

DIRTY PICTURES

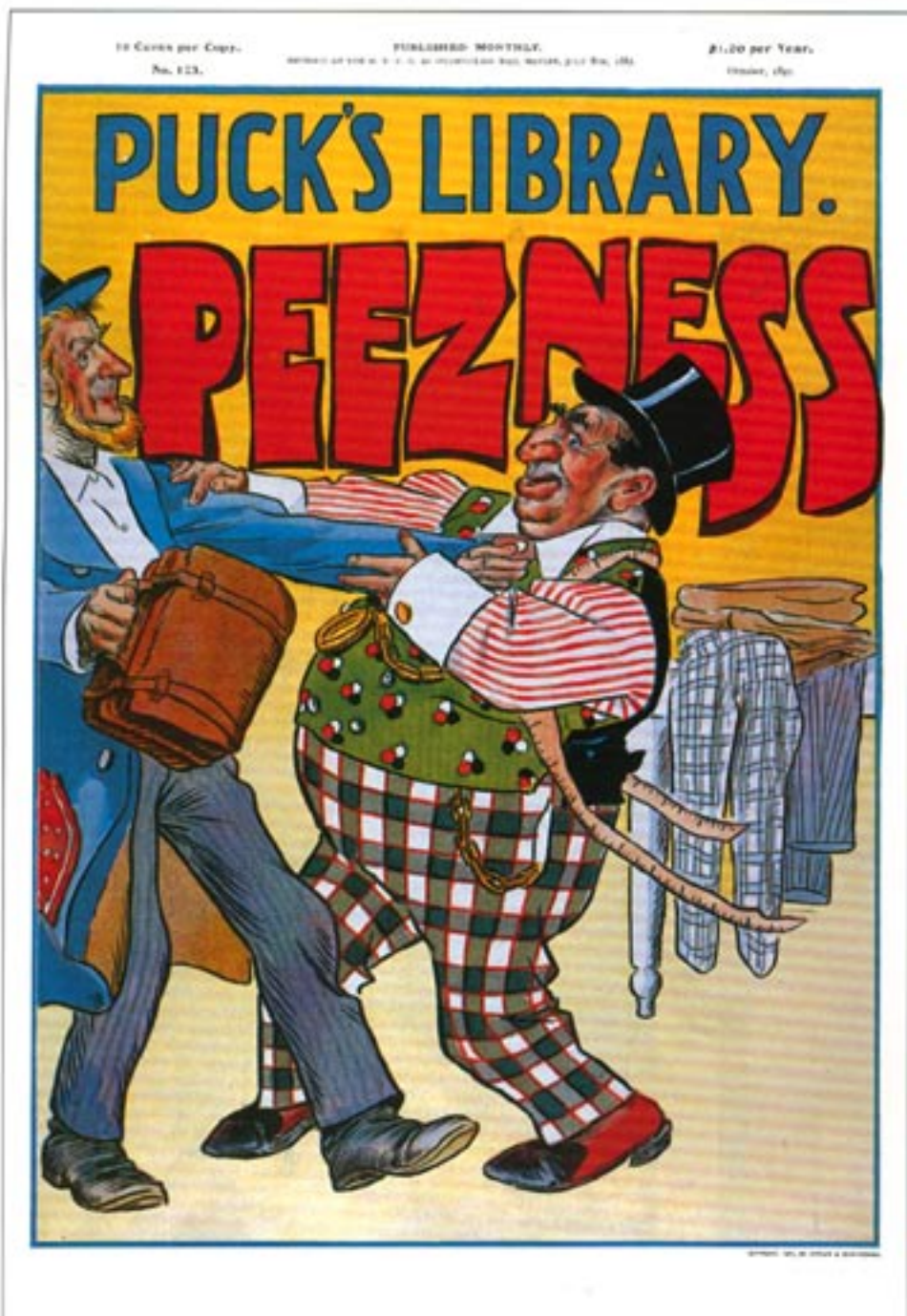
By Steven Heller and William Eric Perkins

The lampooning of racial and ethnic groups has a long history in American visual art. African and Jewish Americans share the bitter legacy of being the most stereotyped people in the melting pot.

A graphic design magazine might seem an odd place to discuss the struggles of minorities and the conflicts between ethnic and racial groups in America, but it's not really so incongruous. Much of this nation's racist past is chronicled in graphic images created by cartoonists and illustrators, published in commercial magazines and newspapers, and seen in advertisements, posters, and packages. In fact, there is a rich, albeit troubling, legacy of racial and ethnic stereotypes pervasive in applied American art from before the Civil War to the 1950s. These embarrassing artifacts are evidence of a difficult phase in America's adolescence, perhaps best forgotten. So why reprise them at the risk of offending readers who might be hurt or insulted?

