

“Take it off!”

Blackness and Burlesque

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I was originally interested in burlesque intersecting with blackface and jazz in the space of American vaudeville. I am also interested in burlesque from my own practice as someone who has taken to the stage as both a burlesque performer and competitive pole dancer. I am interested in the performative sexuality, and the spectacle of both practices and see them together in a loose lineage where the genres of sex-entertainment and theatrical arts are blurred. I am interested in looking past canonized performers such as Josephine Baker, to understand burlesque's relationship with blackness more broadly. From my previous knowledge of burlesque, many women were lower class whites who turned to the scandal of show business for an escape. How then would further marginalized black women achieve success and navigate the porous borders of theatre and "low culture"? This work has multiple goals to combat the absence of black performers in burlesque history, as well as attempting a local history. Secondly, analyzing the way blackness, racial stereotypes, and blackface minstrelsy co-exist with burlesque. Lastly, to consider the politics of burlesque, gender, sexuality, desire, and race. In this way, I see burlesque as a fascinating cross section of social issues, theatre, and politics with a colourful history.

Historically, burlesque is a loose term used to refer to a category of scandalous comedy theatre. In this way 19th century burlesque shows do not resemble the full frontal striptease of contemporary neo-burlesque. To define my terminology, I will use burlesque to refer to the broad historical theatre practice. Burlesque-comedy will refer to the comedic tradition not characterized by the gendered sexualized performance. Neo-burlesque refers to the contemporary revival which is where my interest stems. Performers such as Dita Von Teese and Dirty Martini resurrected the retro art form in 1990's New York.<sup>1</sup> Neo-burlesque is a beautifully political,

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<sup>1</sup> Malika Rao, "20 Burlesque Stars to Know" *The Huffington Post* (date of last access 8 April 2015) [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/04/20-burlesque-stars-to-know\\_n\\_2166928.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/04/20-burlesque-stars-to-know_n_2166928.html)

body/fat positive, race conscious, and sometimes gender blending art form. This work will not touch upon the newer “boylesque” practice that has emerged, since burlesque is traditionally gendered female. A prominent black performer is Ray Gunn who won the Boylesque category at the 23rd Annual Miss Exotic World burlesque competition (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup>

In the normal narratives of burlesque, black performers are absent. Similarly in my passion of pole, there are few prominent black dancers. The most recognizable name would be Nicole “the Pole” Williams, who achieved mainstream success being featured in Rhianna’s “Pour it Up” music video.<sup>3</sup> To combat this marginalization, social media initiatives such as #BlackGirlsPole, or the Black Girls Pole Atlanta showcase have been started to increase visibility (Fig 2, 3).<sup>4</sup> Similarly in 1997, burlesque performers Aurora BoobRealis and Maya Haynes-Warren created the Black Girls Burlesque (BGB) company—an all black burlesque troupe—to combat the lack of diversity in neo-burlesque. Past BGB member Sweet Loraine creates and produces “Shades of Burlesque”, New York’s only all black revue.<sup>5</sup> I hope to do the same in highlighting key figures and their contribution.

Burlesque as a genre is a fusion of European cabaret theatre—burlesque’s predecessor—mixed with American folk and variety entertainment like vaudeville and minstrelsy.<sup>6</sup> It was burlesque’s illegitimate theatre status that made it an accessible medium to play with politics and

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<sup>2</sup> “Ray Gunn - 23rd Annual Miss Exotic World Competition” YouTube video, posted by “BurlesqueHallofFame,” 20 September, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PJJaSbh4otI>

<sup>3</sup> “Rihanna Pour It Up Audition Tape” YouTube video, posted by “RihannaVEVO,” 28 September, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5yInyWTzPo>

<sup>4</sup> PoleDanceNation. “#BlackGirlsPole.” Instagram, 1 March 2015. Photograph. 5 April 2015; BlackGirlsPole. “BlackGirlsPole Profile Bio” Instagram, 1 March 2015. Photograph. 5 April 2015

