

Notes on Contributors

LEONARDO BUONOMO received his Ph.D. from the University of California, San Diego. He teaches American literature at the University of Trieste and is the President of the Italo-American Association of Friuli Venezia Giulia. He has published on nineteenth-century American literature, Italian-American literature, and American TV series. His most recent book is *Immigration, Ethnicity, and Class in American Writing, 1830-1860: Reading the Stranger* (2013).

SIMONE CAROTI was born in Italy, graduated at the University of Trieste, and then moved to West Lafayette, Indiana, in 2002, to pursue a Master's and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at Purdue University. While there, he taught Italian, English composition, literature, and business writing, and received his Ph.D. in 2009 with a dissertation on science fiction. In 2011, that dissertation became a book, *The Generation Starship in Science Fiction: A Critical History, 1934-2001* (McFarland). In December 2010, he moved to Florida, and started teaching at Brevard Community College. He taught prep writing, composition, literature, and science fiction at BCC before beginning working at Full Sail University in April 2012. He is also a Senior Research Scientist at the Astrosociology Research Institute (ARI), an organization devoted to bringing the humanities and the social sciences into the debate on human colonization of outer space. He is currently under contract from McFarland for a book on the science fiction of Iain M. Banks.

DANIELA DANIELE teaches American literature at the University of Udine. Her interest in the performative aspects of American writing ranges from Victorian private theatricals to contemporary poetry in performance. She has explored the textual aspects of American mixed-media in *The Woman of the Crowd: Urban Displacements and Failed Encounters in Surrealist and*

Postmodern Writings (2000). More recently, she edited the second Italian edition of the anthology of women in performance *Research: Angry Women* (1997, 2010) and reported on Don DeLillo's dramatic output and on the recent adaptation for the stage of Kathy Acker's *New York in 1979* by the Belarus Free Theater company.

VALERIO MASSIMO DE ANGELIS teaches American Literature at the University of Macerata. He is the author of two books on Hawthorne (*La prima lettera: Miti dell'origine in The Scarlet Letter di Nathaniel Hawthorne*, Rome, Lozzi & Rossi, 2001; and *Nathaniel Hawthorne: Il romanzo e la storia*, Rome, Bulzoni, 2004). He is also co-editor of two collections of bio-critical essays on contemporary American literature, of the proceedings of an international conference on Philip K. Dick, and of the proceedings of the 19th International Conference of the Italian Association for North-American Studies. He has written on historical fiction, romance, abolitionism, feminism, modernism, postmodernism, comics, and on various authors, such as Walt Whitman, Ambrose Bierce, Stephen Crane, Henry James, Langston Hughes, Thomas Wolfe, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Henry Roth, Leslie Fiedler, Philip K. Dick, E.L. Doctorow, Stephen King, Leslie Marmon Silko, Margaret Atwood, and Rudy Wiebe.

DANIELE FIORENTINO is Associate Professor of U.S. History at the Università Roma Tre. He taught for several years at the University of Macerata and was Director of the Center of American Studies in Rome. A specialist of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Fiorentino has written extensively on American-Indian history and on U.S.-Italian relations during the process of Italian unification and the American Civil War. He is the editor-in-chief of a series on this subject, sponsored by the Center of American Studies. He is on the editorial board of *American Studies-Mid-America* and since 2013 sits in the board of the *Centro Studi Americani*. His most recent book is *Gli Stati Uniti e il Risorgimento d'Italia, 1848-1901* (Gangemi, 2013).

KATHLEEN FRASER began writing poetry seriously after her move to NYC in the early 1960s, and credits friendships with N.Y. School poets Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest and Joseph Ceravolo as intensely generative to her work. After her 1967 move to San Francisco, her poetry focus shifted to the work of Objectivists George Oppen, Lorine Neidecker, Basil Bunting and Jack Spicer – all of whom “condensed and re-tuned her ear.” Between 1968-1971, Fraser taught at The Iowa Writers Workshop and Reed College, returning to S.F. in 1972 to direct the Poetry Center at San Francisco State University, where she initiated The American Poetry Archives and taught in the graduate Writing Program. Fraser co-founded and edited *HOW (ever)* from 1983-1991, and continues to publish its on-line version, *HOW2*, with the help of other English-language writers. In 1992 she won a Guggenheim that took her to Rome where she and her husband, the philosopher Arthur Bierman, have lived each spring since. Fraser has published 16 poetry collections, 7 Artist books (all housed at Yale's Beinecke Library), an essay collection and two children's books.

