Racial stereotypes as comedic mechanism: Luscombe Searelle and Walter Parke
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This article examines the use of racial stereotypes and disparagement as a humour mechanism by the composer William Luscombe Searelle, in the two operatic works that he produced in collaboration with the English wordsmith Walter Parke, *Estrella* and *Bodabil*. Through a discussion of the concepts of race and racism, and using selected examples from their works, this paper argues that while Searelle and Parke’s depictions do go some way toward preserving the ‘bulwark of bigotry’¹ inherent in the English depiction of the ‘other’, the real intent is comedy.

Introduction

The literary and stage works of British colonial composer [William] Luscombe Searelle (1853–1907) and his occasional collaborator, librettist Walter Parke (c.1845–?) are forgotten to all but a few scholars. Although both librettist and composer were relatively successful men during their own lives, their works have subsequently been neglected, perhaps with good reason, not the least of which is the fact that their works are festooned with racial, and racist, depictions that today would be considered unacceptable. During Searelle’s and Parke’s lifetimes, however, racially stereotyped characterisations were very much an acceptable part of English-language theatre and literature. What was Searelle and Parke’s agenda for racial disparagement? It is generally accepted that racial stereotyping on the English-language stage, and in literature, was hegemonic and designed to preserve a sense of cultural and ethnic superiority. With the spread of the British Empire there was a distinct risk to English identity from a kind of colonial ‘miscegenation’, or dilution of Englishness due to colonial influences.² The ‘otherness’ of the stock character models, defined by their strange behaviours, gestures, dress and speech, were always presented in stark contrast to the virtuous normality of Englishness.

Englishness was by no means the default national identity in 19th-century Australia. There were a number of competing national identities and cultural dichotomies: European/indigenous; convict/free; catholic/protestant; and immigrant/native, for example.³ Also ingrained was the bifurcation between English and Irish, with anti-English feeling being regularly whipped up by the activities of the *Bulletin* newspaper, founded in 1880 by John Haynes and John Feltham Archibald. The stated aim of the *Bulletin* was ‘the immediate end of constitutional connections between the Australian colonies and Great Britain’.
The publication was ‘virulently antagonistic to British, particularly English, cultural influence’.

In some small way, the maintenance of English theatrical paradigms in the colonial theatre helped to maintain Englishness as a valid national identity against the onslaught of competing influences. Searelle and Parke also saw racial disparagement as a primary comedic technique.

Luscombe Searelle was, far and away, the most successful British colonial composer of the middle to late 19th century. Searelle was born in Devonshire in 1853 to a middle-class family of mill owners who emigrated to the newly founded city of Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1865, when the boy was 12 years of age. Searelle received what was then referred to as ‘a classical education’ at Christ’s College, Christchurch. He was also taught piano by his mother, and began writing music for the stage at the age of 16. Searelle moved to Australia in the late 1870s and enjoyed a number of prosperous years as a conductor in minstrel shows and burlesque, later specialising in opera. He was the composer of at least nine operatic works, a blank verse drama, a cantata, solos for piano, violin and cornet, as well as a number of individual songs. As well as success in Australia, New Zealand, Mauritius and possibly France, Searelle’s works were performed and published in San Francisco, London and New York. Later in life he was also one of the progenitors of the theatre industry in South Africa.

Fig. 1: Mr Luscombe Searelle, the popular composer, wood engraving, published by Tuttle & Co., n.d. Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia.
Searelle’s collaborator for two of his operas, *Estrella* and *Bodabil*, was English wordsmith Walter Parke. Parke, who also operated under the *nom de plume* ‘The London Hermit’, remains an obscure figure. While little is known about his life, Parke is remembered for a number of operatic libretti in addition to *Estrella* and *Bodabil*, namely: *Gipsy Gabriel* (music by Hogarth), *Kitty* (Henry Parker), *Mr Fitzwilliam* or *Taking the bull by the horns* (Horace Newte) and, in partnership with Henry Paulton, *Les manteaux noir* or *The black cloaks* (Procida Bucalossi). The British Library also holds two of his published libretti: *Brer Rabbit and Uncle Remus: A comic opera for children* and *Wooing a widow*, neither of which appears to have been set to music.