We are showing them because this collection of negative stereotypes forces us to confront racial antagonisms that still roil contemporary society and to face up to the cause of enmity between certain ethnic and racial groups. In this article, we will focus on images that demean two peoples, African Americans and Jewish Americans, who, though they have a shared history of exclusion, have nevertheless become alienated from each other despite their common bonds. While the histories of these two groups in America differ profoundly, as minorities they have both suffered from discrimination promoted, in part, through graphic art, which, even in its most benign forms, exaggerated their physical and cultural differences for purposes of exclusion, and thus fostered misconceptions, some of which persist today. This article will survey the printed communications that supported prejudices against the two most stereotyped peoples in the melting pot.

Some sociologists argue that printed ethnic and racial stereotypes were ritualistic means by which newcomers could be introduced to and assimilated by the dominant group, in this case white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Indeed, virtually all immigrant groups were subject to cartoon ridicule in the popular press (with the exception of Scandinavians, who settled in the Midwest and about whom no cartoons have been uncovered in any meaningful quantity). The images of a few groups, most notably African and Native Americans, were shanghaied into the service of advertising as silly, often demeaning, mascots and trade characters. (Absurd caricatures of Na-



tive Americans are still used as logos for baseball and football teams.) Comic weeklies such as Puck, Judge, Life, Chic, and Wasp; daily newspapers with comics sections (notably those owned by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer); and "general" pictorial weeklies and monthlies like Harper's Illustrated Weekly, Frank Leslie's Weekly Illustrated, and Ballou's Pictorial published a regular diet of "humorous" stereotypes. It was from these periodicals that Americans learned about the waves of foreign immigration. They were tutored in how to distinguish a Cohen from an O'Malley, or a Gonzales from a Castiglioni.

Editors of the illustrated weeklies tried to present a comparatively "realistic" portrait of America's minorities in artwork that professed to be "journalistic" rather than simply "entertaining," but the comic weeklies made no such claim. Historian James Dorman writes in his essay "Ethnic Stereotyping in American Popular Culture" that the comic journals were designed to "appeal to a large middle-class audience; priced to sell at ten cents an issue, these serial publications envision[ed] their purpose as, in the words of Judge's Library . . . 'A paper for the family and fireside. Satirical without being malicious, and humorous without being vulgar.'" Despite this claim of good, clean fun, the publishers and the artists who worked for the comic weeklies were responsible for creating and perpetuating cruel stereotypes that reinforced unflattering myths. Even the most sympathetic depictions were tainted by cartoon conventions born out of ignorance and fear of different cultures. To be fair, early American humor in general was based on slapstick exploitations of character distinctions, whether ethnic, racial, or class. Though most of the perpetrators of this humor were white Anglo-Saxons, some of the artists were themselves ethnics, although none were African Americans. Jewish caricatures were sometimes drawn by Jewish immigrant artists who saw their own experiences as valid material for what is now called Jewish humor. Some of the cruelest Jewish stereotypes published in America appeared in Jewish publications like *Der Yiddisher Puck*, a New York satire magazine edited by socialist Eastern European immigrants who aimed their barbs at upper-crust German Jews who they felt had become fat off the back-breaking labors of workers both



1. In the Puck's Library issue titled "Peezness 1887," a Jewish clothing retailer takes advantage of a provincial rube.
2. Rea Irvin's 1938 New Yorker cover takes a swipe at the haughty military officer, while reinforcing the image of the servile black.
3. This trade card for Sanford's Ginger Tonic, c. 1885, uses the watermelon for graphic effect, but in this context the symbol seems arbitrary.





4-6. Exaggerated Jewish caricatures were sometimes accepted by Jews themselves. A range of examples includes a collection of Hebrew jokes, c. 1900 (Fig. 4); sheet music for "I'm a Yiddish Cowboy," c. 1908 (Fig. 5); and the cartoon figure of a "Jewess" which appeared on a novelty greeting card, c. 1900 (Fig. 6).

Jew and Gentile. Regardless of their origin, cartoonists also took frequent comic jabs at provincial rubes and the urban rich, among other targets, which also resulted in demeaning stereotypes and furthered class distinctions.

