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Editors' Preface

The essays assembled in this collection were presented at a one-day symposium entitled "Cross-cultural Readings of the United States" held in Zagreb on May 24, 2014. This symposium thus offered a platform for Croatian Americanists and the colleagues from the neighboring countries to present their current research in particular as it reflects our "local" readings, interpretations, and imagining of the United States in its present or past aspects. The local variants of conceiving the United States, as a powerful dispenser of images and cultural practices globally, included the views from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, and the United States. We are grateful that Professors Walter Hölbling (University of Graz) and Moira Baker (Radford University) acted as key note speakers and lead the way into inspiring discussions.

The present collection is hopefully only a first volume in the series Working Papers in American Studies. We envision this series as showcasing the state-of-the-art research done in American Studies and related fields by Americanists in Croatia, members of the Croatian Association for American Studies, and enriched by the contribution of our colleagues, regional, European and world-wide American Studies scholars. We earnestly hope that the edition, published on the CAAS (HUAmS) web site, will be able to continuously register the thematic, methodological, and generational diversity and dynamics characteristic of doing American Studies in the institutions of higher learning in our country, while extending welcome to scholars from abroad. As always, we invite our readers to be the final judges of the success of our scholarly endeavors.

The editors gratefully acknowledge the grant by the University of Zagreb in support of research that was awarded in 2014.

Editors,

Sven Cvek

Jelena Šesnić

I Directions in European American Studies

Walter W. Hölbling
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American Studies in Europe: ‘Divided We Stand’

With its military and economic influence, its cultural and linguistic reach, the United States is—for better or for worse—too formidable and potent not to be understood clearly and critically. HOW to understand the USA has been a vehemently discussed issue ever since 1998 ASA president Janice Radway suggested that “American Studies” better be re-named “cultural studies,” or some such. Since then we have seen the arrival of a plethora of new terms – starting with the not so exciting coinage “New American Studies” and diversifying into a host of terms that preferably include “trans-,” “cross-,” “anti-,” “post-,” “comparative,” “queer,” and even “diasporic” – a term which until not so long ago usually only referred to the history of the Jewish people from antiquity to the present. If, as then ASA President Emory Elliott argued in his 2006 address, “diversity” is now the key concept in American Studies, this lively pool of buzzwords certainly testifies to it. While it also seems to indicate a trend towards the globalization of American Studies, this process itself spawns another debate that is tied to the object of our discipline as well as to the concepts and tools of the field itself: is globalization actually Americanization – often understood as the unfettered spread of ruthless capitalism across the globe? If so, how to assess this phenomenon with the methods of our discipline? Has Radway’s 1998 provocative suggestion been vindicated and has “America” become a diffuse free-floating signifier for “trans/international” Americanization? As European scholars we have one advantage: looking across the Atlantic, our object of study is very clearly visible – the USA have not disappeared in the flood of buzzwords, and there is little indication they would do so in the foreseeable future. The New Americanists will still try to understand the same old USA, but with different concepts; the debate about US exceptionalism will continue, enriched by more comparative aspects and cross-cultural perspectives. For a better understanding, as Winfried Fluck, Stipe Grgas, and Jelena Šesnić, among others, suggest in recent papers, scholars might pay more attention to the importance of capitalism and economy as decisive forces in U.S. society and culture. We might also look more closely into the extremely mediated character of everyday life in the

States, including the new media; at the ownership of media conglomerates like FOX, Time Warner, etc.; and at the impact they have on the practice and processes of U.S. democracy. Another research focus could be the compatibility of fundamentalist religion and democratic society. I expect that the intensified sharing of U.S. and international American Studies scholars' perspectives will help us to gradually establish a more comprehensive view on all these issues under discussion, and to better place them in their appropriate historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts. For our research and teaching of U.S. culture and society, only an inclusive approach guarantees the necessary and most authentic level of complexity and differentiation which can make students aware that the flood of simulacra they receive via everyday mass media is exactly that.

Key words: New American Studies, contextuality, transculturality, globalization, exceptionality

As Paul Lauter once put it in his insightful study *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park*, the U.S.A. – with its military and economic influence, its cultural and linguistic reach – is, for better or worse, too formidable and potent *not* to be understood clearly and critically. HOW to understand the U.S.A., though, has been a vehemently discussed issue ever since ASA president Janice Radway suggested at the 1998 annual meeting that “American Studies” better be re-named “cultural studies,” or some such.

Let me insert a short personal comment here: When I was born, in 1947, what sometimes is called the “American Century” had almost completed its first half, but I was not really aware of that. The State Treaty of 1955 returned to Austria the independence it had lost with its annexation to Nazi Germany in 1938, and the withdrawal of all allied troops was celebrated nationally. From a little boy's perspective, this was a very fine thing – no school, and my father even bought me a big cone of ice cream, a treat reserved for very special occasions. The U.S.A., in my memory, did not figure prominently in these events, except as one of the names of the four powers that signed the treaty in Vienna; our town was in the British zone of occupation, I had never seen a *live* U.S. citizen, and it took another ten years or so before I did. In

short, for many years my “America” was largely one of my own imaginary as it had taken shape nourished by the reading of literature and, since the early 1960s, the first – rather limited – TV broadcasts. I believe that many Europeans of my generation first “met America” in a similar way. Looking back, it was probably not the worst way and, for all practical purposes, there were not many other options available at the time. One should remember that, even nowadays, in the age of mass tourism, only a relatively small number of Europeans have extended personal experience of the U.S.A. (and *vice versa*); what many of the tourists actually take home in *knowledge and understanding* of the U.S.A. after they have visited Epcot Center, the Grand Canyon, Death Valley, or spent a week in New York City or San Francisco or L.A. is a different question altogether. But I guess it’s still better than having hot chocolate on Ghiradelli square with your avatar on web 2.0.

To resume: Radway’s provocative address of 1998 drew strong criticism from many U.S. American Studies scholars who felt that the very foundations of their profession were under attack. European scholars in the field sympathized with their American colleagues, but most of them never felt threatened, and the explanation for this difference in attitudes, then as now, is simple and pertinent: Looking at the U.S.A. from across the Atlantic, the object of our study – the United States – is still clearly discernible and has not disappeared. But what has at least come under very close scrutiny, if not disappeared, is the notion of American exceptionalism and the idea of a monolithic nation state, both of which had been implicit or explicit theoretical pillars of American Studies for many decades.

Over the past sixteen years, we have seen the arrival of a plethora of new terms, starting with the not-so-exciting coinage “New American Studies,” and diversifying into a host of terms that preferably include “trans-,” “cross-,” “anti-,” “post-,” “comparative,” “queer,” “planetary,” and even “diasporic” – a term which until not so long ago usually only referred to the history of the Jewish people from antiquity to the present. If, as ASA President Emory Elliott argued in his 2006 address, “diversity” is now the key concept in American Studies, this lively pool of new terms certainly testifies to it. (A

few years ago Werner Sollors, referring to this development, mentioned that his students at Harvard love to play “buzzword bingo” in lecture classes.) One may consider this new diversity part of the trend towards the globalization of American Studies. The foundation of the *International Association for American Studies* (IASA) in 2000 and, more recently, that of the *International Association of Inter-American Studies* (IAS/EIA) in 2009 are aspects of this development, as is the appearance of new Journals like *Transatlantic Studies* (2002) and *Journal of Comparative American Studies* (2003).

This process itself ignites another debate that is tied to the object of our discipline as well as to the concepts and tools of the field itself: In our age of globalized corporations and hedge funds, is the original American Studies concept of “area studies” still useful? In 2011, the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin organized an international conference that asked this question in a very comprehensive way; the resulting volume – *American Studies Today: New Research Agendas* – was published in May 2014 and offers a good survey of theories and practices in contemporary American Studies. Among others, Winfried Fluck lucidly discusses the positions of the two currently competing major movements, the multiculturalists and the New Americanists, and points out their advantages and shortcomings in his contribution “The Concept of Recognition and American Cultural Studies.” Of particular interest in our current context is Ulfried Reichardt’s “American Studies and Globalization,” in which he discusses the U.S.A. as an important – but not necessarily dominant – node of the global network and explores the usefulness of the concepts of multi-perspectivism and hybridity.

I would argue that, while the U.S.A. has not disappeared in the flood of new buzzwords and there is little indication it might do so in the foreseeable future, there have been enormous changes in available resources as well as in methodologies and approaches. While my generation of American Studies scholars outside the U.S. had the problem of how to gain access to resources, today’s scholars are facing the opposite problem: Which of the infinite pieces of print and electronic information should we use? How do we know they are

reliable, accurate, or representative? As we know, the major internet search machines filter their results according to the profiles they have constructed for us from our previous searches. Do we have to constantly change our internet identities to be reasonably sure we really get unfiltered search results?

In addition to these practical issues, U.S. society itself and the position of the U.S.A. in the world has seen drastic changes over the past decades. I grew up in the times of the Cold War, the Iron Curtain, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the space race, etc. – today, the primary U.S. enemy figures are fundamentalist Muslim terrorists; the U.S. space agency has outsourced space travel to private businesses and, for better or worse, (still) relies on Russian rockets to send their astronauts to the International Space Station (despite the current tensions in U.S.–Russian relations); the U.S. auto-stereotype has changed from “melting pot” to “salad bowl”; a series of outrageous scandals in the business and banking sector – from ENRON to Freddie Mac and Lehman Brothers, to name just a few – has (once more) drastically revealed major weaknesses of global capitalism; and an African-American has been elected president twice in a row, though racism and the ideology of white supremacy remain as rampant as ever, as sadly documented by frequent shootings of African-Americans by self-declared vigilantes or the police in cities across the nation.

As regards world politics, in the wake of the terror attacks of 9/11/2001, the United States started wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that so far have turned out to be of somewhat limited benefit to the citizens of these two countries but also a very heavy burden for the U.S. economy and the collective American psyche, as well as for the global power structure. Understandably, the current U.S. Administration has avoided taking leading roles in the current conflicts in Lybia as well as Syria – and gets criticized for that as well. This political situation also reverberates in our professional field, and – in addition to an increasingly critical view of scholars – has brought along some collateral damage: greater reluctance in funding U.S.-related projects (including student exchanges), longer waiting periods in filling American Studies vacancies, considerations about possibly closing down American Studies pro-

grams/departments or merging them with others to form “North American Studies” units – a concept which university administrators in the Humanities find very interesting in this age of budget cuts, the more so as it also seems to implement ideas of “transnational” or “transcultural” American Studies. All of this goes to suggest that the pursuit of American Studies, one way or the other, has always been a politically loaded activity, during the Cold War as well as in the current age of the “War on Terror” and of globalization.

Now – have my remarks so far been “cross-cultural” simply because I am an Austrian talking in Croatia about the U.S.A. and American Studies? What exactly do we mean when we talk about a “cross-cultural approach” in American Studies? In his response to Emory Elliott’s presidential address at the 2006 ASA, Winfried Fluck points out that diversity of perspectives may be desirable but does not in itself guarantee a new approach. Asking the question of what kind of knowledge we need when doing American Studies, he argues – talking about “transnational approaches” – that, rather than going outside and following a “diasporic” path that meanders along the margins, scholars from outside the U.S. in particular should go inside the U.S.A., to the center, and pursue (again) the original goal of American Studies – the analysis of the cultural sources of American power that helps us to understand – and here I quote –

[. . .] the historically unique constellations that have been developed by the United States: an empire that bases its power, Iraq notwithstanding, not on the occupation of territory but on unique, often hardly visible forms of international dominance; a form of democracy that offers the amazing sight of a continued and stable dominance of business and social elites by way of democratic legitimation; and the fascinating spectacle of a culture that has transformed an egalitarian ideology into a relentless race for individual recognition [. . .] (Fluck 2007: 29)

I could not agree more; our colleagues Jelena Šesnić (253) and Stipe Grgas (Hicks and Radeljković 2007) seem to think along similar lines, and other contributions to this workshop also sound a similar theme: that schol-

ars should look more closely at the importance of these “business and social elites” – i.e., of capitalism and the economy – in order to better understand how the American system, American culture, and the idea of “America” work. In our investigations of how all these factors interact, I believe it is absolutely legitimate to draw on comparative and cross-cultural perspectives where they are useful – but we are not *always* obliged to do so.

Let me become more specific: One of the most debated issues in today’s studies of the U.S.A. in Europe are no longer the “lack of history” or the “absence of culture,” which representatives of “old European cultures” used to consider the foremost characteristic of our Big Cousin across the Atlantic. (I am reminded of an episode at Stanford University in 1982, when the partner of a German visiting scholar phrased this Eurocentric attitude rather bluntly: “You have the deserts, we have the culture!”) Rather, the discussion today is focused around the question of how to handle, on the theoretical as well as the practical level, the abundance of literatures and cultures that have surfaced under the new inclusive multi-cultural American self-image since the 1960s – from new paradigms in literary and cultural theory to the never-ending debate about canon-formation and the pragmatic problems of selection and representation in everyday teaching. Given the enormous diversity of contemporary cultures in today’s U.S.A., I would argue that one has to apply cross-cultural approaches even within the United States.

Far from presenting yet another master narrative, all I offer here is to sketch out how I prefer to approach things in my field of U.S. literature and culture, and I would like to focus on two terms, “contextual” and “cross-cultural,” understanding them not as opposites but as complementary.

By **contextual** I mean that we should always keep in mind that literary, socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts are interactive historical processes rather than parallel chronological strings of individuals and events that somehow never meet. This begins with pointing out the very diverse goals and motivations of the early settlers in Virginia and New England, respectively; the dissenting voices within the Puritan regions (Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, etc.); the pros and cons in the War of Independence; the multi-

ple aspects of domestic and international expansionist tendencies during the nineteenth century; the complex causes and aspects of the Civil War and the dynamics of industrialization and mass immigration following in its wake; the ambiguities of the “Crusade for Democracy” in World War I parallel in time with rather colonialist military applications of the Monroe Doctrine in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific; or the ambiguous role of the United States in the events around the Russian Revolution of 1917. And this would continue right up to more contemporary issues that baffle many Europeans, such as the idea that the somewhat adolescent but not really dangerous sexual escapades of a U. S. president could lead to such a costly special investigation and even impeachment, whereas it does not seem to be much of an issue that other administrations have had close ties to fraudulent big businesses whose collapse impoverished hundreds of thousands of small shareholders, or that they handed out profitable government contracts to their friends. Or, in foreign politics, the puzzle of why the United States would help Soviet-supported Saddam Hussein in his eight-year war against fundamentalist-islamic Iran, then support fundamentalist Muslim Mujaheddin against a Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, and then end up eliminating Saddam’s only non-fundamentalist dictatorship in the region, claiming that this is absolutely necessary in order to succeed in the fight against Islamic fundamentalist terrorism.

On a different level of contextuality, not many people know that Henry Highland Garnet (1815–1882), an African-American who escaped from slavery through the underground railroad and became an ordained Presbyterian minister and a radical abolitionist in New York, in his “Address to the Slaves of the United States of America” at the Negro national convention in Buffalo, NY, in 1843, called for resistance against an evil and immoral government – much along the lines of argument for which Henry David Thoreau’s “Resistance to Civil Government” became famous six years later. Students may also be interested to learn that Garnet was the first African-American citizen to enter the U. S. House of Representatives not as a servant through the back door but rather as a guest speaker invited by President Abraham Lincoln to address the House in February 1865, after Congress had passed the

bill which became the Thirteenth Amendment. That same city, Washington, D.C., had before the Civil War housed the largest slave market in the nation; as is now widely known thanks to the 2013 movie *Twelve Years A Slave*, in 1841 (two years before Garnet gave his abolitionist address in Buffalo) Solomon Northup, a free African-American from Saratoga, NY, was kidnapped and kept confined and shackled in slave trader William William's slave pen "Yellow House" in view of the Capitol before being shipped to New Orleans and sold to a plantation owner in the Red River region of Northern Louisiana. After Northup regained his freedom, with the support of New York State judiciary, he eventually brought both his abductors and the slave trader before the court, yet in neither case was any of the culprits sentenced.

Another case, today no longer as sensational as it was about forty years ago, is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "re-discovered" short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," a text that combines techniques like stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, self-conscious/unreliable narrator, etc., to produce one of the most powerful short narratives of nineteenth-century literature – twenty or thirty years before James Joyce or Marcel Proust or William Faulkner became famous for using similar techniques in their works. It was not so much the unusual literary discourse, though, but rather its rebellious feminist content that guaranteed, in the socio-cultural context of its original publication date (in the January 1892 issue of *The New England Magazine*), that the story would soon be "forgotten" and would not make it into any anthology of U.S. literature until the 1960s. We might be somewhat doubtful of the reason the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1891 gave for rejecting the story – because "[he] could not forgive [himself] if [he] made others as miserable as [he] made [himself]"; as Susan Lanser comments, the same argument of devastation and misery can be said about the work of Edgar Allan Poe, yet most of his work has been printed and studied by academics ever since its publication (cf. Lanser 1989, *passim*). In the 1890s, when U.S. newspaper advertisements were full of remedies against *male* "nervous weaknesses" and other ailments like "insomnia, fits, nervous debility, lost vitality, seminal losses, errors of youth or over-indulgence" (cf. Hölbling/Tally 2001: 169), a story that ended

with the male character fainting at the sight of his deranged wife – living proof of his failure both as husband and medical doctor – was not something the male-dominated literary market could appreciate.

Many more examples might be mentioned – e. g., certain structural affinities between Native American and African-American “storytelling” and postmodern narrative techniques that warrant more scholarly attention than they have received so far. This contextual perspective does not necessarily diminish the impact or importance of so-called “classical” and “canonized” texts, such as those of Thoreau, Faulkner, or Pynchon. But it reminds us that historical processes are considerably more complex than a traditional “peak” view of history would often have us assume. I would also argue, as did James Hicks and Zvonko Radeljković in Sarajevo a couple of years ago, that U.S.-American literature and culture offer us a representative plurality of discourses from a still growing number of diverse cultures and, as a result, strongly invites cross-cultural readings which by necessity also have a comparative component.

This **cross-cultural** approach, already implied in some of what I have already said, not only discusses the above-mentioned cultural diversity within the U.S.A. but also puts U.S. cultures into a comparative perspective in order to focus on their special contributions. Additionally, it investigates how Americans see themselves (or wish to be seen) internationally, and how scholars from different cultures actually do see the U.S.A. From its origin in Human Relations Studies and Ethnography (Murdock 1949; White 1991), where cross-cultural research is based on a vast array of comparative statistical data across many cultures, the term was, in the 1980s and 1990s, also adopted by American Studies scholars, though there it usually applies to the comparative analysis of more specific cultural aspects. Especially over the past 30 years or so, European scholars have increasingly focused on the specific relations of their countries with and contributions to U.S. culture and society (immigration studies, literatures other than English within the U.S.A., immigrant influences in the film industry, the media, and other sections of society, etc.). Since the 1980s, a good number of European and U.S. Amer-

ican Studies scholars have focused their research on cross-cultural aspects, and I can point to a few which I have found quite informative for my own work. In 1986, Werner Sollors added distinctive new perspectives to the raging U.S. “culture wars” with his study *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*; he went on to become one of the first public opponents of the “English Only” movement, together with Marc Shell co-edited the anthology *Multilingual America Transnationalism: Ethnicity and the Languages of American Literature* (1998), and has continued to investigate cross-cultural and inter-ethnic questions ever since. The 1990s also saw the publication of Rob Kroes’ fabulously punning title *If you Have Seen One, You’ve Seen the Mall* (1996), as well as Richard Pells’ *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (1998), looking at American and European attitudes from each other’s perspectives.

The opening of Eastern Europe in 1989 has added a rich number of new aspects and perspectives to this angle of research, as the ideological divisions of the Cold War and the very physical barrier of the Iron Curtain created a quite different set of perceptions and interpretations of the U.S. – An anecdotal example: A few years ago, at an American Studies Seminar in the Czech Republic, I learned from Russian scholars that during the heydays of the Cold War, when U. S. (as well as Austrian) citizens were undergoing regular nuclear attack drills, built fall-out shelters, and learned how to protect themselves with the *New York Times* (or, in Austria, *Die Presse*) while Hollywood turned out nuclear disaster movies, there was little of that hype in the USSR. Apparently, most Soviet citizens did not really believe the U.S.A. would ever attack them and wrote off these rumors as government propaganda, whereas the Westerners were – for reasons that might be worth investigating – more inclined to believe their own governments.

On a different level, Ph.D. theses at our Department of American Studies in Graz, for example, have dealt with cross-cultural aspects that also indicate the diversity of possible approaches: on Slovene authors in the United States and Canada; emigrants from San Marino in the U.S.A. (written by an Austrian who married into a San Marino family); on Native American cul-

tures in urban L.A.; on the presentation of Austria in Anglo-American texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (written by a native of Greece who studied English and German in Austria); on the reception of popular U.S. TV series by Austrian audiences; or on cross-cultural issues in autobiographical texts by Austrian Jewish refugees in the U.S.A. Current projects in this field include a study of female Arab-American literatures and cultures as well as transnational aspects of (female) identities.

Possible research areas where cross-cultural approaches might open up new perspectives are plenty, I believe. One branch of research might be looking at issues of “globalization” and “Americanization” and investigating in depth whether – and if so, in which instances – these two terms are synonymous or show different structural affinities in different cultures. As we know, global corporations have lately adapted very diversified regional/local management strategies, and regional concepts of “America” as well as of “global” often have rather divergent connotations.

In view of the recent revival of strongly religious rhetoric in U.S. politics, we might also do well to make greater analytical efforts to better understand what on the surface comes across as rather irreconcilable opposites: fundamentalist religious beliefs and a free democratic system; or even (apropos “democratic system”) the claim that in elections “every vote counts” though the actual voting/counting of votes (mechanical or electronic) is subject to procedures that leave many Europeans simply stunned. Another promising field for future research, I believe, would be an investigation into the extremely mediated and visual quality of everyday life in the United States, including the ownership of media conglomerates such as FOX, Time Warner, Comcast, etc. – as well as of the impact this has on the practice and the understanding of democracy and its processes. For example, thanks to the continuous rhetoric of the U.S. administration before and around the Iraq War in 2003 – and at that time practically all U.S. media spread this news without questioning it – 50% of Americans seriously believed that Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein actually co-operated; as was the case with the claim of Saddam Hussein’s possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction, not a shred of factual

evidence for this claim has become public, even more than ten years later. For current examples of how mediated reality – and not only in the U.S. – is often limited to highly opinionated and selective TV presentations, just follow any U.S. election campaign.

To Conclude:

I believe that European – and also global – American Studies will continue to widen and diversify along the theoretical and practical approaches outlined above, intensified by a much stronger global cooperation of scholars in the field, and probably by another turn of the screw of critical analysis with respect to issues like exceptionality, social justice, income distribution, barrier-free education, equal rights, democratic practice, etc. So the focus may well come to lie even more on the differences rather than the similarities of auto- and hetero-stereotypes; but the better we understand our differences, the more clearly we can also recognize what is shared in common ground. A stronger cooperation among American Studies scholars inside and outside the U.S.A. will be very fruitful for our efforts to provide answers to at least some of the issues mentioned above. For practical purposes, it may be useful to bundle our global expertise even more and have cross-cultural teams (in the sense of planetary, as well) of American Studies scholars focus on specific issues. Today's electronic tools considerably facilitate such co-operations. I consider it our obligation as scholars and teachers of American Studies to place events and developments in their appropriate historical and socio-cultural contexts and point out the long history of diversified social, political, regional, and cultural groups and movements in the United States.