**Race and racism**

Racial characteristics and differences were noted in ancient times, with the Egyptians referring to the white nations as the ‘cursed race of Schet’ or ‘the plague of Schet’. The earliest English-language use of the term ‘race’, in the sense of ethnicity, may well have been in the Earl of Surrey’s 1557 translation of Virgil’s *Aenid*, ‘Ofspring of eche race With mortal warr eche other may fordoe.’ According to Edward Ziter, it was not until 1835 that a modern definition of race was developed with the *Dictionaire* describing a race ‘as a multitude of men who originate from the same country, and resemble each other by facial features and by exterior conformity’. The *Oxford English dictionary* contains a number of definitions of the term including ‘A group of several tribes or peoples, regarded as forming a distinct ethnic set’.

‘Racism’, however, is a different issue and is based on ‘prejudice and antagonism towards people of other races’. According to Derek Strachan, one of the earliest examples of 19th-century racist philosophy was Count Joseph Arthur Gobineau’s (1816–1882) *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* which was first published in 1853 in French and made it into English translation as *The inequality of human races* by 1856. Gobineau’s pseudo-scientific approach to the study of the races identified three ‘clearly marked types, the black, the yellow, and the white’, these three types existing in a racial hierarchy with the negro at the bottom, the yellow races clearly superior to the black but inferior to the white. Miscegenation and the resultant racial admixture was so serious an issue to Gobineau that he claimed it had the potential to lead to the decline of civilisations. Gobineau’s pseudo-scientific approach to the races was a common 19th-century method of dealing with racial difference, a doctrine called ‘scientific racism’ by Graham Richards. Much 19th-century racism was based on a belief in white superiority. ‘Imperial expansion, and accelerating technological sophistication, gave ideas of intrinsic European superiority ever more credibility.’
Racism also manifests in a variety of ways. Ali Mazrui identifies three types of racism, namely, ‘malignant racism’, ‘benign racism’ and ‘benevolent racism’. Malignant racism is based in hostility toward, and contempt of, other racial groups. Benign racism is non-hostile and involves ethnocentricity, a belief in the superiority of one’s own kind. Benevolent racism is ‘racial paternalism and altruistic ethnocentrism’. Three alternative manifestations are ‘individual racism’, ‘institutional racism’, and ‘cultural racism’. Individual racism involves a person’s own racial prejudices, the superiority of one’s own racial group being a central assumption. Institutional racism involves discrimination against a particular group, or groups, by a government, or other organisation’s policies and practices. Institutional racism became evident in the British colonies—Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada—by the 19th century, where free immigration of Asian people began to be restricted. Cultural racism assumes a ‘superiority of a language or dialect, values, beliefs, worldviews, and cultural artifacts dominant in a society’. It is also important to make a distinction between modern racism, variously called ‘symbolic’ or ‘aversive’ racism, and the more old-fashioned form of overt racism. But what of racism used as comedic device?

Depictions of various racial types have been present in the English-speaking theatre from at least the time of Shakespeare, if not earlier. Perhaps the most obvious early depictions of different racial characteristics on the English stage are Shakespeare’s Shylock, a Jew, and Othello, a Moor. During the 18th century, there was a development in the English theatre of ‘stock’ character paradigms. Michael Ragussis observes that ‘Jewish and Scottish characters played a central role on the stage as important staples of the theatrical repertoire’. Later in the century a number of other stock characters began to emerge. In addition to the obvious blacks, West Indians and nabobs, the Irish and Yorkshiremen also became character paradigms. There developed a very narrow ‘self’ and a very broad ‘other’ which included colonial and provincial character types in addition to the more obviously exotic. There was little attempt to portray these ‘outlandish’ character types in any way authentically; instead they were merely stage representations, ‘performative gestures and conventional markers’.

It is not surprising that the ‘stage Jew’ appears in a number of Searelle’s works. The ‘stage Jew’, like the ‘stage Scot’ and later ‘stage Irishman’, was little more than a caricature whose real purpose was to enforce the notion of English normality and superiority. Ragussis also observes that The merchant of Venice is ‘the master text for representing “the Jew”’, although Dickens’ Oliver Twist, with its representation of the criminal Fagin, may also be considered a master text. Negro impersonation on the English stage dates from the late 18th century, through the performances of composer and
songwriter Charles Dibdin (1745–1814). Dibdin’s Negro impersonations predate black-face minstrelsy, a popular English stage form that lasted from the 1820s to the 1970s, by some two and a half decades. The stereotype of a stage Asian, fuelled perhaps by the lack of Asian actors, also developed during the 19th century.