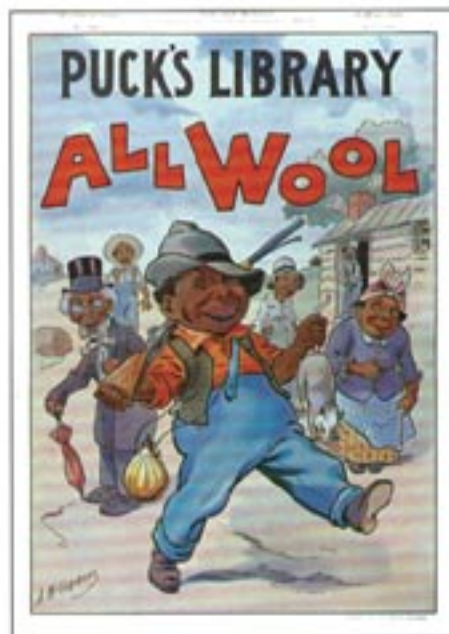
Although, collectively, Americans are now more sensitive to disparaging images of race, religion, and ethnicity, the U.S. is obviously not yet free of the racism that marked its nascent period—a racism so ingrained and matter-of-factly accepted for so many decades that harmful stereotypes routinely appeared even in the largest-circulation magazines and on the most popular commercial products. The 19th- and early-20th-century creators of these images did not necessarily realize that their pictures were harmful or would have long-term negative effects. In fact, one writer for the *Poster*, an advertising trade magazine from the early 1900s, reported that Negro trade characters, like the Armour Meat and Cream of Wheat men, were so friendly looking that they made Negroes more acceptable to white American housewives. Though this is probably true, the product mascots were based on subservient types perceived as second-class citizens. Moreover, such relatively benign caricatures were actually exceptions to the rule. Most black, like virtually all Jewish, stereotypes—even when presented as comic entertainments on trade (or advertising) cards, sheet music, cartoons, and illustrations—were degrading, if not malicious.

Stereotypes are harmful because they subvert and distort reality. Artists who used them in graphic representations of African and Jewish Americans imposed categories that "divide[d] the world into intelligible units," according to sociologists Walter Stephan and David Rosenfield in "Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes." By twisting and exaggerating physical and cultural characteristics of these two groups (skin color, facial features, body shape, nonverbal behavior and language), they codified images that have emerged as the defining traits of African and Jewish Americans. The graphic arts were an important cultural mechanism in promulgating these images to the mass of Americans, providing, as sociologist T.E. Perkins points out in his article "Rethinking Stereotypes," an "evaluative description" as opposed to a "factual description," of a particular social group or set of groups. Thus, stereotyping functions as

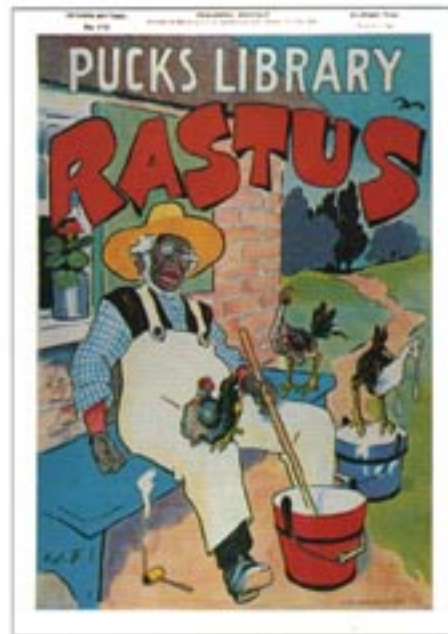
a means of social categorization.

Eduard Fuchs's *Die Juden in der Karikatur* (1921) traces anti-Jewish depictions back to the 12th century in woodcuts showing Jews in their typical dress engaged in savage rituals or in unflattering situations derived from the New Testament. The psychoanalyst Sandor Gilman has noted that the Jew in late-19th-century Europe was projected as black. And the English racial theorist Houston Stewart Chamberlain, an influential pre-Hitler proponent of Aryanization, proclaimed that Jews were an impure race, a result "of the crossing of absolutely different types." The myth of the "Black Jew" served to undermine the Jewish quest for political and social equality in Central and Eastern Europe. This particular feature of the Jewish image was transferred to and adapted in America. The visual icon that emerged was startling. Jews were represented as a "mongrel race"—swarthy, hook-nosed, and poor of posture, characteristics which suggested that they were some sort of inferior hybrid. Coupled with this image of the physically deficient Jew was the "Shylock" image, born in the Middle Ages, and still an essential ingredient of Jewishness in verbal and visual representations. Excluded from the mainstream in Europe, and to a lesser degree in America, Jews were portrayed as merchants of greed, hucksters, purveyors of shoddy merchandise, rapacious bankers, and unforgiving moneylenders. When these two ideological ingredients (mongrel and Shylock) are blended visually, the image that emerges is one that still exercises an immense influence on the popular conception of Jewish ethnicity.

