



**PIVOTAL STUDIES IN
THE GLOBAL AMERICAN LITERARY IMAGINATION**
SERIES EDITORS: DANIEL T. O'HARA · DONALD E. PEASE

palgrave▶pivot

Kristeva in America

Re-Imagining the Exceptional

Carol Mastrangelo Bové

palgrave
macmillan

Pivotal Studies in the Global American Literary Imagination

Series Editors
Daniel T. O'Hara
Temple University
Philadelphia, PA, USA

Donald E. Pease
Department of English
Dartmouth College
Hanover, NH, USA

This series will present new critical perspectives on the histories and legacies shaping the divergent visions of America in the world within literary texts. Texts that re-envision America and its relationship to the larger world, in ways other than exceptionalist, will provide a point of critical focus for these cutting edge scholarly studies. Using the unique format of Palgrave Pivot to make an incisive intervention into current scholarship, the stress in these books will be on how American literary texts have and continue to contribute to the reformation of the vision of America in the world from roughly the antebellum period to the present. As “transnational” approaches to scholarly production have become mainstream, *Pivotal Studies in the Global American Literary Imagination* considers the complexities of such an appropriation and, instead, develop alternative global perspectives.

All American genealogies from the New England preeminence through the mid-century modern cold war consensus to post-modern dissensus, transatlantic, global/transnational turns (and counter-turns) would be tapped and the word “American” in the title will include all of North America. All critical perspectives would also be welcome, so long as the focus is on the question of how the texts and subjects discussed bear on the question of the global American literary imagination. Finally, the authors will demonstrate how to read their chosen texts, revealing the ways these new interpretations foster informed critique and revised critical methods.

Books published within this series should fall within the Pivot length limits of 25,000–50,000 words.

More information about this series at
<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/15082>

Carol Mastrangelo Bové

Kristeva in America

Re-Imagining the Exceptional

palgrave
macmillan

Carol Mastrangelo Bové
Department of English
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Faculty of French
Westminster College
New Wilmington, PA, USA

Pivotal Studies in the Global American Literary Imagination

ISBN 978-3-030-59911-9

ISBN 978-3-030-59912-6 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59912-6>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer
Nature Switzerland 2020

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Pattern adapted from an Indian cotton print produced in the 19th century

This Palgrave Pivot imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

For Paul

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate this book to Paul A. Bové, who has been my consort in writing and in life for many years—we celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary in 2020! I also want to acknowledge Michael Hays for having introduced me to Kristeva’s work back in the early 1980s, an introduction that has become an enduring relationship of a different kind.

Daniel T. O’Hara and Donald E. Pease, co-editors of the Pivot series “The Global American Literary Imagination,” have been supportive in every way in bringing this book to print. I’m grateful for the opportunity to be part of a series that reaches out for dialogue with those beyond the United States at a time when such conversations are increasingly rare.

I thank Rachel Jacobe, Assistant Editor in Literature at Palgrave Macmillan and the team at the press for their support and flexible schedule in working with me to have this study of the response to Kristeva’s work in the United States appear. The University of Pittsburgh’s faculty and administration provided the resources to fund the Kristeva Circle Conference in 2017, which confirmed in my mind the productive debates deriving from her work in this country. I include the conference poster here: it makes reference to two of the major figures I have singled out in discussing the influence of Kristeva’s writing in America, Hortense Spillers and Jack Halberstam. Frank Vroegop’s painting of the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, which appears on Marco Rosano and Andreas Scholl’s album cover for their version of the musical composition, is a striking

visual for the title of what is arguably Kristeva's most famous essay, "Stabat Mater." The following link displays Vroegop's colors in all their glory.

<https://tinyurl.com/y6dbn4dz>

Finally, I thank Scott Davidson and John E. Drabinski, editors of the University of Pittsburgh publication, *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, for making the conference proceedings available: Vol. 26, 2 (2018). They provide further evidence of the substantial influence of Kristeva's work in this country including several of the authors mentioned in this book.

