But the Nigger Dance is a reality. The "Virginny Breakdown," or the "Alabama Kick-up," the "Tennessee Double-shuffle," or the "Louisiana Toe-and-Heel," we know to exist. If they did not, how could Juba enter into their wonderful complications so naturally? How could he tie his legs into such knots, and fling them about so recklessly, or make his feet twinkle until you lose sight of them altogether in his energy. The great Boz immortalised him; and he deserved the glory thus conferred. If our readers doubt this, let them go the very next Monday or other evening that arrives, and see him at Vauxhall Gardens.

But Juba is a musician, as well as a dancer. To him the intricate management of the nigger tambourine is confined, and from it he produces marvellous harmonies. We almost question whether, upon a great emergency, he could not play a fugue upon it.

Certainly the present company of Ethiopians, at the Gardens, are the best we have seen. They have with them Pell, the original "Bones" of Mr. Mitchell's theatre; and he is better than ever.

At least one other widely known black figure of the period should be mentioned in this discussion of early minstrelsy, and that is the actor Ira Aldridge. While it was as an actor that Aldridge won his secure reputation, he was not averse to singing negro songs on occasion. There is evidence that he sang on the stage of the African Grove Theater in New York during the 1820s as well as acted; in Europe he also sang songs between or after the plays of the evening, and the critics discussed his singing in the same glowing terms that they used for his acting.

The final document offered here is an essay by J. Kennard, a citizen of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and a regular contributor to the Knickerbocker Magazine (New York). His witty comments reveal much about the relationship between blacks and whites in the development of Ethiopian Minstrelsy and give proper credit to the original sources of minstrel materials—the songs and dances of the slaves.

Who Are Our National Poets?*

By Our "Salt-Fish Dinner" Correspondent [James K. Kennard, Jr.]

Who says we have no American Poetry? No American Songs? The charge is often made against us, but (as will be hereinafter proved) without the slightest foundation of truth. Foreigners read BRYANT, and HALLECK, and

*Knickerbocker Magazine (1845), pp. 331-341.
received an education like that given in the nineteenth century to lads of genius who have rich fathers?

Applying this rule to America; in which class of our population must we look for our truly original and American poets? What class is most secluded from foreign influences, receives the narrowest education, travels the shortest distance from home, has the least amount of spare cash, and mixes least with any class above itself? Our negro slaves, to be sure! _That_ is the class in which we must expect to find our original poets, and there we do find them! From that class come the Jim Crows, the Zip Coons, and the Dandy Jims, who have electrified the world. From them proceed our only truly National Poets.

When Burns was _discovered_, he was immediately taken away from the plough, carried to Edinburgh, and feted and lionized to the “fulness of satiety.” James Crow and Scipio Coon never were discovered, personally; and if they had been, their owners would not have spared them from work. Alas! that poets should be ranked with horses, and provided with owners accordingly! In this, however, our negro poets are not peculiarly unfortunate. Are not some of their white brethren owned and kept by certain publishing houses, newspapers, and magazines? Are not the latter class, like the former, provided with just sufficient clothing and food to keep them in good working condition, and with no more? And do not the masters, in both cases, appropriate all the profits?

Messrs. Crow and Coon could not be spared from the hoe, but they might be introduced to the great world by proxy! And so thought Mr. Thomas Rice, a “buckra gemman” of great imitative powers, who accordingly learned their poetry, music and dancing, blacked his face, and made his fortune by giving to the world his counterfeit presentation of the American national opera; counterfeit, because none but the negroes themselves _could_ give it in its original perfection. And thus it came to pass, that while James Crow and Scipio Coon were quietly at work on their master’s plantations, all unconscious of their fame, the whole civilized world was resounding with their names. From the nobility and gentry, down to the youngest apprentice or school-boy in America, it was all:

Turn about and wheel about, and do just so,  
And every time I turn about I jump Jim Crow.

Even the fair sex did not escape the contagion: the tunes were set to music for the piano-forte, and nearly every young lady in the Union, and the United Kingdom, played and sang, if she did not _jump_, “Jim Crow.” “Zip Coon” became a fashionable song; “Lubly Rosa, Sambo come,” the favorite serenade, and “Dandy Jim of Caroline” the established quadrille-

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**Song:**

As I was gwine down Shinbone Alley,  
Long time ago;

appeared, in the following shape:

O’er the lake where dropped the willow,  
Long time ago!