Closer to home, Australian Aboriginal stock characters were also present in 19th-century Australian comedy and melodrama, most notably as either the ‘noble savage’ or the treacherous murderer, or a combination of both. The earliest example appears to be J.R. McLaughlin’s adaptation for the stage of Thomas McCombie’s book Arabin or Adventures of a Settler (1845), which contains roles for the somewhat treacherous ‘Aboriginal Chief’, Warren Warren, and for ‘Several Aborigines—males and females’. A more noble depiction of is that of the character Warrigal, companion of the bushranger Captain Starlight in Alfred Dampier and Garnet Walch’s adaptation of Boldrewood’s Robbery under Arms. Nineteenth-century Maori stage tropes also followed the tradition of the warlike but noble savage, albeit with the addition of the tattoo. While the African form of blackface appears in Searelle and Parke’s stage works, no extant examples of Australian Aboriginal, or Maori tropes have come to light. Searelle’s only acknowledgement of Australasian indigenes is in his cantata Australia (1891) which, according to Eric Irvin, contained a coo-ee refrain.

The moneylenders

English writer Charles Lamb (1775–1834) observed, somewhat satirically: ‘The human species, according to the best theory I can form of it, is composed of two distinct races, the men who borrow, and the men who lend.’ Those who borrow, ‘the great race’, are infinitely superior to the degraded race who lend. Although Lamb’s essay is a somewhat glib commentary on the subject, moneylending and the taking of interest have been problematic practices since at least the time of Plato and Aristotle, who viewed the practice as unnatural. While not strictly prohibited biblically, Exodus 22:25 and Deuteronomy 23:19–20 forbid Jews taking interest from each other but do not specifically forbid charging non-Jews. Roman canonical law during the Middle Ages specifically banned the charging of interest, however Jews were exempted, providing the interest charged was not excessive; recognition, perhaps, that moneylending was a necessary evil. William Gifford Palgrave (1826–1888), in his Essays on eastern questions (1872), observed that ‘by Mahometan law not only usury, but even ordinary money-interest, is severely forbidden.’ The practice of moneylending, then, carried an enormous stigma and was only carried out by those outside the dominant cultural group. As Palgrave observed, in the Muslim world the moneylending profession was ‘discreditable in the eyes of
The same observations can be applied to Christian Europe. Consequently, the portrayal of the moneylender in literature is generally negative.

The moneylender character archetype in English drama is, perhaps, Shakespeare’s Shylock. Antonio knowingly puts himself in debt to Shylock—his intention being to help his friend Bassanio win the hand of Portia—having taken a chance on one of his three trading ships returning to Venice within the three-month deadline of the loan. Three months pass and Antonio’s ships have failed to arrive; Shylock has him arrested for defaulting on the loan and demands his ‘pound of flesh’. Shylock is portrayed as vengeful and rapacious; there is also a strong inference that the Christian characters, Antonio especially, are more honourable. In fact, in a rather contrived ‘happy’ ending, all three of Antonio’s vessels arrive back full of merchandise while Shylock loses half his goods to the state and is forced into converting to Christianity.

The first, and most benign, Jewish depiction in Sarellé’s works occurs in the comic opera Estrella (1883) written to a libretto by Parke. Count Pomposo di Vesuvio, a Venetian general, having ransomed himself from kidnappers, returns disguised as a Hebrew moneylender to observe his wife’s fidelity. Little is made of the Count’s fake ‘Jewishness’, in print at least; it is merely a handy disguise. Parke and Sarellé’s comic opera Bodabil (1884) offers an alternative paradigm in the form of an Armenian moneylender. The choice of an Armenian character in a 19th-century English-language comic opera is unusual to say the least. It is debatable as to what general level of awareness there was about the Armenian nation among the English-speaking populace at the time Bodabil was written. That is not to say there was a total lack of awareness, as Palgrave had published quite a detailed account of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in his Essays on eastern questions (1872).

