

### **What West? Worlding the Western in Hernan Diaz's *In the Distance***

Neil Campbell

The essay examines Hernan Diaz's novel *In the Distance* (2017) as an example of "worlding", showing how it interrupts conventions of the Western to explore a post-exceptionalist view of the West as a space of difference in which worlds collide.

### **The New African Diaspora in the United States: Blackness, Literature and Transnationality**

Elisa Bordin

This essay provides an overview of the literary works produced by writers belonging to the so-called "new African Diaspora", that is, people who have voluntarily moved from Africa to the United States in the last two decades. Specifically, it outlines how works by Teju Cole, Chris Abani, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Dinaw Mengestu and NoViolet Bulawayo dialogue and clash with certain themes of the African American tradition, by sharing a political engagement with American blackness yet also distancing themselves from it because of their different ontological understanding of race.

### **"Sometimes, a fight you cannot win is still worth fighting": Law, Justice and Diasporic Subjects in *The Shadow Hero***

Fulvia Sarnelli

This essay focuses on *The Shadow Hero*, a graphic novel published in 2014 by Gene Luen Yang and Sonny Liew. The book retraces the origins of the

Green Turtle, the allegedly first Asian-American superhero who first appeared in the 1940s, by unmasking his hidden immigrant heritage and diasporic subjectivity. The essay explores the spatiality of Yang e Liew's Chinatown, where the dynamics of power can be read as a rendition of Giorgio Agamben's state of exception within the system of globalized capitalism. Such an extra- and ultra-judicial space foregrounds transnational anchoring points between seemingly discordant narratives of governmentality and performances of charismatic leadership. Moreover, in dialogue with the Golden Age comics, the graphic novel envisages a new perspective on heroism and justice, which also becomes a crucial site of definition for (trans)national identity.

### **Giacomo Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West*: Soundscapes and Popular Imagery between the United States and Italy**

Fiorenzo Iuliano

The article addresses two sets of issues related to *La fanciulla del West*, one of Giacomo Puccini's least known and represented operas. First, it analyzes the idea of America that the opera conveys, focusing on Puccini's musical choices and on the narrative and formal strategies he uses to evoke a conventional image of the American West. Several passages of the opera are read as attempts at constructing a Western landscape, through the juxtaposition of musical and textual references that are frequently contrasting with each other. Second, the article submits that *La fanciulla's* implicit subject is Italian society at the turn of the century and that especially

Italian migration to the United States is one of the themes that Puccini remarkably alludes to. Building up a fictitious American West he provides a truthful portrait of some aspects of the Italy of his time and offers new insight into its imagery.

**“The Purest Rules of the Art”: Poe, Baudelaire and the Transnational Genesis of the Literary Field**

*Carlo Martinez*

This article explores the relationship between Poe and Baudelaire from Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological perspective. It argues that Poe’s role for the French author cannot be reduced to a mere psychological or artistic affinity but must be read within the specific literary trajectory Baudelaire was pursuing. Regarded from this point of view, Poe’s role for Baudelaire, totally unacknowledged by Bourdieu, is of basic importance to cast light, first, on the crucial importance of the practice of translation for the constitution of the literary field, and, second and more importantly, on the radically transnational nature of the literary field since its very inception.

**Student Loans: An American Case**

*Marianne Debouzy*

This essay discusses the issue of US student indebtedness, which amounted to 1.5 trillion dollars in 2018. By analyzing data taken from American online and print sources, it presents the topic from a historical perspective, and addresses some of its most striking social and political consequences. Furthermore, it shows how ineffective the measures so far taken by policy-

makers and educational institutions have been in dealing with the increasing influence of banks and other financial institutions in the North-American neoliberal system.

**“He’s one of us”: Pandemic, Protests and the Meaning of the Figure of Donald Trump for his Electors**

*Chiara Migliori*

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the United States more than any other country in the world, shedding light on the attitude of a president who, branding any word not coming from his Twitter account as fake news, has not hesitated to sympathize with the interests of his constituents, practicing populism even to the detriment of the implementation of necessary national measures against the expansion of the virus. Focusing on the words of a sample of his white Christian voters, collected in the first two years of Donald Trump’s presidency, this article shows how the political actions and public discourse of the president express his alignment with an ethnocentric ideology and the feelings of resentment and displacement of a demographic group that would guarantee him unconditional support.

**Professor Graeber against the Gang of “By Now”**

*Stefano Portelli*

David Graeber, anthropologist and political activist born in New York, prematurely passed away in the Fall of 2020. His ability to communicate to a broader audience, his courage in tackling the ‘great questions’ of classical social science, and his pragmatic approach to anarchism as a political

horizon for the present, made him an inspiring figure for scholars, activists, and public intellectuals worldwide. This article focuses on his groundbreaking theoretical contribution to the fields of economic and political anthropology, which represents an antidote to the intellectual paralysis that dominates contemporary radical thought.

### **The Pilgrim Fathers as Master Narrative of American History**

*Massimo Rubboli*

In 1620, a small band of English Separatists (Pilgrim Fathers, as they were later called) crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the Mayflower to seek a place where they could practice their type of Christianity without fear of persecution. In the New World, they found a small colony, Plymouth Plantation. During the revolutionary period, the epic story of their travel and settlement was transformed into a foundational myth that has become part of the master narrative of American exceptionalism.