<sup>5</sup> “About- Sweet Loraine” Sweet Loraine <http://sweetloraineburlesque.weebly.com/about.html> (date of last access 8 April 15)

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Davis, *Baggy Pants Comedy: Burlesque and the Oral Tradition*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp. 34, 35.

sexuality.<sup>7</sup> These environments of “low culture” included sex-workers, alcohol, and gambling thus these “leisure rituals” were gendered masculine, included class solidarity but also generally segregated and raced as white.<sup>8</sup> Saloon’s used “waiter girls” with scant clothing to elicit clients and variety acts featured showgirls, chorus numbers, and striptease.<sup>9</sup> These broad “subaltern” sites have a commonality in their strategic incorporation of female sexuality for heterosexual entertainment. 1868 is cited as the watershed moment for American white burlesque when Lydia Thompson launched her “British Blondes” theatre troupe.<sup>10</sup> Thompsonian burlesque transgressed the moral, conservative, and bourgeois theatre by destabilizing the audience-performer dynamic in its directness.<sup>11</sup> The stage was used to dialogue about modern femininity rupturing modest Victorian bourgeois ideals and representations of white femininity.<sup>12</sup>

Minstrelsy helped institutionalize burlesque in its stock “wench” character played sometimes across race using blackface and cross sex-gender (Fig 4).<sup>13</sup> Jayna Brown argues that female minstrelsy helped burlesque develop around the 1880’s when audiences tired of the male dominated format and female stage presence brought fresh satire, incorporating dance and later chorus numbers.<sup>14</sup> *The Creole Show*, was the first known instance of female blackface and was produced by Jon Isham and Sam T. Jack in 1890.<sup>15</sup> *The Creole Show* featured sixteen light

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<sup>7</sup> Davis, *Baggy Pants*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Clyde Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, p. 74.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, p. 165.

<sup>14</sup> Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> “Black Burlesque: Live Nude Girls!” *Ebony Entertainment & Culture* <http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/black-burlesque-live-nude-girls#axzz3WIJ5UYsX> (date of last access 8 April 2015)

complexion women in blackface, one of whom—Belle Davis—went on to achieve success (Fig 5).<sup>16</sup> The plot was not about plantation nostalgia, but parodied discourses on black female sexuality.<sup>17</sup> Davis is a light skinned black women suspected to be from New Orleans before becoming a minstrel chorus girl.<sup>18</sup> Agents would commonly ask her to “darken up”.<sup>19</sup> *The Creole Show* was so successful that Davis was featured in 1895’s *Octoroons* and 1896’s *Oriental America*.<sup>20</sup> These shows were intelligent in their use of blackface to critique racial segregation or American imperialism abroad.<sup>21</sup> *Oriental America* and *The Creole Show* both toured to at least Britain.<sup>22</sup> European expectations of blackness came from traveler’s accounts, fugitive slave literature and abolition writing to inform their knowledge about black “folk” culture.<sup>23</sup> Another performer who needs to be unearthed is Ada Overton (Fig. 6).<sup>24</sup> Davis toured her own company “Belle Davis and Her Piccanines” in Europe in 1901 but little more is known about her career.<sup>25</sup> The production had a silent film adaptation in 1907, “Belle Davis and Her Three Picaninies”.<sup>26</sup>

The “cooch” dance entered America from the 1893 Chicago World Fair, and became ubiquitous, commonly seen as the precursor to the modern striptease.<sup>27</sup> “Cooch” or belly dancing was different in its scopis desire of the male patron and sexual display of the female performer in

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<sup>16</sup> Rainer E. Lotz, “Belle Davis and Her Piccaninnies: a Preliminary Bio-, Disco-, and Filmography” *Association for Recorded Sound Collections Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1994, p. 180; Rachel Shteir, *Striptease: the Untold History of the Girlie Show*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 32

<sup>17</sup> Brown, *Babylon Girls*, p. 95

<sup>18</sup> Lotz, “Belle Davis and Her Piccaninnies”, p. 178.