Palgrave was, somewhat ironically, the English son of a Jewish father and Christian mother and part of the Palgrave Macmillan publishing dynasty. He received a typical English public school education at Charterhouse, where he was school captain, later studying at Trinity College, Oxford, where he received first-class honours for ‘Greats’ (Literæ humaniores), and second-class honours in mathematics. He took up a commission in the Eighth Bombay Regiment and, after converting to Roman Catholicism, became a Jesuit priest. He was gifted in languages and had a significant interest in Arabic matters. Disguised as a Syrian Christian doctor, he undertook a study mission across Arabia between 1862 and 1863 which resulted in his 1865 book, Narrative of a year’s journey through central and eastern Arabia and his 1872 Essays on eastern questions, which contains an interesting section on eastern Christians. In addition to his observations on the Greeks (both Orthodox and Melchite), Chaldeans, Maronites and Copts, Palgrave made detailed observations of Armenians.
Palgrave observed that the Armenians engaged, primarily, in three industries. The first of these pursuits was agriculture, which was described as ‘a staple Armenian pursuit, and is still followed by about two-thirds of the nation’. Secondly, Armenians, ‘heavy, muscular, large-calved, large-boned men’, were particularly suited to heavy manual labour. Palgrave observed that nine out of ten dockworkers were Armenian. They were also ‘tolerable tailors and shoemakers’. The third category of occupation at which Armenians excelled was moneylending, a vocation forbidden under Islamic law but open to Armenians as Christians. The Armenians practised moneylending ‘under the same conditions, and with the same results, as the Jews once did in Medieval Europe’. According to Palgrave, Armenian moneylenders practised illegal usury, their scale of interest varying from 24, to 60, or even 100 per cent. In Palgrave’s opinion, the practice of moneylending was a considerable ‘black spot’ on the national character.

Palgrave’s description appears to have been the model for the character of the ‘Armenian Money Lender’ in Bodabil. Set in an unspecified part of the East, Bodabil is loosely based on The sleeper awakened (Part 5) from the Arabian nights tales. Bodabil, a poor man, owes an Armenian moneylender a substantial amount. Nearing the end of Act 1, the moneylender arrives to collect his debt from Bodabil and offers the following simplistic summation of the Armenian nation in the form of a patter song, the Armenian character being designated the second tenor, or buffo, role:

I’m a man of a very old nation,
Armenia’s the land of my birth,
In tricky finance speculation
I yield to no people on earth;
The law never dares to molest me,
Folks say I’m a terrible screw,
The smartest of Greeks couldn’t best me,
No more could the cleverest Jew.
Yet in my commercial transactions,
Fair dealing is all my intent,
I’m sure of success, for I never take less
Than seventy-five per cent.44

So much for Shylock’s measly pound of flesh, the Armenian’s interest rate is set at a minimum of 75 per cent. As Bodabil is unable to pay, the moneylender attempts to seize his sister Lulu as a slave in settlement of the debt. Bodabil makes a wish that, if he were Sultan for a day, he would rid the land of all moneylenders. Conveniently, the ‘Sultan of the Night’ has overheard
Bodabil’s wish and leaves a purse of gold to settle the debt, and grants Bodabil his wish to become Sultan for a day. The moneylender is sent packing, but not without another attempt to lend money at the even more outrageous rate: ‘If you want any money our trust in you such is, At 90 per cent, we’ll advance you some more.’ The Armenian character reappears at the end of Act 2 and is again sent packing by the Sultan who says ‘Here is a purse of gold, go now and mend your ways.’ Again, the inference is that the borrower is in all ways superior to the lender.

 Evalina or The hidden genius (c.1899), for which Searelle provided both music and libretto, is a two-actor, two-act, multi-ethnic musical comedy featuring the characters Mr Mario, Kean, Macready, Smith (a famous actor whose career has been ruined due to a fondness for beer), and his daughter Miss Evalina Smith, who wants to become an actress but is forbidden by her father. In order to convince him of her theatrical talent she dresses in various costumes, posing as potential pupils. Likewise, her father responds by disguising himself in various costumes. Smith, owing to his fondness for beer, has fallen into debt to a moneylender, pledging his furniture and theatrical wardrobe as surety against the loan. The exchange between Evalina and the Money Lender (who to confuse matters is actually Smith in disguise) uses what Ragussis refers to as the ‘damn’d Jew’s dialect’:

 Money-Lender: Good afternoon mein tear!
 Evalina: Good afternoon. My Father is not in at present. Can you tell me your business?
 Money-Lender: Dot’s just what it is, mein tear! PUSINESS! You are his daughter, ain’t you? I WANTS NOW FROM YOUR VADER £14 10s. 11 ½ d., or I kops all the furniture and theatrical wardrobe!

 Evalina tries to convince him she would be worth more money if he became her manager, ‘By Jehosophat’, he responds: ‘... she’s vorth to Moss’s Pantomime £15 a veek, but I musn’t forget mein gelt. I’m a money lender and usurer by profession, and I’m proud of it.’