GIANNA FUSCO teaches English as a Foreign Language at the University of Naples “L'Orientale.” She holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the same university and has worked as an Adjunct Professor of American Literature at the Universities of Trieste and Padua. She is the author of *Uomini in secondo piano: Protagoniste femminili e deuteragonisti maschili nel romanzo del tardo Ottocento* (L'Orientale 2007), and of two co-authored books (with Fiorenzo Iuliano) on the teaching of English to humanities students (*Bridging Gaps and Crossing Texts: A Workbook of English for Humanities Students*, 2010; and *Incroci Testuali: Didattica dell'inglese e culture di massa*, 2010). She has also published several essays on Henry James, Kate Chopin and Emily Dickinson and is currently completing a book on American TV series in a transnational perspective. In 2012 she was a SUSI (Study of the United States Institute) Fellow at New York University, a program funded by the U.S. Department of State.

MARINA MORBIDUCCI teaches English Language, Linguistics and Translation at Università di Roma “La Sapienza.” In 1976-78 she was a Fulbright-Hays bursar at SUNY Binghamton, where she earned her MA, and was on the editorial board of *boundary 2*. In 2003 she received her Ph.D. from Chieti-Pescara University, with a dissertation titled *Gertrude Stein in T/empo: The Notion of Time in Gertrude Stein’s Works and Poetics*. She is translator and editor of the first Italian bilingual editions of Gertrude Stein’s works, *Tender Buttons* (1989, 2006), *Last Operas and Plays* (2010), and *Lifting Belly* (2011). She has contributed articles on American innovative poetry in the journal *HOW2* since 2000. She co-edited an anthology on Black Mountain Poets’ poetry and poetics (1987) and published a monograph entitled *Stein Quartet* (2006). She was TESOL-Italy’s president from 2008-2010.

MARCO MORINI is Assistant Professor in Political Science at the International University of Sarajevo. He has previously been Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at Macquarie University (Australia) and at University of Padua (Italy). His main research interests are U.S. Politics, Elections and Political Communication. He is the author of *Gli spot elettorali nelle campagne presidenziali americane: Forme, immagini, strategie* (Otto 2011) and *Forms of Political Transnationalism: The External Voting of the Italian in Sydney* (Booktango 2013).

STEPHEN MOTIKA (born in Santa Monica, California) lives and works in Brooklyn and Mileses, New York. His first book of poems, *Western Practice*, was published by Alice James Books in 2012. The editor of *Tiresias: The Collected Poems of Leland Hickman* (2009), he is also the author of the poetry chapbooks *In the Madrones* (2011) and *Arrival and at Mono* (2007). Motika’s articles and poems have appeared in *Another Chicago Magazine*, *BOMB*, *The Brooklyn Review*, *The Constant Critic*, *Eleven Eleven*, *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *Staging Ground*, *Vanitas*, among other publications. He has held residencies at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Workspace, Millay Colony for the Arts, and ZK/U in Berlin. He is the pub-

lisher of Nightboat Books, the Artistic Director of Poets House in New York, and on the faculty of the Stonecoast MFA Program at the University of Southern Maine.

ALDON LYNN NIELSEN, born in Nebraska and raised in Washington, D.C., is currently the George and Barbara Kelly Professor of American Literature at the Pennsylvania State University. His poetry, which has won the Larry Neal Award and the Gertrude Stein Award, and has been included in Best American Poems, is collected in such volumes as *Heat Strings*, *Mixage*, *Stepping Razor and Mantic Semantic*. Nielsen's volumes of literary criticism include *Reading Race*, *Writing between the Lines*, *C.L.R. James: A Critical Introduction*, *Black Chant: Languages of African American Postmodernism* and *Integral Music: Languages of African American Innovation*. With Lauri Ramey, he is the co-editor of *Every Goodbye Ain't Gone: Innovative Poetry by African American Artists*. A second volume in that series, titled *What I Say*, is forthcoming from the University of Alabama Press. His edition of Lorenzo Thomas's *Don't Deny My Name: Words and Music and the Black Intellectual Tradition* won an American Book Award. Nielsen has also taught at Howard University, the George Washington University, San Jose State University, the University of California in Los Angeles, and Loyola Marymount University.

HAZEL WHITE's first poetry book, *Peril as Architectural Enrichment*, published by Kelsey Street Press, was a finalist for the 2011 Northern California Independent Booksellers Association Best Book of the Year Award. Her new manuscript, *Vigilance Is No Orchard*, was a finalist for the 2015 Ottoline Prize. She is also the author of 12 books on gardening and landscape architecture. Her poetry has appeared in *Denver Quarterly*, *Verse*, and *New American Writing*. She presented in 2014 at the Stanford University Environmental Humanities Project event "Can Poetry Save the Earth?" In 2008, she was one of five publicly voted winners of a monologue contest at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Abstracts

VALERIO MASSIMO DE ANGELIS, Super-Pop Culture: With Great Power, a Greater Irresponsibility

This essay focuses on the issue of “ir/responsibility” in one of the foremost examples of globally dominant American pop culture, superhero comic books, whose (super)power of influencing ideological attitudes and world-views has been dramatically strengthened by their conquest of the Hollywood blockbuster industry. Popular culture is usually associated with a marked social and political irresponsibility, committed as it is (or should be) to elicit the most superficial forms of harmless pleasure. But since the very birth of the genre, superheroes have always been self-reflectively engaged in questioning the motivations and consequences of their actions. Spider-Man’s famous motto, “with great powers comes a great responsibility,” dates August 1962, but it fairly describes Superman’s (or Captain America’s) earliest endorsement of “truth, justice, and the American way.” The essay will briefly describe some of the various trajectories superheroes have taken through the decades in facing the moral and political implications of their predicament, showing the main ideological contradictions embedded in this form of expression, as well as the different and conflicting meanings the concept of “responsibility” has come to take.