What greater proofs of genius have ever been exhibited, than by these _our_ National Poets? They themselves were not permitted to appear in the theatres, and the houses of the fashionable, but their songs are in the mouths and ears of all; white men have blacked their faces to represent them, made their fortune by the speculation, and have been caressed and flattered on both sides of the Atlantic.

Humorous and burlesque songs are generally chosen for theatrical exhibition, and this fact may have led many to believe that the negroes composed no others. But they deal in the pathetic as well as the comical. Listen to the following, and imagine the hoe of Sambo digging into the ground with additional vigor at every emphasized syllable:

Massa an’ Misse promised me  
When they died they’d set me free;  
Massa an’ Misse dead an’ gone,  
Here’s old Sambo hil’-in’ corn!

Poor fellow! it seems a hard case. His “massa and misse” are freed from _their_ bonds, but Sambo still wears his. He might here very properly stop and water the corn with his tears. But no; Sambo is too much of a philosopher for _that_. Having uttered his plaint, he instantly consoles himself with the thought that he has many blessings yet to be thankful for. He thinks of his wife, and the good dinner which she is preparing for him, and from the depths of a grateful and joyous heart he calls out, at the top of his voice:

“Jenny get your hoe-cake done, my darling,  
Jenny get your hoe-cake done, my dear!”

and Jenny, in her distant log hut, which is embowered in Catalpa and Pride-of-India trees, gives the hommony another stir, looks at the hoe-cake, and giving the young ones a light cuff or two on the side of the head, to make them “hush,” answers her beloved Sambo in the same strain:

“De hoe-cake is almost done, my darling,  
De hoe-cake is almost done, my dear.”
Now if that field of corn belonged to Sambo, and the hut and its
inmates were his own, and he belonged to himself, that would be a
delightful specimen of humble rural felicity. But perhaps his young
master may be so unfortunate as to lose the ten thousand dollars which he
has bet upon the race that is to take place to-morrow; and poor Sambo
and his family may be sold, separated, and sent just where their new
masters may please; possibly to labor on a sugar plantation—the hell of
the blacks.

The greater portion of our national poetry originates in Virginia, or
among involuntary Virginian emigrants. Slaves are worked very lightly in
that state, comparatively speaking. They are raised chiefly for exportation.
Every year thousands are sent to the far south and southwest for
sale. The Virginian type of negro character therefore has come to prevail
throughout the slave states, with the exception of some portions of
Louisiana and Florida. Thus every where you may hear much the same
songs and tunes, and see the same dances, with little variety, and no
radical difference. Taken together, they form a system perfectly unique.
Without any teaching, the negroes have contrived a rude kind of opera,
combining the poetry of motion, of music, and of language! “Jim Crow”
is an opera; all the negro songs were intended to be performed, as well as
sung and played. And, considering the world-wide renown to which they
have attained, who can doubt the genius of the composers? Was not the
top of Mount Washington, once upon a time, the stage on which “Jim
Crow” was performed, with New Hampshire and Maine for audience
and spectators? So saith one of the albums at the foot of the mountain.
And doth not William Howitt tell us that the summit of the Hartz
mountains was the scene of a similar exhibition?

These operas are full of negro life: there is hardly any thing which
might not be learned of negro character, from a complete collection of
these original works. A tour through the south, and a year or two of
plantation life, would not fail to reward the diligent collector; and his
future fame would be as certain as Homer’s. Let him put his own name,
as compiler, on the title-page, and (the real author’s being unknown) after
a lapse of a few centuries the contents of the book will be ascribed to him,
as “the great American Poet,” the object of adoration to the poetical
public of the fiftieth century! What was Homer but a diligent collector?
Some learned people say he was nothing more, at any rate. Thou who
pantest for glory, go and do likewise!

While writing this, your city papers advertise: “Concert this evening,
by the African Melodists.” African melodists! As well might the Hutchinson’s
call themselves English melodists, because their ancestors, some six
or eight generations back, came from England. Whether these performers
are blacks, or whites with blacked faces does not appear; but they are
doubtless meant to represent the native colored population of “Old
Varginny,” and as such should be judged. They are American melodists,
par excellence.