 The Jew is further demonised in the ensuing Usurer’s song, in which the stereotype is pushed to the limit:

 Oh, ho! Oh, ho! I’d have you to know,
 I’m a usurer stern and bold,
 who preys on the weak.
 And grows fat and sleek,
 On the Widows’ and Orphans’ gold:
O ho! O Ho!
No mercy I show,
When I have them within my clutch;
They may starve and die, what care I, what care I!
So long as their gold I touch.
Oh! Oh! Ho! Ho! Let them reap as they sow!
At their sobs and their tears I smile—
If they choose to borrow, and come to sorrow,
Why should they my name defile.50

The Shylock paradigm: fierce, vengeful and rapacious, but in reality a ridiculous exaggeration.

Blackface and yellowface
Searelle was no stranger to blackface performance. Billed as ‘Mr. Melbourne, a talented pianoforte accompanist’, Searelle, at age 17, was hired as pianist by Australian comedian William Horace Bent for his Christy Minstrel Show at the Christchurch Town Hall in 1870.51 During 1879 he was appointed as musical director of the Kelly and Leon Minstrel (and later, Burlesque Opera) Troupe at the Sydney School of Arts. The repertoire of the Kelly and Leon Company was extensive and included operetta, melodrama and the afterpiece farce. As its name would suggest, the company also regularly performed in blackface, a form that was a regular feature of late 19th-century colonial entertainment. The Sydney Mail of 8 April 1879 reports an upcoming concert with Kelly and Leon Company performing as ‘The Hampton Students’ or ‘Coloured American Jubilee Singers’ singing ‘the sacred songs of their people’ on Good Friday, 11 April 1879.52 According to Searelle, this sacred concert was his idea and was designed to circumvent theatre closures on religious holidays, such as Easter, by holding ‘sacred’ concerts, albeit in blackface.

Searelle’s ‘Flying-Dutchmanesque’ opera Isidora—later renamed The black rover—is set in Cuba in 1750. In addition to some rather strange characters, including Jacob, a Dutch overseer who inexplicably sings in faux Italian and German, and a half-witted old man called Chickanaque, the work also calls for a ‘Chorus of Negro slaves’ confirming, to some extent, Ragussis’ observation that ‘the West Indian and his black slaves became a popular topos of the London stage’.53 Isidora opened at the Bijou Theatre in Melbourne on 7 July 1885.54 Searelle later revised the work and renamed it The black rover, mounting a largely self-financed production at the Globe Theatre in London, opening on 23 September 1890 and running for 40 performances.

The work was a local success with reviews, such as that in The Argus of 8 July 1885, being favourable: ‘In the history of operatic performances in
Melbourne the above named work, we believe, is unique as being the first representation of an opera written and composed in this city. Likewise, The Sydney Morning Herald reported favourably: ‘Mr. Searelle has before shown himself a clever musician, with plenty of musical ideas which he can use freely, and in ‘Isidora’ there is very much that is really creditable and clever, while the whole is very pleasing music.’

The London critics, however, were a little less sanguine about the production, labelling it absurd. Special criticism was reserved for his Act 3 depiction of the chorus of Negro slaves. During the temporary absence of their overseer Jacob, the plantation slaves get drunk and rise up against their white masters. They search the plantation for any remaining whites, whom they intend to burn at the stake. As they proceed on their murderous mission they sing:

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GAROO! GAROO! GAROO! GAROO!
The fetish sprite is out to-night,
We'll kill at sight, each cursed white
GAROO! GAROO! GAROO! GAROO![58]
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Despite their thirst for blood, the Negro slaves are cowed by a clap of thunder causing them to ‘fall prostrate with terror’, the stereotype of the superstitious Negro.

This attempt at stereotyping was not missed by the theatre critic of The Times who remarked: ‘Nor are the concerted pieces less stereotyped in their character, that in Act III., for the intoxicated negroes, who, for reasons best known to themselves, sing “Garoo, Garoo” and then fall down, being simply cheerfully comic instead of grotesquely horrible.’

Searelle’s later musical comedy Evalina also contains a ‘Coon song’, complete with overly sentimental, but stereotypical, Negro stage dialect:

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I has come here for to see you, Lilly, Lil’, Lil’-my Lilly, Lil’!
An de moon is shining brightely, and de night is O, so still!
I is waiting at your window, for you know I lub you dear.
Yas, you know I lub you dearly, and my darling is so near!
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The sentimentality continues in the refrain:

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Lilly, Lil’, Lilly, Lil’!
Come out I’se waiting here!
Lilly, Lilly, Lilly, Lil’
You needn’t hab no fear,
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Lilly, Lilly, Lilly, lil’
I’se waiting now to kiss you, for I lubs you, OH! – SO DEAR!