Not the least among what is usually considered “typical American characteristics” is the continuing ability to question the *status quo* and to measure contemporary political and cultural practices against the original ideas of the Constitution. Another one is, for better or worse, the ongoing tug of war between extreme conformism and group pressure (e.g., the demands of militant pro-life movements) and extreme individualism bordering on anarchy (e.g., recently the Cliven Bundy bunch on their ranch in Utah). In spite of some

recent serious damage to its once shiny reputation as the arbiter of freedom and democracy, the U.S.A. still presents a model of a society that offers more individual freedom and possibilities than many other societies on the globe, even though this means that diverse interest groups may clash quite harshly at times.

I believe that *any* streamlining of processes and developments – be it for political, ideological, ethnic, class, or gender reasons – inevitably results in the construction of rather “shortened & simplified” discourses on the subject. For our understanding and teaching of U.S. culture and society, only an *inclusive* approach guarantees the necessary – and certainly the more authentic – complexity and differentiation in our understanding of “America.” In particular, I think we also need to make our students aware that the flood of simulacra they receive via today’s mass media and the World Wide Web are very often exactly that: copies of originals that never existed. Finally, we need to remember that, to begin with, “America” was a very European concept, and while looking in from the outside can reveal what those on the inside may overlook, we have to take particular care that, when we cast our gaze across the Atlantic, we see more than our own reflections in a mirror designed by Picasso.

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Shifting Identities in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*

The characters in Toni Morrison's famous novel *Song of Solomon* cover the whole spectrum of the African American community. While Macon II is completely assimilated and tries to pass as a white man, behaving in many ways like a colonial mimic, his son Milkman starts off imitating values of the white community, only to end up in the deep South discovering his family and communal history. On the other side of the color and identity spectrum in the novel are Guitar Banes, who belongs to the militant wing of the African American struggle for civil rights, and the main female character, Pilate, who represents African Americans in search of their roots in African cultures. The identities of the characters shift as they struggle to reach some definition of who they are and where they belong.

Key words: identities, history of the African American community, *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison

Written in 1977, Toni Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon* reflects a very particular time in the history of the African American community. Disappointed with the Civil Rights Movement, which promised so much and delivered so little, and still reeling in shock at the deaths of leaders such as Medgar Evers, Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy, African Americans were searching for a new definition of their identity both on the individual and the racial level. Morrison's characters embody different aspects of this search. Their shifting identities delineate an arch of the development of African American history from the 1930s to the 1960s – from the poverty of the Great Depression and Black Codes that enabled racial segregation to the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of the African American

middle class. On another, very important level, this novel also represents the personal journey of Toni Morrison. The novel opens on February 18, 1931, Morrison's birth date, and closes in 1963. In Duvall's opinion, the stages in the life of the main protagonist, Macon Milkman Dead, correspond to the stages in the life of his "real-life double," Toni Morrison:

Milkman's story stops at the moment of a completed project of self-discovery, authenticity, and connection to his ancestors. ... In short, Milkman is represented as having achieved an authentic identity at the very moment when Morrison begins her search for identity through her writing, and he undergoes the same self-examination crucial to other Morrison characters such as Soaphead Church, Sula, Pilate, and subsequently Jadine Childs in *Tar Baby*. (73)

The issue of identity, therefore, in its many different forms, is at the very locus of the novel.

Milkman Dead spends the first thirty-one years of his life in the lap of luxury. The grandson of the first black man in a Midwestern town who became a doctor, Milkman lives comfortably thanks to his grandfather's accumulation of wealth and the financial skills of his father, Macon Dead, who owns several houses and apartments and leases them to black tenants. Both Dr. Foster and Macon embody the upper-class stratum of the African American community, which up to the sixties could climb the social ladder only by copying the white middle class. Thus Dr. Foster lives in a twelve-room house, cultivates the air of a gentleman who refuses to mix with the rest of the black community, and becomes obsessed with the desire to have members of his family who are only light-skinned. But it is very easy to see through the elaborate façade he builds in front of his occupation and family. Neither he nor his patients are ever allowed to enter the city hospital; the only white patients he treats are white paupers who cannot afford any other form of medical aid. Moreover, his daughter Ruth harbors a relationship with him which verges on the brink of incestuous. Despite the fact that he hates his son-in-law

Macon for being black-skinned, he is quick to realize that Macon is wealthy enough to represent a catch for Ruth and a convenient solution to put an end to Ruth's sexual innuendoes.

Although Macon thinks that his father-in-law is the biggest hypocrite in the world for pretending to be white, his investment in acquiring the good graces of the white community is even greater than Doctor Foster's. He comes to the Midwest as a penniless orphan, but thanks to his savvy, he manages to become a real-estate proprietor. This, however, does not happen without consequences. He becomes his own censor, always careful to consider what white people might think of him. This consideration leads to his estrangement from his sister, Pilate, the only person in the world he loved beside his father. He despises her for being a poor, single mother and winemaker and for making it even harder for him to keep up appearances for his white bosses. Since Pilate features in the novel as an embodiment of African roots, Macon's hatred and shame of his sister points to his refusal to acknowledge his race. His abhorrence of his wife is also related to his reluctance to claim his origins. Macon marries Ruth because of her light skin color and prestige of being a doctor's daughter. In their lovemaking he especially enjoys to uncover her skin inch by inch. However, when he finds her on her father's death bed sucking his finger tips, Macon is so thoroughly disgusted that he starts questioning their whole life together, even whether his daughters are really his or his father-in-law's. In his mind, Ruth becomes connected with dirty sexuality and animalistic behavior, which he also relates to black inhabitants of slums who have no control over their lives. He starts hating his wife and his daughters with a vengeance, and for the next thirty years lords over them, stunning them into silence with his abusive behavior. He is a cruel landlord: he evicts poor families and makes his tenants live in horrible living conditions. In that respect, he resembles white people in their lack of care for the needs of the black community, but also black people who sold out to the whites in order to advance in life. In many ways, Macon resembles Homi Bhabha's mimic: he appropriates the behavior of the white community and practices camouflage in order to be accepted and allowed to climb the social ladder. Moreover, both his name and

his family life betray another important aspect of mimicry – its hollowness. Since the gaze of the colonizer and of the colonized always rests on the surface, the essence of the mimicry can never be revealed. According to Bhabha:

In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy. As Lacan reminds us, mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory ‘identity effects’ in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no “itself.” (128)

Morrison is quick to reveal the hollowness of Macon’s life just as she does with Dr. Foster. In comparison to Pilate’s house, which is full of warmth and song, Macon’s house is devoid of any life or light. At times, Macon yearns for some other kind of life, for more connection with his people, for “some ancestor, some lithe young man with onyx skin and legs as straight as cane stalks” (17). His surname, Dead, encapsulates the severance of any ties with his roots. It was given after the Civil War to his father, Macon I, who was an ex-slave, by a drunken white soldier. Thus with one stroke of the pen, the entire previous history of the family, which the names embody, was canceled. Using the Dead family as an example, Morrison points to the process the slaves had undergone after being kidnapped from Africa. Their identity was stripped away when their names were taken from them, as well as their families, their language and their culture. A similar process of misnaming happened during Reconstruction. Freed slaves either kept their master’s surname (having none of their own to suggest their origin), or they were given names by their liberators. The significance of names features largely in the history of the African American community because it shows the level of its autonomy. One needs only remember the deliberation on choosing a new name described in the slave narratives written by Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Booker T. Washington to realize how crucial it was for ex-slaves to be able to fashion

a new name according to their wishes. In the 1960s, the African American community's search for different modes of identity was once again reflected in the search for names. Important figures in African American political and cultural life like Malcolm X, Elijah Mohammad, and Amiri Baraka renounced their slave names, i.e., the names given to their families during slavery, and adopted Muslim names in an attempt to distance themselves from Anglo-American identity and forge a new one. The search for the meaning of the family name captured in the story of four generations of the Dead family illustrates this larger search for black identity. In Cowart's opinion,

the larger significance of the theme of names and naming complements the theme of history. True names are indispensable for a sense of identity, that great goal of all who, when their humanity is denied, must struggle for a sense of their own value as human beings. To know oneself and one's real worth, one needs at least to know one's name. (99)

Morrison uses dramatic events in the life of Milkman's paternal grandfather to portray a crucial period in American history during and immediately after the Civil War, when black slaves thought that their hour of freedom had finally arrived. Unfortunately, they were soon disappointed. After Lincoln's assassination and the advent of the era of Reconstruction, liberated slaves did not get 40 acres of land and a mule, as Lincoln had promised, which would enable them to build new lives. Thus, ironically, Macon's beautiful farm is called Lincoln's Heaven, and his horse, Lincoln. Just like many of the black people at the time who had managed to rise above poverty, Macon is killed by members of a rich white family in front of his children, who are scarred for life. Macon II resolves never to love anybody the way he loved his father and concentrates all his efforts on amassing a fortune, something his father was never allowed to do. The killing of Macon I has profound effects on the black community, as well. For them, Macon is a larger-than-life hero who started with ten leased acres of forest, which he cleared and turned into fertile soil and within a year acquired ten more. His feat captures the elation of freed

slaves, their yearning to claim America for the first time as theirs and not as a foreign land to which they were brought in bondage. He showed them what they can be and thus features in the novel as the personification of the American Dream. His achievement reflects all the potential of African Americans after the Civil War that was so cruelly blighted. Thanks to his efforts, they can hear the land speaking to them in what can be considered a manifesto of marginalized communities who are seeking their rightful place in the U.S.: “We live here. On this planet, in this nation, in this country right here. No-where else! We got a home in the rock, don’t you see! Nobody starving in my home; nobody crying in my home, and if I got a home you got one too!” (237). Therefore, with Macon’s death, the dream dies in every black person in his community, but in the country as well. His killers walk away unpunished, Black Codes segregating the black and white communities are enforced and nothing changes for the next hundred years. Morrison is personally invested in this episode, since her grandfather suffered a similar fate. His eighty acres of land were taken from him by whites, and as his life was under threat, he was forced to move from the South to the North just as Macon’s children do.

Macon’s grandson, Macon III, however, like many young African Americans is completely unaware of this painful legacy. Following his father’s example, he grows up alienated from the black community and hating his Aunt Pilate for her poverty and unpolished appearance. More importantly, he despises his name, surname, and nickname, which points to his deep-seated ambivalence toward his racial identity. This all changes when he meets Pilate, “the woman who had as much to do with his future as she had his past” (35). She looks like a tall, black tree, feeds Milkman a perfectly cooked boiled egg and shows him the sky. For the first time, he is perfectly happy. Pilate starts telling him stories from the family’s past, enabling him to claim his name and his ancestry. With her songs, food, and belief in other-worldly phenomena, such as ghosts, she imperceptibly connects him to his African legacy.

However, Milkman’s strongest link to the black community is his best friend, Guitar, who serves in the novel as Milkman’s mirror image. If Dr. Foster and Macon are on one end of the spectrum, then Guitar is surely on the

other. He grows up in the South, surrounded by an extended family. After his father is killed in a factory owned by white people, the family does not receive any compensation and moves to the North. Guitar is thus one of many orphans in the novel whose leaving of family land and tradition is necessitated by the white people's violence. However, unlike Macon II, Guitar does not turn to money to compensate for his pain, nor does he become alienated from his community. He grows up on the streets of the black ghetto and knows all its inhabitants, their language, and the origins of their names. He knows how to address them, trade jokes, or show respect. Yet he does not go unscathed. His hatred leads him to become a member of the Seven Days, a militant black organization which selects white victims similar to black ones killed by whites and murders them in a similar way. He explains to Milkman that he cannot just sit and watch black people getting killed. He believes in retaliation and keeping the balance even. The Seven Days capture another important piece of African American history. It was founded in the 1920s, after many black soldiers, who participated in the First World War and experienced a different way of life in Europe without racial segregation, came home in the South and refused to tolerate the denigration of blacks any longer. Their attitudes led to a series of murders and lynchings of black people in an effort by the white community to intimidate blacks and keep the status quo. Morrison creates the Seven Days to show that blacks did not take racial crimes lying down and to emphasize an inherent danger of the repeated violence of the white community which breeds violence among African Americans. Other African American writers, like Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, also exposed this vicious circle of violence in their novels. But Morrison, at the same time, manages to capture another historical moment. In the 1960s, Guitar's logic echoes the arguments of Malcolm X, Bobby Seal, Stokely Carmichael and other leaders of various organizations which gathered around the idea of Black Power, black self-reliance and the right of black people to defend themselves against white violence and racism. They rejected Dr. Martin Luther King's strategy of non-violence as inefficient and tolerant of white dominance. Morrison was well aware of the arguments of the Black Power leaders, since Stokely Carmi-

chael was her student while she taught at Howard University. She is quick to show, however, the underside of militant movements. When Milkman tells Guitar that random killing of innocent white people makes the members of Seven Days equal to white murderers, Guitar is deeply offended. Nevertheless, randomness indicates alienation from the whole human race. The goal of the members of the Seven Days is not to take revenge on those who killed black people and were acquitted by white juries, rather it is to kill any white person. Their weapons are silence and time, and they have no agenda to scare white people with their murders or even make them known. Guitar insists that they are guided only by their love for the black community, but it quickly becomes apparent that arbitrary murders make them unhinged. The novel opens with the suicide of one of the members, Robert Smith. Porter, another one, also tries to kill himself and later quits the organization. From an impassioned young man, Guitar turns into a deranged serial killer. Moreover, false argumentation behind the Seven Days is exposed in its treatment of women. For the members, black women are just objects, and they do not want them to be possessed by white men. In that respect, their behavior mirrors white murderers who lynch black men under the guise of protecting white women. In Cowart's opinion,

Members of these organizations espoused violence to acquire political power – and sexism to recover or reconstitute black manhood. Ron Karenga, for example, openly preached the idea that the role of black women was properly to 'complete' or 'complement' black men. ... Morrison's point is unmistakable: Violence by its own nature fails to discriminate; it rebounds on the heads of the perpetrators and their people. She allows the reader a certain amount of sympathy and even satisfaction at the idea of secret militancy, but gradually she reveals the real cost of such short-term gratification. (103)

Morrison also focuses on the gap between rich and poor in the African American community. While the poor are heavily invested in the racial struggle, the rich do not get involved, since their interests are not endangered. Thus, despite his friendship with Guitar and lessons about black militancy,

Milkman still largely functions as a separate unit, especially in relation to other African Americans. Although American history is at a turning point, Milkman does not understand why discussions about John F. Kennedy and Elijah Muhammad are important. He does not stop to consider the consequences of the struggle of African Americans to win civil rights because he has never encountered any racial oppression. Listening to other black men trading stories of the insults, humiliations, and beatings they suffered under the rule of white people, Milkman is bored since he does not have any such stories. When all of Southside erupts in anger at the brutal killing of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till, who dared to whistle at a white woman, Milkman remains impassive. Symbolically, while all blacks are rushing to Southside to discuss news with each other, Milkman is the only one in the streets who moves in a different direction. He is aware that “his life is pointless, aimless and that it was true that he did not concern himself an awful lot about other people. There was nothing he wanted bad enough to risk anything for, inconvenience himself for” (107).

Milkman takes a plane to Virginia, retracing Pilate’s journey to the North. Return to the South has an almost ritualistic, mythological dimension. In the airplane, Milkman is exhilarated, free from all the constraints in his life, mistakes he has made, people he has hurt. On the surface, the purpose of his trip is to find gold that Macon and Pilate found in a cave where they escaped after their father had been killed. But as it turns out, Milkman recovers a “treasure” in the form of a lost past, a lost myth, a lost name (Coward 97). Milkman arrives in a small southern black town where everybody knows his father and grandfather. He is able to claim his family name for the first time, to enjoy sharing stories about his family. He confronts his fears of black women personified by witches when he meets Circe, an ancient woman who helps him by revealing another piece of the puzzle: his grandfather’s and grandmother’s real names. He also finds out that his grandmother Sing was an Indian and resolves to learn more about her and his grandfather Jake. In Wilentz’s opinion:

The American South, in spite of its iniquitous history of racial segregation and slavery, has become for many African American writers a source of heritage, one's familial home. This may seem, and perhaps is, ironic, but the fact remains that this is where Afro-America began and where the relationship to one's African roots is the strongest. Morrison is no exception, and Milkman's trip south – this time to Virginia – finally leads him to an understanding of himself, his family, and his culture. Milkman's growing comprehension that rural life differs extensively from the life he has known in the city starts when he visits his grandfather's community in Pennsylvania. ... Milkman's appreciation that people may be more important than material goods, that family and community are strengths and that knowing one's heritage is a power separate from the power of money affects him in both conscious and subconscious ways. (124-25)

Milkman gets lost in the forest and sits under a tree. He feels its maternal branches cradling him as a grandfather which symbolizes his fusion with nature and his heritage. It seems to Milkman, as he sinks his finger into the soil, that he can understand men like his father, Guitar, and others he met, who have been so hurt by white people that they were maimed and lost this connection with the land. He can feel the earth talking to him, and suddenly he perceives the danger he is in precisely at the moment when Guitar tries to strangle him. Guitar's carefully hidden resentment towards Milkman for leading a protected life rises to the surface during their quest for gold. Convinced that Milkman is trying to cheat him out of Pilate's gold, Guitar becomes obsessed with killing Milkman to even the score between them. As he fights for his last breaths of air, Milkman surrenders to death. His neck muscles relax and allow for enough space between the cord for him to draw another breath, grab a gun and shoot. Guitar escapes. Milkman thus literary rises from the dead and enters a new life. He stops limping because, once he has faced his shortcomings, he is on the path to finding his true self. As he remembers Guitar's arguments, but also his attempt on his own life, Milkman realizes that Guitar has gone mad with hatred. He concludes that the four black girls who were killed by the bomb planted by whites in Alabama "deserved better than

to be avenged by that hawk-headed raven-skinned Sunday man who included in his blood sweep four innocent white girls and one innocent black man” (334).

Rejecting the corrosiveness of Guitar’s teachings, Milkman instead turns to Pilate’s belief that a man is always responsible for the life he takes because life is precious and people are responsible for it. Milkman’s awareness of the community, the culture, and the natural world around him leads him to reassess his family as well as his own selfishness. He sees all of his extended family in a different light and is sympathetic to both his father’s distorted ambition and his mother’s pathetic helplessness. His understanding encompasses both those he has hurt and ignored and those who have been out to “kill” him (Wilentz 125-26). Milkman takes Pilate back to Virginia to bury the bones of her father and lay to rest both his body, and metaphorically the painful history of the Dead family. Although his retelling of what he has learned does not lead to family reconciliation and reunion, there is some comfort both for Macon and Pilate in the knowledge that their ancestors live on in stories and names of places such as Solomon’s Leap and Ryna’s Gulch. When Pilate is killed by Guitar’s bullet intended for her nephew, Milkman honors her by reinventing Solomon’s song. Instead of saying “Solomon, don’t leave me here, cotton balls to choke me, buckra’s arms to yoke me,” he sings “Sugargirl don’t leave me here” (340), inserting thus the matrilinear line in the previously patriarchal one. Milkman realizes that, of the people he knew, Pilate was the only one who could fly without leaving the ground. She makes the ultimate connection between love for the family and community by saying as she is dying, “I wish I’d known more people. I would of loved ‘em all. If I’d a knowed more, I would a loved more” (340).

Knowing that Guitar is on the opposite hill waiting to shoot him, Milkman offers him his life. Guitar acknowledges his courage by calling him his “main man” (341) thus also finally acknowledging the journey Milkman has travelled from an immature boy to a man Guitar has to respect even if he wants to kill him. Milkman leaps of the cliff, knowing just like his forefather Solomon, that if you surrender to the air, you could ride it. In this flight, he

lays claim to his roots, honoring Solomon and accepting his perception of reality. Of course, it might be said that Milkman, desperate with grief after Pilate's murder, actually commits suicide, just like the Africans who apparently leaped from slave ships and flew back to Africa, but only killed themselves by jumping into the ocean. Morrison does not escape this possible interpretation, since the novel opens with Smith imitating flying men and jumping off a building to his death. But for her, flying is more than just wishful thinking. She rather makes her readers choose whether they are going to adopt a Western view of reality and believe that all these people committed suicide, or whether they are going to allow for another interpretation, for an African outlook which would imbue some men with the amazing ability to fly and thus defy the imprisonment of slavery. As Wilentz puts it, "Morrison compels us to question Western concepts of reality and uncover perceptions of reality and ways of interpretation other than those imposed by the dominant culture" (61). Yet Milkman's flight contains in itself another aspect. If Guitar represents the black ghetto, with all its violence, desperation, and wildness, but also its joy, humor, and abandonment, then it could be said that, by leaping towards him, Milkman accepts both sides of his personality – the one that belongs to his father and the other one that belongs to Guitar, Hagar, and ultimately Pilate. Just as Guitar accepts both his names – the nickname given to him by the black community and surname given to his family by the white master – Milkman at the end learns to live with the conflicting sides of his identity. Once he can embrace Hagar and Guitar as his bane (as Guitar's name itself suggests), Milkman does not have anything to weigh him down. He calls Guitar his brother man and surrenders to the air. At the end of the novel, flight does not serve as a means of escape from the brutality of slavery or meanness of poverty, but as a celebration of belief in heritage and freedom of choice.

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II Institutional and Cultural Frameworks

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A Few Remarks on American Studies and the American University

This paper presents an attempt to briefly examine the specific character of the institutional site of the disciplinary articulation of knowledge in the USA. The paper proposes that such an attempt should involve several areas of focus. First, there is a need to locate the place of the American university as a subject matter within American studies as a discipline. The second question is about the need to assess the centrality of the notion of liberal education to the American university. The third question is about the current crisis of the university and whether that crisis affects the idea of liberal education. Finally, the paper also suggests that in the context of the present-day crisis it is increasingly necessary to re-problematize the question of communication among disciplines, within or outside the context of American studies.

Key words: university, American studies, liberal education

As varied as American Studies is today, with its focus on the history of the American polity, the various and changing identities composing it, as well as the international, transnational, and global contexts wrought by and shaping the American experience, I would like to propose that more scrutiny be given to yet another subject matter relevant to American Studies, which is the specific academic world that the discipline belongs to. In other words, the academic context in which the discipline is couched (or at least the American part of it) should also be subjected to scholarly analysis under the heading of American Studies. And this not only for the purpose of disciplinary self-reflection, but also for the purpose of analyzing the massively important question of the processes of interaction between the academic and the extramural spheres in American society.

Given the difficult and complex nature of the topic of studying education itself, my paper here can only be presented as a series of questions that I think are necessary to raise and keep returning to. The first, as I suggested initially, is that American Studies should also be a study of the American university. The second question is about the centrality of liberal education to the American university, a proposition which I think is practically or historically incontrovertible, although it is not readily clear that the idea of liberal education has had a homogeneous ideological elaboration in the history of American education. The third question is about the crisis of the university and of liberal education, a diagnosis often repeated at this time of economic turmoil among proliferating and varied discourses of declinism. In the concluding paragraphs of the paper I would like to call attention to the need to avoid the limitations of merely reactive and topical attitudes to the current condition of the university, that is, the need to provide comprehensive and sensible reads on the current trends in higher education (concerning the position of the humanities, but also the overall question of the idea of the university), which in turn also requires thinking about the American university over a longer timeframe – a task that could well be undertaken within the scope of American Studies, but one that clearly involves analysis across disciplinary borders.

