

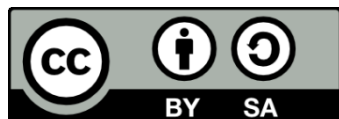


# American Culture and Melodrama in the 19th century

## Ενότητα 4 : Race and Melodrama

Ζωή Δέτση

ΤΜΗΜΑ ΑΓΓΛΙΚΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ



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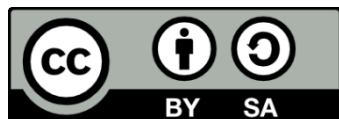
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# Race and Melodrama



Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση  
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ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΥΜΑΤΩΝ  
ΕΙΔΙΚΗ ΥΠΗΡΕΣΙΑ ΔΙΑΧΕΙΡΙΣΗΣ

Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



ΕΣΠΑ  
2007-2013  
πρόγραμμα για την ανάπτυξη  
ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΟ ΤΑΜΕΙΟ

# Περιεχόμενα ενότητας

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1. Melodrama and the Politics of Race
2. The Octoroon (1859)



# Objectives

- The aim of this section is to trigger students into an understanding of the power of melodrama to touch upon inflammatory social issues such as race and slavery.



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# Melodrama and the Politics of Race



# Questions

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- What is race?
- What are your beliefs about racial differences?
- What are some of the causes and impacts of racial discrimination?
- What is being done to address racial discrimination?



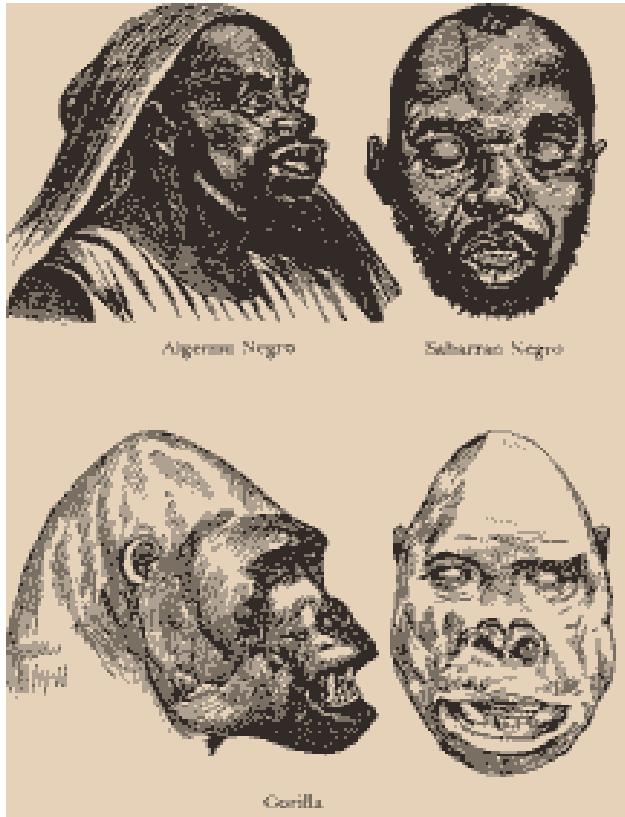


# Glossary/ Terms

- institutional racism; discrimination through economic, cultural, and political means; scapegoating; dehumanization; apartheid; segregation; oppression; resistance; civil rights; civil disobedience; genocide



# Racial Prejudice



- Illustration from the book "Types of Mankind" by Josiah Nott and George Glidden, 1854.

Εικόνα 1



# Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) (1/3)



Εικόνα 2



Εικόνα 3



# Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) (2/3)