Searelle’s most pejorative treatment of the Negro is, however, in his novel *The tales of the Transvaal* (c.1899), specifically in Chapter 7, ‘A general dissertation on Kaffirs’, where he offers this antediluvian view:

An old Kaffir once offered to sell his mother to me for an old spavined mule which I possessed; but it did not happen to be springtime, so consequently my mind was not ‘lightly attuned to thoughts of love.’ It was a pity, for I believe I could have made a tidy sum by exhibiting the old lady as the last survivor of the Pliocene period.

During the 1850s significant numbers of Chinese men migrated to Australia, mostly employed to work on the goldfields. On the Victorian goldfields alone there were—according to Manning Clark—23,632 Chinese by 1857. There was widespread resistance to Chinese migration during this time, partly on economic grounds. The Chinese were frugal, tireless workers who were under contract to their employers and, consequently, did not join trade unions. They replaced cheap convict labour once transportation had ceased, depriving unionised workers of employment. In the words of Manning Clark, ‘the principal grievance was the great diminution in the yield of gold and the lowering of the price of labour’. Similar grievances also arose about the use of Pacific Island labourers, or kanakas, on the sugarcane fields of Queensland. The immigration issue was considered so serious that the members of the first Australian Commonwealth parliament were overwhelmingly in favour of the introduction of a bill designed to ‘preserve a predominantly European society in Australia by prohibiting the immigration of Asiatics and Pacific Islanders, deporting the kanaka labourers on the sugar fields of Queensland’, passing the Commonwealth *Immigration Restriction Act* 1901 and marking the beginning of what became known as the ‘White Australia Policy’.

During the 19th century, stereotypes of Asian characters played by white actors, a practice referred to as ‘yellowface’, also began to appear on the English-speaking stage. These white English-speaking actors and writers ‘developed a complex set of codes for the presentation of the Oriental Other’. Like other stereotypes, stage Chinamen were not necessarily authentic representations but rather ‘hegemonic constructions of “Chineseness”’. Central to the stereotype were dress, manners, stage dialect and, of course, the queue or pigtail.
The first of Searelle and Parke’s yellowface depictions occurs in *Bodabil* (1884). In addition to the Armenian Money Lender, the character list calls for Amazons and a chorus of Chinese Ambassadors. According to the preceding dialogue, The Chinese Ambassadors are actually foreign princes, some are from Japan ‘And some from the Celestial land’, who have come to ask for the princess Zorayda’s hand in marriage. Again, the stage dialect is evident:

> Far away across the roily sea,  
> Chinaman he often come,  
> Welly glad to see this countalle,  
> Plenty eaty dlinky, plenty rum.

Various stereotypes appear during the chorus, including a reference, of course, to the Chinese laundry: ‘We can washee all your closee’. Chinese eating habits are also discussed: ‘He can stew the puppy dogee’ and ‘Chow-chow puppy taillo, birdsy nest to eat.’ Although the delegation of ambassadors is purported to have Japanese men in its numbers, nothing to this effect is mentioned in the text of the chorus. Too fine a distinction, perhaps.

The later musical comedy *Evalina* (c.1899), however, does contain a Japanese song. Evalina dresses in a Japanese costume and arrives at Smith’s house looking for acting lessons in the comic opera style. To demonstrate her stage prowess she sings a supposedly Japanese song about the art of seduction:

> When a Little Japanee from Far Japan,  
> Takes a fancy to a little Jappy man,  
> She never, never sighs!  
> Or downward casts her eyes!  
> To hook her fish she knows a better plan.  
> She puts her fan behind her head—just watch me know!  
> She looks into his eyes—and then a stately bow:  
> The kisses follow soon,  
> And then the honeymoon, etc. etc.

