. Fleetwood borrows the concept of "negative differentiation" in relation to analysis of race and identification from Irit Rogoff's essay "Other's Others," published in *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*. Eds Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay. New York: Routledge, 1996.
[161] Teresa J. Guess, "The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence," *Critical Sociology* 32, no. 4 (2006): 667.
[162] Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision*, 13.
[163] Roland Rood, cited in Dyer 45-46
[164] Id., 48.
[165] Amiri Baraka, *The System of Dante's Hell*, New York: Grove Press, 1966, 158.

Mankind," (figure 20) and the minstrels photographs; the Y Minstrels aimed to portray Black Canadians in a perpetual state of subjugation, as always inferior to them; The "Types of Mankind's illustration" compares crania in a deliberate positing of the Black man's cranium as near-identical to that of the chimpanzee. On the other hand, the white cranium is associated with the marble statue of the Apollo Belvedere, thus equating white masculinity to mythical ideals of beauty, youth, and athleticism, which in turn reinforces white supremacist beliefs. To this effect, Dyer reminds us that "[t]o be seen as white is to have one's corporeality registered, yet true whiteness resides in the non-corporeal," which is why whiteness is considered unmarked, unspecific, and universal.[166] In this instance, the idealized marble statue represents the white man, who successfully evades visual capture, and the subsequent reduction to the corporeal.

Whiteness has always depended on the power of visuality to dictate who fits in its unstable and always-shifting criteria. Dyer adds that, in a culture when visuality defines power, the most powerful position is that of the invisible watcher, and that part of the reason why power resides in invisibility is the Western conception of whiteness as the absence of colour, as defined by Roland Rood.[167] Specifically, Dyer claims that "whites must be seen to be white, yet whiteness as a race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as power is maintained by being unseen."[168] In the case of the Y Minstrels' cast photographs and performances, they successfully evade visual capture by utilizing the black mask as both a shield and a weapon through which they perpetuate racist stereotypes. They remain "unseen" by saturating the visual field with anti-Black caricatures which also ensures the sustained hypervisibility of counterfeit Black representations. Visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff interprets this phenomenon by what he coined "white sight," connecting visual strategies such as Renaissance's perspective and the

[166] Richard Dyer, "Coloured White, Not Coloured," in *White*. New York: Routledge, 1997, 45.
[167] Dyer, "Coloured White, Not Coloured," 44-45.
[168] Dyer, 45.

erection of Apollo statues as monuments to white beauty and power to the rise of racial capitalism and surveillance technologies which create an oppressive and racializing world.[169]

[169] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *White Sight: Visual Politics and Practices of Whiteness*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2023. For further readings on white supremacy and visuality, see Mirzoeff's "The Appearance of Black Lives Matter," 2017; Mirzoeff's The Right to Look, 2011.

CONCLUSION

The ordinary and simple moments are rarely found in the archives, yet they are crucial to the bonds we create. Archives need to move toward a future where we truly reflect the communities we serve. There are transformative possibilities when we preserve records of black life.[170]

Through an analysis of the Y Minstrels as a specific and unique case study, I have argued that the performances inform us on the racial, social, political, and cultural anxieties in Montréal in the twentieth century, and more specifically in the interwar period. While professional minstrel troupes tours were declining in popularity, amateur troupes such as the Y Minstrels adapted the racist tradition and gave it a local flavour by including themes related to events or popular culture of the time. The specific social context of Montréal during the interwar period exacerbated the pre-existing tensions amongst anglophones, francophones and allophones; relying on white supremacy's dependence on the powers of (in)visibilities, the Y Minstrels utilized the black mask as a tool of negative differentiation to approximate their status to that of whiteness. This meant performing in the language of the powerful minority and using references from other bourgeois sources of entertainment such as jazz. By utilizing the archives as a space to negotiate their social power, the Y Minstrels successfully weaponized self-representation within the archival records to craft a narrative that memorialized them as (white) Jewish Canadians. The combination of highlighting their war time effort with anti-Black caricatures consolidated their (white) status and explains the abandonment of the blackface makeup in post-war minstrel productions.

---

[170] Melissa J. Nelson. "Reflections on Black Joy in the Archives," *melissajnelson.com*, February 5th, 2024. https://melissajnelson.com/explore/information-management/reflections-on-black-joy-in-the-archives/#:~:text=The%20ordinary%20and%20simple%20moments,preserve%20records%20of%20Black%20life.

To expend on this current project, it would be incredibly pertinent to look at the female performers and reflect on white femininity—specifically white Jewish femininity in twentieth-century Montréal. With regards to the different makeup techniques used, it would be interesting to flesh out why minstrellettes, or female performers rarely if ever wore greasepaint makeup which was more translucent and paler than burnt cork. I would also inquire about the frequency of their participation in minstrel shows and see if there were any differences in the types of roles they would play compared to their male counterparts. As witnessed through the Y Minstrels' records, the Second World War allowed for more female minstrels to perform, as most men were participating in the Canadian war effort. The post-war cast photographs undoubtedly have more female performers, but it is also worth noting that the troupe contains significantly more members. Interestingly, the post-war increase in performers coincide with the abandonment of the blackface makeup while still retaining the "minstrel" designation. Related to my inquiries about gender, the presence of children in blackface on stage deserves its own research as well, whether through comparisons with Irish-descent blackface troupes in Newfoundland or through a sociology-based lens wherein the construction of whiteness is examined alongside the children's participation in racist entertainment.

Considering the plethora of information related to the performers, it would be pertinent to develop the argument for class-based entertainment by engaging more in-dept with every minstrel. For example, the fonds 1288 is named after Irving Silverman, yet without inquiring to the archivist, it would be near-impossible to find out who this man was. Silverman is often credited as the makeup artist for minstrel shows and his brother, Ben Silverman frequently performed with the troupe as well. Following my arguing that the Y Minstrels aimed to appeal to the English-speaking powerful minority in Montréal at the time, performing in English instead of

Hebrew or Yiddish confirmed and showcased their higher societal status. Moreover, it would be worth exploring the minstrels' careers in relation to their working positions in Montréal at the time. Irving Silverman, one of the makeup artists, worked as an officer for the Montréal police force in the 1930s and was first working in vice, which meant that he would have been frequenting the city's jazz clubs, enforcing laws about illegal use of liquor and narcotics during the Prohibition, but also policing gambling and prostitution. Silverman's positionality is then located at the intersection of anti-Black racist entertainment and the violent history (and unfortunately ever-so present) of systematic racism and the policing of Black lives in the city, and in the country.[171] It would then be appropriate to research other minstrels' jobs and reflect on class, race, and language in Montréal.

Locating blackface minstrelsy performances within Montréal's broader theater scene would be worthy of examination too. I am wondering what plays the Young Men/Women Hebrew Association(s) were performing in Yiddish during the interwar period. It would then be pertinent to compare with the anglophone and francophone theater scenes in the city and see if some of the themes were similar, or if they were reacting to local events or culture and how that would be engaged with differently in respective troupes. Specifically, it would be interesting to research what other plays were performed alongside blackface minstrelsy shows in the city.