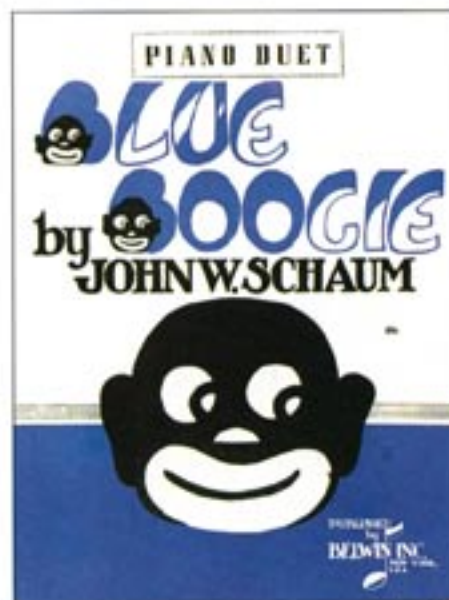
In 1887, Puck devoted an issue of its Comic Library to cartoons of immigrant Jews. Titled "Peezness" (a transliteration of business), it featured a grasping tradesman on the cover in an unflattering pose. Although these cartoons were shown in a humorous context as opposed to a politically propagandistic one, they were nevertheless accepted as paradigmatic generalizations. In an 1880s issue of the original *Life*, a humor magazine published in New York, a cartoon criticizing anti-Semitism used a pawnbroker image to discourage prevailing misconceptions. Despite the constructive intent of this caricature, the result was to reinforce the negative image because no positive one was offered in its place. Indeed, there was no way to present a



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7-11. Caricatures of African Americans exaggerated physical characteristics to the point of absurdity. The cartoon "All Wool," published by Puck's Library, 1903, refers to kinky hair as displayed by a range of stereotypes, including the Kingfish, Sapphire, and Rastus (Fig. 7). "Rastus," a cartoon in Puck's Library, 1896, illustrates the stereotype of the lazy Negro who fritters the day away (Fig. 8). "Blue Boogie" from 1940 and "Choo Choo Boogie" from 1942 are late examples of the stylized minstrel face—with bulging eyes and white lips—used to promote boogie-woogie songs (Figs. 9,10). The button for Trixy molasses, c. 1935, features a pickaninny mascot (Fig. 11).



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positive image of the Jew other than to reject the stereotypes, which left the cartoonist entirely without means of depicting distinctions.

One of the most frequently recurring stereotypical themes in the comic weeklies was intermarriage. The comic depiction of this theme contained a hidden message: Intermarriage with Jews diluted "racial purity." This fear was exploited by racial theorists who warned of the dangers of interbreeding, thus forming the biological basis of European and American anti-Semitism. Jews, as the "mongrel race," had to be purged from the body politic.

As bad as the Jewish stereotypes were, the portrayals of blacks by whites were even worse. Furthermore, they were perpetuated over a longer period, through an even wider range of media. In addition to the comic magazines, Currier & Ives and other commercial print publishers created comic ghettos known as Darktown and Coontown which were inhabited by a ragtag assortment of buffoonish black characters often engaged in minor criminal activity. The basic African American icons were Uncle Tom, Rastus, Buck, Sambo, Mammy, Sapphire, and the Pickaninny. The most familiar cartoon prototype was the lazy, ignorant, watermelon-loving, chicken-stealing aborigine. Slightly up the social scale was the dandified urban "Kingfish" type who had pretensions to a white lifestyle, wore white clothing in a manner that made him look not unlike his evolutionary "relative," the circus chimp, and made malapropistic misuse of the English language. Some of the more malign caricatures had black men carrying razor blades for purposes other than shaving. To further ridicule black men, spouses were portrayed either as feisty mammys who held the family together while their good-for-nothing husbands drank, gambled, or stole, or as henpecking "Sapphires" who unrelentingly emasculated their pitiful excuses for husbands. And even the children were objectified as grotesque little pickaninnies, dressed in tattered rags with unruly wool hair. These "coon" images invariably contained two indelible props that shaped the perception of the African American character—the above-mentioned chicken and the watermelon. Particularly the latter:

*I've an American, same as you
And my favorite flag is red, white and
blue;*

But when I'm hungry tis plain to be seen

My favorite is red, white and green.*

From these cartoons, one would assume that blacks were America's Untouchables. Nevertheless, their images did sell food, sundries, and cleaning products to whites. Caricatures of pickaninies and "native" Africans were adopted as logos for products like Kellogg's Korn Kinks, Gold Dust cleanser, and Impy Coca chocolate powder. Clearly, these images had some semiotic value to marketers. In an expanding consumer market, during the late 19th century, advertisers exploited ethnicity in their ads and packaging by utilizing icons and archetypes that suggested powerlessness and a nonthreatening presence. The African Americans' visual representation revealed to consumers the power that these new products contained as well as the lack of some of the images that sold them. Pears Soap, for example, would clean the black off a black child; Inky Eraser would eradicate black blotches from paper; and the Gold Dust Twins implied that the users of this product would have two little slaves do their cleaning for them. Certain foods that somehow were indigenous to the antebellum South had labels featuring old field hands or house servants. Foods that had maintained a regional identity before mass advertising became nationalized through the intervention of visual advertising. Thus the Cream of Wheat man and Aunt Jemima of pancake mix fame became familiar presences in every American household.