As for my first point or question, I leave it to readers who are better informed than I am to judge to what extent the discipline of American Studies has been dealing with issues of scholarly analysis of the American university itself. It is easily demonstrated that there is abundant literature in the United States dealing with higher education; it is quite possible that no other contemporary national culture has devoted so much energy to academic disciplinary and institutional self-reflection. But has the university been sufficiently recognized within the disciplinary scope of American Studies as an important locus of American culture, of its economies, of its international and transnational dimensions? Perhaps these are issues more readily appreciated by those dealing with American Studies from an external perspective – at home they might be taken for granted or left to the general debate on the status of the contemporary university.

My second point is about the continued relevance of the model of liberal education to American higher education. It is sometimes pointed out, as Martha Nussbaum has recently done in her vocal defense of the idea of liberal education, that this educational model of higher education is found in virtually no other country (17). It indeed is fair to say that liberal education is a very distinctive feature of the American university,¹ if by liberal education we mean a concept that regards university education as not just or exclusively vocational, but a learning process that involves exposure to a broad range of knowledge,² as well as the idea that the exposure to broad learning can facilitate both personal cultivation and education for life in a community. There are some voices today that suggest that the actual university practices designed to convey a liberal range of knowledge fall short of meeting the goals of personal growth and education for the community in anything but the name, insofar as it could be argued that general education requirements at American universities are but perfunctory acknowledgments of the need to provide a meaningful breadth of perspectives associated with the idea of liberal education. Be that as it may, and we must keep in mind that the situation on the ground is tremendously varied in this regard, I would like to suggest here that the idea of liberal education, even when practiced only mechanically, is an important scholarly and social resource in itself. Even exposure to a mechanically assembled plurality of disciplinary thought is preferable in

1 Undergraduate degree programs at some universities in Canada, Scotland and Ireland, and a few other countries around the world, possess some elements comparable to the higher education model commonly found at American universities, but there are also pronounced differences. In England, the most prestigious universities of Oxford and Cambridge developed a system of undergraduate education which is rather unique in terms of instruction, assessment and curricular requirements.

2 In a typical four-year program at an American university, this means taking courses across the different branches of knowledge, with a major in at least one academic discipline chosen not at admission but most often by the end of the second year of study. For the student, this involves a good deal of choice in taking courses outside their major, although there are usually certain requirements in terms of the distribution of such courses across different broad areas of knowledge (typically categorized as the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences).

higher education to the principle of exclusively vocational training. Equally importantly, I would like to suggest that attempts to overregulate the content of liberal education in order to redress the presumably perfunctory deployment of the concept of liberal education would run the risk of turning out to be a resource for dogma rather than for critical thought and cultivation of the ability to relate competently to issues across a range of scholarly disciplines. Since plurality of disciplinary perspectives is attendant on the very idea of liberal education, this very plurality makes it somewhat resistant to standardization.

My third question has to do with the perception that there is currently a crisis of liberal education going on. Here I do not mean so much the charge of perfunctoriness, or the readings that relate this condition to the new priorities of university administrations that place financial issues above pedagogical ones. The crisis that I have in mind here has to do with the perception of the current condition of the university, and the question of dwindling funding (the humanities in particular feel embattled in this regard), which indeed is cause for concern. This crisis is mainly seen to have been occasioned by two historical narratives: it has been around for some time (since the 1970s, according to most accounts),³ and then exacerbated by the economic calamities in the new century. In other words, very often the root cause for the crisis is found in a shift in the development of American capitalism towards “neoliberalism” in the 1970s, which was then coupled in the last two decades by a quantum leap of contemporary capitalism into financialization, a leap that brought about massive economic turmoil. The crisis thus identified is most commonly held to affect public universities more than private ones, for the former depend more on state funding (indeed, one of the noticeable trends in the funding of state universities has been the diminishing share of public funding, and climbing tuition fees). Needless to say, the situation regarding

3 There was a good deal of declinist discourse on higher education already in the 1990s; a good example is Bill Readings’ book *The University in Ruins* from 1996, which focused on the spreading of market imperatives in American higher education.

public universities varies from state to state, and probably larger research universities are affected differently than lower-ranked schools. Another aspect of the crisis is that some parts of the university (such as the humanities) seem to be more impacted by the crisis than others, which is often perceived, at the very least, as affecting the quality of education, not to mention the status of individual disciplines or of the teaching profession in general.

Yet upon closer inspection, things get somewhat complicated. It would be a stretch to suggest that in general the American university is moving away from the concept of liberal education (Martha Nussbaum contends that it is not).⁴ The symbolic capital enjoyed by a wide pool of American universities around the world is still more than considerable, and it would be difficult to wholly explain this symbolic prestige without reference to the appeal of liberal education. Also, it is worth raising the question of whether the changing fortunes of the humanities (and the university in general) can be accounted for simply by reference to economic conditions and policies, and whether other kinds of dynamics may have contributed to the current crisis in the academic world. Any explanatory narrative of how things got to where they are now needs to come to terms with a more long-term perspective addressing more than just economic shifts. For instance, as Louis Menand suggests, the explosion of both university enrollment and employment that happened during the Golden Age in higher education (1945 to 1975) requires serious attention, especially in terms of economic growth, demographic growth, and the new importance attached to higher education by Cold War policies (and superpower rivalry). The vast expansion of the academic world in the Golden Age was unprecedented in the history of the American university, and this very fact calls for analysis from a longer-duration perspective, one which would extend even further into the past so as to furnish additional light on the current situation. Here, the long perspective may also require us to review not only the last half century but also the history of the modern university (in

4 Nussbaum claims that the model of liberal education “is still relatively strong, but it is under severe stress now in this time of economic hardship” (18).

the United States), which is really only a little more than a century old, while the idea that it should be a place of equal opportunity is considerably younger still. Also, let us remember that the period after WW II seemed to offer a promise of economic, technological, and scientific progress, which is often regarded as a golden age not only in terms of higher education; this, in turn, presents us with the need, when talking about higher education in the United States, to also engage in a more focused historical analysis of the expansive dynamic of the postwar period itself.

In that regard, let's have a closer look at how the present crisis of the university manifests itself. A central area of concern is the deterioration of the structure of university employment: slowly but steadily, the percentage of part-time instructional staff has been rising since 1975, and the percentage of full-time instructional staff has been slowly but steadily dropping.⁵ While recently, in the period from 1997 to 2007, the total number of instructional staff rose by almost 32%, two thirds of this increase was in contingent labor.⁶ In the period from 2000 to 2012 the overall number of jobs in American higher education rose by 28%, but more of the growth was in administration and student services than in instructional staff.⁷ As for employment in modern languages and literatures, the number of jobs advertised annually by the

5 See the report entitled *The Employment Status of Instructional Staff Members in Higher Education, Fall 2011* (published by the American Association of University Professors in April 2014). <http://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/files/AAUP-InstrStaff2011-April2014.pdf>. Figure 1 in the report shows that, in the period from 1975 to 2011, the share of full-time faculty (tenured and tenure-track) steadily decreased, while the share of part-time faculty steadily grew, with the share of graduate student employees remaining at more or less the same level. To complete the picture, the share of full-time non-tenure-track faculty also recorded an increase.

6 See the American Federation of Teachers report, *The State of the Higher Education Workforce 1997-2007*. https://www.aft.org/pdfs/highered/aa_highedworkforce0209.pdf

7 See Scott Carlson, "Administrator Hiring Drove 28% Boom in Higher-Ed Work Force, Report Says," in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 5, 2014. <http://chronicle.com/article/Administrator-Hiring-Drove-28-/144519> Carlson quotes the data compiled by the Delta Cost Project.

Modern Language Association was steadily rising in the period from 1975 to 1989 (which could suggest that in some way the good times lingered on well after the end of the Golden Age), and then sharply fell in the 1990s, resumed a rising trend in the '00s, and then sharply fell again in 2008 as the most recent economic crisis hit; the peak level of 1989 has not been recovered since.⁸

Such data must be viewed in relation to the Golden Age, when unprecedented (and probably unrepeatably) expansion was recorded. Menand writes, for example, that more faculty were hired in the 1960s “than in the entire 325 years of American higher education prior to 1960” (64–65). Between 1945 and 1975, the number of undergraduates increased 500%, while the number of graduate students increased 900%; but when in the 1970s the expansion “abruptly came to a crawl, [it deposited] on generational shores a huge tenured faculty and too many doctoral programs churning out PhDs” (145). On the other hand, the average faculty teaching load fell from about 9 hours a week in 1960 to 4.5 hours a week in 1990 (Menand 76); this was among other things informed by a shift in university priorities whereby universities started to increasingly value research over teaching. But this also means that academic careers drastically changed over that period, which in turn gave rise to a complicated debate on how to balance research and teaching.

As the Golden Age came to an end in the 1970s, growth in American higher education slowed down considerably in most ways. There still was growth, even relatively steady growth: in the humanities, for instance, the number of bachelor’s degrees has been slowly rising since the 1980s,⁹ which

8 See *Report on the MLA Job Information List, 2011-12*. MLA Office of Research. Web Publication, September 2012. http://www.mla.org/pdf/report_jil_1112.pdf

9 See http://www.amacad.org/binaries/hum_report_card.pdf. *The Humanities Report Card* for 2013, published by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which suggests that the number of bachelor’s degrees in the humanities rose gradually from 1987, with a period of stagnation in the 1990s, followed by another period of gradual growth in the '00s.

means throughout the recent crises (although it is probably likely that many humanistic disciplines had declining numbers in that period, while other humanistic programs recorded gains). Of course, the various trends of slow growth after the mid-1970s can only be more completely grasped in relation to specific attendant contexts. In recent years, for example, the student body has also grown nationwide: enrollment rose 11% between 1991 and 2001, and 32% between 2001 and 2011, with the percentage of the enrollment of the 18- to 24-year-old population rising (the latter to 42% in 2011). A significant increase in post-baccalaureate enrollment of 78% was recorded in the period from 1985 to 2011.¹⁰ (But again, think of the Golden Age numbers!) We should, however, always remember to appreciate the fact that the dramatic rates of enrollment expansion that took place in the Golden Age are well-nigh impossible to replicate, for the simple reason that dramatic increases in enrollment are only possible when enrollment is relatively low to begin with (as it was at the beginning of the Golden Age), or when there is a significant increase in population (as there was in the postwar period).

Nevertheless, these figures do spell out a crisis in relation to the Golden Age. There is still growth in instructional staff, but it is much slower (and there is also talk of stagnation in salary levels). There is a crisis in terms of the relative weakening of the tenure-track job, and the growth of contingent jobs. There is a crisis in the sense of restructuring and department closures, affecting mostly lower-tier public universities, and predictably, much less the wealthy private schools. But there are also other kinds of crises, which are perhaps less talked about. There is, for instance, a crisis in the genre of the mission statement, or in the self-understanding of the university and its social and educational goals, a crisis commonly circumvented by reference to the vague rhetoric of excellence¹¹ (although I am not certain that the American university in pursuit of excellence matches the penchant for quantifi-

10 See <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>. This is data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

11 Bill Readings wrote extensively on the rhetoric of excellence in his 1996 book.

cation and bureaucratization of academic work such as we are facing in the European context). There is also a crisis in the ways in which we academics now habitually think about and do research, and this crisis proceeds from the reshaping of research as an activity on the academic market. This can be exemplified by, but not reduced to, the imperative of publishing as a means of increasing the marketability of academics. More generally speaking, the exchange of scholarly ideas is now structured as a marketplace of ideas with its own rules of supply and demand, complex as those rules might be and not necessarily analogous to the rules obtaining in other types of markets. Finally, there is a sense that the economic turmoil of the last several decades has also exposed a problem deeply embedded in American academic life (but also in all academic life)—that of (re)conceptualizing, articulating and planning the parameters of academic work. The contours of the modern university in the United States (regarding its institutional structure and curricular requirements) can be traced back to the period of the late nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth century. In that regard, there have been no dramatic changes since that time, and newly emerging disciplines and changing canons have been accommodated within the same basic structure. (In the meantime, higher education became a mass experience, research became a much more central aspect of academic culture and one of the cornerstones of the contemporary civilization, and the needs of organizing and funding higher education and research became much more complex.) While it could be reasonably argued that the constancy of the institutional framework of American universities over such a long period of time may have contributed to their research and teaching performance and potentials, the economic troubles of recent decades have had an unpleasant way of reminding us that higher education always requires a good deal of good planning.

To a historian assuming a detached point of view, it may appear that an appreciable deal of the present troubles stems from the failure of the universities and their administrations, but also of their academic staff, to engage in appropriate mid-term or longer-term thinking and planning (and here I do not mean the kind of planning that concerns itself with narrowly voca-

tional education for the marketplace on the basis of topical needs, but strategic planning of the development of academic institutions). Curricular, organizational, funding, and hiring issues now often appear reactive, a matter of choices about cutting programs and redistributing the available funds. I do not presume to know how better planning should be done or made possible; necessarily, special attention should be paid to decision-making processes in academia and the role of faculty in such processes, and especially in strategic planning of institutional development. I do think, however, that it is unfortunate that in many parts of the world higher education is now experiencing dire economic restrictions at a time when it is clear that the character of knowledge is undergoing a dramatic change. What has been called globalization is increasingly asking of academics to research, think, and write across conventional disciplinary boundaries, while the massive information explosion is changing the way in which knowledge is generated, acquired, and disseminated. This calls for – and this is a point I cannot elaborate at length but can only propose here – a university informed by a solid grounding in liberal education and wary of exclusive vocationalism, a university that remains committed to education for thinking across disciplines.

A particularly important consequence of the current crisis, as well as of the responses to it, for scholarship itself is, in my opinion, the increasingly clear need for a more vigorous discussion on the disciplinary organization of knowledge. Liberal education only makes sense if there is lively cross-border traffic among disciplines, as well as a lively discussion on what such traffic means or should mean. In that regard, it is less important whether the discipline of American Studies takes a structured look at the American university itself; it is more important that such work be done in the form of appreciating the need for communication among different forms of knowledge and scholarship. If it is readily obvious that one of the most dynamic aspects of reshaping American Studies as a discipline in recent decades has been a shift towards a transnational perspective in dealing with the various meanings of

the study of America,¹² then it should be equally obvious that there is also a need to root American Studies in reflection about the American university, its social and economic contexts, its institutional makeup, and its production of academic knowledge, all of which requires an understandably varied assembly of disciplinary analyses.

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12 One way of describing this development is as a shift from the once popular paradigm of exceptionalism in American Studies to what John Carlos Rowe called a "post-national" perspective (see the chapter entitled "Postnationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies" in his book *The New American Studies*).

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Digital Humanities between Technology and Labor

In this essay I offer a reflection on a conspicuous absence in digital humanities discourse. Engaging with the manifold ways in which the digital sphere shapes culture and society, the interests and methods of digital humanities appear indispensable in contemporary academia. However, it is my contention that digital humanities systematically omits dealing with the ways in which issues of technology converge with our labor in humanities today. Viewed in the context of an increasing adaptation of research and higher education to the market form, this disciplinary blind spot reveals technological instrumentality as a structuring principle of both digital humanities and its institutional setting, the “university of excellence.”

Key words: digital humanities, university, technology, capitalism

In this text I want to reflect on the current popularity of digital humanities—or what some have termed “the computational turn” in the humanities—by taking into account its relationship to issues of (digital) technology and (academic) labor. What follows will revolve around the following argument: A relatively recent disciplinary development in the US and European academia, the field of digital humanities cannot be thought of simply in terms of its often very relevant contributions to humanities research. Rather, the institutionalization of the new field, and its influence on existing disciplines, should also be understood as a symptom of the more general state of the humanities today. In its predominantly entrepreneurial, project-oriented approach and demand for technical knowledge, the digital humanities trend outlines the model practice for an increasingly market-oriented academia. This could be put another way, more polemically: while digital humanities focuses on the

place of digital technology in relation to humanities research, it can easily neglect the more general relationship between technology and labor. This omission is the more striking when one has in mind the fact that digital humanities is often understood as a way out of a perceived crisis in the humanities. This crisis, which has to do with both shrinking material resources and shifting institutional terrain, is real. Although it unfolds in different ways in different cultural settings, its overall effects seem to imply the precarization and re-composition of academic labor. Instead of a fully elaborated argument about this process, the format of this paper allows only for a sketch of my own position and a commentary on what I consider a symptomatic blind spot in the practice of digital humanities.

My own interest in this subject comes not from within digital humanities, but from a concern for the ways in which technology is implicated in what I see as the progressive adaptation of the university to the market form. The peripheral position from which I am speaking—namely, that of a member of a “post-socialist” national academia undergoing integration into the global flows of capital and labor through the Bologna process—offers the privilege of a vantage point from which the capitalist logic of the encounter between the digital and the humanities can perhaps be more readily observed. In the Croatian case, the increased orientation of the university towards the market takes several directions: research is supposed to be as marketable as possible, where possible at all, and it is governed by competition for scarce resources. With the introduction of tuition fees where previously these did not exist, higher education is progressively losing its status as a public or common good. Along with these trends, in the process of integration of European research and higher education, the university is undergoing what some term “endogenous privatization.” This term is used by economists to describe a situation in which there is no formal change in ownership; instead, the work process is “reorganized in line with capitalist discipline.” Once exempt from such a logic, these critics argue, European universities are now reorganized

according to the business model (Krašovec 81-82).¹ This reorganization brings with it sometimes dramatic changes in the nature of scholarly work, but also in the composition of academic labor, as new, usually administrative positions are introduced, most often simply as an additional burden for the existing labor force. When the Bologna reform was introduced in Croatia,² a series of changes swept the system of research and higher education, ranging from structural changes in financing to apparent technicalities regarding the evaluation of students, teachers, and researcher ; the administration of mobilities and exchange ; the maintenance of networking and partnership ; the management of projects, etc. All of these new or reformed moments in our academic life are inseparable from the technological (digital) infrastructure which was either adapted to or introduced in those spheres of work where it previously played a more marginal role. Old administrative tasks such as grading are now taking place online; new tasks of administering or coordinating various kinds of “mobilities” of teachers and students, or applying for research grants, are also taking place entirely through the Web. In other words, the presence of digital technology in the everyday life of Croatian academics has been brought to a new level in the process of a market-driven university reform. It is from this position that I ask the the following question: Does the field of digital humanities engage in any way with the institutional-technological nexus emerging from this conjuncture?

This question should lead us to a general consideration about digital

1 Ball and Youdell describe endogenous privatisation as involving “the importing of ideas, techniques and practices from the private sector in order to make the public sector more like businesses and more business-like” (9).

2 Croatia signed the Bologna Declaration in 2001, and the first generation of students enrolled in a reformed University of Zagreb in the fall of 2005 (Turković). Here, I understand the Bologna reform as an integral, operative part of the redefinition of education as a commodity now taking part in the “trade in educational services,” as these are regulated by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). For an extended discussion of this topic, see Pereira. The current “liberalization” of higher education in post-socialist countries should not prevent us from recognizing historical continuities that complicate a too-easy notion of post-socialist transition. For an example of this kind of research, see Bacevic.

humanities work. Digital humanities is a more recent and significantly expanded development of an older academic discipline called “humanities computing,” which usually traces its beginnings back to 1949 and the first applications of computing to linguistic corpora. Most broadly, digital humanities today is about “using information technology to illuminate the human record, and bringing an understanding of the human record to bear on the development and use of information technology,” as the 2004 *Companion to Digital Humanities* puts it (Schreibman et al.). In practice, digital humanities can include anything from the vast realm of “the digital,” such as online publishing, the digitalization of archives, data visualization, or 3D modeling. The trend has touched the discipline of American Studies, too, with the American Studies Association organizing digital humanities panels at its annual conferences for several years now. In her remarks at the 2012 DH ASA panel, Lauren Klein complicates the usual story of the origins of the field—wherein the Italian Jesuit Roberto Busa collaborates with IBM to compile a lexical index of the works of Thomas Aquinas—by focusing on the work of the women operators of ENIAC, the programmers of the world’s first computer in 1945. Introducing the problematic of “gendering and valuation of labor ... and the rise of the U.S. military-industrial complex” in the emerging field, Klein suggests that “the history of the digital humanities, in both its original and its expanded meanings, is also, necessarily, a history of gender, labor, and empire” (Klein). This is a welcome intervention in the more dominant understanding of digital humanities, in which technology can be reduced simply to its instrumental aspect. For instance, an exclusive emphasis on instrumental uses of technology in relation to humanities research is evident in a book entitled *The American Literature Scholar in the Digital Age* (2011), whose editors “hope to further encourage the profession to consider how digital media is affecting all aspects of our scholarship and to recognize that there will be increasing benefits and challenges in the use of technology in scholarship.” They claim that “the digital medium, if utilized properly, can make insights more powerful, evidence more transparent, and communication more effective” (Earhart 2-3). (I will return later both to the issue of labor and the

symptomatic use of notions such as “transparency” and “efficiency” in digital humanities discourse.)

The new (or “new”) field has also been described as participating in yet another in an infinite series of scholarly turns, this time a computational one. David Berry thus speaks of digital humanities as an attempt to “take account of the plasticity of digital forms and the way in which they point toward a new way of working with representation and mediation, what might be called the digital ‘folding’ of reality, whereby one is able to approach culture in a radically new way” (1). The phrase “digital ‘folding’ of reality” strikes one as particularly suggestive, as it obviously need not be reserved for culture as an object of study. Berry explains the crucial act involved in such “folding”: “a computer requires that everything is transformed from the continuous flow of our everyday reality into a grid of numbers that can be stored as a representation of reality which can then be manipulated using algorithms. These subtractive methods of understanding reality (*episteme*) produce new knowledges and methods for the control of reality (*techne*)” (2). The varied practices of digital humanities could do more to take into account the ways in which this new *techne* undergirds the processes transforming the everyday reality of academic labor. Despite the significant contributions of digital humanities to the humanities as a whole, the new field is reluctant to approach the scene of its institutionalization, or the academic context in which it takes place, in a way that would match the radical disposition it presumably takes towards culture.

This argument about the blind spot of digital humanities is not entirely original. Alan Liu, an early advocate of digital humanities in the United States, has posed the question about the place of “cultural criticism” in the field. His words are worth quoting at length, since they resonate with the problematic taken up here:

While digital humanists develop tools, data, and metadata critically ... rarely do they extend their critique to the full register of society, economics, politics, or culture. How the digital humanities advances, channels, or resists today’s great postindustrial, neoliberal, corporate, and global flows of infor-

mation-cum-capital is thus a question rarely heard in the digital humanities associations, conferences, journals, and projects. It is as if, when the order comes down from the funding agencies, university administrations, and other bodies mediating today's dominant socioeconomic and political beliefs, digital humanists just concentrate on pushing the "execute" button on projects that amass the most data for the greatest number, process that data most efficiently and flexibly..., and manage the whole through ever "smarter" standards, protocols, schema, templates, and databases uplifting Frederick Winslow Taylor's original scientific industrialism into ultraflexible postindustrial content management systems camouflaged as digital editions, libraries, and archives—all without pausing to reflect on the relation of the whole digital juggernaut to the new world order. (Liu 490-91)

While the problems listed by Liu are registered within the field, they remain rather marginal and demand a more critical sort of engagement. One way to begin doing this, as announced above, is by reflecting on the current position of digital humanities in academia, on the ways in which its rhetoric and its methodology are spilling over into other disciplinary fields, and on those aspects of the "digital 'folding' of reality" that have been left out of the new interdisciplinary practice.