Εικόνα 4

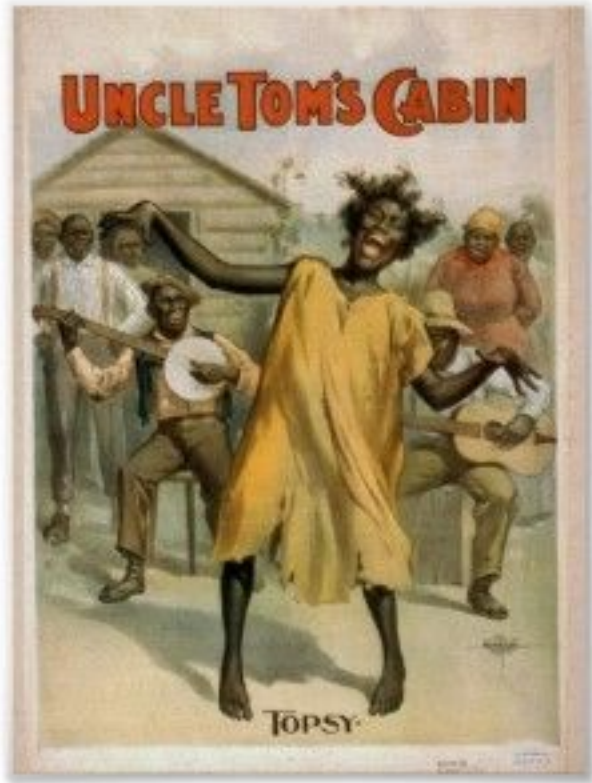


Εικόνα 5





# Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) (3/3)



Εικόνα 6



Εικόνα 7



# Racial Discrimination and Violence



Εικόνα 8

- Hegemonic discourse that framed blacks into an image of racial inferiority, in constant need of guidance and paternalistic care. Barbaric, heathen, and inferior.



# American Democracy and the Problem of Race

- John Adams: a “black cloud” hanging over America.
- Thomas Jefferson: “deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained .... [would] produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of one or the other race.”



# W. E. DuBois and the African-American Consciousness

- African-Americans and national identity.
- “Two competing cultural nationalisms” : slavery and the unresolved dilemma of whether blacks should be freed or recolonized in Africa fragmented the antebellum American society.



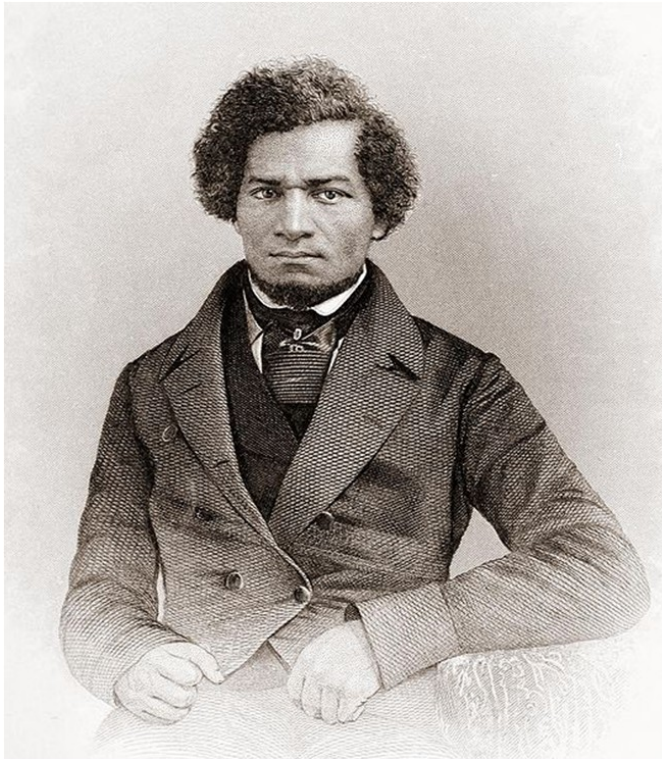


# Political Decisions and Practices

- Fugitive Slave Law (1850): forced northern whites to help return runaway slaves.
- A.C.S.: American Colonization Society: return black Americans to freedom in Africa.
- Abolitionism.
- Slavery exposed the hypocrisy of republicanism.



# Frederick Douglass “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852)



Εικόνα 9

- “To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty and call upon him to join in joyous anthems is inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony” (189).



# Race and Melodrama

- Perform America's conception of race.
- White-black binarism invites melodramatic treatment.
- White vision of blackness?
- Social discourse/ political ideology/ cultural division.



# The African as “Other.”

- Such a distinction was crucial not only for creating images and stereotypes for the racial “other,” but equally essential for defining the “self” as the center of unity, power, and civilization.



# Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), *Black Skin, White Masks*



Εικόνα 10

- For the white subject, the black other is everything that lies outside the self. For the black subject, the white other serves to define everything that is desirable, everything that the self desires. The white man is not only the Other but also the master, real or imaginary (138).