Although Puck and Judge did take editorial stands against what we would today call civil rights abuses, in drawings that criticized racist lynchings and that supported Negro voting rights in the South, the same old negative caricatures were used to portray "sympathetic" blacks. No matter how positive the intent, the white man's cartoon image of African Americans was one that expressed contempt. This was apparent even in political cartoons which had nothing directly to do with blacks but which appropriated their stereotypes as symbols of more generalized human foibles and weaknesses. In one newspaper cartoon from the 1890s, President William McKinley's cabinet is matter-of-factly portrayed as a black minstrel show, its members a mass of fat white lips, bulging eyes, and greased wool hair, indicating

*From a postcard reproduced in *Samba: Rise and Demise of an American Fester*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.



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12. A "friendly" cartoon in a c. 1888 issue of Puck shows a Jewish Uncle Sam as Moses leading his people out of adversity.

13. In an 1896 issue of Judge, Mr. Isaacs is portrayed as a purveyor of shoddy goods.

14. In this c. 1882 chromo trade card, a Jewish clothier tries to sell inferior products.

15, 16. Fruit products exploit images of the friendly mammy and field hand, 1935.

17. Prefiguring Amos 'n' Andy, these Kingfish types in a 1899 Judge cartoon delight in puns and malapropisms.

18. A pickaninny eating a watermelon is the primary logo in a cookbook, c. 1935.



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19. An excessive nose and an excessive bank account are two negative Jewish stereotypes that are illustrated in this 1891 cartoon by Eugene Zimmerman.
20. Novelty card, c. 1895.
21. "The Sheeny Coon," a c. 1900 song sheet, reinforces the stereotype of the "black Jew." ("Sheeny" was a derogatory term for Jew.)
22. In an editorial cartoon titled "Song of Solomon," c. 1892, the baby's rattle is drawn in the symbol (three balls) of the pawnbroker.
23. In the New York "comic" weekly Snaps, blacks are victimized by white practical jokers. 1900.
24. The black dandy, 1907.
25. Song sheet for "The Colored Ragamuffins," c. 1907.

that they were just a bunch of ignoramuses. In another cartoon a few years later, President Theodore Roosevelt is shown in blackface eating a watermelon, the implication being that he was lazy and shiftless. While such overtly negative images had disappeared by the end of World War II, more enduring were the depictions of happy, friendly servants which remained well into the 1950s. Because they weren't as absurd as those in the comics, these depictions were more insidious, for they promoted an image of African Americans as a perpetual and willing servant class.

While exposing the worst side of the American character, the images shown here also allow us to see that profound changes have taken place in American society. After all, with very few exceptions, what you see on these pages is no longer acceptable in the mass marketplace. The slow process of assimilation and upward mobility has eliminated the need for the venal and biting 19th-century stereotype. Indeed, despite the best efforts of the dominant class to prevent outsiders from entering the mainstream, African and Jewish Americans have, to a greater or lesser degree, overcome a good many social handicaps.

But if the old stereotypes have vanished, it hasn't been because America has become more tolerant of difference, but because various individuals and institutions over the years have, on their own, succeeded in putting an end to them. Jewish stereotypes in popular art virtually disappeared during the first decade of the 20th century because many of the cartoonists lived in New York City, which had a large Jewish population, and they simply refused to do them. Similarly, Jewish stereotypes ceased to exist in movies after 1930 when the major Hollywood producers, many of whom were "assimilated" Jews, decided that the "Abie" or "Moishe" characters were no longer the image of themselves they wanted to project. In fact, for a long time they eliminated Jews entirely from films, fearing that negative stereotypes would emerge.

African Americans, however, have not been so lucky. Since they were excluded from white society, they had few champions to fight against negative stereotyping by whites. By the 1930s, when other ethnic stereotyping had ceased, at least in the print media, exaggerated caricatures of black pullman porters, bellhops,

and mammies were still appearing in great numbers on covers of national magazines and on packaging for a variety of foods and sundries. In the 1940s, the NAACP began a consciousness-raising campaign with regard to negative representations, but the struggle to eliminate them hasn't been easy. Up until a few years ago, for example, the Sambo restaurant chain stubbornly clung to its racist-inspired identity; finally, pressure groups forced a change. And despite the pressure exerted by the NAACP and other African American organizations to expunge all negative imagery, the Cream of Wheat chef remains smilingly intact. Aunt Jemima, the last vestige of the plantation mammy, has been altered four times over the last century, each time in keeping with shifting racial attitudes. (A Jewish stereotype with similar historical references would likely not have been allowed to exist in any form. Jewish organizations such as B'nai Brith are quick to expose anything remotely denigrating.)