To conclude, throughout my visits in the Jewish Public Library Archives, I found that one of the most challenging tasks was attempting to conceptualize a precise timeline by piecing together the scattered information and materials across the two fonds. I often wished I had an archival guide regrouping the years of the minstrel shows, the titles and any details related to the

[171] Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*, Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2017; Michelle Alexander and Cornel West, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, New York, NY: New Press, 2012; Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?,* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.

performances, as well as where I could find the photograph or the programme within the JPLA collections. While I was provided with finding aids, they were often incomplete or inconsistent with the records right in front of my eyes. As such, I have created a timeline, regrouping all relevant information in a table and which can be found in Annex A. By sharing this timeline in my thesis and with the JPAL after its publication, I hope to increase the accessibility and efficiency of users' visits and research while also contributing to Canadian blackface minstrelsy scholarship.

To end on a more personal note, while observing the cast photographs in the archives, I could not help but notice the likeness of the minstrels' white gloves with the ones worn to carefully manipulate archived photographs and fragile objects. There is a certain irony about having to wear minstrel-like gloves to access and haptically engage with photographic records pertaining to blackface minstrelsy. There are probably no deeper meanings to the resemblance and the coincidence, though it certainly fostered further reflections upon my own positionality within this research project. As reported in Philip Howard's timeline, the multiple recent blackface incidents and their subsequent debate in the media leave me wondering why white Québécois still feel entitled to use blackface despite all the scholarship vehemently explaining the virulence of its deep-rooted anti-Black racism.

APPENDIX A - The Y Minstrels Shows (1927-1951): a Timeline of the JPAL Records

Year	Title	Cast Photograph	Program	Details
1926	No title	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]		"This was the first show. It didn't have a name, and the only scenery was a Star-of-David flag."
1927	The Y Minstrel Show			
1928	Royal Relishes			"Staged in St. Urbain St. gym."
1929	Campus Capers	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]		Victoria Hall.
1930	Nautical but Nice	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 003. 00902.	"First show in the Auditorium of the brand new Mount Royal Building."
1931	We're in the Army Now	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]		"Pipe-clay to keep the hats white and burnt cork to make the faces black…and a homemade airplane prop that was a real sensation."
1932	Stars in Stripes	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 002. PR018179.	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 001. 00024.	The back is filled with cast signatures. Figure 21.
1933	Hade Hey	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 002. PR018167.	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 001. 00023.	"Locale: the nether region."
1934	Razin A Racket	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 002. PR018168.	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 001. 00030.	February 1934, "had a lavish décor, complete with spear carriers."
1935	No title			"The Minstrels ran out of names — but not out of shows."
1936	Ruff on the Riffs	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]		"Reintroduced a bevy of gals into what had for some years become a stag show."
1937	Sea n' Sights			"Full of yo-ho-ho pirates and skulls."
1938	Puttin' on the Writs	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 001. 00025.	"Had a vicious villain and four endmen named Grumpy, Bashful, Dopey and Snow Black — with no apologies to Walt Disney.
1939	Playin' No Favourites	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 002. PR018170.		"Had a horsey flavour."
1939	Birthright		1288. 4-1C. CTN. 001. 00008.	Presented by *The Little Theatre of the Y*. A performance for the benefit of the German refugees. YMHA Auditorium (265 Mt. Royal Ave. W.) January 14-16, 1939. 8.30 P.M.

1940	Spillin' the Beens,	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 002. PR018172.	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 001. 00004.	"Had a rich plot, a rousing score and a packed house, both onstage and off." March 16-24, 1940
1940	You Can't Take It With You	1288. 2-6E. CTN. 002. 018173.		26-27 November 1940 Brandon, Manitoba
1941	It's Up to You	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]		"The Minstrels first contribution to Canada's wartime morale."
1942	Blitz in Hits	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]		"Was a war show too. Lots of girls and a thin line of 4-F males (registered but unfit for military service). But the show went on, not only in the Y but as troop entertainment too." March 14-17, 22, 1942. YMHA Auditorium.
1943	I'se Right			Army theme
1944	On the Double			Army theme
1945	Soot 'n' Boots			"The last of the war shows — just before V-E Day."
1946	Hotel Chez-Piro	1288. 2-6E. CTN. 002. PR018174.	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 001. 00005.	April 9-12, 14, 1946. His Majesty's Theatre
1947	Hi Buoy	1288. 2-6E. CTN. 002. PR018176.		"Almost sank Canada's merchant marine."
1948	You Sleigh Me		1288. 4-1C. CTN. 001. 00017.	"Took the Laurentian resorts apart." April 10-18, 1948. YMHA Auditorium.
1949	Five-ll Get Yuh Tan	1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231. [Silver Anniversary Program]		"Had a beach-comber flavor."
1950	How's Business			"Introduced the Minstrels in the setting of the new Snowdon Auditorium."
1951	Tech it Easy		1256. 4-3F. CTN. 009. 00231.	Silver Anniversary Production, April 14-23, 1951. Snowdon Auditorium
19--	N/A	1288. 4-1C. CTN. 002. PR018177.		No titles or dates provided; performers wearing a white uniform with the letter T. Many female performers and three children sitting in the front, donning blackface.[172]

[172] All the cast photographs and souvenir programmes can be found in the Jewish Public Library Archives, in the Irving Silverman fonds (1288) and YM/YWHA fonds (1256).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abella, Irving and Harold Troper. *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*. New York: Random House, 1983.

Adams, Eric M. "Errors of Fact and Law: Race, Space, and Hockey in Christie V York." *University of Toronto Law Journal* 62, no. 4 (2012): 463–97.

Ahmed, Sara. "A Phenomenology of Whiteness." *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (2007): 149–68.

Alexander, Michael. *Jazz Age Jews*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Alexander, Michelle, and Cornel West. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Revised edition. New York, NY: New Press, 2012.

Austin, David. *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013.

Bean, Annemarie, James V. Hatch and Brooks McNamara, eds. *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy.* Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996.

Benhnken, Brian D. and Gregory D. Smithers. *Racism in American Popular Media: From Aunt Jemima to the Frito Bandito*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2015.

Berger, Maurice. *White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness*. 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999.

Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. 4th ed. New York: Continuum, 2001.

Brooks, Daphne. *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Brooks, Tim. *The Blackface Minstrel Show in Mass Media: 20th Century Performances on Radio, Records, Film and Television*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2020.

Brown Givens, Sonja M., and Jennifer L. Monahan. "Priming Mammies, Jezebels, and Other Controlling Images: An Examination of the Influence of Mediated Stereotypes on Perceptions of an African American Woman." *Media Psychology* 7, no. 1 (2005): 87–106.

Cheng, Anne Anlin, and Josephine Baker. *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Clemency, Jacqueline. “Brief History of Antisemitism in Canada.” *Montreal Holocaust Museum*. Montréal: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2015. https://museeholocauste.ca/app/uploads/2018/10/brief_history_antisemitism_canada.pd

Césaire Aimé. *Discours sur le colonialisme*. Paris: Présence africaine, 1994.