<sup>19</sup> Lotz, “Belle Davis and Her Piccaninnies”, p. 178.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *Babylon Girls*, p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, *Babylon Girls*, p. 117.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, *Babylon Girls*, p. 117.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, *Babylon Girls*, pp. 30-40.

<sup>24</sup> “Black Burlesque: Live Nude Girls!” *Ebony Entertainment & Culture* <http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/black-burlesque-live-nude-girls#axzz3WIJ5UYsX> (date of last access 8 April 2015)

<sup>25</sup> Lotz, “Belle Davis and Her Piccaninnies”, p. 178.; Brown, *Babylon Girls*, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Lotz, “Belle Davis and Her Piccaninnies”, p. 180.

<sup>27</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, pp. 255, 256.

a more direct interaction than previously seen in burlesque.<sup>28</sup> In the 1920's, Thompsonian burlesque transformed as striptease became standardized, chorus girls became a staple of vaudeville theatre, and strip joints sprung up.<sup>29</sup> Rumour has it the modern striptease was invented in the late 20's when a Chicago chorus girl, Hinda Wassau accidentally broke a bra strap exiting the stage.<sup>30</sup> In the Parisian jazz culture, black performers like Baker or the *Revue Negre* played up their exoticism using sexualized and “primitive” tropes.<sup>31</sup> Segregated black burlesque and vaudeville halls were common in urban areas during the jazz age and Harlem Renaissance.<sup>32</sup> Burlesque flourished in the 1930's Depression with variety acts flourishing in affordable popular carnival culture across America.<sup>33</sup> Gypsy Rose Lee became a burlesque star in white mainstream America at this time.<sup>34</sup> Variety shows in the era were dominated by burlesque-comedy with chorus and accompanying burlesque acts. Burlesque-comedy houses popped up in industrial neighbourhoods in the north east and midwest and catered to low and working classes.<sup>35</sup> The economic situation disproportionately affected people of colour and rural whites, so the potential for interracial interaction in these sites of low culture could be heightened.<sup>36</sup> I am skeptical of scholars erasure of blackface in Depression era burlesque comedy. A performer like Clotide circa 1930 requires scholarly attention in that very little is know about her car career and life (Fig 7).

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<sup>28</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, p. 231.

<sup>29</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, pp. 186, 243.

<sup>30</sup> Davis, *Baggy Pants*, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Petrine Archer Straw. *Negrophilia: Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*. (New York, N.Y.: Thames & Hudson, 2000) pp. 94-122.

<sup>32</sup> “Black Burlesque: Live Nude Girls!” *Ebony Entertainment & Culture*

<sup>33</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, p. 235.

<sup>34</sup> Jacki Willson. *The Happy Stripper: Pleasures and Politics of the New Burlesque*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Davis, *Baggy Pants*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> Sonnet H Retman. *Real Folks: Race and Genre in the Great Depression*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 79.

Spilling over into the 1940's performers like Gypsy Rose Lee, Ann Corio and Sally Rand achieved stardom.<sup>37</sup> Sahji Pearl can be inserted into this lineage as a black burlesque performer who achieved acclaim as a skilled dancer (Fig 8).<sup>38</sup> One interesting artifact is the 1949 revue film *Burlesque in Harlem*, which not only confirms that there was socially segregated variety theatre but survives to let the modern viewer experience the burlesque show. It features singers, tap dancers, comedians, chorus girls, and a few energetic striptease numbers to excite the audience.<sup>39</sup> Few performers are known by name except the "striptease contortionist" Tarza Young, and Gertrude "Baby" Banks performing a belly dance (Fig 9, 10). The revue film also features an unidentified female dancer and a third striptease dancer (Fig 11). The film is hosted by comedian Pigmeat Marckam, a known blackface performer and one of the few blacks to breakthrough in burlesque comedy.<sup>40</sup>

