

Political and Correct. Student Protests, Online Activism and the Cult of Purity*Valeria Gennero*

This essay investigates the role played by the cultural protocols associated with the term “woke” in the new season of (mainly) online activism that has been shaping U.S. society in recent years. Gennero describes the theoretical framework surrounding the development of a vocabulary of political correctness, which includes expressions like: trigger warnings, entitlement, racial appropriation, deplatforming, safe spaces, privilege, deplatforming, and microaggression. She also explores the controversies about the impact of social media on campus politics and on the rise of movements like #MeToo.

Revisiting Political Correctness*Robert Boyers*

Robert Boyers argues that few ideas now seem as familiar and tired as “political correctness.” Due to the endless debates surrounding it, the term has come to mean so many different things to different people. Yet, as Boyers points out, however tired and tiresome the idea of political correctness might be, it does continue to help us understand the world of contemporary academia, where a large percentage of university professors fear to say anything that will conceivably lead anyone to level at them some complaint.

Why Freedom of Speech Is Not an Academic Value*Stanley Fish*

The title of this essay is intentionally provocative, for there are many who

believe that freedom of speech is the preeminent academic value. Stanley Fish’s challenge to that popular view depends on a distinction between freedom of speech and freedom of inquiry. Freedom of speech is a democratic value. It says that in a democracy government should neither anoint nor stigmatize particular forms of speech, but act as an honest broker providing a framework and a forum for the competition of ideas and policies. In this vision, every voice has a right to be heard, at least theoretically. In the academy, on the other hand, free inquiry not free speech is the reigning ethic, and academic inquiry is engaged in only by those who have been certified as competent; not every voice gets to be heard.

The Controversial History of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Reception*Anna De Biasio*

The early part of the essay focuses on the dramatic change in the critical status of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a major point of reference for feminist criticism through the 1970s and 1980s, who later became the target of accusations of racism in the 1990s. The author first traces the influence of second-wave and third-wave feminism on Gilman studies, and then looks at the ideological and rhetorical common ground shared by certain postures of revisionist criticism in the 1990s along with the culture of political correctness, with special reference to John L. Jackson’s notion of “de cardio racism”.

Political Correctness, Gender, Disability, and Arabophobia in Maysoon Zayid's Stand Up Comedy*Cinzia Schiavini*

The essay investigates the interrelationships between Political Correctness, stand-up comedy, and minority groups, by concentrating on the performances of an Arab-American disabled comedian, the "Palestinian Muslim virgin with cerebral palsy" Maysoon Zayid. Focusing on PC as a set of linguistic practices whose effect is the sanitization of public discourse (especially when minorities are concerned), and stand-up comedy as a set of speech acts aiming at both the affirmation and/or the transgression of identity boundaries, the essay investigates the relationship between PC and comedy, and the way they interact within the three "spaces of minority" Zayid embodies: ethnicity (Arab-Americaness in the wake of 9/11), gender (womanhood and its relation to both Arab and American cultures), and disability, under-represented in American culture and the media.

"My Turn": *House of Cards* after #MeToo*Nicolangelo Becca*

In November 2017, the American media streaming company Netflix removed Kevin Spacey from the cast of its flagship series, *House of Cards*, as a strong reaction against the actor's accusations of sexual misconduct and in direct response to the contemporary rise of the #MeToo movement. Consequently, the sixth and final season of the TV show was rewritten without its main character, Frank

Underwood, while the focus of the story became his wife, Claire (played by the show's co-star Robin Wright). The article aims at offering a corpus-based critical discourse analysis of the wide-ranging shifts between the last two seasons of *House of Cards*, focusing on how the story, its characters, and their language have changed in relation to a new awareness of the role of power and gender relations triggered by the emergence of the #MeToo movement.

WESTERN: UPDATE**Western Fiction in Translation: An Update***Stefano Rosso*

This panoramic bibliographic essay resumes the updates published in *Ácoma* up to 2002 and focuses on the western in Italy. The first section concentrates on American western fiction translated into Italian since 1828; the second on westerns written by Italian writers; and the third on the western in Italy after the "western crisis" of the late 1960s, that is, in the so called "post-western" narratives.