The institutional history of the field helps illuminate its present-day status. In his informative critical history of the digital humanities, Patrik Svensson notes that "historically, and to some extent contemporarily, it would seem that a prototypical organizational form [for digital humanities] is a humanities computing unit or center affiliated with a school of liberal arts or humanities. Often such units provide service to the rest of the school and this rather *instrumental function* has typically been primary" (27, my emphasis). The inherent instrumentality of digital humanities might provide one answer to the question about the current popularity of the field, because that makes it, quite simply, marketable. It is no coincidence, then, that the field is gaining in prominence at a time when the humanities in general are undergoing difficult times; to this trend, digital humanities is supposed to provide an antidote. In 2010, Liu himself founded a digital humanities initiative,

4Humanities, with the aim “to advocate for the humanities at a time when economic retrenchment has accelerated a long-term decline in the perceived value of the humanities” (Liu 490). In short, the digital humanities label has indeed proven to be a successful way to attract research funds. As Matthew Gold noted in 2012, “at a time when many academic institutions are facing austerity budgets, department closings, and staffing shortages, the digital humanities experienced a banner year that saw cluster hires at multiple universities, the establishment of new digital humanities centers and initiatives across the globe, and multimillion-dollar grants distributed by federal agencies and charitable foundations” (ix).

The language of digital humanities often reflects the mutual sympathy between the field and its funders. In it, we notice a recurrent use of some of the key terms of the current academic culture of projects. The “transparency” and “effectiveness” that the digital medium will presumably bring to the study of American literature, as mentioned above, is another case in point. In other digital humanities literature, this sort of rhetoric is even more explicit. In a volume entitled simply *Digital Humanities*, published by MIT press in 2012, the use of managerial jargon is completely normalized: the field is about “projects,” “risk-taking,” “competencies,” “learning outcomes,” “best practices,” and so on. This particular volume actually openly embraces the spirit of academic enterprise, claiming to be a handbook for digital humanities project management (viii).

A certain lack of interest in the wider political and economic context of academic work and an insistent focus on matters of technique can be observed here. This inclination appears problematic if we consider the ways in which two of the self-professed fundamental values of digital humanities—openness and collaboration—become enmeshed in the technological-institutional frameworks of the corporate university. For example, in digital humanities, which prides itself on being “collaborative and committed to public knowledge” (Burdick vii), the idea of a commons of knowledge for which scholars have a special responsibility is certainly operative, particularly in the more successful examples of open-access publishing and the creation

of public digital archives or databases. However, the hijacking of scholarly production by commercial interests, as evidenced for instance in the boycott of the academic publisher Elsevier (cf. Flood), or in the practice of charging authors for the costs of publication of their own articles in open-access journals,³ offers clear evidence that neither the technological potential of digital platforms nor the promise of open access exist outside the institutional and economic forces at play at any given moment. The other feature of digital humanities, its fundamentally collaborative character, also points to the same tension. From a European perspective, the collaborative requirements underpinning EU project funding and the institutional logic of academic culture more generally (with its demand for mobilities and focus on credit transfers) often turn collaboration into a purely formal matter of “partnerships,” “exchanges,” and “networks.” The pervasive and increasingly naturalized metaphor of the network in particular should remind us that networks are also “the form of organization of the cooperative and the communicative relationships dictated by the immaterial paradigm of production” (Hardt and Negri, qtd. in Schaefer 213). This is certainly not to say that the ideals of openness and collaborative research should be abandoned, but that their meaning and social impact depends heavily on the political-economic and organizational frameworks within which they are practiced.

As I have already mentioned, the marketability of digital humanities comes as no surprise and is clearly related to the field’s original instrumental function: an academic practice which offers expertise in data or content management must logically find its place in an economy geared towards the

3 This practice is unfortunately not limited to the so-called “predatory publishers,” which will publish, in open-access form, more or less anything you are willing to pay for. SAGE Publications, a renowned publisher, has recently started SAGE Open, a peer-reviewed open-access journal that charges US\$99 for the “article processing charge” or “author publication fee” (taxes not included). According to the SAGE website, “Authors who do not have the means to cover the publication fee may request a waiver after acceptance” (SAGE Publications).

flow and exchange of information.⁴ What remains more puzzling is the field's indifference towards the ways in which labor in the humanities in general is affected by the workings of the information economy, especially in light of the fact that universities are now positioned as suppliers of "educational services." Commenting on the Global Agreement on Trade in Services, the legal framework which also covers education, Ana Pereira notes the following: "Instead of providing a definition of 'services', GATS refers to the various ways in which services are supplied to delimit its coverage. Hence, the educational service sector covers any international trade in an educational sector provided through one of the four modes of supply: cross-border, consumption abroad, commercial presence and presence of natural person" (8). As Pereira herself remarks, this formalized understanding of trade in services, which emphasizes the circulation of educational services, is quite extensive. When digital technology is concerned, it is worth noting that "electronic delivery of services falls under the scope of GATS, as it can take place under any of the four modes of supply" (9). In fact, it could be argued that digital technology plays an ever more central role in this process of supply, since it provides the infrastructure for circulation (or trade) taking place. In this constellation, knowledge need not be mobilized for any ideological purpose, but merely for the purpose of circulation. The insistence on "mode of supply" or circulation in the legal and institutional framing of academic work is telling: this language points to the logic by which people—researchers, teachers, and students alike—become merely bearers of capital, which must circulate in the form of the allocation of project funds, of ECTS credits, or of mobility slots.

In order to further reflect on this problem, I would like to turn to Bill Readings' *University in Ruins*, a book about the transformations of academia

4 One of the more prominent digital humanities institutions, the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia, sets as its goal "to explore and develop information technology as a tool for scholarly humanities research." Apart from that, it offers "consulting, programming, and data services to academic, cultural, non-profit, government, and business organizations" (About IATH, http://www.iath.virginia.edu/about_iath.html).

in the context of capitalist globalization and the decline of the nation state “as the prime instance of the reproduction of capital” (3). After giving a panoramic view of the historical transformations of the institution of the university, Readings focuses on the contemporary notion of the university—the university of excellence—which is “either tied to transnational instances of government such as the European Union or functioning independently, by analogy with a transnational corporation” (3). The key legitimating notion in this development, excellence, is according to Readings referentially empty, and “functions to allow the University to understand itself solely in terms of the structure of corporate administration” (29). (Significantly, Readings claimed in 1997 that the effects of this process are felt not only in North America but also “in the states of the European Union and in Eastern Europe” [3].) In other descriptions of excellence, Readings insistently links the notion of excellence to the political-economic context in which the contemporary university functions, such as when he writes that “excellence responds very well to the needs of technological capitalism in the production and processing of information, in that it allows for the increasing integration of all activities into a generalized market, while permitting a large degree of flexibility and innovation at the local level” (32). “Technological capitalism” and the emphasis on information seem to bring his discussion of the contemporary university quite close to the interests of digital humanities. “As a non-referential unit of value entirely internal to the system,” Readings writes, “excellence marks nothing more than the moment of technology’s self-reflection. All that the system requires is for activity to take place, and the empty notion of excellence refers to nothing other than the optimal input/output ratio in matters of information” (39). His remark about the absolute requirement for “activity” emptied of any real content in the university of excellence gains a more concrete outline when situated in the context of the abstract description of “educational services,” which are defined in GATS purely through their potential to circulate.

Of course, humanities work that deals with the problematic outlined above—the intersection of issues of higher education, digital technology, and

capitalist economy—does exist, although it is usually not considered part of the digital humanities canon. David Noble’s study of the effects of online education on the position of academic labor comes to mind, as well as the recent debates about the technological outsourcing of academic labor in the USA.⁵ In these writings, the relationship between technology and labor is taken up as the preeminent problem of the “university of excellence.” Noble, who considers “the high-tech transformation of higher education” to be simply camouflage for its commercialization, writes that

With the commoditization of instruction, teachers as labor are drawn into a production process designed for the efficient creation of instructional commodities, and hence become subject to all the pressures that have befallen production workers in other industries undergoing rapid technological transformation from above. In this context faculty have much more in common with the historic plight of other skilled workers than they care to acknowledge.

Noble is certainly not alone in considering the implications of technological innovation for white-collar labor. In a similar vein, Simon Head has argued that

The emerging relationship between technology and work in the US economy of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries suggests that the corporate sector is relying on information technology both to simplify and accelerate the processes of business output, and so increase the output of labor, and to deskill labor, diminish its role, and so weaken its earning power. (13)

With the advent of “the university of excellence,” these have become problems of the humanities, too.⁶ Significantly, the productive emphasis here

5 These have been well documented in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: see Kolo-
wicz, Parry, Williams June.

6 Writing on the consequences of increased technological management of the work
process in the service sector through “Computer Business Systems,” Head comments on

is on historical continuity when thinking about the position of technology in relations of production, rather than on a radical, technologically determined turn.⁷

This problematic is not entirely absent from the field of digital humanities, although it is articulated in quite different terms than the ones offered by Noble or Head (namely, in terms of employability). If we look at examples, we see how issues of technology and labor do get registered in digital humanities, but only in order to be enveloped in terms sympathetic to the environment and discourse of the corporate university. One way in which digital humanities registers the impact of technology on labor is that it brings to light problems of institutionalization and valorization of new forms of work. One US commentator has remarked on the problem by drawing a parallel between work in digital humanities and consultancy (a parallel made quite explicit in the example from the University of Virginia, above). Echoing Svensson, Julia Flanders writes that

the digital humanities, as an institutional phenomenon, has evolved very substantially out of groups that were originally positioned as ‘service’ units and staffed by people with advanced degrees in the humanities: in other words,

the inherent contradictions of any attempt of such digital “folding of reality”: “How can this regime of precise measurement and of panoptic managerial vision be transferred to a context where the objects of production are the treatment of sick patients, the transactions between teachers and pupils, or the decisions to hire and fire employees? The answer is that the structure and context of these activities must be expressed in a form that can be captured by the system, so that their digital representations can then be read and analyzed. But the limits of ‘capturability’ become apparent when one looks at transactions between human agents where attempts to impose ‘capturability,’ and with it the disciplines of CBSs [Computer Business Systems], distort the meaning of what is being done and leave the data thus generated highly vulnerable to GIGO—garbage in, garbage out.” (Head 59) Head calls this misplaced managerial inclination “misindustrialization” and finds it at its most extreme precisely in academia (his example is the University of Oxford).

⁷ A thematic issue of *Workplace: A Journal of Academic Labor* entitled “Technology, Democracy, and Academic Labor” (5.1, 2002) offers more analyses in line with Noble’s work. Of course, the relation of technology to labor is a classical Marxist topic. For a relevant discussion, see Caffentzis.

people with substantial subject expertise who had gravitated toward a *consulting role* and found it congenial and intellectually inspiring. The research arising out of this domain, at its most rigorous and most characteristic, is on questions of method. (299, my emphasis)

Two points are important here. First, the institutionalization of digital humanities makes it possible for previously invisible forms of work to become recognized and valorized—especially the kind of work perceived to be somewhere between “purely technical” and “truly intellectual.” Second, Flanders is aware that, in reality, consultancy-like work is becoming more and more central to academic labor as such. In fact, Flanders argues that, “just as critical theory came in the 1980s to occupy a position of metanarrative with respect to the traditional academic disciplines, so consultancy positions itself as a kind of metaknowledge, an expertise concerning the ways in which knowledge work is conducted” (298).⁸

The widening of the scope of humanities expertise, indicated by the “meta-” prefix, has really only one basic function: that of employability. William Pannacker, in his article “No DH, No Interview,” makes precisely this point:

[T]here are also more and more people who see DH as a means of coping with the lack of tenure-track positions and a means of increasing their options for alternative academic positions. DH offers transferable skills that can land them in administration, coding, grant writing, and project management if they are unable to find permanent academic posts. (Pannacker)

Comments such as this one make it obvious how digital humanities appears in the academic spotlight at a moment when academic labor is caught in

8 This is not the only assessment of the digital humanities which compares it to critical theory. In his article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “No DH, No Interview,” William Pannacker reports that “[Laura] Mandell [director of the Initiative for Digital Humanities, Media, and Culture at Texas A&M University] said the digital humanities is partly a turn against the dominance of critical theory, which she called ‘a PR failure and an intellectual failure: an excessive and unexamined lock-step discipline’” (Pannacker).

the midst of important structural transformations. Starting from that premise, the emphasis on method in digital humanities that Flanders notes becomes also symptomatic of the increase in technical methods (and the requirement to know them) necessary for a growing need to manage administrative processes of the corporate university, all of which are unimaginable without the working knowledge of various digital platforms. The emergence and popularity of digital humanities thus points to the shift in the work of academics—understood as an instance of “cognitive labor”—from “brain work” to “chain work,” or from “properly cognitive labor” to “mental labor of a purely applicative kind” (Berardi 79). Let me add here that this is not a complaint about the “degradation” of creative intellectual work—although that could certainly be a matter of debate, too. In reality, this shift can easily manifest itself as an increase in the work load for academic labor in total. The administrative-technical work is simply added to the existing pool of the work force and is distributed within existing resources (i.e., it necessarily represents an objective additional burden on a labor force already exposed to austerity measures and pressures of competition for funding). So it is not only that digital humanities, with its demand for technical expertise, makes it possible for previously unseen work to take an institutional form, as Flanders rightly notes; the institutionalization of digital humanities is itself evidence of the extent to which academic work is now “conducted as” a formal, technical matter, a matter of administering (or “coordinating”) processes of various kinds (in the European case: mobility, exchange, efficiency, or productivity).

This structural moment remains largely unproblematic in the mainstream of digital humanities. Perhaps this is unremarkable, since the technicization of research and higher education appears as a condition for the establishment of digital humanities as a discipline. Still, it is well worth reflecting on, as it speaks to wider, systemic shifts that are occurring in academia in general.

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Croatian Students' Perception of American Culture

The article discusses the results of a study conducted among students of English at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, Croatia. Although the study might be considered to be a rather limited one (60 participants), the author believes that it could give a general picture about the type of knowledge that young educated Croatians have about American culture. Generally speaking, the students-participants do not seem to be either positively or negatively biased regarding American culture. Their sources of information are mainly some aspects of formal education (school and/or university), complemented by TV and films. On the whole, the students do not think that they have good knowledge of American culture, and a number of them expressed the opinion that what they knew might only be stereotypes. This attitude may mean that at least some of the students - respondents will try to gain better insight into the subject of American culture in the future.

Key words: American culture, students, knowledge, stereotypes

Culture – a short introduction

'Culture' is a term that has several meanings. Anthropologists usually differentiate between Culture with a capital C, and culture with a small c. Culture with a capital C is a generalized possession of the genus Homo, and includes a capacity and possession shared by hominids. The term 'culture' with a small c stands for the different and varied cultural traditions of specific societies (Kottak 37). Prominent American anthropologist Conrad Phillip Kottak explains that even anthropologists can get culture shock. Although anthropologists are scientists trying to combat ethnocentrism (the tendency to apply

one's own cultural values in judging the behaviour and beliefs of people raised in other cultures), there are situations where even they cannot escape it. Ordinary people are more prone to suffer from various types of cultural shock. Therefore, there is a long tradition of books and guides explaining patterns of behaviour, mores and traditions of particular societies to individuals who are planning to visit, or even to start living in new, unfamiliar societies. On the other hand, there is ample literature based on cultural research, which was created with the aim of educating and consequently inspiring further research.

The field of studies called American Studies has been present for over half a century in the United States of America, as well as in different parts of the world. American culture has been a widely studied subject by scholars and students all around the globe. It suffices to enter 'American Studies' or 'American Culture' into any search engine on the Internet, and the user will immediately be provided with exhaustive reading lists and guidelines as how to obtain information about the subject matter. The introduction to the Oxford Bookworms Factfiles book on the USA suggests that for millions of people around the world the United States is one of the most interesting countries in the world. There are American things around us all the time (Baxter 2008). In spite of this, American culture is very often perceived in terms of preconceptions and stereotypes.¹ This is not surprising, bearing in mind the fact that people often do not know much about their own culture, or tend to either idealize it or belittle it (Zergollern-Miletić 2001).

American Culture and Croatia – some preliminary thoughts

Croatians have a long history of relations with the United States. A large number of Croatians emigrated to the USA in the nineteenth century for economic reasons. In the twentieth century the reasons were either eco-

1 For an amusing yet instructive account of preconceptions and stereotypes about Americans that exist among the British, see Wesley Mead's article in *The Ann Arbour Review of Books*, October 4, 2012.

conomic or political. We might say that Croatians had information about “The New World” long before the advent of modern media. For some, America was a land of promise, riches and amusement, while to others it represented the reason for their families’ break up.

After WWII, when Croatia was part of socialist Yugoslavia (1945 – 1991), a person’s outlook on the USA depended very much on their education, social status and political alignments.

This may also be true today. Nevertheless, I suggest that in today’s Croatia people’s opinion about the United States is mostly shaped by the media, primarily by popular culture.

Young Croatians are generally rather apolitical, so I do not consider that political decisions or military actions of the United States significantly shape their views.

American Culture and Croatian Students – the study

The participants and the instrument

In order to obtain information about young Croatians’ perception of American culture, I conducted a study among students at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. As a university teacher, who has taught different language, translation and cultural courses to Croatian university students of English at different institutions, I have at times encountered unexpectedly deep-rooted prejudice in my students. Sometimes they even showed lack of willingness to accept new ideas and new perspectives on the cultures we were discussing, including their own (which in most cases was Croatian). Fortunately, this cannot be claimed for the majority of students. Another thing that can be noticed among Croatian students is that, in general, they are reluctant to think critically.

The present study included sixty participants – thirty second-year students and thirty third-year students at the Faculty of Teacher Education. Those students are training to be generalists, as well as primary school teachers of English. The study took place around the middle of the summer semes-

ter, so the second-year students had not yet completed the course Cultures of the English-Speaking World. The instrument for the research was a questionnaire that contained seven open-ended questions, as follows:

- When you hear the term ‘American Culture’, what comes first to mind?
- Do you think you are familiar with American culture?
- What do you actually know about it?
- Where and how have you learned it?
- Have you ever been to the USA?
- Do you think that Croatians are, in general, familiar with American culture?
- Could you, please, compare American culture with Croatian culture?

It is important to report at the beginning that there is no difference in quality between the second- and third- year students’ answers. Most of them reflect a careful approach to the matter. In other words, there were only a few students who did the task superficially, out of whom some did not even answer the last question. What should also be immediately said is that none of the students had ever been to the United States, and most of them had never been to any English-speaking country. About a third of them added to their answer in 5) that they would like to visit the States.

Results and discussion

Question 1) was supposed to provoke a quick, instant answer, an association, an emotional response, rather than a product of deep contemplation. Most students listed a few things they associated with America. The most frequent answer to that question was ‘fast food’ (12). The second-most frequent answer was ‘Hollywood’, ‘films’, ‘movies’, or ‘Hollywood movies’ (10). The third was history (9). One student even said ‘their long history’. Several students mentioned ‘numerous presidents’.

The fourth answer in terms of frequency was ‘multiculturality’, also ex-

pressed as 'different nations' or 'different peoples' (8).

The fifth answer was 'holidays' – such as Thanksgiving, 4th of July, etc. (8).

'A particular way of living' was the answer provided by seven students (with occasional additional comments such as 'houses in suburbs that look alike', 'a hectic way of life', 'big cities'). Universities was the first association recorded by six students, and various sports (primarily American football and baseball) by three.

There were two answers concerning American English or American accent. The same number of students mentioned 'opportunities', and yet another two mentioned Indians.

In two answers we can find 'hard-working people', and in one, 'numerous museums'.

Three students suggested, with some criticism implied, American efforts to promote their life-style and opinions to the rest of the world. These were the only respondents who expressed negative feelings in this part of the study.

The answers to question 2), whether the respondents think they are familiar with American culture, vary from 'no' to 'not enough' or 'so-so'. Only four students reported that they were familiar with it.

To question 3), what they actually know about American culture, the most frequent answer was: 'Something about their history' (15), where some students mentioned Indians, Puritans, or colonization. This answer is followed in frequency by the answer that the students had gained some general information (12). The third answer was about American holidays (10).

There were also answers about America being a consumer society, about it being a great world power, about the American lifestyle, where some students further explained that Americans move from place to place, and that they change careers much more often than, for instance, Croatians.

Some mentioned unhealthy or fast food as an answer to this question.

One student said: 'They don't learn about the rest of the world.'

On the other hand, two students suggested that their own knowledge

about America might only include some stereotypes.

From the students' answers to question 3), we might conclude that most of the information they had gained had been provided by school or university courses, which will prove true in the students' answers to question 4).

As the answer to the question 'Where and how have you learned it?', most students mentioned school (15) and university (16), combined with TV (13), the internet (9) and movies (14). Newspaper articles, documentaries, National Geographic and History Channel did not appear often in the students' answers, but it is encouraging that they came up at all.

Some students had learned about America from the Americans they had met, or from friends or relatives who lived there.

The following question asked whether the respondents thought that Croatians are, in general, familiar with American culture. The prevalent answers to this question are 'no', 'not much', or 'they have wrong ideas about it, their ideas being shaped mostly by TV or films'.

Seven students said that Croatians were more familiar with American culture than the other way round. One said: 'Depends on your criteria, but I think they are all right.'

The final question required an analytical approach, a comparison between American culture and Croatian culture. The most frequent answer was that Americans are much more open-minded than Croatians, who are rather conservative. I find this answer rather intriguing. I would like to learn what these respondents meant by 'open-mindedness' and 'conservatism', so I am planning to conduct an interview with them in the course of the following academic year.

American multiculturalism was often mentioned in the respondents' answers, and I suppose that the fact that America is multicultural might be at least one of the reasons why a number of students consider Americans to be open-minded.

Several students think that both Americans and Croatians are traditional. From their answers we cannot see whether they see it as something positive or negative. The concept of 'traditionalism' in young Croatians'

minds is yet another problem that I am considering to do research on.

Some students think that Americans and Croatians equally cherish their history and traditions, while others think that Croatians are the ones who take the lead here. On the other hand, there are students who think that Americans preserve their history and traditions, and Croatians ruin everything. We can see from these answers that the respondents consider tradition to be something positive.

Also present in a number of the students' answers is the idea that America is a modern, powerful country. Some students claim that Croatians try to imitate Americans.

According to a few, Americans are more hard-working. One student puts it like this: 'Croatians complain and dream. Americans work to acquire the American Dream.'

One student claims just the opposite, that Croatians are more hard-working.

Several students say that Americans do not have any knowledge about certain things that are considered general culture in Croatia, but Americans generally focus on their field of expertise, and they are good at it. One student puts it like this: 'Croatians have to know everything about everything' (referring to the Croatian system of education).

All students who mentioned food (4) agree that Croatians cook at home, and do not eat as much unhealthy food as Americans.

It is interesting to note that there are opposite views about the way of living, where some students consider the Croatian way to be more relaxed, and others just the other way round.

One student said that she had got the impression from films and sitcoms that there is more unity in American families. It would be interesting to analyse the role and the functioning of the American family as presented in modern American films and sitcoms, to see what information an average viewer might obtain. A superficial view on the American family, in comparison to the Croatian family, might give us just the opposite impression – that there is more unity within the Croatian family. Literature based on research

might support that impression (Campbell and Kean 1997; Althen, Doran and Szmania 2003; Petak 2004; Bianchi, Robinson and Milkie 2006).

Conclusion

The present study is a rather limited one concerning the number of participants, yet I believe it can give some general picture about the type of knowledge that young educated Croatians have about American culture. We have seen that the students – participants in the study showed an awareness of the meaning of the term 'American culture'. They did not interpret it as arts or literature, but they understood that the term included history and traditions, as well as a way of living. Most students also showed some acquired knowledge of American culture, and the willingness to reflect on it.

In their answers to question 7) most of them tried to provide some analysis.