It is a true test of genius in a writer, that he should be able to put his
sayings into the mouths of all, so that they may become household
words, quoted by every one, and nine times in ten without knowledge of
the author of them. How often do we find in Shakspeare [sic], Sterne, and
other celebrated old writers, the very expressions we have been accus-
tomed to hear from childhood, without thought of their origin! They
meet us every where in the old standard works, like familiar faces. And
how often, when uttering one of these beautiful quotations, if questioned
as to its origin, we feel at loss whether to refer the querist to Milton,
Sterne, or the Bible! Proverbs are said to be “the wisdom of nations,” yet
who knows the author of a single proverb? How many of the millions
who weekly join their voices to that glorious tune Old Hundred, ever
heard the name of the composer? How transcendent, then, must be the
genius of the authors of our negro operas! Are not snatches of their songs
in everybody’s mouth, from John O’Groat’s to Land’s End, and from
Labrador to Mexico? Three hundred and fifty times a day (we took the
pains to count, once) we have been amused and instructed with “Zip
Coon,” “Jim Crow,” and the tale of a “Fat Raccoon, a-sittin on a rail.”
Let Webster tell of the tap of Britain’s drum, that encircles the world.
Compared with the time occupied by Great Britain in bringing this to
pass, “Jim Crow” has put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes.
At no time does the atmosphere of our planet cease to vibrate harmo-
niously to the immortal songs of the negroes of America. At this present
moment, a certain ubiquitous person seems to be in the way of the whole
people of these United States simultaneously (a mere pretender, doubt-
less, dressed up in some cast-off negro clothing), and any one may hear
him told, a hundred times a day, to “Get out ob de way, old Dan Tucker!”
But if he gets out of any body’s way, it is only that of “Dandy
Jim, of Caroline.” Oh, that he would obey the command altogether! but
depend upon it, he will do no such thing, so long as the young ladies
speak to him in such fascinating tones, and accompany their sweet voices
with the only less sweet music of the piano. Dan takes it as an invitation
to stay; and doubtless many a lover would like to receive a similar
rejection from his lady-love; a fashion, by the way, like that in which the
country lass reproved her lover for kissing her: “Be done, Nat!” said she,
“and (sotto voce) begin again!”

Who is the man of genius? He who utters clearly what is dimly
felt by all. He who most vividly represents the sentiment, intellect and
taste of the public to which he addresses himself. He to whom all hearts and heads respond. Take our “national poets,” for example, who being unknown individually, we may personify collectively as the American SAMBO. Is not Sambo a genius? All tastes are delighted, all intellects are astonished, all hearts respond to his utterances; at any rate, all piano-forces do, and a hundred thousand of the sweetest voices in Christendom.

What more convincing proof of genius was ever presented to the world? Is not Sambo the incarnation of the taste, intellect and heart of America, fortissimo do, and a hundred thousand of the sweetest voices in Christendom. astonished, all hearts respond to his utterances; at any rate, all piano-

SAMBO. Is not Sambo a genius? All tastes are delighted, all intellects are delighted with his humor, his pathos, his irresistible fun. Say truly, is not Sambo the realization of your poetic ideal?

But our national melodists have many imitators. Half of the songs published as theirs are, as far as the words are concerned, the productions of “mean whites”; but base counterfeits as they are, they pass current with most people as genuine negro songs. Thus is it ever with true excellence! It is always imitated, but no one counterfeits that which is acknowledged by all to be worthless. The Spanish dollar is recognized as good throughout the world, and it is more frequently counterfeited than any other coin. The hypocrite assumes the garb of virtue and religion; but he who ever thought of feigning vice and infidelity, unless upon the stage? Every imitator acknowledges the superior excellence of his model. The greater the number of imitators, the stronger is the evidence of that superiority; the warmer their reception by the public, the more firmly becomes established the genius of the original.

But the music and the dancing are all Sambo’s own. No one attempts to introduce anything new there. In truth they, with the chorus, constitute all that is essentially permanent in the negro song. The negroes themselves leave out old stanzas, and introduce new ones at pleasure. Travelling through the South, you may, in passing from Virginia to Louisiana, hear the same tune a hundred times, but seldom the same words accompanying it. This necessarily results from the fact that the songs are unwritten, and also from the habit of extemporizing, in which the performers indulge on festive occasions. Let us picture one of these scenes, which often occur on the estates of kind masters, seldom on those of the cruel. So true is this, that the frequent sound of the violin, banjo, or jaw-bone lute, is as sure an indication of the former, as its general absence is of the latter.