By the 1960's white club managers asked dancers to mingle directly with customers, a practice that would develop into the lap dance.<sup>41</sup> Burlesque as a performance still had interest with some surviving paraphernalia referencing Shelly Devonshire and Tootsie Roll (Fig 12, 13). Allegedly by the 1970's burlesque had disappeared and given way to the modern strip club as the new dominant site of "low" sexual culture.<sup>42</sup> The function of burlesque as "anarchic" with its political intent to transgress authority, gender, theatre, and class seemed lost.<sup>43</sup> During the neo-burlesque revival Dita Von Teese rekindled the politics of the practice. Characterized with an

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<sup>37</sup> Shteir. *Striptease*, p. 196.

<sup>38</sup> "Sahji - Popular 1940's Black Exotic, Belly, Shake Dancer" YouTube video, posted by "MusicandDancing4Ever," 12 August 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diz0giFWxT0>

<sup>39</sup> "Burlesque in Harlem (1949)", YouTube video, posted by "peepshowburlesque", 19 January 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAyoHYzu2qg>

<sup>40</sup> Davis, *Baggy Pants*, p. 52.

<sup>41</sup> "Black Burlesque: Live Nude Girls!" *Ebony Entertainment & Culture*.

<sup>42</sup> "Black Burlesque: Live Nude Girls!" *Ebony Entertainment & Culture*.

<sup>43</sup> Willson. *The Happy Stripper*, p. 18.

ultra feminine vintage look with tight corset and high heels to become a fetish sex object. This ultimate objectification is turned as the performer recognizes her sexual agency controlling her object hood.<sup>44</sup> BGB member Chicava HoneyChild explains that “this is our way as women and performers to speak our truth, express ourselves and celebrate exactly who we are...*real* women.”<sup>45</sup> Coco Framboise is one example of the crop of new talent emerging in neo-burlesque (Fig 14).<sup>46</sup> Perle Noire is an acclaimed black neo-burlesque artist who won the first Queen of Burlesque title at the inaugural 2009 New Orleans Burlesque Festival. (Fig 15)<sup>47</sup> Foxy Tann is another prominent star who identifies as a “radical feminist”.<sup>48</sup> Neo-burlesque is fusing social and identity politics with sexuality, art, and performance in exciting ways.

With this project I was interested in how burlesque, blackface and variety acts functioned in Montreal. Historically, Montreal night life was heavily segregated and white dominated spaces. “Interracial” interactions in “low culture”, sex-entertainment, and sex work spaces were limited to “lesser” white immigrant populations like Italians, Jews, French, Irish etc.<sup>49</sup> So unfortunately, I can only speculate into burlesque and blackness in our local history based off of images available in the McCord archive. The presence of minstrel characters in Montreal theatre advertising should alert us to the intersections of blackface with variety entertainment including burlesque (Fig. 16). Similarly, “the main” St Laurent has been a longstanding fixture of nightlife,

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<sup>44</sup> Willson. *The Happy Stripper*, p. 144.

<sup>45</sup> “Modern Burlesque Divas Shake What Their Mamas Gave ‘Em!” *Ebony Entertainment & Culture*, <http://www.ebony.com/video/entertainment-culture/modern-burlesque-divas-shake-what-their-mamas-gave-em#axzz3WlJ5UYsX> (date of last access 8 April 2015).

<sup>46</sup> “Coco Framboise - The 3rd Annual New Orleans Burlesque Festival” YouTube video, posted by “burlesquefest”, 25 November, 2011, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Hro9QENGw8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Hro9QENGw8)

<sup>47</sup> “Perle Noire - The 3rd Annual New Orleans Burlesque Festival” YouTube video, posted by “burlesquefest”, 25 November, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHO9SAAUswM>

<sup>48</sup> Malika Rao, “20 Burlesque Stars to Know” *The Huffington Post* (date of last access 8 April 2015) [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/04/20-burlesque-stars-to-know\\_n\\_2166928.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/04/20-burlesque-stars-to-know_n_2166928.html)

<sup>49</sup> Karen Herland, “Montreal’s Red Light District”, Lecture/ Walking Tour, Montreal, 8 April 2015



historically with cinemas and burlesque variety theatres (Fig. 17). Montreal's reputation as a "party town" and the site of a thriving jazz culture would suggest there is a colourful history there to be revived.<sup>50</sup>

Historically burlesque addressed the classism inherent in theatre by reclaiming it as a "low culture" space.

