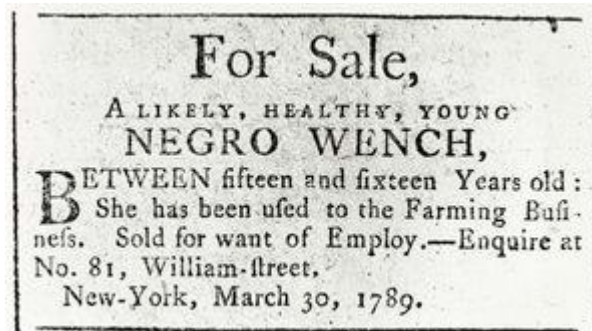


EAAS (European Association for American Studies) Workshop
Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers Study Group

“Constructing Identity: Nineteenth-Century African American Women Writing about Race”

Florence, Italy
Thursday-Friday, 18-19 October 2012



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This workshop will examine how race is constructed in nineteenth-century American slave narratives as well as personal correspondence and journals of African American women. At times, in the fictional, autobiographical, travel, and personal writings the racial discourses become intricately intertwined with discourses of gender. For instance, in many slave narratives, slave girls and women are depicted as doubly helpless: because of their race and their gender. As nineteenth-century slave narratives and anti-slavery novels repeatedly reveal, nineteenth-century racial definitions were arbitrary inventions and race was more than anything a social construction. These narratives question the American concept of democracy, conditions for citizenship, and definitions of political and legal national identity. Moreover, as scholar Matthew Frye Jacobson has demonstrated, race has been central “to American conceptions of property (who can own property and who can *be* property)” (*Whiteness of a Different Color* 21). The problems of slave women (the threat of sexual abuse, degradation, destruction of the family unit, lack of social and legal rights, socio-political vulnerability and helplessness) often emerge in slave narratives closely linked to constructions of African American racial identity – be it individual or collective. In particular the Mulatta figure frequently appears as a living testimony of the unsuccessful control of illegitimate racial mixing and an embodiment of the tensions related to racial definitions. The Mulatta (and Mulatto) figures tend to destabilize nineteenth-century black-white binary system of racial divisions. In other words, the slave and the Mulatta characters often serve to destabilize nineteenth-century definitions of racial and national identity.

The two-day event organized in Florence, Italy will take as a starting point Harriet Ann Jacobs’ autobiographical novel, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). In addition to Jacobs’ work and other African American women’s slave narratives, white American women’s perception of race will be used as a point of comparison. For instance, how did such antislavery activists as Lydia Maria Child and Elizabeth Cady Stanton form their ideas about African American womanhood; what was this image like and how was it constructed? Or, how did foreign women who toured the United States in the nineteenth century perceive slavery and race and how did these impressions differ from those of American or African American women? During the event,

participants will examine the various ways of constructing race and forming definitions of interracial identity, and will look at the ways racial discourses can be blended with gender.

Please send a 200-word abstract no later than 30 March 2012 to
Sirpa Salenius, email: sirpa.salenius@gmail.com



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Ida B. Wells: *Southern Horrors : Lynch Law in All Its Phases.* (Cover page) (1892)

The event is supported by City of Florence and District 1 (Comune di Firenze and Quartiere 1), The European Association for American Studies – EAAS (www.eaas.eu/eaas-networks/european-study-group-of-19th-century-american-literature), The Rome Study Center of Richmond University (www.richmondinrome.it), The Collegium for African American Research – CAAR (www.caar-web.org), Michel de Montaigne Foundation (www.fondazionemontaigne.it), Universite´ Paris 10 and research group FAAAM (<http://www.u-paris10.fr/servlet/com.jsbsoft.jtf.core.SG>).

Some suggested slave narratives and sources for related material:

Primary and secondary sources on Harriet Jacobs:

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)

Jacobs, Harriet A. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987.

Yellin, Jean Fagan. *Harriet Jacobs: A Life.* Basic Civitas Books, 2005.

Yellin, Jean Fagan and Cynthia D Bond. *The Pen Is Ours: A Listing of Writings by and about African-American Women before 1910 with Secondary Bibliography to the Present (Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers).* Oxford UP, 1991.

Garfield, Deborah M. and Rafia Zafar, eds. *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays.* Columbia UP, 1997.

Lyons, Mary E. *Letters From a Slave girl: the Story of Harriet Jacobs.* New York: Scribner's, 1992.