On the whole, these students do not seem to be either positively or negatively biased regarding American culture. On the other hand, a certain number of them showed great disapproval of Croatian culture. In my view, this disapproval reflects the present difficult political and economic situation in the country. In addition, I suppose students, like many other Croatians, are influenced by the media, which project a rather negative picture of Croatia.

The sources of information, as we can see from the students' responses, are mainly some kind of formal education (school and/or university), complemented by TV and films.

The students generally do not think that they have a good knowledge of American culture. Some of them even expressed the opinion that what they knew might only be stereotypes. This attitude may mean that at least some of the respondents will try to gain better insight into the subject of American culture in the future. Students training to be teachers should be encouraged to learn about their own culture – not just about various events from the past, but rather to try to approach it from various sides, and to develop a critical view of it. They should acquire an opinion that should not be easily shaped or swayed by the media.

When future teachers of English are concerned, it is necessary that, in addition to their own culture, they learn as much as possible about the cultures of the English-speaking world. This does not imply merely learning about the kings and queens of England and being able to recite the presidents of the United States. In addition to learning about, to questioning and researching their own culture, English teachers should also develop a critical approach to the cultures of the English-speaking world.

Studies like the one whose results I have discussed in this article may be tiresome for the respondents. Nevertheless, such questionnaires can at least in a small way encourage them to reflect upon certain problems, and to question the truths (or “truths”) that are presented to them.

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III America and Croatia

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An Austro-Hungarian America: Emerson for Croatia, 1904–5

It was principally through Antun Gustav Matoš (1873–1914) that Croatian literature received its modernity for the twentieth century, as well as its sense of Europeanness. His essay on Emerson (1904–5) can be analyzed as part of the same agenda, especially in view of its marked Nietzschean overtones; it is Nietzsche's Emerson that Matoš brings to Croatian culture and, with it, a corresponding inflection of both Europe and philosophy. While this suggests that a Nietzschean America comes to shape the American phantasm for twentieth-century Croatian modernity, I propose to discuss another operation which is equally critical to this placement of Emerson: the way in which Austro-Hungarian cultural practices, definitive to Croatia at the time and at work in Matoš, decide Emerson's profile and refract some of its Nietzschean features.

Key words: America, Austria-Hungary, Antun Gustav Matoš, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche

It was principally through Antun Gustav Matoš that Croatian literature received its modernity for the twentieth century, as well as its sense of Europeanness.¹ In 1904 and 1905, while living in Paris, he published two versions of an essay on Emerson, one in Serbia and one in Croatia: two years, he writes, after North America, along with the rest of the world, celebrated the centenary of Emerson's birth. This, however, is not to say that he writes "post festum,

1 A slightly different version of this essay was published in Croatian as "Matošev Emerson, ili konzekvencije flanerizma" in *Mjesto, granica, identitet. Prostor u hrvatskoj književnosti i kulturi* (ed. Lana Molvarec), Zagrebačka slavistička škola, Zagreb, 2014, 67-80. All translations from Matoš are mine.

after the fact, because writing about minds like that is never too late or too early” (Matoš 1973: 41).

This is evidently of critical interest to Matoš, because he opens the essay with the above remark: he begins by emphasizing that both he and Emerson are figures of a certain counter-historical contemporaneity, of untimeliness. It is here already that Matoš’s approach to Emerson is reminiscent of Nietzsche, especially of his *Untimely Meditations* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*). In *Untimely Meditations*, time is not that of history or of historicizing. It is untimely specifically where it imparts a sense of contemporaneity, a sense of time in layers and from within faultlines, a time-with, time which is plural to begin with, time inconceivable without an addition or else from within an addition. After all, Matoš invokes Nietzsche explicitly when he says that no nineteenth-century scholar is so “menschlicher, allzumenschlicher” as Emerson (1973: 41).

This in turn reflects the position of critical importance to Nietzsche himself, because Nietzsche too privileges Emerson as a scene of instruction. *Untimely Meditations* is a case in point here, especially the essay “Schopenhauer as Educator” (“Schopenhauer als Erzieher”). Nietzsche, that is, foregrounds Schopenhauer as educator of culture and philosophy, but is given to quoting from Emerson in the most critical of positions – especially from “Circles.” One could therefore argue that Emerson is the true educator of culture and philosophy in Nietzsche, as well as the figure of the very untimeliness which to Nietzsche is constituent.²

Matoš imagines Emerson as an expanse of thought which does not allow for homogenizing. Consequently, it is the thought itself of expanse and expansion: it is the thought which is defined by mobilization, movement and spreading out. According to Matoš, “Emerson is not to be forced into any of the schools of philosophy” and “one could not imagine spirits more differ-

2 In his 1910 essay on Nietzsche, Matoš insists that Emerson was of critical importance to the German philosopher and claims that reading Emerson was instrumental to Nietzsche’s recovery “from melancholia” in 1874: it was at that time, Matoš emphasizes, that Nietzsche completed “Schopenhauer as Educator” (1973: 110).

ent than Emerson is from Hegel”; it is “for this very reason that the scholar from Concord is the program of the young America” (1973: 42–43). This is also why Matoš insists that Emersonian thought is wide and universal, precisely where it is not original or systematic. In other words, it is the kind of thought, or rather the type of rationality, which demands that universality be approached in terms of microphysics, as a kind of capillary motion. One could almost say that Emerson in Matoš is to map out a position where mathematism is to give way to microphysics, also where metaphor is to give way to metonymy. In turn, microphysics and metonymy are to be seen not merely as an indication of universality, but – surprisingly perhaps – as an indication of the very logic of universalism.

As a result, America emerges in Matoš as a scene of this metonymic rationality, of microphysics, of mobilization at its purest. At the same time, this is to say that America makes sense as a scene of universalism, or else that America makes no sense if not as a scene of universalism. It is in this way that Matoš’s Emerson points in fact to America as imagined and constituted by its founding fathers, primarily by Thomas Jefferson. I would like to quote from Hannah Arendt, who claims that the very idea of America depends on the Jeffersonian accent on the new continent and the new man. According to Arendt, the new continent is what it takes for the new man, because the new continent secures the unrestrained freedom of movement, a kind of unconditional mobility (2006: 14–15). Arendt privileges this mobility; indeed, it is in this unconditional mobility that she situates the *raison* itself of the American Revolution: not merely its reason, but also the rationality specific to it. What is more, Arendt claims that this is why European revolutions never quite came close to the conceptual purity of the American revolutionary blueprint: because no continental revolution ever relinquished the notion of the nation-state. One could propose, therefore, that Arendt’s perspective on the Jeffersonian accent reads in fact as a study of metonymy, with metonymy as the logic of the revolution, as well as the logic of the very political project of America.

In Matoš, what defines Emerson as truly American is precisely the re-

lation which he forges between freedom and movement, freedom as movement. According to Matoš, there is “something free” in Emerson, something “unrestrained and truly American” (1973: 41). This therefore constitutes the truth of America, an American truth, a truth which one cannot approach in any other way or position. Which is then also how Matoš maps out the position where Jeffersonian America, as a political project, is to become the privileged destination of philosophy.

Also – it is not so much that there is something free in Emerson but that Emerson has that something which is free, unrestrained and truly American. “Nešto slobodno, nevezano i doista amerikansko *ima* taj pisac,” writes Matoš (1973: 41, emphasis mine). *Having* that something which is free, unrestrained and truly American secures Emerson as a scholar, although it evidently cannot secure his subjectivity – only his labor, the labor of thought. It is the kind of labor which appears to imperil the maintenance of subjectivity, or else subjectivity perceived in terms of maintenance. So there is a political economy to Emerson which is not to be separated from psychic economy; it is a small wonder that Stanley Cavell, for instance, tends to analyze Emerson alongside Freud and psychoanalysis. If this means that an American scholar, or an American economist, or simply an American, is more or less insane, Emerson – as quoted in Matoš – replies that whoever lives for gain alone is a beggar (1973: 43). In the wake of this thought, Matoš quotes two more sentences from Emerson, now also as a kind of instruction for understanding Croatia, in Austria-Hungary, in 1905. The first one is that the interest of history lies in the destiny of the poor. The second is that, similarly to Ruskin and Tolstoy later, Emerson thought that people, scholars included, are incomplete unless well acquainted with craftsmanship and economy (1973: 43).

Cavell sheds light on this proposition in *Pursuits of Happiness*, when he analyzes the luxury and leisure of the Hollywood comedies produced in the 1930s, during the Great Depression. According to Cavell, Emerson best explains how luxury in these comedies should be grasped, the line of reasoning to be found in his essay “History”: “It is remarkable that involuntarily we always read as superior beings... We honor the rich because they have

externally the freedom, power and grace which we feel to be proper to man, proper to us. So all that is said of the wise man by Stoic or Oriental or modern essayist, describes his unattained but attainable self” (Cavell 1981: 5).

This is the context in which to interpret a strong claim that Matoš makes in his 1904 essay on Andrew Carnegie, the American industrialist and philanthropist (and another essay where Emerson features as a thinker important to Matoš). Matoš thinks highly of Carnegie and champions him as the role model for Croatia. Yet he critiques Carnegie’s statement that the cause of the downfall of great nations is not hardship and poverty but luxury and corruption. In Croatia, we know how to be both destitute and corrupt, and the corrupt poor are worse by far than the corrupt rich, says Matoš in the conclusion of his essay (1973: 40).

While the above sentence may read as rash and callous, it actually contains a suggestion similar to the one that Cavell detects in Emerson: that the poor are corrupt when they accept wealth as a value in itself, instead of seeing it as but a tool of political pedagogy, or else as a tool for working toward an unattained but attainable self (which Cavell proceeds to identify as moral perfectionism).³ It is in this light that one should understand the most critical sentence of Matoš’s Emerson: “One day we will learn how to replace politics with education” (1973: 43).⁴

Croatia here is evidently symptomatic of Austria-Hungary, of which it was part at the time: because Carnegie as quoted by Matoš speaks about the downfall of *great* countries. Austria-Hungary is in this way compared to America, with America as a scene of instruction for Austria-Hungary. While this too may seem unexpected, particularly in view of the fact that Austria-Hungary was a monarchy and the United States a republic, so that their very constitutions appear to be beyond comparison, the comparison

3 See also Cavell 1988.

4 Matoš uses the word *odgoj* in the above sentence to indicate education, pedagogy and upbringing alike. However, seeing that he translated Nietzsche’s “Schopenhauer as Educator” as “Schopenhauer kao odgojitelj” (1973: 110), I have decided to translate his *odgoj* here as education.

nevertheless reveals important facets of both. Austria-Hungary, that is, was indeed of a specific political constitution, insofar as it was founded in 1867 as a so called personal union of the dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary: it was a relatively loose political collective which at all times kept negotiating the very grounds of collectivity and collectability. One could say that Austria-Hungary was indeed a great country, but only thanks to the fact that it kept questioning the very reason of the state – *raison d'État* – as well as its conditions. Similarly, it was not until after the Civil War that the United States of America gave way to significant centralization; it was only with the Lincoln administration that the States themselves were no longer a relatively loose political collective. As a result, *raison d'État* in Austria-Hungary was markedly divorced from a unified imaginary of territory or territoriality, now as a kind of pure reason of the state which occupies an empty place, a no-place, a position which is assigned to metaphor and comparable to where psychoanalysis situates the law. In turn, the idea of territory and territoriality in Austria-Hungary, thus exempted from metaphor, persisted in the imaginary one could associate with metonymy, capillarity and microphysics. So, while the reason of the state, as well as the law, was decided in the domain of metaphor (with Kafka's narratives as a case in point), the idea of territory in Austria-Hungary remained singularly encumbered with a kind of metonymic surplus, which was promising to mobilize and revolutionize the body politic precisely to the extent to which metonymy does not share its constitution with metaphor, law and the reason of the state. This then is the position from where to grasp the fact that both Matoš and, later, Miroslav Krleža privilege the peasantry, as collectives attached to locality and territoriality, to indicate the revolutionary potential: this always happens where metonymy represents the peasants better than metaphor and where metaphor perhaps cannot represent the peasants to begin with.

It is certainly symptomatic that Matoš's and Krleža's representations of Croatian peasants in Austria-Hungary correspond to how Viktor Tausk, Freud's disciple and the military doctor in the First World War, describes the peasant recruits. According to Tausk, peasants in the Austrian-Hungarian

Army are incompatible with military discipline, which is based on an absolute, pure value of command and authority divorced from the idea of locality; peasants, on the other hand, cling to the imaginary of locality and territoriality.⁵ Symptomatically, Tausk describes the peasants as somewhat impervious to psychoanalysis, too, which suggests that the authority fundamental to the Austrian-Hungarian Army (in the conditions of a world war) corresponds to how psychoanalysis imagines the symbolic sphere (of law and language). Finally, Tausk's remarks correspond to how Karl Marx analyzes peasants in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon": Marx excludes the peasants from political self-representation, arguing that they cannot represent themselves.⁶ If this suggests that there may be a flaw in Marx's thinking of the revolution (since most of the successful communist revolutions in the twentieth century took place in predominantly agricultural societies – Russia, Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, Vietnam...), it equally suggests that Marx, like Tausk, excludes peasants from the domain of metaphor and from the metaphoric principle.

Insofar as Marx's flaw in thinking the revolution concerns his elision of the peasantry, it also suggests that Marx failed to take into account, fully, the lesson of the American Revolution, specifically its *raison*, which was deeply impressed by Jefferson's constitutional appreciation of agriculture and by what was Lucretian and Epicurean about this appreciation. In other words, Marx's flaw should be located not merely in his shedding of peasants but equally in his failure to understand Jefferson; a failure all the more telling in view of the fact that Marx formed as a philosopher in an elaborate account of the Epicurean reworking of Democritus' physics – precisely the match for what is unmistakably Lucretian in Jefferson's political logic.⁷ It is almost as if

5 See Tausk 1991: 158, 160-161.

6 See Marx 1960: 198-199. Among other things, in these paragraphs Marx compares peasants to a sack of potatoes: an image which implies that peasant collectives are constituted around metonymic relations. Its derogatory angle suggests that Marx critiques precisely the metonymic character of these collectives or else metonymy as the apparatus of political reasoning.

7 The title of Marx's doctoral dissertation was *Differenz der demokritischen und epi-*

Marx had somewhat repressed his own Epicurean beginnings when he later embarked on his critique of the political economy of capitalism, a repression whose impact on his theorizing of revolution would turn out to be truly Oedipal. In turn, this American dimension of revolution keeps surfacing in the Austro-Hungarian imaginary, particularly aptly in Matoš's discussion of Emerson, for instance. After all, Gilles Deleuze also singles out the American and the Austro-Hungarian imaginaries as peculiarly revolutionary, thereby implying an unacknowledged (philosophical?) affinity of the two.⁸ This is an affinity which could be traced perhaps to a common interest in physics (of classical antiquity), rather than to mathematics; what ensues is a specific thinking of universalism based in metonymy, not metaphor.⁹

So there is a logic to the Austro-Hungarian imaginary which sits well with Jeffersonian and Emersonian America; finally, the political cultures in both depend on a rather fundamental tension between law and contract. Furthermore, Austria-Hungary forms in 1867 as a relatively loose political collective just as other German countries are unifying and homogenizing. Austria-Hungary remains outside of this process of unification and homogenization, only to deconstruct its Germanicity into a script of minoritarianism. It is a Deleuzian minoritarianism: what is important is not so much the fact that Austria-Hungary was characterized by a large number of so-called small or minor languages in opposition to German, but rather that German persisted in Austria-Hungary in the zones of indeterminacy and undecidability so that ultimately any single, pure language was to be perceived as foreign.¹⁰

kureischen Naturphilosophie. See Dolar 2014 for a detailed reading of Marx's dissertation, especially in relation to Hegel.

8 For privileging the American and the Austro-Hungarian imaginaries as peculiarly revolutionary, see Deleuze 1967 and 1996: 47-91.

9 This, in part at least, explains also Matoš's decision to pair his Emerson with Rousseau. While writing on Emerson, he quotes from Rousseau that it is in the country that we learn how to love and serve humanity – in cities, however, we learn only how to hate it (1973: 42).

10 Hence Deleuze's continued interest in Kafka. Matoš, too, wrote also in German and published in *Agramer Tagblatt*, a Zagreb-based German newspaper.

Also, it is the homogenizing unification of the German lands that Nietzsche critiques in “Schopenhauer as Educator,” when he adopts Emerson’s description of revolutionary culture in order to argue that revolutionary culture is an alternative to the kind of subjectivity which is befitting the politics of homogenization. According to Emerson, “a new degree of culture would instantly revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits” (1950: 284).¹¹ True, Matoš too adopts Emerson as instruction, now for Croatia in Austria-Hungary. Still, while Matoš needs Emerson so as to suggest that Croatia is a pre-revolutionary or perhaps a proto-revolutionary culture, Nietzsche employs Emerson in order to show that the homogenized Germany of the 1870s lost its revolutionary potential or, more precisely, to show that foregoing the revolutionary potential was the price Germany paid for its homogenization.

If this is how Matoš provokes ultimately a comprehensive comparison of the American and the French Revolutions, what is truly provocative about his perspective is its implicit rejection of Nietzsche’s positions. Nietzsche, that is, seems to be implying that the Emersonian agenda is not universalist, insofar as not all can open up to revolutionary becoming; some respond to it by developing structures comparable to those which Freud will later describe as masochism. Matoš, on the other hand, registers no such restriction. Instead, he is emphatic about embracing Emerson’s idea of politics as education, as if suggesting that crisis implicit in it is also how to think universalism. It is almost as if Matoš suggests that Nietzsche needs to be sidestepped if one is to understand America (and Emerson), as well as the event of the revolution where revolution is definitive to politics in modernity. Which is where another discussion can begin, and in the same vein: that of Derrida’s rejection of Jefferson in favor of Nietzsche, in his famous refusal to address the American Declaration of Independence except in the form of an excuse.¹²

11 In Nietzsche: “*Ein neuer Grad der Kultur würde augenblicklich das ganze System menschlicher Bestrebungen einer Umwälzung unterwerfen*” (1988: 426, emphasis F. N.). Cavell pays special attention to this quote from Emerson in Nietzsche when discussing what he calls “the constitution of Emersonian perfectionism.” See Cavell 1988: 10.

12 See Derrida 1986.

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Croatian Leftist Critique and the Object of American Studies

The article argues that one possible way of understanding the United States at the disposal of American Studies scholars working in the region of ex-Yugoslavia is by retrieving the leftist critique as it was articulated by members of the Croatian Praxis writers. The author begins with the contention that the prevailing representations of the United States today present it as the exemplary country of capitalism. Arguing that extant Americanist paradigms let this reality slip under their screen, he goes back to the said leftist critique and reads how they provide a conceptual frame with which to engage the United States. He elaborates this frame in three ways: first, he recalls the Praxis group's engagement with the United States when the journal was being published; second, he draws attention to Vanja Sutlić's and Ivan Kovačić's pronouncements on the United States as the exemplary capitalist country; and third, he foregrounds the Praxis group's Marxist engagement with Heidegger. It is this engagement that the author contends is of particular relevance for understanding the present mutation of capitalism and the place of the United States in the contemporary world. In conclusion, the author argues that a reading of the United States through Marx and Heidegger repositions the work of William Spanos within the archive of the discipline.

Key words: the United States, capital, Praxis, Heidegger, Marx, Spanos

There will be ... no future without Marx, without the memory and inheritance of Marx: in any case of a certain Marx, of his genius, of at least one of his spirits.
(Derrida 13)

1

Pragmatically speaking, the research project which set itself the task of taking stock of the mappings of the United States in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia stems from a conviction that these representations ought to find a voice in the disciplinary archive of American Studies. As such, it is a local, regional endeavour intended to articulate the commonalities and the differences of reading the United States from a geography that up until quite recently had been bound together by manifold ties.¹ On the other hand, its aims are trans-local, since such an archive, with its attendant methodological and conceptual agenda, can make a contribution to the latest opening of the discipline to scholarship done outside of the United States. This opening has, for example, been registered by one of the latest American Studies anthologies, in which the last three chapters are grouped under the heading “Internationalization and Knowledge Production about American Studies” (Radway et al. 2009). The common thread binding this section of the anthology is the contributors’ position of utterance outside the United States, from which they ponder, What does one do when practicing American Studies? Whether explicitly formulated or implicitly presupposed, this question is highly pertinent to what follows.

Liam Kennedy, who is an author of one of the three chapters (Radway et al. 569–77), formulates what is at stake in this undertaking in another article, entitled “American Studies Without Tears, or What Does America Want?” as follows:

1 The tenacity of this common experience, the way it continues to be interpellated from the outside, despite the voicing of difference from the newly-spawned identities after the fracture, came to the fore when the Croatian Association of American Studies sought membership in the European Association of American Studies. The European Association persisted in denying individual membership and proposed that the possibility of joining would be opened if a joint bid was made by the various national organisations in the region. The other national organisations in the region were confronted by the same obstacles. The result is that the presence of this part of Europe is now registered in the EAAS membership under the clumsy acronym AASSEE (Association for American Studies in South East Europe).

I will be reflecting on aspects of our intellectual relationships to America as an object of knowledge, to American studies as the field formation that frames that object, and to the field imaginary as a sphere of collective knowledge that is regulated by disciplinary practices but also as a field of less-regulated desires. And so I also want to consider what the construction of a field imagery leaves out, what it represses or disavows, in producing America as an object of knowledge. (Kennedy)

Here Kennedy describes not only what he is doing in this article, but what many of those who partake in the internationalization of the discipline are doing. To the extent that I will be dealing with the “field imaginary” of the discipline and with what its construction has systematically occluded, I see myself as participating in this work of self-reflection. In so doing, I will be arguing for the retrieval of a space and its intellectual production that give us a platform from which I hope to contribute to the internationalization of knowledge about the United States.

One reason for the need for this retrieval becomes apparent if one peruses the work in American Studies that is being conducted outside the United States. It is striking that so little attention has been given to the way that the United States was projected in the socialist world and how these projections have fared after the demise of the socialist states. I think this is a factor that goes some way to explain the marginalization of Americanist scholarship produced in post-socialist countries. I find this all the more paradoxical, considering that the socialist world has figured so powerfully in the constitution of the discipline itself. Suffice it for present purposes to quote Michael Denning:

On the one hand, American Studies served as the embodiment and explicator of the American Way, the “genius of American politics.” Its interdisciplinary ambitions and “pluralist” ideology made it the quintessential alternative to Marxism itself, which was understood simply as Soviet ideology. American Studies in its imperial guise was based on the uniqueness and exceptionalism of American experience, and this Cold War vision of America attracted corporate funding and moved overseas as an intellectual arm of US foreign

policy. (2000: 446)

Others, of course, have followed Denning's line of reasoning. But even these critical genealogies of the discipline have not deemed it worthwhile to retrieve the readings of the United States as they circulated within this constitutive outside, this other space. It goes without saying that the demise of the socialist world played a large part in "disavowing" the readings of the United States produced by its antipodal ideology. However, if the euphoric moment of the nineteen-nineties explains this erasure, ought we to persist in this erasure at a point of history when American ideology – celebratory capitalism – is being questioned from many quarters. Needless to say, I am not proposing a return to simplistic explanations, to a dogmatized Marxism. However, I will be arguing for the retrieval of a Marxist critique that was articulated and developed in Yugoslavia, which, as Tvrtko Jakovina maintains, was America's "first communist ally" (2003). Reflecting upon the American presence in that failed state, I am proposing that the practice of American Studies in the successor countries can both add to the international archive of readings of the United States and, what is equally important to us here, help engage another erasure – the erasure of a common history in newly-constituted cultural practices.