In recent years, many African American organizations have determinedly fought the degrading images of the past (a recent example being the campaign waged by the civil rights establishment and the Congressional Black Caucus against the negative images of blacks in Japanese consumer culture) as a prelude to developing a new iconography, one which exorcises the grotesque caricatures that have been instrumental in shaping the perception of African Americans.

Given that determination, how then to explain the phenomenon of the contemporary "coon show"?

A decade ago, staging a coon show in a city like New York would have provoked instant and acrimonious protest. "Coon," after all, was one of many terms of denigration heaped on southern black men and women and later applied by racist whites to African Americans in general. As stinging as "nigger," "spook," or "jigaboo," this epithet further dehumanized a race already treated as property. Historically, the coon show, also known as the minstrel show, was a comic entertainment first performed by blacks and later co-opted by whites who donned blackface and cavorted on stage in caricatures of indigenous Negro dancing and singing. (Indeed, some white minstrel shows were allowed into theaters in which black performers were banned!). We know that the word was rejected

SNAPS

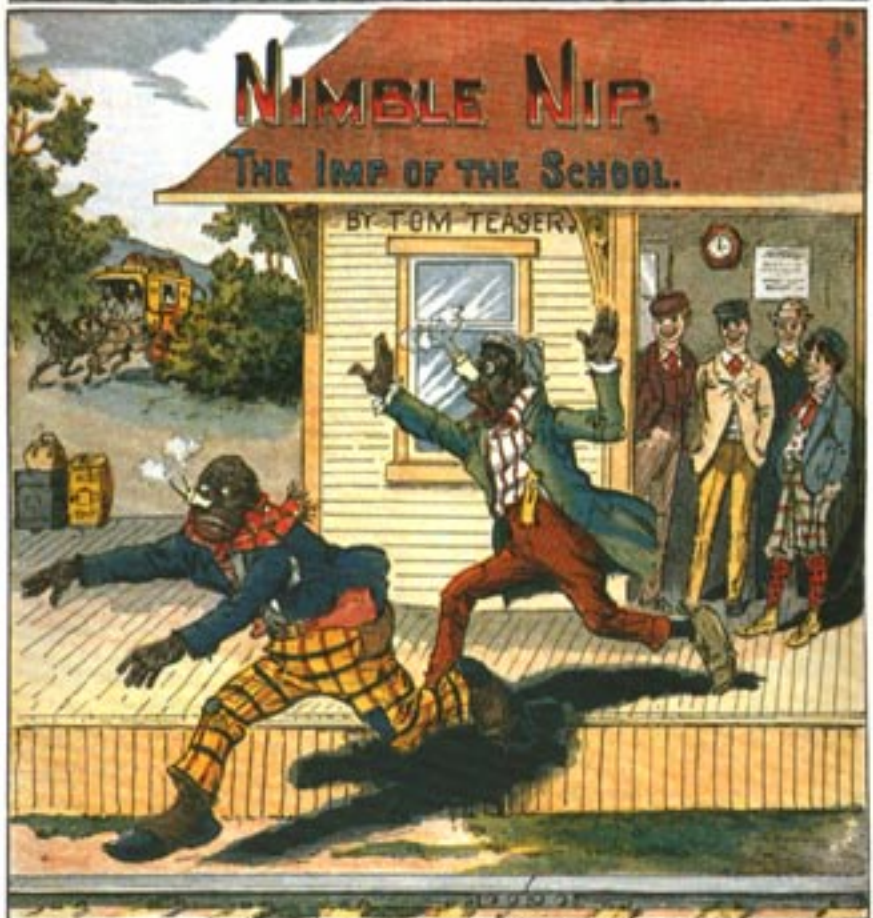
A COMIC WEEKLY OF COMIC STORIES BY COMIC AUTHORS.

Serialized Weekly—By Subscription \$1.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Young.

No. 28.

NEW YORK, APRIL 18, 1900.

Price 5 Cents.