Websites:

Harriet Jacobs (1813 - 1897)

<http://www.yale.edu/glc/harriet/links.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet_Ann_Jacobs

<http://www.harrietjacobs.org/>

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Sjacobs.htm>
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/jacobs/hjhome.htm>
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/jacobs/hj-timeline.htm>
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2923.html>
<http://www.yale.edu/glc/harriet/index.htm>

<http://www.yale.edu/glc/harriet/docs.htm>:

The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers (2 volumes)

<http://www.amazon.com/Harriet-Jacobs-Family-Papers/dp/080783131X/>

The collected writings of Harriet Jacobs, published by the University of North Carolina Press

Harriet Jacobs Papers

<http://webpage.pace.edu/kculkin/index.html>

Website for the Harriet Jacobs Papers Project, which will produce a two-volume documentary edition of papers by and about the 19th-century African-American author, abolitionist, and reformer Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897), to be published by the University of North Carolina Press.

http://www.pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Jacobs_Harriet.html

http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Harriet_Jacobs/Incidents_in_the_Life_of_a_Slave_Girl/A_Visit_To_England_p1.html

Other slave narratives and antislavery novels:

Anonymous. *Memoir of Old Elizabeth, a Coloured Woman* (1863).

Craft, Ellen and William. *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; Or the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* (1860). (online: Project Gutenberg)

Hopkins, Pauline. *Slaves' Escape; or, The Underground Railroad* (1880).

---. *Contending Forces : a Romance Illustrative of NegroLife North and South* (1900).

Keckley, Elizabeth. *Behind the Scenes; or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (1874).

The Narrative of Bethany Veney, Slave Woman (Boston: George Ellis, 1889).

McCray, S. J. *Life of Mary F. McCray. Born and Raised a Slave in the State of Kentucky* (1898).

Trollope, Frances. *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw; or Scenes on the Mississippi*. Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1836. <<http://books.google.com/>> 03 March 2008.

Wells, Ida. *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892)

Wilson, Harriet. *Our Nig* (1859) <<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/africam/ournighp.html>>

Slave narratives and related sources on the web:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snrelated.html>

Foreign women on slavery and race:

Bremer, Fredrika. *The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America*. Trans. Mary Howitt. 2 vols. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853-54.

Kemble, Fanny. *Journal of A Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*, 1863.

Martineau, Harriet. *Society in America*, 1837.

Trollope, Frances. *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 1832.

Material on the topics of race and interracialism:

Andrews, William L. *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* University of Illinois, 1988.

Babb, Valerie. *Whiteness Visible: The Meaning of Whiteness in American Literature and Culture*. New York: New York UP, 1998.

- Baptist, Edward E. "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States." *American Historical Review* 106.5 (2001): 1619-50.
- Bentley, Nancy. "White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction." *American Literature* 65.3 (1993): 501-22.
- Braxton, Joanne M. *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition within a Tradition*. Temple University Press, 1989.
- Fisch, Audrey A. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Harrold, Stanley. *American Abolitionists*. Essex: Pearson Education, 2001.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.
- Johnson, Walter. "The Slave Trader, the White Slave, and the Politics of Racial Determination in the 1850s." *Journal of American History* 87.1 (2000): 17.
- Macdonald, Christine. "Judging Jurisdictions: Geography and Race in Slave Law and Literature of the 1830s." *American Literature* 71.4 (1999): 625-55.
- McDowell, Deborah E. and Arnold Rampersad, eds. *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- O'Brien, Michael. *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Peterson, Carla L. *"Doers of the Word": African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880)*. Rutgers University Press, 1995.
- Raimon, Eve Allegra. *The "Tragic Mulatta" Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Antislavery Fiction*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004.
- Riss, Arthur. *Race, Slavery, and Liberalism in Nineteenth-century American Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Sekora, John and Darwin T. Turner. *The Art of Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory*. Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1982.
- Sollors, Werner. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York: Oxford UP, 1986.
- Sollors, Werner. *Neither Black nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Sollors, Werner, ed. *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Sundqvist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993.
- Triconi, Albert. "Dialect and Identity in Harriet Jacob's Autobiography and Other Slave Narratives." *Callaloo* 29.2 (2006): 619-33.
- Zackodnik, Teresa. "Fixing the Color Line: The Mulatto, Southern Courts, and Racial Identity." *American Quarterly* 53.3 (2001): 420-51.

On the web:

<http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/slave.html>

<http://www.yale.edu/glc/harriet/links.html>

Slavery and the Making of America (PBS)

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/>

Slavery and the Making of America offers new perspectives on the slave experience and testifies to the active role that Africans and African Americans took in surviving their bondage and shaping

their own lives. The PBS website, meant to supplement the 2004 PBS documentary series, includes lesson plans and primary documents.

History Now (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)

http://www.historynow.org/12_2004/index.html

In this, the December, 2004, issue, contributing scholars focus on four different types of primary sources and apply them to the task of looking at the history of enslaved African Americans. Their essays explain not only what these types of sources reveal but also how to evaluate their validity and how to use them effectively.

Documenting the American South

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/>

A collection of sources on Southern history, literature and culture from the colonial period through the first decades of the 20th century. It is sponsored by the Academic Affairs Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the texts come primarily from its Southern holdings.