We who do American Studies in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia do not share only that common past but also the parochialisms of our newly-discovered countries. We also share a marginality through which the European center reenacts the relationship of center and periphery that European Americanists hope to destabilize in their own positioning towards the United States. The mapping of the United States from a site that underwent a transformation, a tragic disassemblage, from a site where the United States has played such an important role, can, I believe, redress that marginality and empower us to participate in the internationalization of the discipline. The inscription of that post-socialist perspective into American Studies, a perspective that has not wholly disavowed its past, will bring into our ken not only what the field imagery of American Studies tends to repress in producing its object of

knowledge but also the main issue of what follows, a thinking, a leftist critical thinking that has been largely repressed in the latest remapping of the region.

2

Unlike the use of the word map in that last sentence, which of course refers to our latest state boundaries, when I use it in relation to our disciplinary field imaginary, I am referring to the way the United States has been made an object of thought, representation, and emotional-psychological investment. As a rule, this is the departure point, the presupposition with which we work when engaging in American Studies. The regional history of this field imagery can only be indicated as a challenge to future research. What I hope to do is legitimate that line of research by focusing on just a small part of that field. I will begin in a roundabout manner. I maintain that one of the specificities of American Studies is that the discipline has always shown a willingness to engage the present moment, the actuality of its object of study, that is, the latest stage in the trajectory of the American project. Therefore, as a preliminary step I will briefly sketch what I perceive as the image of the United States that nowadays percolates through Croatian culture and society. Although reductivist and selective, I hold that this sketch provides an imagery which American Studies would have to acknowledge if the discipline seeks to speak to the actuality of its object of study.

If we take as our point of departure, as Americanists customarily do, the image of the United States as it is articulated in literary texts, we can begin mapping today's American presence in Croatia by going to literature. Evidence of this presence is not lacking. As one of the most recent Croatian literary representations of the United States I choose Maša Kolanović's narrative poem *Jamerika* (2013). Her staging of the collision between a defunct socialist world-vision and a triumphalist United States foregrounds the latter's economic prowess. Her description of her sojourn in New York jocularly juxtaposes the defunct ideas of the socialist project with the reality of banks, money, and business. I will not rehearse but merely acknowledge her many references to the economy in its manifold guises. In closing her book, Kola-

nović defines America as follows: “America is a centrifuge/ *ca-ca-pi-pi-talism* the siren call/ with which each day it awakens the West and the East” (2013: 181). Kolanović is far from being alone in engaging the United States in her writing. I add the following list of recent fictional representations of the United States in Croatian fiction: Goran Tribuson’s *Made in USA*, Neda Miranda Blažević’s *Američka predigra*, Dubravka Oraić Tolić’s *Urlik Amerike*, Dubravka Ugrešić’s *Američki fikcionar*, Jelena Čarija’s *Klonirana*, Miljenko Jergović’s *Buick Riviera* and Nin Mimica’s *Lea ide u Hollywood*. This provisional list appears in Maša Kolanović’s afterword to Irena Lukšić’s novel *Očajnički sluteći Cohena* (2013), about which Kolanović writes that it depicts an encounter with “late capitalist postmodernity” as articulated by Fredric Jameson (125). I will add to this list Josip Mlakić’s dystopian novel *Planet Friedman* (2012), which more than any other work succinctly names the present of our object of study. This novel by a Bosnian-Croatian writer, who in earlier texts had been preoccupied with the identity problematic, evinces to me his recognition of a deeper dynamic. Mlakić’s naming of the Chicago economic guru of the latest mutation of capital ought to be given due weight. If that name has the resonance that the writer presumably presupposes by inscribing it as the title of his novel, that naming points to how the United States, if Friedman is seen as a synecdoche for a larger whole, is represented and perceived in the public space where the novel appeared.²

However, in accord with the methodology of American Studies, we need not restrict ourselves to literary artefacts in our search for the American presence. To supplement the literary evidence, I will first quote from a

2 In passing, I note that Milton Friedman indeed paid a visit to Yugoslavia. A differently-focused exploration of the American presence in this part of the world would record his observations on the Yugoslav system but would also take cognizance of how economists inspired by his thought participated in the dismantling of Yugoslavia (Jeffrey Sachs in particular) and how policies based on his economics contributed to the subsequent trajectories of the newly-established nations. For a description of Friedman’s negative evaluation of the Yugoslav system, see Jadranko Brkić: “Failure of Yugoslavia’s Worker Self-management: Kardelj vs. Friedman” (<http://www.slobodaiprosperitet.tv/en/node/870>).

newspaper commentary which, needless to say, can be augmented by countless other examples. From this interminable stream of pronouncements that evince the tyranny of the economy in Croatian life, I choose a piece by Viktor Vresnik, not because it is particularly perceptive, but because of a particular remark he makes there:

When they became convinced of the power of capital markets, the politicians used it as the decisive demagogical underpinning. Everyone could become a Gordon Gekko, even those who never heard of him, although these were few because Croatian television had repeatedly broadcast Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* in a stable rhythm in prime time at least every three months. (Vresnik)

The fact that a newspaper commentary could refer in such an offhand fashion to an icon of American popular culture or at least to the mindset the film-figure embodied testifies to the extent that Gordon Gekko has saturated Croatian public space. To take another example: a commentator at the Catholic weekly *Glas koncila* reviewed a number of American films, *Wall Street* included, which according to him “anticipated where greed and the pitiless struggle for profit amongst stock brokers will end up” (Ban 19). That the official Catholic press was registering the new mutation of the American way of life indicates a presence unacknowledged in the church's earlier litany of pieties and its disparagement of the former social order. In April 2014, Croatian television repeatedly aired a news item in which entrepreneurs and banks in Croatia, more specifically entrepreneurs in the construction business, were described as Croatian *Wolves from Wall Street*. I will add to this evidence of the saturation of Croatian public space by capitalist America factual evidence which, in my opinion, is more disturbing than these examples. According to a survey conducted by Stjepan Šinko, it turns out that the value system Croatian bankers base their decisions upon shows a strong affiliation with the world views of Ayn Rand (Šinko 2013). Although Šinko notes that the sample of bankers is relatively small, the results make us pause to think and ask whether the catastrophe Croats are living through is not the brainchild of

devotees of the high priestess of capitalism.

Evidence for the way I see today's American presence in Croatia can easily be expanded. I refrain adducing from the contemporary leftist critique of what the United States today embodies, whether that critique articulates itself in straightforward pronouncements, in translations, in individual public figures visiting Croatia, or, for that matter, in the way American studies are conceived and taught at Croatian institutions. As an addendum to my list of examples, I only cite Dag Strpić, who in his book recognizes the critique which I indicate in my title:

Susan Strange did more than she aimed to do with her book *Casino Capitalism*. She merely had in mind that the world financial system nowadays works day and night, like in Las Vegas. In fact, what was beginning to take shape was a virtual world casino that had replaced the real casino with a virtual one, and that had opened a day-and-night world "space opera," an SF-game of inconceivable proportions. This was accompanied by a new infantilized temporality in all mathematically conceivable dimensions – excepting in real time and in the three routinely known dimensions of space. The cult film *The Matrix* is a real child's game in comparison with this Wall Street matrix. The crisis which only (maybe) culminated in 2008 affected us like a cold shower from the real (film) *Matrix*. (207)

In my opinion, all of these references provide more than anecdotal evidence. They evince an emerging representation of the United States that is, of course, not restricted to Croatia. Put otherwise, they are synecdoches of a historical conjuncture that Andrea Micocci succinctly describes in the following manner: "Economics has acquired today a perfect centrality, comparable to that central architectural position that once upon a time seemed to belong to theology" (xi). The archive of representations that I have mustered above reflects the position of the United States in that "perfect centrality". The question I ask at this point is whether extant Croatian readings of our object of knowledge provide tools to grasp the centrality of the economy – to formulate the commonality of our examples – as it emerges in the present

conjuncture. The answer is negative. The extant archive of Croatian scholarship in American studies, focusing as it does on literature, identity, exceptionalism, and United States institutions and values, lets this conjuncture, both in its “originary and lasting” modalities – to paraphrase Micocci – pass under its screen. Put otherwise, when myriad sources are registering the hijacking of United States institutions by money interests, corporations, and business, when we are witnessing everywhere “the capillary penetration of capitalism” – to quote Micocci again (3) – the extant scholarship and its research priorities and explanatory accounts prove to be inadequate.

3

However, if the disciplinary archive of American Studies does not provide a way to understand the mutated representation of our object of study, can we find in the Croatian cultural archive an enabling theoretical position that anticipated the nature of the emergent conjuncture? If we restrict ourselves to the period after 1990, the answer would again be negative. For various reasons, Croatian scholarship and political discourse “left out, repressed and disavowed,” to use Liam Kennedy’s terms, the question of capitalism. Boris Buden summarized this in an interview: “In fact it is fantastic that during the nineties capitalism does not even exist, that it is a word that cannot be uttered, simple and impossible, something otherworldly” (Buden). If such is the case, and I agree with Buden’s assessment, then it is logical that, if the nineties marked such a break, we will have to reach back in time in order to retrieve the naming of capital(ism). If capitalism insinuates itself as the dominant object of our discipline – something that my overview of Croatian representations of the present-day United States seeks to indicate – and if we are disabled in conceptualizing our object after that break, I propose that we go back to the pre-nineties Yugoslav context, where, need it be said, capitalism was uttered – uttered, we will agree, perhaps even too often. The retrieval of that context, a context that espoused a Marxist ideology, would show that the capitalist labelling of the United States was common practice. If today we approach the United States as “a powerful, duplicitous force,” as Kennedy

puts it, official Communist party representations of the United States could indeed be mustered, but I harbor doubts about their heuristic value. However, to subsume leftist thought under official party orthodoxy does not do justice to the complexity of intellectual work in former Yugoslavia. Such a maneuver erases voices that I contend ought to be heard in the contemporary enchantment with and bafflement at the American presence.

The “leftist critique” in my title refers to the group of writers who worked outside the official party line, more specifically, the Zagreb *Praxis* group. But, as I will show below, the object of American Studies, or capital as its (de)structuring core, does not unproblematically appear in their writings. Obviously, within the limited confines of this presentation, I am not able to go into an in-depth search for and sustained analysis of the American presence in the back issues of the *Praxis* journal.³ Amongst the reasons why the United States was not foremost on their agenda one has to recognize the fact that their main intent was time- and site-specific. Borislav Mikulić encapsulates the main thrust of the *Praxis* project and its position within continental philosophy in the following assessment:

Praxis as a philosophical group not only didn't participate in the theoretical disintegration of the humanistic horizon and the ideals of emancipation,

3 A cursory search through the table of contents of the journal shows that a number of authors engaged American thinkers. I merely list here the relevant articles: I. Kuvačić, “C. Wright Mills,” *Praxis*, 1965, II/2, 260-68; D. Pejović, “John Dewey,” *Praxis*, 1966, III/2, 244-253; I. Kuvačić, “Veblenova kritika kapitalizma,” *Praxis*, 1966, III/3, 419-435; S. Morris Eames, “Determinizam i svjesna akcija kod Karla Marxa i John Deweya,” *Praxis*, 1966/4-6, 690-696; Branko Brusar, “Filozofija Ralpa Waldana Emersona,” *Praxis*, 1970, VII/3, 418-425. The journal published an overview of Marxism in the United States written by Howard L. Parson, “Utjecaj Marxove misli u Sjedinjenim Državam,” *Praxis*, 1967, IV/3, 337-349, while Jasminka Gojković wrote two articles on the American New Left. In the first, she described the trial of people accused of the rioting that accompanied the 1968 convention of the Democratic Party in Chicago (“Pozorište na sceni čikaškog pravosuđa,” *Praxis*, 1970, VII/4, 599-610), while in the second, she reported on the program and the situation of the Students for a Democratic Society (“Raskršća američkog SDS-a,” *Praxis*, 1970, VII/5-6, 1023-1036).

which characterised Western philosophy (especially French) after 1968, but on the contrary, constituted itself through critique of the institutional alienation of humanism in the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, and even attempted, for the sake of the theoretization of disalienated human existence, to reinterpret positively the Heideggerian critique of humanism, i.e., the very foundation of the theoretical disintegration of ‘humanistic universalism’ within the contemporary European philosophies. (Mikulić)

Praxis’s critique was primarily directed at existing institutions of power, the thinking of the group was the thinking of revolution, of man as a being of praxis who challenges, destroys, and transcends the limitations of what exists. It is paradoxical that to these Marxists, capital(ism) was not the primary concern of their agenda. Darko Suvin has commented that the *Praxis* group was not primarily focused on the economic sphere and that it downplayed the extent that human life was “located in political economy”, forgetting the fetishistic nature of the commodity (Suvin 93). And yet, despite these concerns and elisions, what Suvin designates as a “lack” in addressing “economic relationships”, I argue that if we return to the *Praxis* group we will find material relevant to the American Studies project.

4

It is interesting to recall that Vladimir Bakarić, the long-lived functionary of the Croatian Communist party, attacked the *Praxis* group in 1968 because they, as he said, “gave expression to the modern American anti-communist current of thought” (in Suvin 92). Such an accusation points to how the *Praxis* group was a foreign body to the dogmatist interpretations of Marx and how they were interpellated into an inimical, American context.⁴ However, if one

4 As far as I know, there was no connection between the *Praxis* group in Zagreb and their colleagues in the English department, where America was an object of study. The fact that Ivo Vidan, an important figure in the policies of the English department, translated Howard L. Parson’s overview of Marx’s influence in the United States for *Praxis* (1967, IV/3, 337-349) shows that the people in the English department, who later on participated in institutionalizing American Studies, were not unaware of the *Praxis* project.

attends to certain texts written by the *Praxis* writers, it is more than unfounded to maintain that they propagated any kind of Americanism. I offer three instances which corroborate Johanna Bockman's more just appraisal when she mentions the group: "The New Left in the universities and the Zagreb-based *Praxis* group attacked the economic reforms, markets, and trends they regarded as capitalist" (164). The first one is the account that Gajo Petrović, the foremost member of the group, gave about his participation in a 1966 philosophical conference in London. At the conference, he attended talks given by Stokely Carmichael, Allen Ginsberg, Paul Goodman, and Herbert Marcuse. His comments on their presentations leave little doubt that he fully supported these oppositional figures of the American sixties (136–46). My second example is Ivan Kuvačić's book *Obilje i nasilje* (1979). Kuvačić, who had been on a Fulbright scholarship to the States, writes about American social stratification, the racial divisions in American society, about politics, work and the university in the United States. Instead of espousing an "American anti-Communist" position, as Bakarić would have it, these two instances undoubtedly show that the *Praxis* group participated in the radical critique of the United States. Finally, I quote from Vanja Sutlić, whose work, more than that of other *Praxis* writers, still has relevance today:⁵

If one sought to give a thick description of that institutionalization, that fact has to be acknowledged. Against that background, we can evaluate the American Studies program that was later accepted and implemented and ask to what extent the Zagreb Americanists intentionally sought a way to break away from the dominant Marxism, to what extent that choice was a political decision, and whether they made the choice exclusively on their own or whether the institutionalization of a program of American Studies had something to do with American policy in this part of the world. Saying this, I have in mind an observation Johanna Bockman makes: "To U.S. government officials, Western influences could best be transmitted through educating eastern European scholars in American social sciences and humanities. These officials also considered American scholars in the social sciences and humanities as best able to collect intelligence information because they often understood the languages and cultures of the region" (61). The possibilities which are opened up by these observations ought not to be offhandedly dismissed.

5 Going to Sutlić, it is worth noting that he recognized the emergence of a con-

Deductively and abstractly speaking, technical progress within the framework of the capitalist mode of production ensues in a disjunction between production and consumption because it requires a reduction in rent and an ever greater part of profit for accumulation. In such circumstances, the state can, and actually did, after the great crisis between 1929-1932, intervene in different ways (think, for example, of the methods of the New Deal) to reduce, tendentially remove this disjunction. It could not have succeeded in this if the working class of the industrially most developed countries, in this or that manner, had not responded to the satisfaction of needs that the capitalist mode of production put on offer on its path of self-preservation. Accepting this offer, which varied in the social, political, etc. sense from country to country, (from the “American way of life” to the Nazi “SS-Sturmabführer”), the working class began to use Marx’s phrase from *The Holy Family*, “to feel good in alienation.” The USA is an instructive example, and it is pre-eminently there that one must study modern capitalism. (1973: 180)

Sutlić’s succinct overview of what took place in twentieth-century capitalism clearly shows that he was in no way biased towards American capitalism. However, of greater if not foremost importance to my argument is the last observation that the United States is an “instructive example.” In order to explain this point I return to Kuvačić, who commented on the American path of the development of capitalism as follows: “When one speaks of this path or its mode, then one primarily has in mind the fact that in America, unlike

figuration of capitalism which has nowadays been designated as “the third capitalism” or “cognitive capitalism.” The following quote will suffice: “Things related to the ‘cultural sector’ become complicated at the point when, on the one hand, the technological process demands, instead of the ‘simple’ worker, a ‘complicated,’ ‘multi-faceted’ worker and, on the other, when ‘culture’ itself is included in the process of the production of capital. At that point, one ought to speak of a distinct ‘synthesis’ of the work of the head and of the hand within capitalism which – regardless of the transformed personal ‘experience’ – makes the subsumption of labor under capital stronger and more profound” (Sutlić 1974:168). The analysis Sutlić provides of this new phase of subsumption ought to be recognized for its pioneering acumen, particularly if due weight is given to recent attempts to understand the latest transformation of capitalism. As a rule, these go back to Marx’s remarks on the General Intellect in *Grundrisse*, which Sutlić registered and commented upon in his analysis.

in Europe or in Asia, there did not exist any feudal factors which prevented or slowed down the development of capitalist relations” (30). I stress that neither Sutlić nor Kuvačić needed to reference those passages in Marx where Marx explicitly stated that the United States, unballasted by a feudal past, provided what I have on various occasions designated as America’s laboratory conditions for the rise of capitalism.⁶ *Praxis* writers did not elaborate on this insight, nor did they need to call upon Marx to substantiate their claims, because to them this was common knowledge, something that was taken for granted. I would argue that American Studies has yet to acknowledge that fundamental truth of its object of study and that one way that American Studies in this part of the world can make a contribution to the discipline is to retrieve the assumed knowledge of the *Praxis* group. If we do so, certain disciplinary paradigms will be destabilized, and a research agenda will unfold which can hardly be foreclosed by disciplinary presuppositions and the horizon of questions that is thereby insinuated.

5

For example, if we keep in mind Marx’s reading of the American project, a reading that was a part of the horizon of understanding of the *Praxis* group, it is obvious that it is hard to accept the notion of American exceptionalism which in different ways is the cornerstone of the discipline.⁷ I am proposing

6 On this occasion I quote one of Marx’s observations: “Nowhere does the fluidity of capital, the versatility of labour and the indifference of the worker to the content of his work appear more vividly than in the United States of North America. In Europe, even in England, capitalist production is affected and distorted by hangovers from feudalism” (I, 1990:1014, footnote 23).

7 In passing, I note that, according to some accounts, the notion of American exceptionalism ought to be ascribed to Joseph Stalin. When the American Communist leader Jay Lovestone in 1929 informed Stalin in Moscow that the American proletariat was not interested in revolution, Stalin responded by demanding that Lovestone end this “heresy of American exceptionalism” (see McCoy). Albert Fried gives an account of how the word appeared in the controversies within the Communist party in which some held that, “thanks to its natural resources, industrial capacity, and absence of rigid class distinctions, America might for a long while avoid the crisis that must eventually befall every capitalist society.

that the recognition of the laboratory, unballasted conditions for the rise of American capitalism needs to be constantly kept in mind when we proceed to think about the constitution of the discipline. If we do so, it can be contended that each of the disciplinary paradigms was a mythologizing, a whitewashing of the fact that the founding and the development of the United States was not an *ex nihilo* project but rather a stage in the dynamic of capitalist expansion. However, the import of this insight is more than genealogical. That is, if we are today witnessing, to quote Andrea Micocci again, the “sudden appearing of the emergency,” I opt for his second way of thinking that emergency, which consists of “seeing in the ‘emergency’ what emerges from far away times which we cannot stop” (ix). Micocci goes on:

This second approach observes in the event that has taken place what is simultaneously originary and lasting. It perceives in the event the presence of an originary foundation that was hidden and that, after having invisibly accompanied every evolution of the phenomena investigated, only now manifests itself in ultimate and simplified forms. (ix)

The unstoppable character of what is emerging, to be more precise, the unstoppable nature of capital, its “capillary penetration” (Micocci 3) should be, in my opinion, the central concern of our discipline now.

Today it is a platitude to speak of the United States as a capitalist polity. Capital has insinuated itself into the totality of social practice, including the political practices, institutions, and values that have been avidly professed by American Studies when they sought to legitimate their object of study. Democracy was at the forefront of this legitimating rhetoric. But today that rhetoric is hardly persuasive. Something has insidiously cast a shadow over it. Discussing Robert Reich’s preconditions for democracy, Henry A. Giroux

American exceptionalism explained to Communists why their movement, like the rival Socialist movement, fared so poorly here in the most advanced capitalist country on earth” (Fried 7–8).

writes, “All of the conditions he claims are crucial for a democracy are now undermined by financial and economic interests that control elections, buy off political representatives, and eliminate those public spheres where real dialogue and debate can take place” (16).⁸ This diagnosis would find widespread consensus. Giroux’s jeremiad is one among many that clearly show how the exemplary country of capital is no longer capable of camouflaging the essence of its exceptional trajectory. The reception of Thomas Piketty’s recent book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014) clearly shows that capital is no longer the unspoken in American culture but rather the framework within which options, if such exist, are weighed.⁹ In the present of our object of study, capital emerges triumphant and co-opts if not obliterates all obstacles.

The question I will ask at this point is whether Croatian leftist critique anticipated the emergence from far away times which we cannot stop,

8 Chris Hedges offers the following description of how the ascendancy of capital has impacted U.S. democratic institutions: “Corporations have 35,000 lobbyists in Washington and thousands more in state capitals that dole out corporate money to shape and write legislation. They use their political action committees to solicit employees and shareholders for donations to fund pliable candidates. The financial sector, for example, spent more than \$5 billion on political campaigns, influence peddling and lobbying during the past decade, which resulted in sweeping deregulation, the gouging of consumers, our global financial meltdown and the subsequent looting of the U.S. Treasury. The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America spent \$26 million last year and drug companies such as Pfizer, Amgen and Eli Lilly kicked in tens of millions more to buy off the two parties. These corporations have made sure our so-called health reform bill will force us to buy their predatory and defective products. The oil and gas industry, the coal industry, defense contractors and telecommunications companies have thwarted the drive for sustainable energy and orchestrated the steady erosion of civil liberties. Politicians do corporate bidding and stage hollow acts of political theater to keep the fiction of the democratic state alive” (Hedges).

9 There are numerous passages in Piketty that are relevant to understanding the United States. Somewhat in line with the notion of laboratory conditions for the rise of capitalism, he remarks that capitalism in the New World took a specific form “because land was so abundant that it did not cost very much” (104). Yet, later on, he writes that at the time of the Revolutionary War “the United States was still a land without capital” (152). But if the United States does not have a feudal past, what was this earlier socio-economic formation?

to quote Micocci again. Do the euphoric pronouncements of the sixties, in which I first located the *Praxis* group's reading of the object of American Studies, show them to have been wholly off the mark? Does the fact that the then fracturing of Western polities and the empowerment of subaltern voices – American voices that Petrović listened to and registered in his report – were mere blips on a more tectonic process wholly delegitimize their work? I argue for caution and discrimination. Although the *Praxis* group is marked by its time and its revolutionary zeal, there is a kernel of thought in the *Praxis* group – signaled, for example, in Sutlić's remark on “the path of self-preservation” – that adumbrates a future in which capital proves a force not easily dethroned. I argue that it is this thinking of capital that we today need and can use.