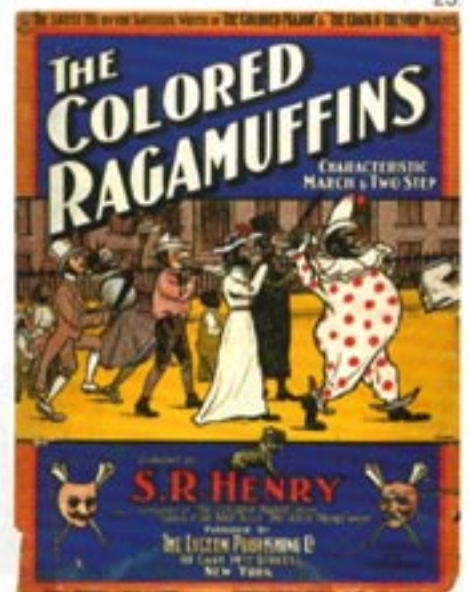


That was enough for the two gentlemen from Lansenville. They found the door and rushed out at full speed, and jumping down upon the track, these two thoroughly sobered darkeys skittered for home, leaving the ties as though pursued by the evil one himself.

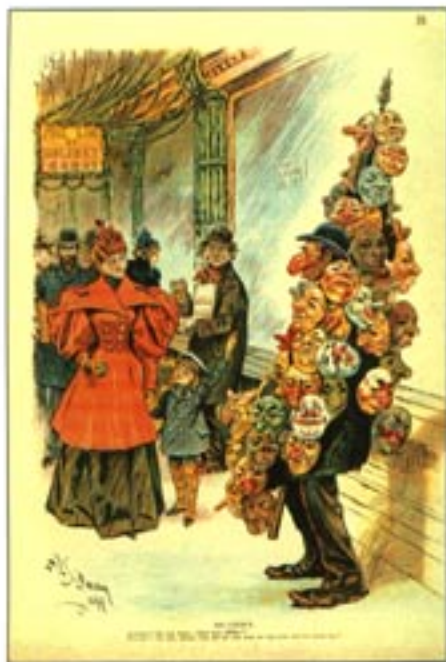
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26. This 1894 Puck cartoon holds Jewish physiognomy up to ridicule.

27. A trade card for the Blue Store Clothing Co., 1882, shows the arrival of the Sheehy Monowski family to America.

28. Life magazine cartoon, 1909, editorializes against the "Jewish theatrical trust," accused by Life's drama critic of defiling the theater by giving the public garbage.

29. Pillsbury was one of many mainstream national companies to advertise products with Negro caricatures, c. 1898.

30. Novelty product, c. 1930, illustrates high jinks at Mammy's expense.



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from proper language long ago. So why are coon shows currently popping up in major cities throughout the country? Does this signal a resurgence of popular or institutional racism?

Today, the term "coon show" ironically describes a relatively new kind of flea market—one which specializes in artifacts and ephemera representing Negro life in America from around the 1820s (when the first black caricature was represented on stage by an African American performer) to the 1950s (when the last of the most insidious black stereotypes were removed from mainstream product advertising). Coon shows have become magnets for collectors of all ethnic and racial persuasions, but primarily for middle-class African Americans, who either are trying to better understand their ancestors' painful history or are interested in the folk and popular arts that represent their exclusion from, and to a certain extent entrance into, American society. The items for sale at coon shows run the gamut from benign depictions of friendly field hands on packaging and mammies on salt shakers to malicious editorial caricatures of threatening black "bucks" and dandies. Hardly any of the material presents a positive model by today's standards, but rather starkly reveals the pervasiveness of negative black stereotypes in American popular culture.

As repulsive as the materials in coon shows are, they do force a kind of collective purging of old demons. That these once ubiquitous, then suppressed, manifestations of American racism are displayed and collected so openly suggests that the subjects of derision have co-opted the imagery from their oppressors. Divorced from their original contexts, these insidious objects appear like quaint curios of a bygone time. Somehow, they have been transformed into celebrations of rites-of-passage, a commemoration of a minority's intense struggle to win equal rights and respect. It is reasonable to assume that collecting these negative images is like displaying souvenirs from a hard-fought war.

For some collectors, displaying these racist items is one way to preserve (and explore) an embarrassing history so that future generations will remember and understand the methods by which racism was perpetuated. Yet as understandable as this reasoning might be, it still appears odd to many who revile these

artifacts that people would want to display them in their homes, would want to be so vividly reminded of their ancestors' servitude and second-class status.

To judge just how odd this is, one simply can compare the market in artifacts showing black stereotypes to the virtually total lack of a similar market for Jewish stereotypes. "Kike," "yid," or "hymie" shows have yet to be mounted—though, like minstrel shows, "Hebrew" shows featuring Jews performing in dialect were regularly found on the vaudeville circuit in the 1880s. Few Jews would choose to display the material evidence of this society's distrust and exclusion of, first, the German Jews, who emigrated to the U.S. in the 1870s, and then their Eastern European brethren, who came here a decade or so later. Few would openly display in their homes the various and abundant negative caricatures that portrayed their ancestors as devious dry-goods retailers and pawnbrokers, or as ragtail, disease-ridden greenhorns. Many of these depictions equaled, and at times surpassed, the venomous images found decades later in Nazi propaganda.

