1. Record Nr. UNINA9911009176703321

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Titolo	Citizenship on Catfish Row : Race and Nation in American Popular Culture
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Columbia : , : University of South Carolina Press, , 2022 ©2022
ISBN	9781643363295 1643363298
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (184 pages)
Classificazione	PER011020LIT004030
Disciplina	780.89/96073
Soggetti	Race in opera Race in motion pictures African Americans in popular culture African Americans in musical theater LITERARY CRITICISM / American / Asian American & Pacific Islander PERFORMING ARTS / Theater / History & Criticism Noirs americains dans la culture populaire Race au cinema Race a l'opera
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Includes index.
Nota di contenuto	Introduction. Art and America -- The Nation in The Birth of a Nation -- Show Boat and the Strain of Race -- Porgy and Bess and the Danse Americaine -- Conclusion. A More Perfect Disunion.
Sommario/riassunto	"Citizenship on Catfish Row focuses on three seminal works in the history of American culture: the first full-length narrative film, D. W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation; the first integrated musical, Oscar Hammerstein and Jerome Kern's Showboat; and the first great American opera, George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess. Each of these works sought to make a statement about American identity in the form of a narrative, and each included in that narrative a prominent role for Black people. Each work included jarring or discordant elements that pointed to a deeper tension between the kind of stories Americans wish to tell about

themselves and the historical and social reality of race. Although all three have been widely criticized, their efforts to connect the concepts of nation and race are not only instructive about the history of the American imagination but also provide unexpected resources for contemporary reflection"--

"Citizenship on Catfish Row: Race and Nation in American Popular Culture retrieves three "iconic" works, each of which launched an entire genre-the serious narrative film (The Birth of a Nation), the "integrated musical" (Show Boat), and American opera (Porgy and Bess), to interpret popular entertainment in the Jim Crow era. Despite their manifold differences, these radically innovative works shared two striking features: each attempted to represent the character or spirit of America in narrative form, and each included in that story a central role for the issue of race. As popular entertainment designed to appeal to audiences, these works both endorsed and helped to shape a contemporary social consensus on race that we now find grievously flawed, and each has been sharply and appropriately criticized on that account. But when read with attention to the many ways in which they seem to question, and even contradict themselves, these works appear in a very different light, not as monuments to a dishonorable past but as expressions of a conflicted and uncertain culture burdened by history but groping its way-not always with a purposeful stride, not always with clear sight, and not always in good faith-toward a present moment confident enough of its position to criticize them. By identifying the common ambition in these foundational works, Citizenship on Catfish Row enables us to see them as moments in an evolving popular understanding of American national identity. And by focusing on points of incoherence or dissonance in their telling of the national story, it suggests the impediment to national unity represented by race. Drawing attention to the ways in which popular entertainment confronted, sometimes through evasion and sometimes with a brutal honesty, the issue of race, Harpham proposes that analysis of these works can benefit our polarized and vitriolic conversation about our nation's most important problem"--