Centre d'histoire de Montréal. *Scandale! Le Montréal Illicite, 1940-1960*. Edited by Catherine Charlebois, Mathieu Lapointe, Bédard Maryse, and Leclerc Jean-François. Montréal, Québec: Cardinal, 2016.

Charles, Julia S. *That Middle World: Race, Performance, and the Politics of Passing*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

Collin, Jean-Pierre. “Montréal, Depictions of a Mid-Size Metropolis.” *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 12, no. 1 (2003): 1–7. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44320745.

Cornellier, Roxanne. “Blackface Minstrelsy Imagery and Political Caricatures: John Wilson Bengough, Henri Julien & the Complicity of Canadian Newspapers.” *Asterisk* Journal of Art and Art History*, Yale University 2, (2020): 14-18. asteriskjournal.org/fall-2020

Dagenais, Michèle. “Montreal in the Twentieth Century: Trajectories of a City Under Strains.” in *New World Cities: Challenges of Urbanization and Globalization in the Americas*, edited by John Tutino and Martin V. Melosi, 169-209. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.

Davis, Angela Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.

Du Bois, W. E. B, and Brent Hayes Edwards. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford England: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Dupuis, Gilles. “De Peau Noire, Masques Blancs À Nègres Blancs D’Amérique: Portrait Du (Demi)Colonisé.” *Nouvelles Études Francophones* 33, no. 2 (2018): 136–46

Dyer, Richard. “Coloured White, Not Coloured.” *White*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Dyson, Michael Eric. *Entertaining Race: Performing Blackness in America*. Firsted. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2021.

Fanon, Frantz, Jean-Paul Sartre, Homi K Bhabha, and Cornel West. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York, NY: Grove Press, 2021

Fanon, Frantz. *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952.

Fleetwood, Nicole R. *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018.

Gilmore, John. *Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montréal*. 2nd ed. Victoria, B.C.: Ellipse Editions, 2011.

Goings, Kenneth W. *Mammy and Uncle Mose: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Guess, Teresa J. "The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence." *Critical Sociology* 32, no. 4 (2006): 649-673.

Hardy, Dominic. *Drawn to Order: Henri Julien's Political Cartoons of 1899 and his Career with Hugh Graham's Montreal Daily Star, 1888-1908*. Peterborough: Master Education, University of Trent, 1998.

Hardy, Dominic. "Historical Ironies of Henri Julien (1852-1908): Researching Identity and Graphic Satire Across Languages in Québec." *Working Papers on Design* 2, no. 1 (2007): 1-25.

Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Hartman, Saidiya V. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

Haverly, Jack. *Negro Minstrels: A Complete Guide* of *American Humorists Series*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Literature House, 1969.

Howard, Philip SS. "Timeline of Canadian Blackface Incidents," *Arts Against Postracialism*, 2017. https://www.mcgill.ca/aapr/blackface-canada/timeline.

Howard, Philip SS. *Performing Postracialism: Reflections on Antiblackness, Nation, and Education through Contemporary Blackface in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023.

Howard, Philip SS. "A Laugh for the National Project: Contemporary Canadian Blackface Humour and Its Constitution through Canadian Anti-Blackness." *Ethnicities* 18, no. 6 (2018): 843–68

Irving Silverman fonds. Jewish Public Library Archives, Montreal, Quebec.

Joachim, Joana. "Black Gold: A Black Feminist Art History of 1920s Montréal." *Canadian Journal of History* 56, no. 3 (2021): 266–91.

Johnson, James and 28 others. "Petition from People of Colour Residing in the City of Toronto to His Worship the Mayor of Toronto." 14 October 1841, Series 1081, Item 785, City of Toronto Archives, Toronto, Canada.

Johnson, Stephen Burge, ed. *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.s

Julien, Henri. “Songs of the By-Town Coons, By the Go-As-You-Please Quartette.” Reproduced from The Montreal Daily Star, 1899, 24. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.1115

Lalonde, Michèle. *Speak White*. Montreal: L’Hexagone, 1974.

Le Camp, Lorraine. “Racial Considerations on Minstrel Shows and Related Images in Canada.” PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2005.

Lott, Eric. *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Lott, Eric. “‘The Seeming Counterfeit’: Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy.” *American Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1991): 223–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/2712925

MacLennan, Hugh. *Two Solitudes*. Toronto: M&S, 2008.

Makropoulos, Josée. “Speak White!: Language and Race in the Social Construct of Frenchness in Canada.” In *Racism, Eh: A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada*, eds Charmaine Nelson and Camille A Nelson. Concord, Ont.: Captus Press, 2004.

Maynard, Robyn. *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2017.

Mian Chen, Jun. “The Contentious Field of Whiteness Studies.” *Journal for Social Thought 2*, no. 1 (2017): 15-27.

Mills, Sean. *A Place in the Sun: Haiti, Haitians, and the Remaking of Quebec*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016.

Mills, Sean. “Democracy in Music: Louis Metcalf's International Band and Montreal Jazz History.” *The Canadian Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (2019): 351–72.

Mills, Sean. “Montreal’s Black Renaissance.” in *Unsettling the Great White North: Black Canadian History*. Michele Johnson and Aladejebi Funké, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022.

Mills, Sean. *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *White Sight: Visual Politics and Practices of Whiteness*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2023.

Morra, Linda M, ed. *Moving Archives*. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2020.

Morrison, Toni. *The Source of Self-Regard : Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations*. Firsted. Business Book Summary. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019.

Mossakowski, Tomasz Filip. “The sailors dearly love to make up”: Cross-Dressing and Blackface during Polar Exploration.” PhD diss., King’s College, London, 2014.

Nel, Philip. *Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: The Hidden Racism of Children’s Literature, and the Need for Diverse Books*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Nigam, Sunita. “Feeling in Public: Blackface as Theatre of Action in Contemporary Quebec.” in *Theatres of Affect: New Essays on Canadian Theatre, Volume Four*, edited by Erin Hurley, 38-61. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2014.

Pilgrim, David. *Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice*. Oakland: PM Press and Ferris State University Press, 2015.

Pilgrim, David. *Watermelon, Nooses, and Straight Razors: Stories from the Jim Crow Museum*. Oakland: PM Press, 2018.

Post, Tina. “Williams, Walker, and Shine: Blackbody Blackface, or the Importance of Being Surface.” *TDR (1988-)* 59, no. 4 (2015): 83–100.

Pruitt, Conrad Jr. “Jemimas, Jockeys, and Jolly Banks: The Racial Discourse of Black Collectibles.” PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2022.

Quigley, Colleen, and Melissa Templeton. “Performing Blackface on the Newfoundland Stage: The Rossleys, Transnational Connections, and Early Twentieth Century Theatre in St. John’s.” *Theatre Research in Canada* 41, no. 1 (2020): 64–87.