# Black Stereotypes

- Clownish servant, but loyal, and with a great desire to emulate his white master.
- Master culture/ value system/ superiority.
- Minimize threat.
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kc4EwD5hoA>



# Minstrel Shows



Εικόνα 11

# Cultural Misconceptions



Εικόνα 12

- “Jim Crow” dance.
- Inaccurate depiction of black culture.
- Clownish buffoons, fond of dancing and singing.
- Contented and harmless.
- Created caricatures rather than realistic portrayals.
- Idealized picture of life on Southern plantations.





# Ideological Contradictions

- “self” and “other.”
- Divisive discourse of North and South.
- Antislavery and proslavery.
- Liberalism and racism.
- Illusory coherence of white republican culture and the reality of exclusion.



# Women and Race

- Double victimization: race and color.
- Exoticism.
- Skin color: social factor and identity marker.
- Acceptance of white standards of femininity.
- Come to terms with their otherness and marginalization.



# Racial Mixing



Εικόνα 13

- A stereotypical character that appeared in American literature during the 19th and 20th centuries.
- Issue of miscegenation.
- Society's reluctance to acknowledge ambiguity in racial classifications.



# The Tragic mulatto



- Sad or suicidal because fails to fit either in the “white world” or the “black world”.

Εικόνα 14



# A woman who can “pass” for white:

- is accepted as white by society and falls in love with a white man. Eventually, her status as a bi-racial person is revealed and the story ends in tragedy.
- has suffered little hardship in her life, but upon the revelation that she is mixed race, she loses her social standing.
- has all the social graces that come along with being a middle-class or upper-class white woman but is nonetheless subjected to slavery.



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# The Octoroon (1859)

Dion Boucicault



# The role of theatre in politics and social life



Εικόνα 15

- New business class of industrialists and financiers: production of moral reform plays and sensation melodramas which encouraged family attendance and segregated the respectable from the lower classes of society.





# An era of increasing industrialization



Εικόνα 16

- Bourgeois consumption was reflected in the various technological developments in the American theatre: more spectacle and scenic effects.





# Turning point

- Echoes the wider abolitionist sentiments of the ante-bellum American society.
- Black characters gain protagonistic status for the first time in the American theatre.



# A controversial issue (1/2)

- The dehumanizing aspect of the institution of slavery.
- But,
  - preserves class and race lines.
  - the codes of bourgeois respectability and racial purity emerge intact from chance-ridden circumstances.
  - not too radical or forcefully outspoken regarding the abolition of slavery.



# A controversial issue (2/2)

- Racial ideology arises out of economic exploitation.
- Economic structures and chance-ridden circumstances.
- Fluid and unstable Southern society and economy.



# An era of increasing industrialization



Εικόνα 17

- Becomes personalized.
- A localized system based on specific interactions between villain and victims.
- Legal sanctions.
- Hegemonic discourse.



# Racial Discourse



Εικόνα 18

- Frantz Fanon has defined colonized people as not simply those whose labor has been appropriated but those in whose souls an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality.”



# White Hegemony

- Sense of rootlessness, of deprivation of a cultural background:
  - a powerful method of control to deprive the slaves of the possibility to challenge the white world's assumptions and definitions
  - a psychological device to deny their identity and history.



# W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) (1/2)



Εικόνα 19

- “always looking at the world through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”



# W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) (2/2)

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- “double consciousness.”
- “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings.”





# Biologized essentialism

- National identity and its widely advertised values of freedom, equality, and progress become firmly rooted in the uncertain locations of “skin” color or “blood.”
- Racial intermixing.



# Body/corporeality

- Zoe's ambivalent presence: fear of *racial pollution*.
- Social purity and the ideology of absolute racial difference.
- Miscegenation was a nightmare since race functioned as the most powerful and yet the most fragile marker of human identity.



# Hybridity

- Zoe, as a ‘hybrid’ species
  - does not represent the space of racial interchange, but rather establishes the polarities and inequalities of racial relations.
  - is granted neither identity nor difference.
  - mirrors back an image of whiteness but in imperfect form.



# Social marginalization

- Zoe’s “split subjectivity - feelings of psychic dislocation:
  - moves within the dominant white world.
  - she is marginalized by the same culture she was brought up to revere and emulate.



# Tragic ending

- Her death leaves the social order intact from any kind of racial mixing, thus reassuring the American audiences of the immutability of racial categories.



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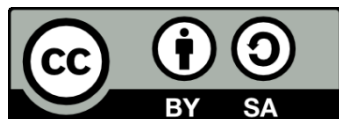
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