Reinterpreting the American West from An Urban Literary Perspective: Contemporary Reno Writing*David Ríó*

Traditionally western American literature has been exclusively identified with proximity to the land and rural settings. However, this restrictive notion of western writing has been questioned in the last few decades by a growing number of authors who have vindicated the urban quality of

the New West. It is argued that not only large cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Houston or Las Vegas have attracted the attention of contemporary writers, but also smaller urban centers, for example, Reno, “the biggest little city,” have recently become the setting of insightful postfrontier writing. The present essay explores contemporary Reno literature, written both by local authors (Willy Vlautin, Tupelo Hassman, Claire Vaye Watkins) and temporary residents (for instance, Bernardo Atxaga and Javi Cillero), as a major example of the consolidation of the urban perspective in recent western American writing.

The Rebirth of a Nation: *The Hateful Eight* and the Lincoln’s Letter

Enrico Botta

Compared to the historical counter-narrative of *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) and *Django Unchained* (2012), *The Hateful Eight* – Quentin Tarantino’s eighth movie (2015) – rewrites the Reconstruction Era in ideological and political terms. By confining in a haberdashery the geography represented by the eight characters and the historical changes they are witnesses to, the film describes a specific period of American history by mingling reality and fiction through a narrative mechanism that focuses on a letter Lincoln is supposed to have written to one of the characters. Whether the letter is true or false is a central point in the film. In line with the President’s confidence in a country reunited under the umbrella of equality and democracy, a northern black and a southern white build a new political, social and ideological structure with the target to execute a woman who

tries to subvert that structure. The haberdashery thus becomes the stage where the actors represent not only what the Civil War has left unresolved, but also a problematic national re-birth.

ESSAYS

“A Chapter from An Unwritten Romance”: The Textuality of the Mother’s Voice in Louisa May Alcott’s *Transcendental Wild Oats* (1873)

Raffaella Malandrino

Louisa May Alcott’s satirical sketch *Transcendental Wild Oats* (1873), written thirty years after the author’s childhood experience at the alternative commune of Fruitlands with her family and other transcendental philosophers, is a semi-autobiographical account of the contradictory principles that regulated life at the farm. These principles directly impacted her mother, who, being the only woman of the group, was overworked by the task of taking care of all practical matters and saving the whole family from starvation and illness. The failure of Fruitlands, which was also due to divergent opinions among its members on family dynamics and kinship relations, resonates in Alcott’s memory as a deep critique of the separate spheres paradigm. The latter, though apparently challenged by the utopian intentions of the consociates, was actually reconfigured as a naturalized material and ideological space, where a woman’s incessant care and labor contained the effects of men’s inertia regarding concrete self-sustenance.

This study examines how the narrative structure of *Transcendental Wild Oats*

confronts these issues by exposing how the complex rendering of the character of Hope Lamb at Fruitlands, from her forced domesticization to the heroic reaffirmation of her moral and salvific power, is only apparently aligned with the sentimental literary tradition of the period. The metatextual strategies of the story subtly deflect the scripted gendered role of the mother, and aim at rehabilitating the utopian principles of Fruitlands through her voice, by creatively projecting bridges across characters and events. At the meta-discursive level, Alcott's trans-historical recomposition of Fruitlands also frames the author's mature stage of writing and her creative engagement with documenting the experience of women involved in the workforce in and out of domestic realms, thus reflecting the author's fluid engagement with social activism and reformist endeavors in the American society of her time.

“All Our Choices Will Probably Run Out”. William's T. Vollmann's Post-Apocalyptic Post-Fiction

Marco Malvestio

With the two volumes of *Carbon Ideologies* (2018), William T. Vollmann provides a complex and innovative treatment of a pen enormously complex topic, climate change. The essay analyses the variety of literary styles, ranging from scientific divulgation to narrative reportage and the science fictional imagination, employed by the author to communicate the perils of climate change and the circumstances in which it manifests itself in everyday life. Coherently with what Coffman calls his 'moral non-intervention' (2015), Vollmann's use of a multilayered

textual strategy merging objective exposition and personal digression refuses to stigmatize the actions and behaviour of the people he interviewed, but rather aims to trace the collective dimension of responsibility behind climate change.

Toni Morrison, *Our Beloved*: Interview with Toni Morrison

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