Quirion, Jean, Guy Chiasson and Marc Charron. “Des canadiens français aux québécois : se nommer à l’épreuve du territoire?” *Recherches sociographiques* 58, no 1 (2017): 143–157. https://doi.org/10.7202/1039934ar.

Rajabi, Helen Maryam. “The Idea of Race in Interwar Britain: Religion, Entertainment and Childhood Experiences.” PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2013.

Rocco, Vanessa. *Photofascism: Photography, Film, and Exhibition Culture in 1930s Germany and Italy*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020.

Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. Revised and Newed. Haymarket Series. London: Verso, 2007.

Rogin, Michael Paul. *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Rogoff, Irit. “‘Other's others’: Spectatorship and Difference.” In *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*. Eds Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Schwartz, Joan M, and Terry Cook. “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory.” *Archival Science: International Journal on Recorded Information - Incorporating 'archives and Museum Informatics'* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435628.

Sheehan, Tanya. “Comical Conflation: Racial Identity and the Science of Photography.” in *No Laughing Matter: Visual Humor in Ideas of Race, Nationality, and Ethnicity*. Edited by Angela Rosenthal et al. Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2016.

Smith, Shawn Michelle. Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Strausbaugh, John. *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult & Imitation in American Popular Culture*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2006.

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993.

Thompson, Brian Christopher. *Anthems and Minstrel Shows: The Life and Times of Calixa Lavallée, 1842-1891*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015.

Thompson, Cheryl and Emilie Jabouin. “Black Media Reporting on Theater, Dance, and Jazz Clubs in Canada: From Shuffle along to Rockhead’s Paradise.” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* (2021). https://doi.org/10.1177/01968599211042579.

Thompson, Cheryl. “*Black* Minstrelsy on Canadian Stages: Nostalgia for Plantation Slavery in the 19th and 20th Centuries.” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 31, no. 1 (2021): 67-94.

Thompson, Cheryl. “‘Come One, Come All’: Blackface Minstrelsy as a Canadian Tradition and Early Form of Popular Culture.” in *Towards an African-Canadian Art History: Art, Memory, and Resistance,* edited by Charmaine A. Nelson, 95-121. Concord: Captus Press, 2018.

Thompson, Cheryl. “``I'se in Town, Honey": Reading Aunt Jemima Advertising in Canadian Print Media, 1919 to 1962.” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49, no. 1 (2015): 205–37.

Thompson, Krista. “The Sound of Light: Reflections on Art History in the Visual Culture of Hip-Hop.” *The Art Bulletin* 91, no. 4 (2009): 481–505.

Toll, Robert C. *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Turner, Patricia A., *Ceramic Uncles & Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and Their Influence on Culture.* New York: Anchor Books, 1994.

Vallières, Pierre. *Nègres Blancs D'amérique : Autobiographie Précoce D'un "terroriste" Québécois*. Nouv. éd. rev. et corred. Montréal: Éditions Partis Pris, 1969.

Winks, Robin W. *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 2nd ed. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.

Wyatt, Robert, and John Andrew Johnson. *The George Gershwin Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Wynter, Sylvia. "Sambos and Minstrels." *Social Text* 1, no. 1 (1979): 149–56. https://doi.org/10.2307/466410.

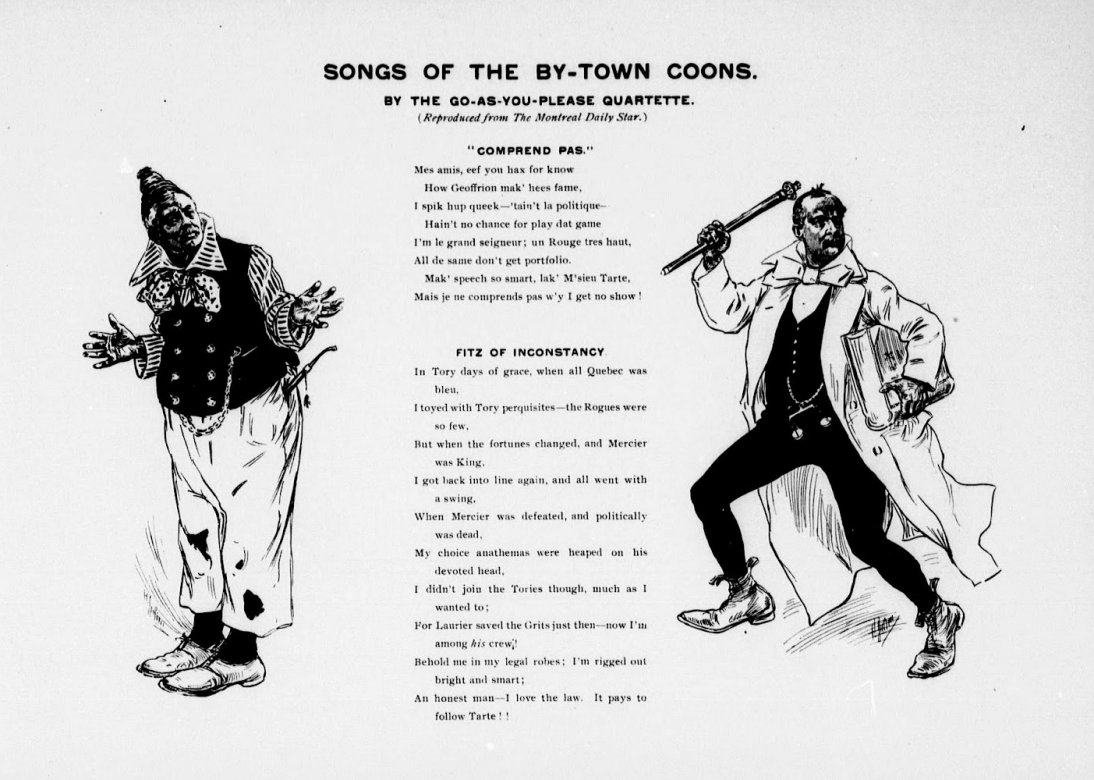
Young, Harvey. *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Walker & Wiseman, "La Rue's Minstrels and Hamall's Serenaders," ca. 1875, wood engraving, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 2. "Hayseed Carnival Group, Y.M.C.A, Drummond st.," ca. 1925, gelatin silver glass plate negative, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 3. William Notman & Sons, “Mr. Hickey, blackface theater performer, Montréal, QC,” 1896, albumen print. McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.



SONGS OF THE BY-TOWN COONS.

BY THE GO-AS-YOU-PLEASE QUARTETTE.