Again, I say this acknowledging the paradox that capital was not at the top of the agenda of Croatian Marxist leftist critique. To bring it to the fore, I make note of a remark Darko Suvin made in his “Theses about communism and Yugoslavia, or the two-headed Janus of emancipation through the state.” In this paper, dedicated to his *Praxis* colleagues, Darko Suvin writes, “This makes the work of my essay anamorphic in relation to Marx: rotated into the dimension of Post-Fordism, the new Leviathan” (Suvin).¹⁰ I quote Suvin here not only because I hold that a leftist critique of the new Leviathan has to be anamorphic in relation to Marx but, more to the point of my argument, because the *Praxis* project had already positioned Marx in a manner that some are now arguing is the best way to think the present moment. I have in mind those authors who in thinking the present conjuncture use both Marx and Heidegger. None of these authors register the fact that this encoun-

10 Suvin's metaphoric usage of the word anamorphic retains its geological meaning of deformation and change in rocks from great pressure and heat deep below the earth's surface, to summarize the dictionary definition of anamorphism. I reckon Suvin is saying that we need to think Marx amidst the newest mutation of capital and ask how his analytic stands in the face of the changes. The paper appeared in translation in Suvin's later book (2014). The author had earlier e-mailed the paper to me. I have been unable to track down an English version, so it does not appear in my list of cited literature.

ter had been staged in Yugoslav philosophy decades ago. Since I believe that the question of capital ought to be the center of American Studies, and since I hold, as I will show below, that to engage its present mutation one must give a hearing to Heidegger, it is obvious that there is more at stake in arguing for the relevance of Yugoslav leftist critique for American Studies than its anecdotal registering of United States events and processes. Put otherwise: although the *Praxis* group let pass under its screen the “self-preserving” strategies that ultimately defeated the emancipatory activities of the sixties – partially a result of the fact that the economy itself was not a priority in their intellectual priority – I contend that we can find in writings by the group a kernel of thought that registered this possibility.

6

The departure point for thinking the Marx/Heidegger encounter was encapsulated in a passage in Vanja Sutlić’s book on how to read Heidegger: “in a general manner, Marxism has to be brought to that point at which it is open to dialogue or – simply put – to that point where it speaks to today’s man” (1984: 207). Sutlić adds that, just as one ought to be cautious regarding Heidegger’s thought, the same stance ought to be maintained in relation to those who simplistically identify with Marx although an abyss separates them from him (1984: 208). With hindsight, a lot can be read into Sutlić’s admonishment to be cautious. One can imagine how jarring his warning was to those who had “identified” with Marx, who held that they understood him. Sutlić was challenging dogmatic interpretations of Marx, particularly those simplifications that were proffered in the political arena. To what extent this was enabled by his encounter with Heidegger is a question I leave hanging. I am only proposing that out of this encounter emerges a thinking of capital which is pertinent to understanding the present not only of the United States but of our globalized world. Let me illustrate this with a quote:

In other words, when capital and the forces of production come together in such a way that the forces of production appear as the forces of the produc-

tion of capital, then, in principle and as a tendency, the growth of the forces of production has no end. Then the growth of the forces of production as well as the production of surplus value that develops in immediate unity with this growth and develops only through it are without bounds. This is a thought that ought to be thought through when, in an impromptu manner, one wants to reach conclusions, sometimes from the immanent contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, about the impossibility of the development of forces of production within the framework of capitalism. (1973: 20–21)

It does not require great acumen to see that such a pronouncement would have been anathema to an ideology which constantly harped upon the imminent demise of capitalism. To return to the issue at hand, I hold that the evidence of the half century since that pronouncement was made has shown that the object of our study, “the instructive example” as Sutlić dubbed it, has evinced precisely the development he describes and that the “impromptu” prognostications and the politics based on them were mistaken.

If we seek to participate in the international production of knowledge about the United States, we can do worse than retrieve the *Praxis* group’s reception of Heidegger.¹¹ Not only will this remedy the dearth of philosophy within the discipline¹² but from this intellectual position we will be able to

11 Branka Brujić gives an overview of the Heideggerian presence in Croatian philosophy and a succinct reading of the Heidegger–Marx relation in Sutlić and Pejović (Brujić 643–45).

12 In his milestone article “‘The Special American Conditions’: Marxism and American Studies,” Michael Denning cites as one of his epigraphs Robert Sklar: “But there is also another reason for the poverty of theory in American Studies, and that is the reluctance to utilize one of the most extensive literatures of cultural theory in modern scholarship, coming out of the Marxist intellectual tradition” (1986). I am convinced that the “poverty of theory,” as Sklar writes, derives in large part from the fact that, despite its interdisciplinary openness, American Studies have not adequately engaged philosophical knowledge. Of course, since that statement was made, things have changed. The reception of French theory in the United States could certainly serve as a counterexample, and yet, as the discussion of William Spanos in my conclusion shows, American Studies in my opinion still shows a certain inhospitability to philosophy.

participate in readings of the present which have more and more called upon both Heidegger and Marx. A convincing example of such readings is provided by Michael Eldred in *Capital and Technology: Marx and Heidegger*. In the afterword to a book he published twenty-five years earlier, Eldred asks why Marx, why philosophy at all, why Heidegger at all. He gives an answer, which I quote, to explain why I think it is worthwhile to reclaim the *Praxis* readings of Heidegger:

Because we continue to live in a capitalist world in which technology is a hugely dominant power, and yet we only pretend to know what capital is and what technology is. It is the primal scene of philosophy all over again: We understand very well what technology and capital are, and at the same time, we don't. We have overlooked something, we have skipped over it and taken it for granted as self-evident, even trivial. At present we are in a global economic crisis triggered by major players in the gainful game of capitalism who played very badly, underestimating risk, and who almost managed to bring the movement of financial capital, and with it, the entire economic movement, to a screeching standstill. (Eldred)

Another passage from Eldred foregrounds the questions that arise at our point of crisis but also, I argue, questions that American Studies more than other disciplines has to ask:

To bring Heidegger and Marx together in all the radicalness of their respective thinking means to endeavour to see what light the genius of each of these philosophers throws on the respective blind spots of the other, especially with regard to the questions: What is technology? and What is capital? These questions demand the ability to think both ontologically and phenomenologically. Phenomenology here is not merely one school of philosophical thought among many others vying for attention and footholds in the academic establishment, but is the attempt to bring to language those invariably overlooked phenomena that, as Aristotle already said, are "hard to see, because they are so near, so everyday." (Eldred)

I am not saying that the leftist critique I target in this presentation took full account of the problems addressed by Eldred, but I would wager to say that, if American Studies as well as other intellectual projects in Croatia feel that Eldred's questions are a part of their agenda, then the *Praxis* group of intellectuals can be a starting point from which to think these matters.

We saw that Eldred in his afterword felt the need to address the global economic crisis triggered by the "gainful game" of capital. If the reader goes back to my overview of representations of the United States in Croatia, it is obvious that all of them, particularly Dag Strpić's – who, I repeat, acknowledges the *Praxis* legacy – in referencing "casino capitalism" gesture to the "gainful game." If the "rise of circulatory capitalism," as Edward LiPuma and Benjamin Lee dub it, and the place of the United States in that conjuncture,¹³ "have thrown orthodox Marxists and critical theorists into a tailspin" (LiPuma 15), perhaps, as Michael Eldred has it, we ought to reengage Marx through Heidegger. Obviously, such a project oversteps the limits of American Studies. However, has not the discipline always worked against its own limits? If those limits are entirely undermined, no tears ought to be shed because we are merely addressing a historical urgency. Heeding that urgency, we will think from the United States both the command of technology and of money. Neither Marx nor Heidegger will be left outside that task of thinking. Pointers in that direction can be gleaned from the following comment made by Alfred Denker:

13 The agency of United States financial institutions in the present conjuncture is a moot point. LiPuma and Lee write: "Indeed, one can easily read the history of late-twentieth-century capitalism as a sustained attempt by financial capital to emancipate itself from the political system and its regime of regulation" (17). We ought to keep this in mind and its implications for the object of our discipline: "The gargantuan size of the derivatives market, especially for derivatives devoted to interest rates and currencies, creates a culture of circulation in which no nation-state, not even the United States, can regulate the exchange value of its currency, the character of its reserve assets, or the transnational movements of capital" (48).

It is important to pick up on Heidegger's thinking in order to continue to evolve in directions in which Heidegger himself did not go. Finanztechnik could indeed be interpreted as a new manifestation of the Gestell, as Heidegger called the enmeshing framework of technology. Perhaps we could then say that money has become an end in itself, and so lost its true character. (Denker)

I cite this observation not only to point to a chore lying ahead but to argue again that the *Praxis* thinkers' engagement with Heidegger ought to be given adequate weight.

7

Saying this, I am not suggesting that the *Praxis* group anticipated the mutations of capital that have ensued in the present conjuncture. From the standpoint of the present, it can even be said that they did not perceive the momentous changes in capital or, to be more concrete, the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s – the “self-preservative” strategies I mentioned above – which set off a period of capitalist hegemony. If that is a fault, then there are many who could keep them company. However, I am arguing that the *Praxis* project left a legacy which needs to be kept in mind if we foreground capital not only as a concept within which to think the object of American Studies but the world in which we live. I will illustrate that legacy by briefly quoting three Croatian authors who have engaged capital(ism) in the aftermath of the *Praxis* project. The first I call upon is Branko Despot, who writes:

Marx sees his philosophical task as the construction of a true real-philosophy of false being. The true object of this metaphysics of false being is self-producing capital as self-objectifying, as a *praxis* which enacts itself and the other of itself. *Capital* is not an object amongst possible “objects” of science and work. Capital is the godless, unnatural, inhuman object of hyletic Being. It can be said that the totality of production is that which is false as such. (83)

The second is Nenad Mišćević:

Capitalism integrates, ingests every branch and thusly turns out as the universal. This is no longer the universality of the state apparatus, of dispersion, but universality as an interior characteristic, as the universality of the capitalist mode of production. Nothing exists that cannot become a commodity; there is no desire that is not axiomatized and conjugated with the flow of money; there is no rebellion that does not function as an additional cog which renovates and lubricates the machine. (158)

Finally, I cite Ozren Žunec, whose work I have elsewhere acknowledged (Grgas 2014) as profoundly influencing my thoughts on capital. In a recent publication, Žunec expands his earlier thoughts on Marx (1996) and reiterates that Marx's entire opus can be read as "an engaged destruction of the foundational features of philosophy", an opus that works with "principles that oppose all of classic ontology" (2012: 271). From the perspective of this "relatively coherent and yet unsystematic meontology," Žunec maintains that capitalist society is a kind of "spectral" object – an all-annulling thrust – whose only constant is change and transformation:

A society which knows the commodity and which appears in "the world of the commodity" does not have any kind of form, nothing stable and differentiated. That society is interminable flow, transformation and change, production and exchange, or – the production, exchange and the "spectral-object" "form" not of something that is, of whatsoever is determined or of any kind of being, but of what in traditional ontology is opposite to these: of Nothingness itself. (2012: 286)

It is moot how comfortable these three authors would feel in the company of the *Praxis* group.¹⁴ I have assembled the above philosophizing on

14 This is particularly true for Mišćević, whose work in analytic philosophy marks a clear break with what he did in *Marksizam i post-strukturalistička kretanja: Althusser, Deleuze, Foucault*. However, not going into particulars, I know that he would not disclaim his earlier thoughts on capital. In passing, I note that an opening to philosophy in Croatian American Studies would have to explore how Anglo-American philosophy as such contributed to the American presence in the region.

capital not only because they show what can be extrapolated from the *Praxis* project but because of their actuality and merit.

If it is conceded that they do not provide ready-to-hand methodological tools for thinking capital within the object of our discipline, they surely point to the enormity of the task. I am hard put to bring to mind perspectives on the dynamics of capital(ism) that surpass these meontological utterances.¹⁵ In a recent review of Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, David Harvey, probably the foremost Marxist working in the United States, took Piketty to task for not coming up with a working definition of capital in his analysis:

There is, however, a central difficulty with Piketty's argument. It rests on a mistaken definition of capital. Capital is a process not a thing. It is a process of circulation in which money is used to make more money often, but not exclusively through the exploitation of labor power. (Harvey)

However, although Harvey, with the reservation – “often, but not exclusively” – seems to step out of the orthodox Marxist analytic, he merely registers certain mutations of capital and subsumes them under the word “process.” I would wager to say that he has, to use Michael Eldred's words, “overlooked something,” that he has “skipped over it and taken it for granted

15 The relevance of *Praxis*'s pronouncements on capital or what they bequeath to us can be recognized if French poststructuralist thought is approached with the question of how it has always already engaged capital. Simon Choat (2010) shows that Marx was important to all of the French thinkers. He argues that, when they distanced themselves from Marx, they did so by primarily critiquing Marx's vestigial ontology. Concerning Derrida, Choat writes the following: “the interrogation of Marx's ontology is one of the most important themes of Derrida's book. It relates the reading of Marx strongly to Derrida's work hitherto, aligning it with his deconstruction of the onto-theological heritage of Western metaphysics from Plato onwards. Against Marx's ontology Derrida proposes a ‘hauntology’: the study of the spectral” (75). Following this up, it can be said that Mišćević's study is a pioneering work if Marx is thought in the poststructuralist context. Although Žunec keeps the poststructuralist debate in abeyance, his meontological reading provides a profound insight into how Marx can be thought, not only in the context of American studies, of course, but within the broader project of thinking the present.

as self-evident, even trivial.” Perhaps the reason for this lies in his sticking too literally to Marx and not permitting his thought to engage Suvin’s “anamorphic” movement, which would recognize tectonic changes in capital and which would be willing to engage Heidegger.¹⁶

8

Just as I have argued that, if we go back to the *Praxis* group, we open up a horizon of thinking the object of our discipline, in my concluding remarks I argue that this horizon brings to the fore a scholar who I believe has been unjustifiably sidelined by the mainstream of the discipline. The scholar I have in mind is William Spanos, whose importance I have argued for on numerous occasions.¹⁷ I do not propose to explore his work here nor will attempt to fathom the reasons for his marginality. I bring up Spanos because, first, his work engages issues that have been brought up above and, second, because, if we accept that Marx and Heidegger are asking similar questions, Spanos’s Heide-

16 I cite a passage from Eldred which I think has some bearing on the meontological thinking of capital: “Parallel to the figure of thought of the set-up, the question arises, what the gathered gathering of valorization should be called. With this naming, the essence of modern capitalist society would also be named. Instead of tracing back value only to social labour in an abstractly universal form, as Marx does, labour itself now also has to be thought in tracing it back into its groundless ground in the infinite, violent movement of valorization, since labouring humans, too, are merely used by this essence that holds sway.” And again: “We call the gathered gathering of valorization that attains domination in the capitalist world in an essential sense the gathering of the gainable, the gainful game or, simply the win (Gewinnst, Gewinn-Spiel). The gainful game is here neither profit nor winnings nor a purely economic magnitude, nor the successful result of a human struggle or human labour, but the gathering of the gainable, i.e. the gathering of all the risky opportunities for gain, which holds sway groundlessly as the essence of capitalism that opens itself up as a world to human beings whilst appropriating human being to itself” (Eldred).

17 The most recent was the paper I delivered in the workshop “Technology, War and American Identity” at the 2014 EAAS Conference in The Hague, Netherlands, April 3–6, 2014. I also duly acknowledge my debt to William Spanos in the article included in Christina Alsina Risquez’s and Cynthia Stretch’s book *Innocence and Loss: Representation of War and National Identity in the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

ggerian readings of the United States turn out to be very relevant to the thematic of capital in the discipline of American Studies. Needless to say, due to the constraints of time and space, I can merely give an outline of an argument.

In an interview Spanos gave for the *Minnesota Review* in 2006, he summarizes his work as follows: “My focus was always on the ontological, the representation of Being that was fundamental to the Western tradition, which Heidegger called the onto-theological tradition. My whole orientation, as I said, was on the ontological revolution, not the social and political; that came later” (Jeffrey 2006). If we agree that there is a dearth of philosophical thought in American studies, Spanos’s marginality in the discipline comes as no surprise.¹⁸ The surprise will be even less if we keep in mind that Spanos’s reading of America has persistently been constructed alongside and through a sustained engagement with Heidegger.¹⁹ However, although Spanos makes no secret of his espousal of Heidegger, in his last publication he registers his debt to “materialist intellectuals and scholars” (2011: xv) including neo-Marxists. This voicing of debt by the Heideggerian Spanos merely articulates what has always been more or less latent in his work. For example, in *America’s Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire* (2000), he speaks of “the contemporary global

18 Of course, the question of whether Spanos would consider himself an American Studies scholar cannot be answered here. There is no doubt that his Heideggerian readings are not easily accommodated to disciplinary protocols. And yet his work persistently addresses American literature, it does so by reading it through a historicizing lens which always reflects pressing political and social developments (WWII, Vietnam, 9/11 and its aftermath). However, it is indicative that in his book *The End of Education* (1993), in which the institutionalization and the use made of the discipline could have easily served as illustrations of his argument, Spanos explicitly refers to what I take to be a part of American Studies only in two footnotes (253–54 n. 11 and 261–62 n. 25).

19 That engagement worked against Spanos contributing to the American Studies project that argued for the uniqueness of the United States. I will merely cite Heidegger’s brief comment on Americanism in “The Age of the World Picture”: “‘Americanism’ is something European. It is an as-yet-uncomprehended species of the gigantic, the gigantic that is itself still inchoate and does not as yet originate at all out of the complete and gathered metaphysical essence of the modern age” (153). I would contend that much of Spanos’s work explores the implications of this insight and as such cannot be accommodated into the identitarian pathos of the discipline.

occasion” as marked by “the rapid transformation since the Vietnam War of a national corporate capitalism to a global late or commodity capitalism.” He goes on to write the following:

Since the Vietnam War, the United States, understood as a nation-state, has been eclipsed by the rise of transnational capitalism, but this does not mean that America is no longer an imperial center. It means, rather, that transnational capitalism has become “American” – an ontologically grounded comportment toward other “underdeveloped” worlds, from their way of perceiving reality to their political institutions, that assumes the latter’s radical inferiority – and that its post-Cold War project is the “Americanization” of the planet. (2000: 179–80)

Spanos here formulates the outcome of two insights that can be gleaned from *Praxis* writings: the possibility that the unbridled development of capitalism will constantly overcome its barriers and the fact that this “occasion” will be centered in the “instructive example” of capitalism. If the leftist critique, particularly the way it read Marx through Heidegger and vice versa, is given due attention, Spanos’s inscription of history and economy into his ontological readings comes as no surprise. We are ready for the “unconcealment” – a concept that the *Praxis* group had something to say about – that Spanos’s work occasions.

Hoping to bring Spanos’s work not only to the attention of regional Americanists but to do so by retrieving the leftist critique in Yugoslav philosophy, I cite a remark Liam Kennedy makes in the article “Spectres of Comparison: American Studies and the United States of the West.” The remark appears in the anthology I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, in the group of three texts that exemplify the “internationalizing turn” of the discipline:

For much of the last 50 years, European Americanists have tended to write as though part of a transatlantic intellectual class and in so doing have not questioned but lent support to the authority of US-centered knowledge based

in American institutions and publishers. Until recent years they have been generally disinclined to engage home-grown theoretical movements until after they have been digested by US American studies and fed back to Europe. (Radway et al. 574)

In a sense, it is appropriate that this insight appears in an article with the word “spectres” in its title. In my paper, I have been conjuring spectres which refuse to be laid to rest. In the world conjuncture in which I am writing, it haunts our discipline, and if we are to think our object of study, both Spanos and the way the leftist critique appropriated and “anamorphosized” Heidegger ought to be heeded and given due weight. One can surmise that if Spanos had been acquainted with the reception of Heidegger that was performed by the *Praxis* group, his own engagement with Marx would have probably been different.²⁰

We ought not balk at the implications that an engagement with both Marx and Heidegger will have for the teaching, the research programs, the very legitimization of the discipline. The cutting edge of American Studies has never balked before exogenous developments and has been ready to question its groundings in the face of those developments. Moments of crisis have been fortuitous, and American Studies has not balked at the mismatch between its categories and emerging reality. Stephen Shapiro has diagnosed a “demagnetization of the field’s compass” (23) that ought to be seen as an enabling condition for doing American Studies in this part of the world. I quote Shapiro:

Non-US-based Americanists are ideally situated to explore and cultivate a world-systems approach because of its roots in and acceptance of Marx’s eco-

²⁰ In his book *The End of Education* (1993), Spanos takes issue at several points of his argument with what he sees as the “economism” of the Marxist critique of the system of education. He speaks approvingly of the “essentially positive effort” (27) of neo-Marxist and other “worldly critics” of dogmatic Marxism. I can imagine that he would have included the *Praxis* group in this effort. Furthermore, I believe that, in light of present-day developments, that pendulum has swung too far and that a “worldly” reading of the present world has to refocus on the economic sphere albeit armed with both Heidegger and Marx.

conomic and political writing. Understanding an intellectual tradition is not the same as endorsing it, yet any attempt to poach these terms in the first instance will easily collapse and void their purchase. In the current climate, US colleagues exist within an environment that makes renewed collective education about the foundational terms and debates of world-systems analysis difficult to conduct. For scholars outside of this ideological pressure, our responsibility is to conduct the research our colleagues cannot. (28–29)

As a final word, I will add that the “non-US-based” Americanists have to be geographically differentiated and that American Studies scholars working in the post-socialist countries ought not to be left out of the picture. What these scholars need to do is not take the demise of the former system as the zero-point of thought. If they do so, they will succumb to the ideological pressure Shapiro identifies, to a pressure that has displaced and silenced Marx. However, all evidence suggests that Marx continues to haunt that silence. He does so in different ways and through various spectres. In my presentation I have lent an ear to one of these, a local spectre, but one which, I believe, has something to say about the Leviathan that haunts and intimidates not only the region but the world – global capital or a historical conjuncture implementing the “Americanization’ of the planet.”

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Bogdan Raditsa, the 1970s, and the Question of Croatian Emigration

The article contends against a fallacious assumption that Croatian political emigration in the second half of the twentieth century formed a homogeneous and monolithic whole, while it is rather the case that it was fissured and destabilized by each successive wave of emigrants. This differentiation is here presented in a number of contributions by Bogdan Raditsa, written in the 1970s and published in *Hrvatska revija* predominantly and occasionally in other emigration journals as well. Raditsa, as one of the nestors of the “new emigration” occurring after World War Two, notes a trend of increasing radicalization of the emigrants entering political arena as a result of reprisals following the suppression of the Croatian Spring in 1971. The 1970s are thus seen as a pivotal decade in which generational distinctions within Croatian emigration were manifested in a number of high-profile radical and terrorist acts committed by the latest wave of emigrants. Raditsa’s position indicates his adherence to democracy and liberalism on the model of the United States, while he subjects different models of political activism in emigration to reasoned scrutiny. His political analysis is not only a record of a diasporic intellectual disposition but also an incisive comment on the vicissitudes of Croatian politics in the stifling embrace of the Cold War. Consequently, an argument is forwarded that calls for a definitive inclusion of political diaspora into Croatian Cold-War history, while suggesting that such a goal might be achieved among other things by a sustained reception of Raditsa’s formidable oeuvre.