The refrain of this song shows some rather tenuous rhyme:

> I’m a pretty little, pretty little Jappy,  
> Who has come to fascinate an English ‘Chappy,’  
> If he’s not an awful ‘sappy,’ [mawkish or overly sentimental]  
> I will try to make him happy,  
> If I can’t, well then I shall not care a ‘rappy.’ [rupee?]
Tales of the Transvaal

*Tales of the Transvaal* is one of two literary works written by Searelle. It is a tale of the travels of a band of unlikely companions across South Africa. Among the group are the British characters: ‘I’ (Searelle), Phil, and the Hon. Bally. There are also a number of exotic characters: the Boer Jan Kroonfit (Afrikaans for crown shape), Totty, a Hottentot driver and a 60-year-old, six-foot-six Jew, Ikey Schlenterpollock (‘schlenter’ being South African slang for a counterfeit). Ikey is more Fagin than Shylock and not engaged primarily in moneylending, but rather adept at the swindle.

At the beginning of Chapter 5 there is an interesting exchange between Ikey and a Boer farmer in which the farmer takes a liking to Ikey’s gold watch, a watch which Ikey admits is really a counterfeit made in Brummagem (Birmingham), ‘where they are mostly sold by the ton’. Ikey, however, tells the Boer that ‘this was a special extra-distilled, double breasted, sixty-five over-proof chronometer’ which he had imported from Paris for the President of the Transvaal. Offering it to the Boer initially for £150, Ikey eventually accepts the year’s wool clip in payment. In Chapter 6, Ikey convinces most of the Orange Free State that smallpox has broken out in the capital Bloemfontein. Disguised as a Doctor Habernethy from London, Ikey proceeds to offer smallpox vaccinations, using stolen condensed milk and a hypodermic, across the state. Again, using a kind of literary dialect, Ikey admits, ‘Vith that von tin of condensed milk hi vaccinated the ’ole of that blessed Republic, and cleared nearly tree tousand pound by the speculation.’

Clad in ‘a long frock-coat and stove pipe hat … according to the Jewish law’ (exactly which part of Jewish law specifies this mode of dress is unclear), Ikey Schlenterpollock is the consummate ‘stage Jew.’ Despite his continual one-upsmanship and apparently successful swindles, Ikey never seems to rise above his position. Although he obtains many thousands of pounds by many forms of deception, he never becomes rich, and certainly never honourable. Although part of Searelle’s band, he is very much the ‘other’, the outsider who cares little for being on the inside.

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From a 21st-century perspective Searelle’s depictions of ethnic stereotypes are offensive, but is it fair to dismiss him completely for this reason alone? Searelle was a composer and writer of English-language farce and his stage depictions, as offensive as they are to the modern audience, reflected white middle-class attitudes towards the ‘other’ prevalent at the time. According to Graham Richards, these attitudes were fuelled by ‘long-standing myths, stereotypes, folk-lore and traveller’s tales which had accreted to them over a millennium’. By the late 19th century the concept of racial hierarchy, or ‘the
belief that certain human groups are intrinsically inferior to others as measured by some socially defined criterion such as intelligence or “civilised” behaviour was firmly entrenched in Britain, due perhaps to the English translation of Gobineau’s works.戈比内”的态度对待种族差异被英语生物学家和进化主义者托马斯·赫胥黎所呼应，他在19世纪对非欧洲人的社会期望提出了以下评估：“最高的地方在文明的等级中将肯定不在我们的黑人亲属的范围内。”

如果我们将塞雷尔的背景考虑进去，那么在他的作品中找到种族定型是不足为奇的。克赖斯特彻奇，塞雷尔受过教育的地方，被定位为“新西兰的特殊殖民地，一个自由于工业贫民窟和革命精神的英国社会，一个理想的英国社会，由理想的英国教会维持”。他的学校克利斯学院，克赖斯特彻奇，建立在传统上是英国私立学校的英格兰，毫无疑问会介绍他阅读如帕尔格雷夫的《东方问题论文集》，甚至可能是戈比内或赫胥黎的作品。帕克的学校我们知之甚少，他的歌剧词，然而，弘扬类似的，不加考虑的种族描绘。

即使塞雷尔和帕克的“舞台人物”是讽刺的，他们被用于建立英国的霸权，或者至少是一个19世纪的反面的英国人。塞雷尔对犹太人、黑人和亚洲人的蔑视是显而易见的，但他的目的意图是什么？优越性可能被定义为一种“提高自尊”，87在中产阶级的英国人中，自尊经常从取笑差异而获得，非常明确地在塞雷尔的作品中得到体现。伊克伊的“金发”在犹太放债人和一个犹太金发人之间的对话中——与所恶的犹太人的联想——双重增强了英国人的优越感。放债人的过度贪婪，像施洛克在类固醇上的施药，无疑给观众带来了笑声。同样，塞雷尔的黄皮脸描绘包含了预期的种族定型和对中国的洗衣店和吃狗的参考。

塞雷尔和帕克的定型的喜剧效果是由于它们的不协调或荒谬。例如，来自《伊瓦利娜》的放债人是如此贪婪以至于他不满足于掠夺弱者，老妇人，
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NOTES


3 The term ‘Australian Native’ was applied to Australian-born men and women of British ancestry. So important was this particular sense of national identity that it led to the formation of the Australian Natives Association, a non-political and non-sectarian organisation formed in 1871 to represent the interests of ‘native’ born Australians.