It would nevertheless be wrong (and perhaps even racist) to assume that, because some African Americans are more tolerant of the oppressed past, as a group they are less sensitive than Jews to the implications of negative imagery. Various African American organizations are no less vigilant than their Jewish counterparts in denouncing such stereotypes. For example, a few years back, after plans were announced to rebroadcast episodes of the 1950s television series "Amos 'n' Andy," the NAACP vigorously protested on grounds that the series perpetuated negative stereotypes. The show was consequently banned from the airwaves (though it is available on videocassette). Indeed, the NAACP was so successful in this effort that most young African Americans, no less than white Americans, do not even know who Amos 'n' Andy are.

It would also be wrong to assume that Jews, since they occupy a relatively se-

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Steven Heller's recent book is *Low-Budget/High-Quality Design*, published by Watson-Guptill. William Eric Perkins creates tests in the social sciences at the Educational Testing Service and teaches courses on African American Media in the communications department at Hunter College, New York City. He has had an interest in the visual representation of race and ethnicity for the last 15 years.



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facturer's rated ISO settings.

The suggested list price is \$730 for the body; the Bar Code Reader is \$60 additional. Lenses are, of course, extra and there is the usual range of superb Canon autofocus optics available, all incorporating individual autofocus motors.

The Canon EOS 10S does seem like an embarrassment of riches but it is actually a superb piece of equipment that embodies all of the advances in electronics—"state of the art," as they say.

Dirty Pictures

Continued from page 113

cure and "integrated" position in American society as compared to blacks, would feel less threatened about recalling their derogatory images. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith is so tireless a monitor of anti-Semitism in the U.S. precisely because it believes that its various manifestations lie just below the surface, waiting to burst forth. Indeed, the League circulates a didactic slide show on the history of racial and ethnic stereotypes as a means to educate Jews and others. Yet, while Jews do not object to historic or nostalgic recollections of their immigrant past in plays or literature, they place little educative value in recalling the more negative stereotyping that was inflicted upon them in 19th-century America. This attitude is based partly on the traditional determination of Jews to assimilate and to eradicate the greenhorn and other prejudicial stereotypes that would force their exclusion from the mainstream (to the point, in many cases, of Anglicizing their names, and in fewer cases, of totally denying their roots).

There is also the wish to let sleeping dogs lie. An editor at a Jewish monthly once rejected a piece on anti-Semitic caricature stating that it might be a wake-up call to all those holding racist beliefs. Some would contend that this very article would serve the same purpose.

Anyone engaging in a critical analysis of the ways in which ethnicity and race have been used in popular culture is soon confronted by the realization that stereotypes continue to shape our conception of reality. Art historian John Berger has suggested that alternative "ways of seeing" offer us a new perspective on representations of reality. Stereotyping, as a means of social categorization, allows the viewers of the visual stimuli to form a set of judgments about the groups depicted. The visual history of African and

Jewish Americans are alike in that both groups have been represented as evolutionary outcasts, Jews as a despised mongrel race, African Americans as virtual apes. Both groups have been depicted as inferior, physically and intellectually. And both groups have been denied true social, political, and economic equality as a result of these blatant misrepresentations. Nor have the stereotypes disappeared. Television and film have given the old images new credibility. Rastus-like characteristics can be seen in Fred of "Sanford & Son," George Jefferson of "The Jeffersons," and the Deacon of "Amen." Some of Sapphire can be found in Louise of "The Jeffersons," Mary of "227," and even Claire Huxtable of "The Cosby Show." The mammy stereotype characterized Florida of "Good Times" and Nell of "Gimme a Break," while JJ of "Good Times" was the modern-day equivalent of a pickaninny. Jackie Mason's recent failed sitcom revived the Lower East Side Jewish stereotype and Spike Lee's obnoxious Jewish club owners in *Mo' Better Blues* show us how adapted versions of these stereotypes continue to shape our reality.

While ethnic and racial characteristics do exist, even the most benign use of stereotyping becomes a means of simplifying and generalizing that inevitably leads to dehumanization. Yet stereotyping is a fact of life—a tool of the artist, pollster, politician, and demographer, as well as the racist. As such, it is difficult if not impossible to eradicate. Perhaps only through a critical anatomy of racial and ethnic stereotyping can its end result, deformed reality, be overturned. Perhaps by analyzing the worst images that our culture has produced, society can neutralize visual misrepresentation.

And perhaps by exposing ourselves to the worst images that affect Jews and African Americans, we can see the strange bond that ties these two groups together as the most denigrated in the American racial and ethnic mix.

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