Like the wits of the white race, the negro singer is fond of appearing to extemporize, when in fact he has everything “cut and dried” beforehand.

Sambo has heard that his “massa” is going to be put up as candidate for congress; that his “missee” has that day bought a new gold watch and chain; that Miss Lucy favors one of her lovers above the rest; that “massa and missee” have given their consent; and in fact, that Violet, the chamber-maid, saw Miss Lucy looking lovingly on a miniature which she had that morning received in a disguised package. Sambo has learned all this, and he has been engaged the whole day, while hoeing corn, in putting these facts, and his thoughts thereon, into verse, to his favorite turn, “Zip Coon.” He never did such a day’s work in his life. He hoed so fast, that his fellow-laborers looked at him in astonishment, and said Sambo had “got de debbil in him; dumb debbil, too; no get a word out ob him all day.” Sambo finished his hoeing task by three o’clock, but not his rhyming. He could not sit still, so he went to work in his little garden-patch; and at just sun-down, having completed his verses to his satisfaction, and hummed them over till confident that he could sing them through without hesitation, he threw down his hoe, and shouted and capered for joy, like a madman.

Soon after tea, Violet enters the parlor: “Sambo sends compliments to Massa and Misse, and de young gemmen and ladies, and say he gwine to g’b musical entertainment to company dis evening in de kitchen and be happy to hab a full house.” Sambo is a favorite servant, and so, with an air of kindness and dignity, the master replies: “Give our compliments to Sambo, and say that we will attend with pleasure”; and soon the whole family go out to the kitchen, which at the South is always a building by itself. The master’s family occupy one end of the room, standing; the doors and windows are filled with black faces, grinning ivory, and rolling eyes. Sambo emerges from behind a rug, hung across the corner of the kitchen; and the orchestra, consisting of one fiddle, played by old Jupe, strikes up: “Clar de kitchen, old folks, young folks, old Varginy neber tire.” This is a feint, skilfully planned by Sambo, just as if he intended nothing more than to sing over the well-known words of one or two old songs. He goes through this performance, and through two or three more, with the usual applause: at last old Jupe strikes up “Zip Coon,” and Sambo sings two or three familiar stanzas of this well-known song; but suddenly, as if a new thought struck him, he makes an extraordinary flourish; looks at his master, and sings:

Oh, my ole massa gwine to Washington,
Oh, my ole massa gwine to Washington,
Oh, my ole massa gwine to Washington,
All’ niggers cry when massa gone.

I know what I wish massa do,
I know what I wish massa do,
I know what I wish massa do, 
Take me on to Washington to black him boot an' shoe.

Zip e dudun duden, duden duden da.

Misse got a gold chain round her neck, 
Misse got a gold chain round her neck, 
Misse got a gold chain round her neck: 
Da watch on toder end tick tick tick, 
Da watch on toder end tick tick tick, 
Jus de same as Sambo when he cut up stick: 
Zip e dudun duden, duden duden da.

Miss Lucy she hab a gold chain too, 
Miss Lucy she hab a gold chain too, 
Miss Lucy she hab a gold chain too; 
No watch on de toder end ob dat, I know, 
No watch on de toder end ob dat, I know, 
No watch on de toder end ob dat, I know, 
I reckon it's a picture ob her handsome beau: 
Zip e dudun duden, duden duden da.

Great tittering and grinning among the blacks; hearty laughter among the whites; blushes and a playfully-threatening shake of the finger at Sambo, from Miss Lucy. Sambo meanwhile “does” an extra quantity of jumping at an extra height. His elation at the sensation he has produced really inspires him, and he prolongs his saltations until he has concocted a genuine impromptu stanza:

Who dat nigger in e door I spy? 
Who dat nigger in e door I spy? 
Who dat nigger in e door I spy? 
Dat old Seip, by de white ob him eye: 
Zip e dudun duden, duden duden da.

By de white ob him eye an he tick out lip, 
By de white ob him eye an he tick out lip, 
By de white ob him eye an he tick out lip, 
Sambo know dat old black Seip: 
Zip e dudun duden, duen duden da.