5 The main biographical sources on Searelle are two unpublished typescripts written by theatre historian Eric Irvin: Papers of Eric Irvin, MS8786, National Library of Australia, Canberra. Although undated, what appears to be the earliest of these two typescripts is entitled simply ‘William Luscombe Searelle: 1853–1907’. The other

6 Searelle claimed his only other teacher was Charles Packer (1810–1883), the convict pianist. He also received some instruction in arranging and orchestrating from his brother Richard, a well-known organist and bandmaster of the local garrison band.

7 No biography of Walter Parke has been located at the time of writing this article. Information here has been compiled from the catalogues of the Boston Public Library, British Library, National Library of Australia, New York Public Library, State Library of New South Wales and State Library of Victoria.


10 This somewhat incomplete citation from the 1835 Dictionaire is contained in Edward Ziter, ‘Kean, Byron, and fantasies of miscegenation,’ Theatre Journal, vol. 54, no.4, December 2002, pp. 607–626 (608). It is not clear to which Dictionaire Ziter is referring. The only 1835 edition located with a similar title is Dictionnaire de l’Académie française (1835) which is cited in Anne-Louise-Germaine Staël (Madame de Staël), De l’Allemagne, Paris: Typographie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1845, p. 599.

11 ‘race, n. 6’, Oxford English dictionary.


16 Reilly, Kaufman and Bodino, Racism, p. 195.
18 Richards, Race, racism, and psychology, p. 2.
20 Mazrui, ‘Dr. Sweitzer’s racism’, p. 97.
23 Belgrave and Allison, African American psychology, p. 104.
31 Maza incorrectly spells the name as McLachlan.
34 Irvin, ‘Rogue genius’, p. 199. Australia has not been located at the time of writing and is presumed lost. The Aboriginal call ‘coo-ee’ was also used by Isaac Nathan in his Southern Euphrosyne and Australian miscellany: Containing oriental moral tales, original anecdote, poetry and music, London: Whittaker & Co., 1849.
36 Lamb, *The two races of man*.


38 Vermeesch, ‘Usury’.


40 Palgrave, *Essays on eastern questions*.


47 Edmund Kean and William Charles Macready were well-known 19th-century British actors, both known for their depictions of exotic characters. See Ziter, ‘Kean, Byron, and fantasies of miscegenation’.


51 Irvin, ‘Rogue genius’, p. 18.

52 Also in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1879, p. 2.


55 *The Argus*, 8 July 1885, p. 6.


57 *The Graphic*, 27 September 1890, p. 17.

58 The word ‘garoo’ may be a contraction of the word ‘kangaroo’. There is also a town of the same name in New South Wales in the vicinity of Tamworth. The word also appears in Ronald Firbank’s novel *Vainglory* (1925). It does not appear to have any African origin.

The Times, 24 September 1890, p. 8.

Searelle, Evalina, p. 25.

Searelle, Evalina, p. 25.


Clark, A short history of Australia, p. 115.


Clark, A short history of Australia, p. 115.

Clark, A short history of Australia, pp. 148, 175–176

Clark, A short history of Australia, p. 175

Lee, Performing Asian America, p. 96.


Irvin, ‘Rogue genius’, pp. 139–142. According to Irvin The march of the Amazons was also accompanied by a full brass band on stage and the chorus of Chinese Ambassadors was followed by a grotesque dance by miniature ‘chinamen’.

Parke and Searelle, Bodabil, p. 16.

Parke and Searelle, Bodabil, p. 16.

Searelle, Evalina, p. 8.

Searelle, Evalina, p. 8.

Searelle, Tales of the Transvaal.

Searelle, Tales of the Transvaal, pp. 20–21.

Searelle, Tales of the Transvaal, p. 27.

Searelle, Tales of the Transvaal, p. 25.

Richards, Race, racism, and psychology, p. 4.


89 Searelle, Tales of the Transvaal, pp. 41, 63.
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