(*Reproduced from The Montreal Daily Star.*)

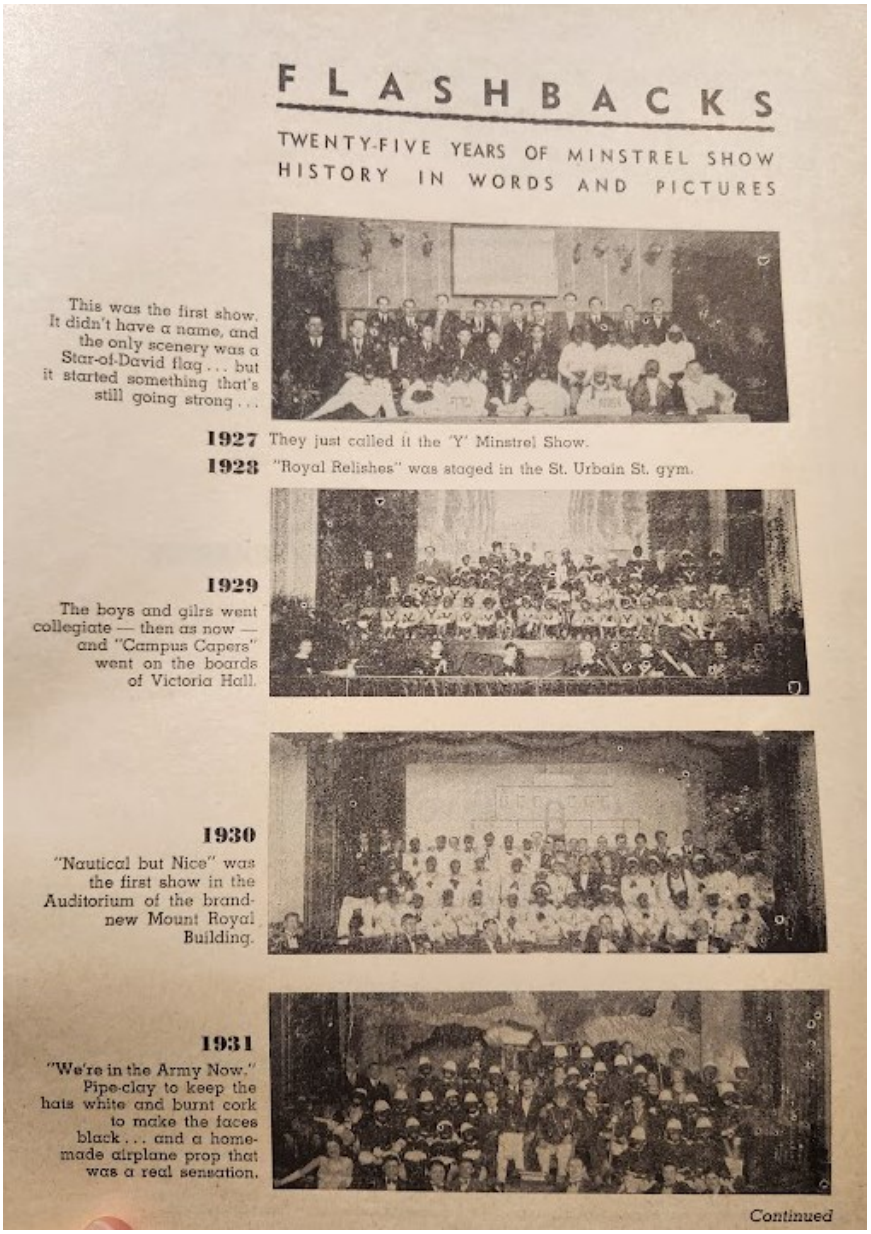
"COMPREND PAS."

Mes amis, eef you hax for know
How Geoffrion mak' hees fame,
I spik hup queek—'tain't la politique—
Hain't no chance for play dat game
I'm le grand seigneur; un Rouge tres haut,
All de same don't get portfolio.
Mak' speech so smart, lak' M'sieu Tarte,
Mais je ne comprends pas w'y I get no show!

FITZ OF INCONSTANCY.

In Tory days of grace, when all Quebec was bleu,
I toyed with Tory perquisites—the Rogues were so few,
But when the fortunes changed, and Mercier was King,
I got back into line again, and all went with a swing,
When Mercier was defeated, and politically was dead,
My choice anathemas were heaped on his devoted head,
I didn't join the Tories though, much as I wanted to;
For Laurier saved the Grits just then—now I'm among *his* crew;
Behold me in my legal robes; I'm rigged out bright and smart;
An honest man—I love the law. It pays to follow Tarte!!

Figure 4. Henri Julien, "Songs of the By-Town Coons. By the Go-As-You-Please Quartette," 1899. Reproduced from the Montreal Daily Star. https://archive.org/details/songsofbytowncoo00juli



FLASHBACKS

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF MINSTREL SHOW HISTORY IN WORDS AND PICTURES

This was the first show. It didn't have a name, and the only scenery was a Star-of-David flag . . . but it started something that's still going strong . . .

1927 They just called it the 'Y' Minstrel Show.

1928 "Royal Relishes" was staged in the St. Urbain St. gym.

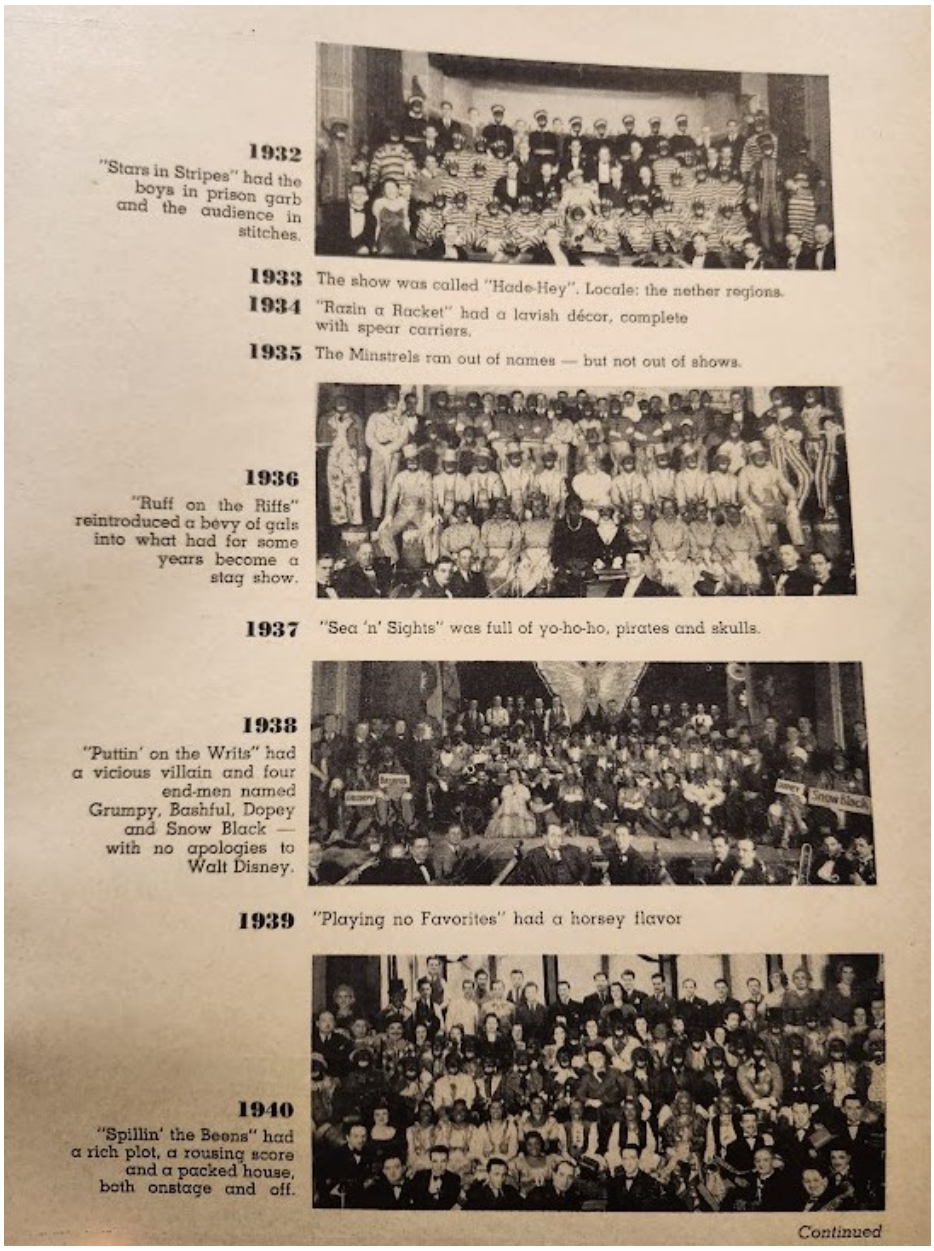
1929
The boys and gilrs went collegiate — then as now — and "Campus Capers" went on the boards of Victoria Hall.