SIMONE CAROTI, The Madman’s Embarkation: The Ship of Fools and Richard Paul Russo’s *Ship of Fools*

This paper analyzes Richard Paul Russo’s 2001 novel *Ship of Fools* in terms of its use of the eponymous trope, which Russo takes from Sebastian Brant’s 1494 poem *Das Narrenschiff* and from the European tradition of ship-of-fools narratives dating back to Medieval times, as well as from the historical reality of literal ships of fools plying the waterways of central Europe in the 15th century. In accordance with this tradition, the characters in Russo’s novel act

out the same kind of warped, insane behavioral practices as those in previous stories. When faced with the discovery of alien life in the universe, and of this alien life's utter hostility and brutality, the inhabitants of the generation starship *Argonos* respond with an inward-turning solipsism utterly at odds with their actual circumstances, thus initiating a cascade of events leading them to near-total ruin. Russo's handling of the ship-of-fools trope in the story, at once unobtrusive and pervasive, relocates the voyages of the madman from the stretches of Earth's seas to the empty vastness of space, presenting both as reflective surfaces against which we do not see the reality of our lives, but only the reflections of our psyches – until it is too late.

DANIELA DANIELE, *Pretending to Be Lincoln: Interracial Masquerades in Suzan-Lori Parks's Twin Plays*

Anachronism is a frequent device in Avant-garde theater. From Eugene O'Neill's plays to the eclogues of the New York poets, representative historical figures have always fluctuated on stage as emblems of power. In the mid-1960s, Adrienne Kennedy brought in her dream-like drama the incongruous presence of black actors dressed like white leaders like Queen Elizabeth and William the Conqueror, in an interracial camouflage which reversed the mocking practice of blackface minstrelsy. In this iconoclastic fashion, the black dramatist appropriated symbols of white power to allude to the failed attempt of her community to find a definition beyond the patterns of non-black hegemony. More recently, Hip-Hop dramatist Suzan-Lori Parks enacted a similar interracial masquerade, staging Black impersonators of the celebrated Abraham Lincoln. In the twin plays *The America Play* (1992) and *Topdog/Underdog*, she features the deep estrangement of Americans of African origin dressed in the genteel attire of the white President, in a racialized version of the most popular anti-slavery advocate in American history. Especially in the latter play, which in 2002 was awarded the first Pulitzer Prize for Drama ever assigned to a black woman dramatist, the African-American actors in Lincoln's garb appear no less "trapped in Blackness" than Adrienne Kennedy's hallucinated heroines, being artificially framed within a videoculture which neutralizes racial difference

and places them in the indeterminate condition of frustrated spectatorship. In the twin plays that Parks dedicates to the “Great Emancipator” of the black race, Lincoln’s lookalikes revive this national icon through a grotesque ritualization, in a post-racial and media-conscious remodulation of the interplay of blackness and power in American history.

GIANNA FUSCO, *Binders and Bayonets: Irony, Comedy, and Social Media in the 2012 Presidential Campaign*

This article focuses on the 2012 U.S. Presidential campaign and its impact on popular culture, with specific reference to online SNS practices as a form of grass-root appropriation of political discourse. Moving from the shift that has occurred in the online cultural practices around campaigns and candidates since the 2008 Presidential election, the article analyzes the role of memes as a form of popular (that is, un-authorized by the establishment) culture which by now constitutes a form of political speech act informed both by the tradition of humor and satire and by the Web 2.0 specific laws of production and circulation of user-generated content.

MARCO MORINI, *How U.S. Presidents Are Regarded Historically: The Contrast Between Historians’ Judgment and the Retrospective Public Opinion Approval Ratings*

In April 2013, when covering the opening of his presidential library in Dallas, part of the media attention was drawn by the “unexpected” surge in approval ratings of former President George W. Bush. That surprise came because the 43rd President was very unpopular when he left office in 2009 and because he is still considered by many scholars as one of the “worst Presidents in history”. Although scholars’ judgment and public opinion surveys often seem not to match each other, this paper explains that George W. Bush’s rise is exactly what one would expect, based on the history of other former presidents’ approval ratings. Indeed, retrospective approval ratings typically exceed approval ratings while in office.