Key words: Bogdan Raditsa, Croatian emigration, the Croatian Spring, the 1970s, terrorism

This short essay—more than appropriately designated as a “working paper”—comes from a larger project that proposes to trace a, tentatively titled,

transnational poetics of Croatian American diasporic writing in the twentieth century. As a project pursuing Croatian American topics, it thus reflects the most recent calls for transnational American Studies, even if its precise methods and scope have yet to be declared.¹ Finally, as a fragment of yet another larger undertaking, a still unrealized but sorely needed cultural history of Croatia in the Cold War, it is a historical investigation plain and simple, a work based on primary historical sources scattered among numerous Croatian and U.S. archives, awaiting future researchers.

At the outset, it is worth highlighting at least two principal goals that this essay, as a part of a more ambitious effort, aims at fulfilling. The first is to propose that diasporic intellectuals in the vein of Bogdan Raditsa (alternatively, Radica), and the work they carried out while in political exile, form a key, if missing, part of Croatia's cultural history in the twentieth century, especially during the period of the Cold War when they were pointedly excluded from participating in the public life of socialist Yugoslavia. The second goal is to point out what is one of the most charged periods of post-WW II Croatian emigration to the West, the turbulent 1970s. The validity of this latter assertion will be tested in the remainder of the essay.²

Boris Maruna, both a poet and long-term emigrant himself, reminisces in the afterword to *Vječni Split* about Bogdan Raditsa and his staunch liberal orientation, placing him within the American political mainstream (188; similar observations are proffered by Ivo Banac in the preface to the same edi-

1 For more on this recent disciplinary orientation and a tentative articulation of its scope, goals, and methodology, cf. Fluck and Pease; *Journal of Transnational American Studies* (an e-journal hosted by the University of California).

2 When I say "missing," I have in mind the almost non-existent reception in Croatia of Raditsa's truly formidable, quantitatively speaking, oeuvre. It is deplorable that such an output—truly transnational in terms of its themes, as well as in terms of the author's frequent changes of residence, broad cultural and linguistic literacy, and political acumen—is still largely unrecorded in the Croatian public sphere and its intellectual hubs. One may hope that better times are in the offing since the announcement of the founding of the Raditsa research center in Split, his hometown. For an elaboration of this argument, cf. Đurešković.

tion: cf. 8). Maruna observes Raditsa's added qualities which turn him into one of the invaluable personages amongst the Croatian intellectuals scattered worldwide: "For Bogdan Raditsa has always been willing to talk, dispense advice, discuss things, which leads me to conclude that he is preeminently the man of the agora, the piazza, immersed in the Split mores" (188; if not indicated otherwise, all translations are by the author). Moreover, it is Maruna's belief that Raditsa was one of the "truest men of the Mediterranean in Croatian political emigration. This mostly means that he has carried within himself all the virtues and vices not only of his native Split but of the entire Mediterranean area, as well, which, as a historian, he intimately knew and, as its true son, loved above all" (189).

Bogdan Raditsa (1904–1993), therefore, cuts a formidable presence in the political life of Croatian emigration in the second half of the twentieth century from whatever angle we look at it. Judging by his biography ever since he made it into top journalistic circles and subsequently into the diplomatic service of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the 1930s and 1940s, his versatile career was increasingly marked by an unmistakable and genuine political nerve. Initially, though, as a journalist and a foreign correspondent in a number of leading Yugoslav newspapers and journals, he was more interested in all manner of cultural matters, ranging from literature to history to philosophy. From the beginnings of his public engagement, Raditsa found himself in a unique position to experience firsthand the rising and conflicting political ideologies engulfing Europe in the run-up to the Second World War. His pre-war activities already carry unmistakable traces of his later liberal and democratic commitments, while his acquaintance with different forms and features of the rising fascism and ideologies on the left made him sensitive to their lures and misleading arguments.

The next turning point for Raditsa came in the immediate wake of World War Two, when he found himself back in Croatia and Yugoslavia just as the new regime was taking hold. The scenes later described in his memoirs *Hrvatska 1945* (Croatia 1945) bear forceful testimony of the initial, quite bloody and violent phase of consolidation of the new order. After witnessing

the ordeal of the new society for a short while, Raditsa left the country in late 1945 and would not return, it turned out, for the next forty-five years. After that he only visited Croatia in the early 1990s, shortly before his death in 1993. During that time he lived in the USA, spent his summers in Italy (his wife, Nina Ferrero, was Italian), made his home a hub for Croatian émigrés and other anti-communist and anti-totalitarian opposition, while his public efforts as a professor of political science and history, commentator, lecturer, and journalist resonated in both Croatian- and English-speaking communities. Grateful to America for his and his family's freedom, safety, and opportunities, Raditsa implicitly spells out the role of the post-war "DP [Displaced Persons] intelligentsia," harbored by America, "doomed to death" in their home countries, to which he himself belonged: "... the new immigrant intelligentsia must first mold itself to the American pattern and try to establish itself in the growing American intellectual tradition" ("Some Displaced").

For the purposes of this format, I will not so much try to rehabilitate Raditsa, since neither he nor his works need that kind of attention, but will use his high stature and his reputation as one of the leading Croatian political émigrés to highlight a series of ruptures and discontinuities observable in the otherwise flatly designated phenomenon, oftentimes still used in a derogatory sense, of Croatian political emigration. Let me take a step back here in order to remind the reader that this ambivalent term was in fact coined by the Yugoslav socialist regime, especially its arm that was authorized to deal with the considerable segment of its citizens that was leaving the country for one reason or another. In order to ideologically differentiate among these, the category of "emigration" was prefaced by additional modifiers, such as political, extremist, enemy, or Ustasha, often regardless of the substantive charge behind these categories.³ (In case of other antagonistic national or political groups, since the state did not lack enemies, real or invented, other modifiers

3 This is amply illustrated in the 1974 booklet *Politička emigracija*, authored by two high-ranking officers in the YPA (Yugoslav People's Army) which was to be used as "an official textbook ... for the socio-political education of YPA soldiers and seamen" (Domankušić and Levkov n.p.).

were used, such as “informbiro” or “cominform” for pro-Stalinist and pro-Soviet elements, or “irredentist,” which was a code word for Albanian political emigration.) Likewise, appropriate nomenclature was used to designate the apolitical branches of Yugoslav emigrants abroad. If a person happened to land on the list of politically proscribed emigrants, it spelled for him almost by default the loss of all civil rights in Yugoslavia. Such was the case with Raditsa after his sudden defection from the country in 1945.

To go back to the main line of my argument, we need to understand how Raditsa, as a member of the first wave of Croatian political emigration after WW II, considered and assessed the phenomenon of the second wave of Croatian political emigration caused by the crackdown ordered by Tito himself on the reformist forces of the Croatian Spring and happening in the wake of the Spring’s violent shutdown in late 1971 and afterwards. The time-frame for my analysis, then, will comprise the ten years stretching from 1970, focusing especially on the ominous 1971, to 1980 and the death of Josip Broz Tito. It is necessary to delimit the scope of our research given Raditsa’s prolific production. Beyond these technical observations, another consideration dictates such a focus, which this essay will aim at demonstrating by presenting the main lines of Raditsa’s thought as laid out in his contributions to *Hrvatska revija* from 1970 to 1980.⁴ Writing in early 1970, he calls the crisis permeating Yugoslavia at the dawn of the 1970s “an organic Yugoslav crisis” (1970: 21). He cites other sources contending that the large part of the turbulences occurred due to “deep national conflicts” (ibid.). Even economic questions, pressing as they may have been, stood subservient to the national issue exacerbated due to a deep ideological crisis—the Party and its politics based on Marxism no longer bound the nations in the federation together (1970: 22). Moreover, he considers the national right of self-determination to be one of the major political principles of the twentieth century (ibid.). I have delib-

4 The impact of *Hrvatska revija* on the cultural life of the diaspora was incalculable, as testified by its uninterrupted course of publication since its reactivation in Buenos Aires in 1951; cf. Brešić; Listeš.

erately highlighted this essay as inaugural for the 1970s, since it shows in a nutshell Raditsa's preoccupations for the next ten years and beyond.

In Raditsa's case, in which he was hardly alone, he hailed with enthusiasm the rise of Croatian national awareness that was in evidence at least from 1966 and the fall of Aleksandar Ranković, Tito's right hand and the proverbial almighty chief of the Yugoslav secret police.⁵ When the Spring effectively ended by a military and police crackdown, it signalled for Raditsa a new phase, not only for Croatia, but also for the Croatian diaspora, and, ultimately, for his own political philosophy as he makes clear. This is then why 1971 is so charged a year on many levels. This comes to the fore in the way Raditsa tries to make sense of the violent end of the Croatian Spring, the debacle in Karadžorđevo, "the new Croatian catastrophe in Yugoslavia" (*Hrvatska 1945*, 33, 44). Up to that point he was still willing to consider the existence of Croatia as a federal unit in the Yugoslav fold. This attitude was in part a reflection of both his idealism and his political realism—his understanding that the West wants Yugoslavia to survive and needs it as an idea.

As we posit 1971 as a turning point, we should first look at the way Raditsa positions himself with regard to the events in Croatia and Yugoslavia before 1971, while considering their imbrications with the Cold-War containment politics of the superpowers. This will show how Raditsa always develops his insights and analyses in the process of triangulating the Croatian strain, its diasporic resonance, and the global Realpolitik to which these two are often subservient. For instance, considering his U.S. public appearances, there are at least two or three major phases to be considered. One is the key propagandist role that, alongside Louis Adamic (alternatively, Adamič), Raditsa played as one of the vocal promoters of Tito and the Partisans' side as principal antifascist factors on the ground in Yugoslavia as they made clear in the critical period of late 1943 and 1944. While initially Tito appreciat-

5 That Ranković's fall inaugurated a process of restricted economic and political liberalisation is argued, among others, by Ante Batović. It is thus probable that a few years later a full-fledged reformist movement might have flourished. Cf. Ponoš 17.

ed their engagement (to the extent that Raditsa came back to Yugoslavia in 1945), later on he would denounce Raditsa as a “warmonger,” when the latter no longer countenanced the situation in Yugoslavia after the war (*Hrvatska 1945*, 44, 358). In addition, it was almost inevitable that, while at the outset of the Cold War in the 1950s Raditsa’s sharply polemical articles critical of the situation in his home country were welcomed by the leading U.S. political and public opinion magazines, this ceased to be the case as the 1960s began.⁶

At that point in time, with Yugoslavia becoming a factor in international relations and a major U.S. ally in the bipolar world, a negative view of Tito and his regime was not endorsed either by the State Department or by the major political journals. So in his late 1970 contribution to *Hrvatska revija*, he admitted that the official U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia had not wavered during the Cold War, and that it was more than likely that the pro-Titoist direction would remain a mainstay of the State Department’s foreign policy (1970: 518, 519). As for his further analyses of U.S. foreign policy in South-eastern Europe, Raditsa on more than one occasion warned against what at times loomed as a possibility in this period: namely, for the Americans to surrender Yugoslavia to the Soviets (1970: 531). Thus it is at that point that Raditsa began to focus his energy more on publishing in a series of Croatian emigrant publications, including *Hrvatski glas* (Canada), *Nova Hrvatska* (London, U.K.), the *Journal of Croatian Studies* (New York City, U.S.A.), *Hrvatska revija* (Barcelona and München, at the time), and *Danica* (Chicago, U.S.A.), to mention a few, which spanned the spectrum from left to right. His activities demonstrate a clear diasporic disposition at work, as his texts spread from London to Canada, from the United States to Buenos Aires and, later, to Barcelona and München, to all centers of Croatian emigrant cultural

6 Many of Raditsa’s friends recall that he was never one to mince words, as is evident in his 1953 piece on Moscow and Belgrade, in which he unequivocally calls Tito a “dictator” (“Malenkov’s”). In a 1951 editorial for *The Saturday Evening Post*, he took another hard look at the conditions in communist Yugoslavia while trying to make a case against “unconditional aid” “in loans and food supplies” from the West, the United States in particular, to the crisis-ridden Yugoslavia (“Yugoslavia Will Be a New Headache”).

and political activity.

As it has already been suggested that the global Realpolitik was an axle around which revolved both the status of Yugoslavia and, consequently, the attitude that the politically engaged diaspora took to it, in the remainder of this essay I will first present Raditsa's main international political concerns in this period, 1970–1980, and then embed his view of the Croatian situation in that particular international constellation.

The world at the time was a bipolar world, according to Raditsa, in which Yugoslavia, for better or worse, found itself vacillating between the East and the West (1970: 531). Despite its non-aligned status, or precisely because of it, insofar as that status was a viable political option, the country found itself wooed by the superpowers. This comes to the fore in the 1970s in both a conspicuous and anecdotal manner. Namely, during that decade the country was visited by both the leader of the “free world,” i.e., President Nixon, and on few occasions also by Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Soviet Politburo. Raditsa invites us to consider the symbolic of the two visitors when he reminds his readers that Nixon also visited Croatia, and Zagreb, during his official visit to Yugoslavia in 1972, unlike Brezhnev, who in 1971 stayed in the ominous (for Croatia) Karadžorđevo (1974: 3-15; for a description of Brezhnev's visit, cf. Banac). Later on, these two leaders would come to play a prominent role in the process of *détente* aimed at reducing the tension and geo-political strain resulting from the arms race, when they would sign a bilateral agreement. These developments were assessed at the time by Raditsa in an ambivalent light (1973: 8).⁷ During those years he considered international political events within the framework of “a deep moral and political crisis besetting Europe and America” and signaling the decline of the West (1974: 3), which spelled bleak prospects for Croatia.

It is thus inevitable that the coup of 1971 that shook up most Croatian

7 In a related context, that of the assessment of the Croatian Spring forty years later, Rinna Kullaa of Finland considers how the “crisis in Croatia,” one of its various names, was narrativized and framed by U.S. intelligence reports, while also placing it tentatively within the context of East–West relations in Europe at the time; cf. Kullaa 93-109.

institutions, from political to cultural to economic, caused Raditsa to focus on the fate of Croatia and its new wave of emigrants. In accounting for the clash of generations that became observable in the 1970s as scores of new politically hardened candidates flocked to the shores of the old immigration destinations of Croats, such as the United States, it will perhaps be helpful to us to personalize this historical moment by staging it as a dispute between the old and the new guard. The old guard stands represented by staunch political liberals, such as Raditsa, by Croatian antifascist nationalists (the circle around Dr. Krnjević and “his” HSS [Croatian Peasant Party]), or by right-wing nationalists, while the new guard, or the Spring generation as Raditsa dubbed them, was represented by radical lions, many of whom were already politically seasoned by their membership in the League of Communists and now further incensed after they had been turned out in purges, tried and sentenced in staged trials, or simply allowed to leave the country before ending up in prison (1978: 371; 1979: 580). Some of these young lions found themselves on the warpath against the regime which only yesterday was extending a promise of a better society and offering a whiff of reformist hope. The new type of Croatian political activist was personified in the figure of the late Bruno Bušić for several reasons, as suggested in the following excerpts:

Bruno Bušić had been a representative of an entirely new Croatian generation He had been brought up in Yugoslavia, where he was publishing even in completely legal newspaper [sic] at the time of the “Croatian Spring,” in the early seventies. Of course[,] he already aroused Belgrade’s indignation in those days, so that they eventually arrested him. But he was definitely not one who could be politically incriminated with the sins of the past and subsequently discredited in the eyes of the world. (Rullman 16; original in English)

Moreover, “Bušić also shocked many older political emigrants who had left their country because they were fighting Communism. He openly advocated the inclusion of the Croatian Communists in a national united front against the regime in Belgrade” (Rullmann 16).

How can we account for this shift? A historical sketch might help us here. One of the most publicized events of the Croatian Spring was certainly the strike organized by the University of Zagreb students and led by the student leaders of whom some of the most prominent were Dražen Budiša, Ivan Zvonimir Čičak, Ante Paradžik, and Ivan Dodig. After the students were pressured to end the strike on December 4, 1971, Budiša was reported to have said: “Those who come next will be even more radical than we were” (cf. Jakovina 10), these words ringing as his political testament and sounding all the more ominous in view of the impending trial sentencing the student leaders to multiple years in prison. The subsequent events proved Budiša right, however. The young misfits, now coming mostly from the folds of the Party itself, Tito’s prodigal sons, so to speak, began to fill the ranks of the Croatian emigration, bringing with them the ways and means of conducting political combat that the older generation found too radical, violent, and deficient in democracy to help the cause. Already in March 1972, while the backlash against the Spring protagonists was still in force, Raditsa strongly denounced “the rhetoric of so-called revolutionary actions” that may have only further damaged Croatia’s position (1972: 11), all the more so since it was his conviction that, one way or another, “Tito is politically dead” (1972: 16). The problem is, however, as Raditsa contended, that his refusal to step down or announce his successor was holding the entire country hostage (1972: 8).

We can see how Raditsa weighs in with his comments and his political acumen that was sensitive to any show of anti-democratic violence standing in for political deliberation and debate. The material offered by Raditsa’s younger compeers was rife indeed. We must remember that the 1970s were a decade of terrorism and other means of violent political strife worldwide (cf. Bilandžić 67), so that the actions undertaken by certain minority segments of the Croatian emigration fit the bill and showed certain parallels with other politically minded and active groups (both on the right and the left end of the political spectrum).⁸ Raditsa found himself bewildered, if not appalled,

by the turn of events in a number of high-profile cases involving Croatian political emigrants. To name but a few in the turbulent 1970s, there was the alleged terrorist group incursion into Yugoslav territory in 1972 known as the Bugojno incident, which was swiftly foiled by the authorities with most of the infiltrators being killed and the few survivors being sentenced to death or long-term imprisonments by court marshal; the hijacking of a TWA airliner executed in the United States by an underground formation headed by Zvonko Bušić in 1976; several cases of extortion and blackmail in the Croatian emigrant communities in the United States; the threat of political assassinations and political infighting (often spurred by Yugoslav secret-service and counterintelligence activity); and two court cases involving alleged terrorist conspiracies by Australian Croats in Australia, while the list could be extended. In addition, in 1978 there was an internationally infamous case of the intended swap of three high-profile West German members of the Rote Armee Fraktion terrorist organization (who had been apprehended in Zagreb) for eight Yugoslav dissidents residing in West Germany (among them were six Croats who were alleged members of extremist emigrant groups). This protracted case in turn triggered other violent responses by all the parties involved.⁹ (As an aside, this is no place to enter a more detailed analysis of intricate links that the Yugoslav regime, while pursuing the so-called politics of non-alignment and denouncing terrorism, was maintaining with different terrorist and independence groups and movements, especially from the Third World—such as the PLO but not restricted to that, as the above case with the RAF makes clear.)

factions of Croatian emigration cf. Clissold (for a general picture and despite occasional imprecision); for an insider's view, cf. Korsky.

9 The chronology of this veritable international conundrum causing serious friction between West Germany and Yugoslavia can be followed on the pages of any major publication in the diaspora at the time. Their coverage is all the more interesting because they included foreign sources and reports, notably those from West Germany. Needless to say, reports in the Yugoslav press were streamlined and censored. For a different vantage point on the crisis but confirming its cause, course, and outlines, cf. Baković. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ivica Šute for his help and advice with bibliography.

The entanglement of terrorist and freedom movements as a response to an ideologically split world called for Raditsa's ongoing comments and reflections. An interesting perspective on where the Croatian diaspora stood in that respect can be read in his 1975 essay, where he attempts a psychological portrait of the activists. He distinguishes three groups in diaspora, namely, American Croats, Croatian Americans, and lastly and most importantly for his argument, Croatian Croats, born and raised in communist Yugoslavia. While the first two groups seem to have accommodated themselves to the conditions in their host country, the last group poses an interesting problem both in ideological and political terms. According to Raditsa, this group is violently nationalistic, not refraining even from embracing Ustasha ideas, but not denouncing social communism, either, providing that it secured an independent state. In the attainment of that goal, they are hampered by neither guilt nor awe (1975: 379), while they retain the right, so the reasoning goes, to implement all and any revolutionary means—including guerilla tactics and terrorism (*ibid.*). Not surprisingly, for Raditsa they exhibit clear-cut totalitarian aspects, especially considering that they turn away from America in despair over its unchanging containment politics and even try to court the support of the Soviets, thus committing an unthinkable breach according to Raditsa's staunch liberal views.

In the wake of various dramatic events, Raditsa warns in his commentary in the periodical *Danica*, published in Chicago, of the “cancer of terrorism,” while pointing out that in recent times the name “Croatian” in the States has become almost synonymous with terrorism, its holders classified alongside the supporters of the PLO, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans (*Danica*, 1981: 1, 9). On the other hand, as Raditsa contends, neither the Poles nor the Ukrainians resort to terrorism. This orientation, Raditsa warns further, might delegitimize the struggle for the accomplishment of a free state. Earlier, in his 1974 concluding piece to his above-mentioned memoirs *Hrvatska 1945*, he makes the following prediction—that by the end of the century Croatia must and will be a free state, and that such a fateful decision will have to be made by the people at home, not by the diaspora (*Hrvatska 1945*, 366).

It is therefore with great misgivings that he looks at the dissipation of energy and the loss of young lives and freedom on the part of the latest and exceedingly radical fighters in the ranks of the Croatian political emigration. Furthermore, he strongly resents the use of essentially non-democratic and violent forms of activism—including political assassinations—that is totally alien both to his political habitus and to American democratic principles (*Hrvatski glas*, 1980: 1). True to his democratic disposition, he truly believed in the inalienable right of self-determination of a people, based on President Wilson's principles, subsequently reinforced by the United Nation's charter, and eventually so flatly betrayed by both the Versailles and the Yalta agreements. In his 1975 text, he weaves these ideas into a map of a contemporary world that breaks down into "a world of freedom" and "a world of totalitarianism" (1975: 373). In March 1975, for instance, he considers decolonization as one of the major trends of the twentieth century: "the revolutionary rise of erstwhile small and obscure nations onto the stage of history" (1975: 20). This gives wings to his reiterated argument—that the principle of independence and self-determination, of universal political and moral value, therefore must also apply to Croatia, being a matter of historical necessity (1978: 3). It is the same belief, however, that inspired the anonymous author or authors of the Declaration and the Appeal to the American People, the documents meant to be distributed during the hijacking of the TWA airliner committed in 1976, as mentioned above.¹⁰ A glance at Raditsa's thoughts, however, will suggest how this act, rightly deemed terrorist, crystallized different reactions and cemented the generational division within the Croatian emigration. Even while he could see the political logic behind the action and the lifting of silence stifling Croatia in the aftermath of the Spring's demise, he nonetheless notes a change in the ranks of the latest emigrants and somewhat ruefully remarks on their aggressiveness and non-democratic methods assumed under com-

10 Maruna's report from 1995 is the most complete chronology to date of the events following the hijacking, as he uses his position as the court interpreter for the hijackers to follow the day-to-day events in the courtroom. In the final part of his study, he presents the texts of the two documents whose authorship has not been confirmed to this day.

munism and now used even to denounce the older generation (1979: 580). It was thus the case that the newcomers' radical methods sowed seeds of discord within the diaspora and contributed to the image of the turbulent 1970s.

Unlike his younger counterparts, Raditsa sees the inevitability of the demise of communist regimes worldwide due to the unfolding principle of universal human rights, while predicting that, within the Yugoslav fold, the principle of national self-determination will take place (*Nova Hrvatska*, 1979: 8). Given his lifelong political philosophy, only a segment of which could be presented here, for Raditsa the end did not justify the means, as was the case for his political sons. The subsequent developments will prove him right.

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