Exit Sambo, behind the rug. Great applause; and white folks exequent. The evening winds up with a treat of whiskey, all round, furnished by “massa” on the occasion, and in due time all disperse to their several log huts, and retire to rest, after one of the most joyous evenings they ever passed in their lives. All sleep soundly but Sambo; he lies awake half the night, so excited is he by the honors he has acquired, so full of poetical thoughts, seeking to shape themselves into words. Slumber at last falls on him; but his wife declares, next morning, that Sambo talked all night in his sleep like a crazy man. Thousands at the South would recognize the foregoing as a faithful sketch of a not infrequent scene:

The man who has no music in his soul, 
Nor is not moved by concord of sweet sounds, 
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils; 
Let no such man be trusted.

Shakspeare [sic] never uttered a more undeniable truth; and if he were living at the present day, and needed evidence to back his opinions, a short experience as a cotton planter would furnish him with the requisite proof. This thing is well understood at the South. A laughing, singing, fiddling, dancing negro is almost invariably a faithful servant. Possibly he may be lazy and idle, but “treasons, stratagems and spoils” form not the subject of his meditations. He is a thoughtless, merry fellow, who sings “to drive dull care away”; sings at his work, sings at his play, and generally accomplishes more at his labor than the sulky negro who says nothing, but looks volumes. These last words have struck “the electric chain” of memory, and forthwith starts up a picture of by-gone days. “The time is long past, and the scene is afar,” yet the mental daguerreotype is as fresh as if taken yesterday.

One day during the early part of the Indian war in Florida, we stepped into a friend’s boat at Jacksonville, and with a dozen stout negro rowers, pushed off, bound up the St. Johns with a load of muskets, to be distributed among the distressed inhabitants, who were every where flying from the frontier before the victorious Seminoles. As we shot ahead, over the lake-like expanse of the noble river, the negroes struck up a song to which they kept time with their oars; and our speed increased as they went on, and become warmed with their singing. The words were rude enough, the music better, and both were well-adapted to the scene. A line was sung by a leader, then all joined in a short chorus; then came another solo line, and another short chorus, followed by a longer chorus, during the singing of which the boat foamed through the water with redoubled velocity. There seemed to be a certain number of lines ready-manufactured, but after this stock was exhausted, lines relating to surrounding objects were extemporized. Some of these were full of rude wit, and a lucky hit always drew a thundering chorus from the rowers, and an encouraging laugh from the occupants of the stern-seats. Sometimes several minutes elapsed in silence; then one of the negroes burst out with a line or two which he had been excogitating. Little regard was paid to rhyme, and hardly any to the number of syllables in a line: they condensed four or five into one foot, or stretched out one to occupy the space that should have been filled with four or five; yet they never spoiled the

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tune. This elasticity of form is peculiar to the negro song. But among these negroes there was one who rowed in silence, and no smile lighted up his countenance at the mirthful sallies of his sable companions. When the others seemed merriest, he was unmoved, or only showed, by a transient expression of contempt, the bitterness which dwelt in his heart. In physiognomy he differed entirely from his companions. His nose was straight, and finely cut, his lips thin, and the general cast of his countenance strikingly handsome. He was very dark, and in a tableau vivant might have figured with credit as a bronze statue of a Grecian hero. He seemed misplaced, and looked as if he felt so. The countenance of that man, as he carelessly plied his oar, in silent contempt of the merry, thoughtless set around him, made an impression on my mind which will never be effaced. He spoke not, but "looked unutterable things." He had no "music in his soul"; he was not "moved by concord of sweet sounds"; but his thoughts were on "treasons, stratagems and spoils"; he was thinking of the muskets and ammunition which the boat contained, and of the excellent use that might be made of them, in the way of helping the Indians instead of repelling them. "Let no such man be trusted!" would have been a proper precaution in this case. A few weeks after this he ran away and joined the Seminoles, and was suspected to have acted as a guide to the party that subsequently laid waste his master’s plantation.

Comparatively speaking, however, there are few negroes at the South who have "no music" in their souls. The love of music and song is characteristic of the race. They have songs on all subjects; witty, humorous, boisterous and sad. Most frequently, however, specimens of all these classes are mingled together in the same song, in grotesque confusion. Variety is the spice of the negro melodies. Take the following as a fair specimen of negro humor and pathos:

Come all you jolly niggers, to you de truf I tell-ah;
Never lib wid white folks, dey never use you well-ahh:
Cold frosty mornin’, nigger bery good-ah;
Wid he axe on he shoulder, he go to cut de wood-ah;
Dingee I otten dotten, balli’ otten dotten;
Dingee I otten, who dar?