KRISTEVA CIRCLE CONFERENCE



MARCO ROSANO
ANDREAS SCHÖLL
Andreas Schöll appears courtesy of
 Decca Music Group Ltd

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH • UNIVERSITY CLUB GOLD ROOM

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

OCT. 27 AT NOON
 Jack Halberstam, Columbia University, "Auto-Destructive Art"

OCT. 28 AT NOON
 Video Conference and Skype Q&A with Julia Kristeva,
 writer and psychoanalyst, "The Psyche Lives in Time"

OCT. 28 AT 6 PM
 Hortense Spillers, Vanderbilt University,
 "Time and Crisis: Questions for Psychoanalysis and Race"

All events are free, please register by contacting cbove@pitt.edu by Oct. 1, 2017

For more information visit www.kristevacircle.org
 or contact cbove@pitt.edu or mecchia@pitt.edu

Funding Provided by: John Beverley's Research Budget, Carol Bove's Research Budget,
 the Faculty Research and Scholarship Program, the Humanities Center, the European Studies Center,
 the Hewlett International Grant, the Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Program,
 the Department of English, and the Department of French and Italian.

Fig. 1.1 Stabat Mater Poster from the 2017 Kristeva Circle Conference at the University of Pittsburgh. Frank Vroegop (painter)

INTRODUCTION

This book studies the influence of Julia Kristeva's work on American literary and film studies including, for example, innovative approaches to Paule Marshall's fiction and Orson Welles's films. Critics in the United States receive the thinking of arguably the best representative today of French feminism, semiotics, and psychoanalytic writing in complex, controversial ways, especially on the question of marginalized populations. Like the critics analyzed here, I incorporate her thought in my own creative readings of relatively little-known authors and directors including Christiane Rochefort, Nancy Savoca, and Frank Lentricchia in these pages.

PRAISE FOR *KRISTEVA IN AMERICA*

“Carol Bové’s *Kristeva in America: Re-Imagining the Exceptional* is a work of great critical importance. In it, she explores the relationships between Kristeva’s work and the experiences of marginalized populations: African American, immigrant, woman as mother. At this particular moment, readers need to grapple with these complex relationships. Bové also explores American’s political identity and structural composition in light of Kristeva’s work, reinforcing the relationships between the psychoanalytic, semiotic, and political identities of both an individual and a nation.”

—Gina MacKenzie, *Associate Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, and Associate Professor of English at Holy Family University, USA*

“Carol Mastrangelo Bové braids together two strands of reflection in *Kristeva in America*. The first is a survey of Kristeva’s reception and use by US literary and cultural critics, including Hortense Spillers, Kelly Oliver, Benigno Trigo, and Jack Halberstam, among others. The second is an analysis of selected works of Kristeva herself that bear on the question of the psychic life of power in the United States. Given the rise of the so-called culture wars and their current political consequences in our country, Bové’s contribution is especially pertinent and timely.”

—John Beverley, *Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Hispanic Languages and Literatures, University of Pittsburgh, USA*

CONTENTS

1	Kristeva's Theories on Motherhood and Abjection: Spillers and Halberstam	1
2	Kristeva's Impact on Film Studies: Orson Welles and David Lynch	25
3	"Allow Me a Confession: I Love America"	43
4	The Fiction: A Modernist View of America	61
5	Re-Envisioning World Literature and Film: Rochefort, Savoca, and Lentricchia	79
	Conclusion	111
	Index	113



CHAPTER 1

Kristeva's Theories on Motherhood and Abjection: Spillers and Halberstam

Abstract This chapter shows how Kristeva's theories on motherhood in the essay "Stabat Mater" as well as her writing on abjection in *Powers of Horror* have stimulated new directions in American literary studies. Hortense Spillers's *Black, White, and in Color* and Jack Halberstam's *Skin Shows*, for example, draw on a psychoanalytic approach shaped by her theories to address especially the race question. I discuss primarily Kristeva's essays from the 1980s in dialogue with two American critics who bring their creative versions of Neo-Freudian thought to bear on Paule Marshall's and Bram Stoker's novels.

Keywords Motherhood · Abjection · Race

Theories on motherhood in the essay "Stabat Mater" (Kristeva 1987, 234–264) as well as her writing on abjection in *Powers of Horror* (Kristeva 1982) have stimulated new directions in American literary studies. Both Hortense Spillers (2003) and Jack Halberstam (2012), among others, draw on Kristeva's theory in significant ways in their writing on literature and race. Considering Spillers's and Halberstam's work in their connection to her theory enables a psychoanalytic approach to address especially the race question hovering over literary studies and beyond. In