Those in socially higher positions often control the discourses within which the low other will be figured and thus defined. In the case of burlesque, however, the low other produces another discourse, one that—within the confines of the theatrical space—might invert that hierarchy and worse yet, threaten to call into question the right of higher discourses to determine the vertical order of culture to begin with.<sup>51</sup>

I see a contemporary study of the stripping industry useful for considering the relationships between burlesque and race as marginalized sexualized performers, in what Siobhan Brooks terms "desire industries". These environments are segregated and have patterns of racism. One interview revealed that managers will not hire racialized dancers because they do not fit his "ideals" of beauty.<sup>52</sup> A dancer Destiny, used to work in an all black club but now found herself confronted with the "whole white-standard-of-beauty type thing."<sup>53</sup> Black beauty in the sex industry—or entertainment more broadly—is measured against norm and idealized white beauty and physiognomy. Some dancers use their "difference" with majority white clientele to their advantage to capitalize on double standards. Exemplary, Roxanne speculates some men "wouldn't sleep with a black girl out there, but (can) come (into the strip club) and look at... fantasize about it."<sup>54</sup> To complexify things, Alicia working in Conquest Club in New York, used to work in an all black club in Atlanta and refuses to work in another, saying "the customers

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<sup>50</sup> Herland, "Montreal's Red Light District"

<sup>51</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> Kim Price-Glynn, *Strip Club: Gender, Power, and Sex Work*. (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p. 118.

<sup>53</sup> Price-Glynn, *Strip Club*, p. 120.

<sup>54</sup> Price-Glynn, *Strip Club*, p. 119.

acted like they were just entitled to have you. They were rude; touched you even after you told them certain areas were off limits.”<sup>55</sup> In this way there is an internalization of black female hypersexuality by black men in not respecting the boundaries of consent. Brooks also theorized in desire industries, symbolic violence is normalized in the culture to lower “erotic capital” of black women. “Erotic capital” means that racialized women are desired but for lower economic values.<sup>56</sup> This low “erotic capital” means that men feel they can pay racialized women less for the same services.<sup>57</sup> Racialized women working in sex entertainment have to cope with nude performance, emotional, and erotic labour while simultaneously facing sexism and racism.<sup>58</sup> I see these politics applicable to women in burlesque historically and in the modern day.

Black performers have a place in the history of burlesque since its early conception with variety minstrelsy. Performers were present throughout the ages but little is known about these women’s acts, fascinating lives or careers. The lack of diversity in historical burlesque, neo-burlesque, and even pole dancing is affectively being combated by the very woman involved. The wider discourses and practices of “desire industries”—sex work, stripping, burlesque etc—demonstrate how black women have to confront race based hostility along with misogyny in the industries. On this note, it is commendable how black burlesque performers can navigate terrain of racism and sexism to manage their acts, create choreography, construct props, sew costumes, and create their theatrical visions of stardom. The politics of race, gender, sexuality, performance, and desire make this a truly interesting area of study that clearly requires more attention.

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<sup>55</sup> Siobhan Brooks, Unequal Desires: Race and Erotic Capital in the Stripping Industry. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), p. 40.

<sup>56</sup> Brooks, Unequal Desires, p. 38.

<sup>57</sup> Brooks, Unequal Desires, p. 38.

<sup>58</sup> Price-Glynn, Strip Club, p. 120.