1930
"Nautical but Nice" was the first show in the Auditorium of the brand-new Mount Royal Building.

1931
"We're in the Army Now." Pipe-clay to keep the hats white and burnt cork to make the faces black . . . and a home-made airplane prop that was a real sensation.

Continued

Figure 5. "Flashbacks: Twenty-Five Years of Minstrel Show History in Words and Pictures," 1927-1931, *Tech It Easy* Programme, 1951, Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, 4-3F, file 00231, location JPL 4-3B CTN.009.



1932 "Stars in Stripes" had the boys in prison garb and the audience in stitches.

1933 The show was called "Hade-Hey". Locale: the nether regions.

1934 "Razin a Racket" had a lavish décor, complete with spear carriers.

1935 The Minstrels ran out of names — but not out of shows.

1936 "Ruff on the Riffs" reintroduced a bevy of gals into what had for some years become a stag show.

1937 "Sea 'n' Sights" was full of yo-ho-ho, pirates and skulls.

1938 "Puttin' on the Writs" had a vicious villain and four end-men named Grumpy, Bashful, Dopey and Snow Black — with no apologies to Walt Disney.

1939 "Playing no Favorites" had a horsey flavor

1940 "Spillin' the Beans" had a rich plot, a rousing score and a packed house, both onstage and off.

Continued

Figure 6. "Flashbacks: Twenty-Five Years of Minstrel Show History in Words and Pictures," 1932-1940, *Tech It Easy* Programme, 1951, Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, 4-3F, file 00231, location JPL 4-3B CTN.009.

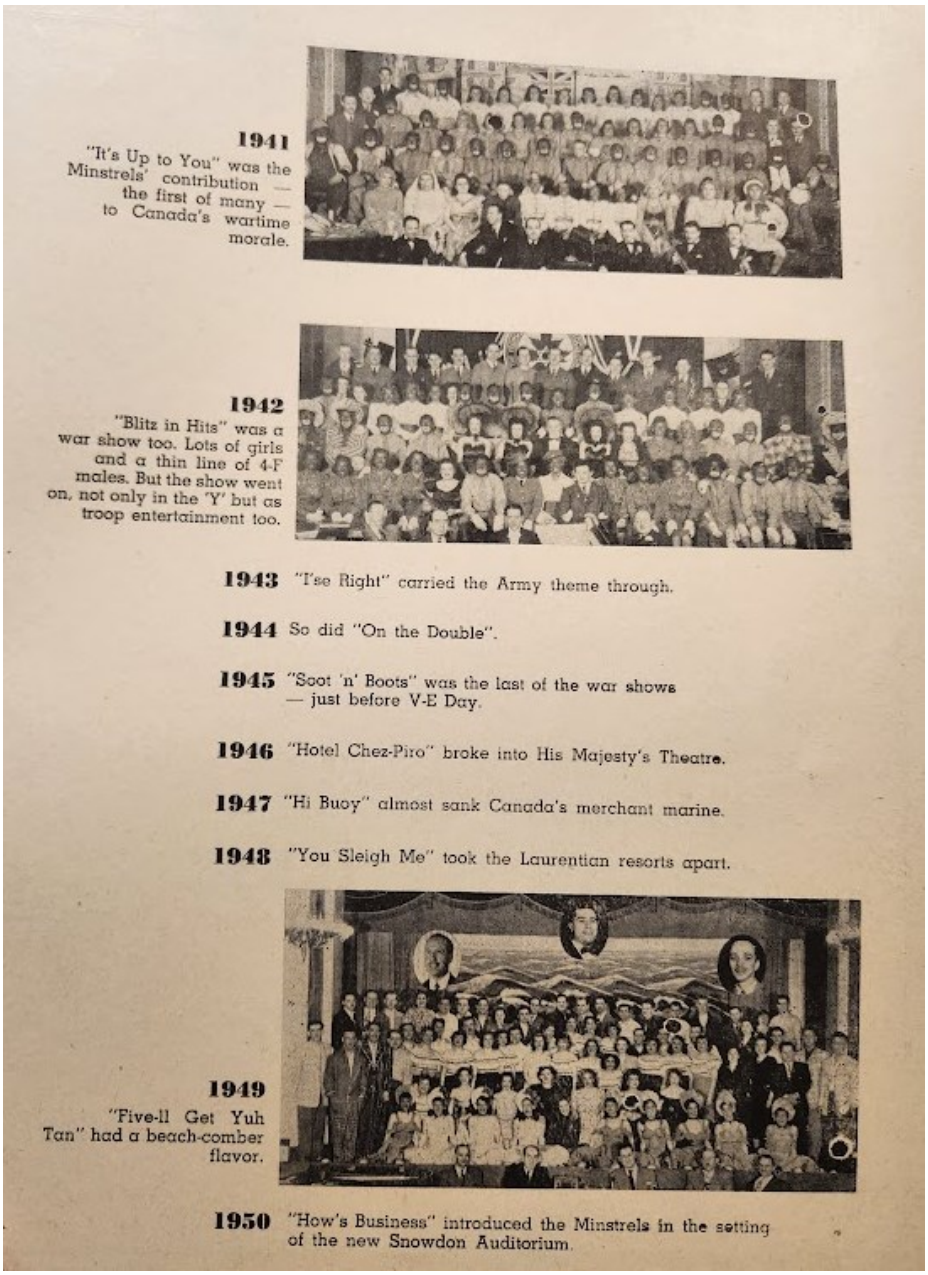


Figure 7. "Flashbacks: Twenty-Five Years of Minstrel Show History in Words and Pictures," 1941-1950, *Tech It Easy* Programme, 1951, Jewish Public Library Archives, YM-YWHA collection, fonds 1256, 4-3F, file 00231, location JPL 4-3B CTN.009.