Come home to breakfast, get somethin’ to eat-ah;
And dey set down before him a little nasty meat-ah;
Den at noon poor nigger, he come home to dine-ah;
And dey take him in de corn-field, and gib him thirty-nine-ah!
Dingee I otten dotten, balli’ otten dotten;
Dingee I otten, who dar?

Den de night come on, and he come home to supper-ah,
And dey knock down, and break down, and jump ober Juber-ah!
Den a little cold pancake, and a little hog-fat-ah,

The intelligent reader, conversant with Howitt’s “Student Life in Germany,” cannot have failed to note the close similarity of style between the foregoing and some of the student-songs, translations of which are therein given. The question arises, Who was the imitator? Surely not the negro: he knows not that there is in existence such a being as a German student. But the students know the whole history of the negroes, and doubtless are acquainted with their world-renowned songs. The inference is irresistible: the student is the imitator of the negro, just in the same way that he is the imitator of Homer, and Anacreon, and Sappho. The student is a man of discernment, able to recognize true genius, and not ashamed to emulate it, however lowly the circumstances in which it may be found. He remembers that Homer was a blind, wandering beggar, and knowing that simplicity and adversity are favorable to the growth of true poetry, he is not surprised to find it flourishing in perfection among the American negroes. Or, say that the student is not an imitator of the negro: then we have a case which goes to establish still more firmly the well-known truth that, human nature being the same everywhere, men of genius, living thousands of miles apart, and holding no communication with each other, often arrive at the same results.

Proofs of the genius of our American poets crowd upon us in tumultuous array from all quarters. A few of them only are before the reader, but enough, it is hoped, to establish their claim beyond a doubt. Now let justice be done! Render to Caesar, and Poissy, and Scipio, and Sambo, the just honor which has been so long unjustly withheld; and render to America the meed of praise which has been so pertinaciously denied to her. Sambo claims honor for the fact that he is a true poet: America asks praise for bringing him up, with infinite pains, in the only way in which a true poet should go; which fact was demonstrated in the beginning of this article. Acknowledge, then, ye British critics! your sins of mission and commission; eat your own slanderous words, and proclaim the now undeniable truth, or else be branded as false prophets, and “for ever after hold your peace!”

A wise man has said, “Let me have the making of the songs of a
people, and I care not who makes their laws." The popular song maker sways the souls of men; the legislator rules only their bodies. The songmaker reigns through love and spiritual affinity; the legislator by brute force. Apply this principle to the American people. Who are our true rulers? The negro poets, to be sure! Do they not set the fashion, and give laws to the public taste? Let one of them, in the swamps of Carolina, compose a new song, and it no sooner reaches the ear of a white amateur, than it is written down, amended, (that is, almost spoilt), printed, and then put upon a course of rapid dissemination, to cease only with the utmost bounds of Anglo-Saxon-dom, perhaps of the world. Meanwhile, the poor author digs away with his hoe, utterly ignorant of his greatness! "Blessed are they who do good, and are forgotten!" says dear Miss Bremer. Then blessed indeed are our national melodists! "True greatness is always modest," says some one else. How great then are our retiring Samboes! How shrinkingly they remain secluded, and allow sooty-faced white men to gather all the honors and emoluments! The works of great men are always imitated. Even those miserable counterfeits, "Lucy Long," and "Old Dan Tucker," have secured a large share of favor, on the supposition that they were genuine negro songs. With the music, no great fault can be found; that may be pure negro, though some people declare it to be Italian. Be that as it may; the words are far beneath the genius of our American poets; this any student, well-versed in negro lore, can perceive at a glance.

BRYANT, LONGFELLOW, HALLECK, WHITTIER, do you ardently desire fame? Give heed to foreign reviewers; doubt no longer that nationality is the highest merit that poetry can possess; uneducate yourselves; consult the taste of your fair countrywomen; write no more English poems; write negro songs, and Yankee songs in negro style; take lessons in dancing of the celebrated Thomas Rice; appear upon the stage and perform your own operas; do this, and not only will fortune and fame be yours, but you will thus vindicate yourselves and your country from the foul imputation under which both now rest! With your names on the list with Crow and Coon, who then will dare to say that America has no National Poets?

Notes

1. The definitive source of information about early blackface minstrelsy is Hans Nathan, Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962). Its bibliography lists many of the important primary sources as well as significant secondary sources that were consulted for this study.