# Plate List



Fig. 1

Author's screenshot, "Ray Gunn - 23rd Annual Miss Exotic World Competition" YouTube video, posted by "BurlesqueHallofFame," 20 September, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PJJaSbh4otI>

Figs 2 and 3

Author's screenshot, PoleDanceNation.  
"BlackGirlsPole." Instagram, 1 March 2015.  
Photograph. 5 April 2015

Author's screenshot, BlackGirlsPole.  
"BlackGirlsPole Profile Bio" Instagram, 1 March 2015. Photograph. 5 April 2015



Fig. 4 and detail

Minstrelsy company sheet music cover \*note the prominence of the "wench" character\*, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, found in Robert Clyde Allen. Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) p. 180.



Fig. 5

“Belle Davis 19th Century”, photographer unknown, from “Vintage Black Burlesque Photos” Ebony Entertainment & Culture  
<http://www.ebony.com/photos/entertainment-culture/vintage-black-burlesque#photo-6> (date of last access 8 April 2015)



Fig. 6

“Belle Davis late 19th/ early 20th Century”, photographer unknown, from “Vintage Black Burlesque Photos” Ebony Entertainment & Culture,  
<http://www.ebony.com/photos/entertainment-culture/vintage-black-burlesque#photo-6> (date of last access 8 April 2015)



Fig. 7

“Clotilde 1930’s”, photographer unknown, from “Vintage Black Burlesque Photos” Ebony Entertainment & Culture,  
<http://www.ebony.com/photos/entertainment-culture/vintage-black-burlesque#photo-6> (date of last access 8 April 2015)



Fig. 8

“Sahji Pearl 1940’s”, photographer unknown, from “Vintage Black Burlesque Photos” Ebony Entertainment & Culture,  
<http://www.ebony.com/photos/entertainment-culture/vintage-black-burlesque#photo-6> (date of last access 8 April 2015)



Figs 9, 10, 11.

Author's screenshots of Tarza Young, Gertrude "Baby" Banks, and an anonymous dancer from "Burlesque in Harlem (1949)", YouTube video, posted by "peepshowburlesque", 19 January 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAyoHYzu2qg>



Fig. 12

"Shelly Devonshire 1960's", photographer unknown, from "Vintage Black Burlesque Photos" Ebony Entertainment & Culture, <http://www.ebony.com/photos/entertainment-culture/vintage-black-burlesque#photo-6> (date of last access 8 April 2015)



Fig. 13

"Tootsie Roll 1960's", photographer unknown, from "Vintage Black Burlesque Photos" Ebony Entertainment & Culture, <http://www.ebony.com/photos/entertainment-culture/vintage-black-burlesque#photo-6> (date of last access 8 April 2015)





Fig. 14

Author's screenshot from "Coco Framboise - The 3rd Annual New Orleans Burlesque Festival" YouTube video, posted by "burlesquefest", 25 November, 2011," [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Hro9QENGw8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Hro9QENGw8)

Fig. 15

Author's Screenshot from "Perle Noire - The 3rd Annual New Orleans Burlesque Festival" YouTube video, posted by "burlesquefest", 25 November, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHO9SAAUswM>



Fig. 16

*Theatre Comique*, burlesque comedy poster by John Henry Walker, circa 1850-1885, 34.2 x 26.7 cm, M930.50.7.572, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.  
\*note the presence of the minstrel characters



Fig. 17

*St. Lawrence Boulevard, Montreal, QC about 1910, Neurdein Frères, circa 1910, ink on paper mounted card, 8 x 13 cm, MP-0000.861, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.*

\*the catalogue entry notes the cinemas and theatres present with variety and burlesque shows

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*Theatre Comique*, burlesque comedy poster by John Henry Walker, circa 1850-1885, 34.2 x 26.7 cm, M930.50.7.572, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

*St. Lawrence Boulevard, Montreal, QC about 1910*, Neurdein Frères, circa 1910, ink on paper mounted card, 8 x 13 cm, MP-0000.861, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

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