Figure 8. “Wm. H. West's Big Minstrel Jubilee,” Strobridge & Co. Lith. New York: Strobridge Litho. Co., [1900], print color lithograph, 76 x 101 cm. POS - MIN - .W48, no. 35 (C size) [P&P], Library of Congress. Available online at https://www.loc.gov/item/2014637077/.

Figure 9. Group portrait, cast of YMHA minstrel production, n.d., black and white photograph, 25 cm x 20.5 cm. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, 4-1C, item 018177, location 2-6E CTN.002.

Figure 10. Playin' No Favorites, 1939, black and white photograph, 24.5 cm x 19 cm. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, 4-1C, item 018170, location 2-6E CTN.002. Includes handwritten inscription on matting, "With grateful appreciation for an excellent production, YMHA Minstrel Show 1939" and inscription on matting on verso, "Sincerest appreciation for a good make-up, The Great Heuslo."

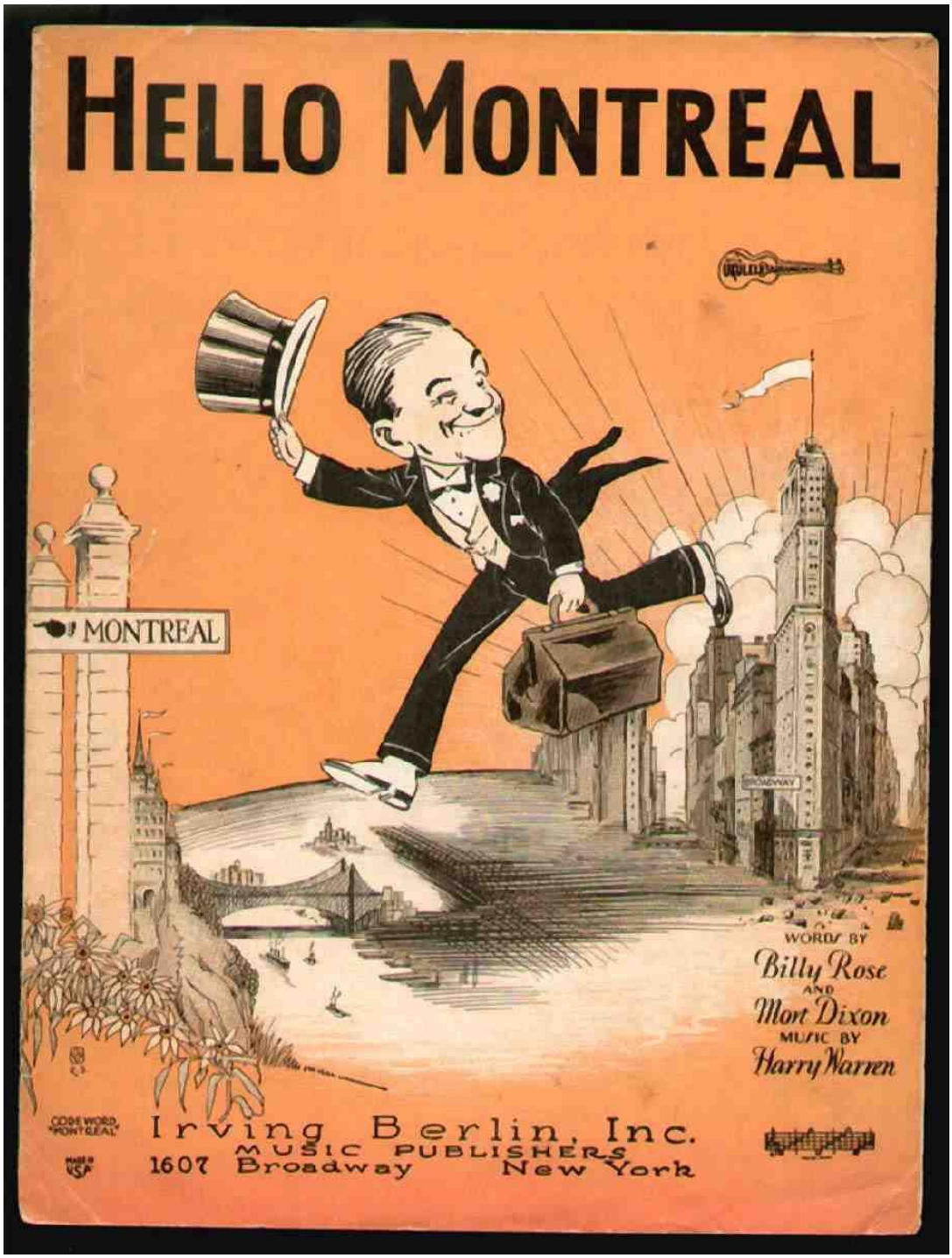


Figure 11. Irving Berlin inc., "Hello Montreal," *Art Deco Montreal*. 1928. Retrieved from http://artdecomontreal.com/congress/music/

Figure 12. Spillin' the Beens, 1940, black and white photograph, 24.5 cm x 17 cm. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, item 018172, location 2-6E CTN.002.

Figure 13. Stars in Stripes, 1932, black and white photograph, 25 cm x 20.5 cm. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, 4-1C, item 018179, location 2-6E CTN.002.

Figure 14. Hade Hey, 1933, black and white photograph, 25.5 cm x 20.5 cm. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, 4-1C, item 018167, location 2-6E CTN.002.

Figure 15. Razin A Racket, 1934, black and white photograph, 25.5 cm x 20.5 cm. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, 4-1C, item 018168, location 2-6E CTN.002.

Figure 16. Valentine & Sons' Publishing Co. "His Majesty's Theatre, Guy Street, Montreal." 1908, postcard. CP 5771, Bibliothèque des Archives Nationales du Québec, Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie, Montréal, Canada. https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/5216

Item 018167

Group portrait, "Hade" Hey, 8th Annual YMHA Minstrel Show [graphic material] . -- 1933.

YMHA of Montreal

1 photograph : b&w ; 25.5cm x 20.5cm

The minstrel show, or minstrelsy, was an American form of racist entertainment developed in the early 19th century. Each show consisted of comic skits, variety acts, dancing, and music performances that depicted people specifically of African descent. The shows were performed by mostly white people in make-up or blackface for the purpose of playing the role of black people" and lampooning them. Read more at Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minstrel_show
; "Contrary to popular belief, blackface minstrelsy was a popular form of entertainment in Canada, much as it was in the United States." Read more at McGill's Arts Against PostRacialism site: https://www.mcgill.ca/aapr/blackface-canada

In accordance with the Jewish Public Library Archives' internal policy, minstrel images will not be posted online but are available upon request.

Young Men's-Young Women's Hebrew Association Fonds

Location: 2-6E Ctn.002

Figure 17. "Item 018167," screen grab taken from JPLA finding aid for the Irving Silverman fonds (1288), published October 25th, 2023.

Figure 18. Hotel Chez Piro, 1946, black and white photograph, 25.5 cm x 20.5 cm. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, 4-1C, item 018174, location 2-6E Ctn.002.

Figure 19. Samuel D. Ehrhart, "Darkness and Dawn," Puck 65, no. 1671 (March 10, 1909), 6. Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, N.H. Published in *No Laughing Matter: Visual Humor in Ideas of Race, Nationality, and Ethnicity*. Edited by Angela Rosenthal et al. Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2016, 220.

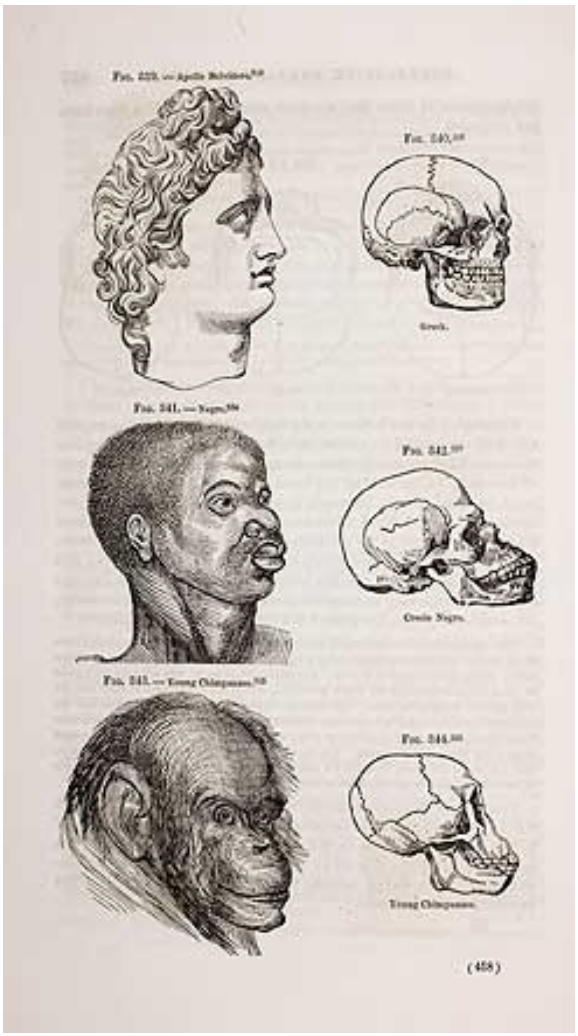


Figure 20. “Illustrations of Comparative Types of Races,” published in Josiah C. Nott and George Robert Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1854, 458. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. https://commonplace.online/article/types-of-mankind/

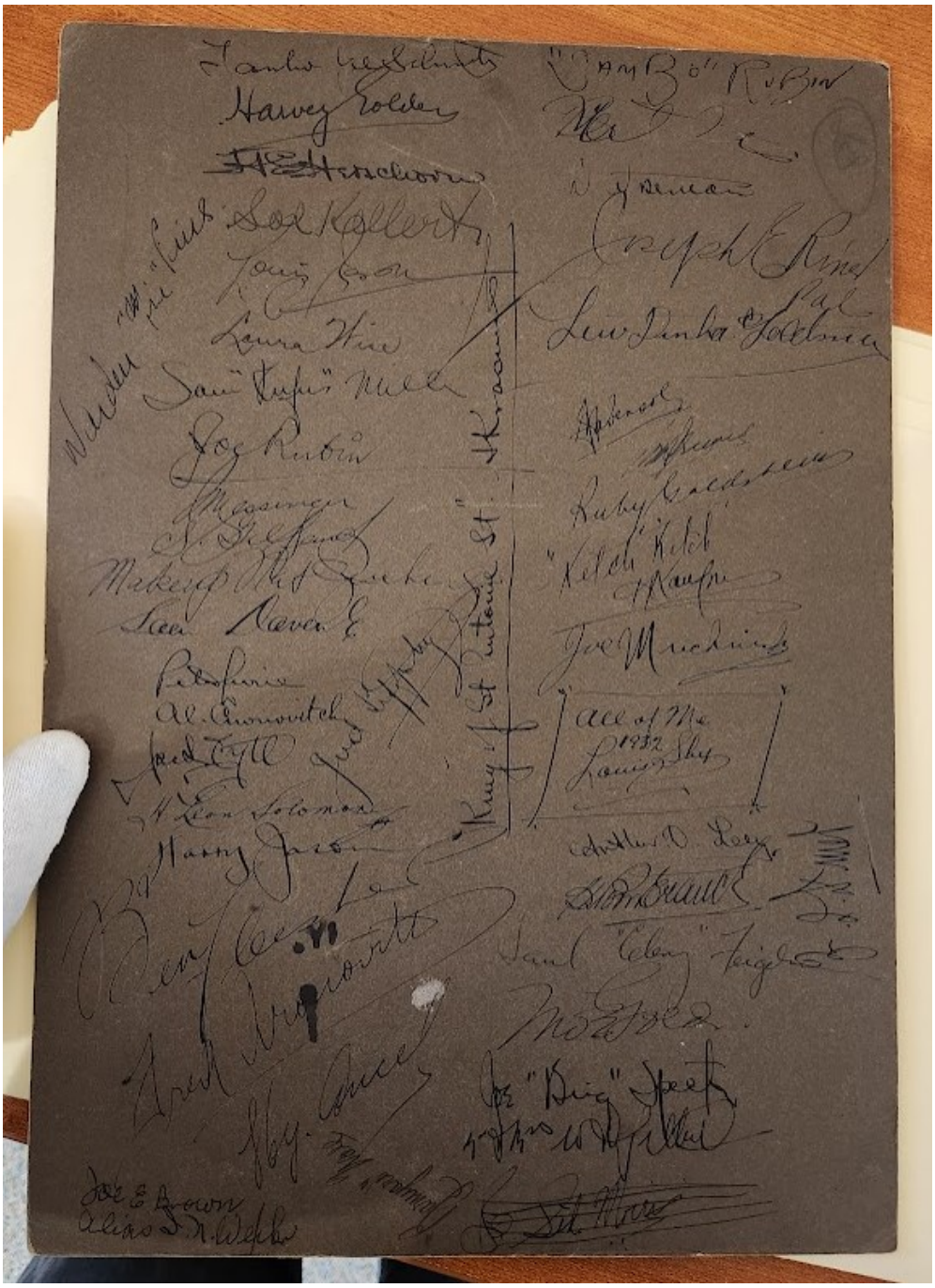


Figure 21. Stars in Stripes, back of the cast photograph, 1932, black and white photograph, 25 cm x 20.5 cm. Jewish Public Library Archives, Irving Silverman collection, fonds 1288, 4-1C, item 018179, location 2-6E Ctn.002.