

**THE ERRANT LABOR OF THE HUMANITIES:
FESTSCHRIFT PRESENTED TO STIPE GRGAS**

*The Errant Labor of the Humanities:
Festschrift Presented to Stipe Grgas*

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The logo for FF press, featuring the letters 'FF' in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by the word 'press' in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font. Above the 'FF' is a stylized graphic element consisting of two horizontal lines with small circles at their ends, resembling a pair of glasses or a bridge.

Zagreb 2017



Atiye Savaş

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editors' Preface	9
GEOGRAPHIES OF IMAGINATION	17
Svend Erik Larsen, <i>Literature, Migration, Translation</i>	19
Vladimir Biti, <i>The Dis/location of Solitude: The Disaggregation of Empire in Joseph Roth's The Radetzky March</i>	35
Vanja Polić, <i>White Civility and the Im/Possibility of Crossing in Guy Vanderhaeghe's The Last Crossing</i>	49
Josip Lah and Leo Zonn, <i>Crossing to the Imaginary: Bildungsroman and a Journey Into the Wild</i>	65
Marko Lukić, <i>Displacing the Dead – Remapping of Post-apocalyptic Geographies</i>	79
Nikola Petković, <i>Between the Rock and the Homeplace: Poetics of Bestiality</i>	93
CROATIA, AMERICA, HISTORY	117
Maša Kolanović, <i>Capitalism beneath the Mythical Beginning: The "Discovery" of America as a Topic of Twentieth-Century Croatian Literature</i>	119
Sven Cvek, <i>Notes on "Command of Money" and the End of Socialism</i>	143
Hrvoje Tutek, <i>The Institutional Framework of Post-Socialist Literary Production: Literature as Creative Writing</i>	159
RETHINKING AMERICA	177
Grant Farred, <i>The Exceptional Exception: Frederick Douglass and the Problem of the Nation</i>	179
Tatjana Jukić, <i>An American Antigone: Henry James's Washington Square</i>	193
Jelena Šesnić, <i>F. O. Matthiessen, C. L. R. James and a Sense of the Past of American Studies</i>	215
CAPITAL IN CONTEXTS	235
Ozren Žunec, <i>Marx's Meontology</i>	237
Borislav Knežević, <i>Contours of Capital in the Novel</i>	257
CASE STUDIES: NATURE AND SCIENCE	281
Martina Domines Veliki, <i>(Pre-)Romantic Constructions of Nature</i>	283
Lovorka Gruić Grmuša, <i>"Knotting into" Gravity's Rainbow: Scientific Paradigms and Literature</i>	303
List of Contributors	321

Editors' Preface

For some time now the humanities or, to be more precise, those who are their practitioners have tended to overstep the fields of their specialist knowledge and inquiry. Scholars in the humanities have ventured and are continuously venturing outside of what would seem their habitual scholarly pursuits and are tackling issues of politics, culture understood in the broadest sense, questions of identity and other similar matters. Some are of the opinion that we are witnessing a movement from institutionally compartmentalized and parceled-out scientific / scholarly enterprises into a postdisciplinary that seems to have shifted its focus of interest onto, at first glance, non-academic, mundane agendas and happenings. . . .

Following up on the disciplinary turn, which seeks to address the urgency of the present and the necessity to foreground the role of the economic, enforces us to address the issue of postmodernism or of postmodernity in a manner which shows it to have been a rather evanescent affair. . . . The reality— capital and its dynamics—on which it has found itself grounded can be said to have been the radical other of postmodernism especially if the latter is defined as an artistic style, a philosophical outlook or a break with an earlier historical formation.

(Stipe Grgas, "Postmodernity Grounded," 2011)

It was precisely my sense that a vacancy, a nothingness, yawns at the very basis of Melville's narrative that prompted me to go back to Melville. But to cull from Melville's novel evidence of how he sees the ocean and how he brings it into utterance is only a preparatory step for a thinking of the sea in *Moby Dick* and for asking how that thinking has contemporary pertinence.

(Stipe Grgas, "What Does Melville See on the Ocean," 2016)

This fundamental lack of substance of the very thing which functions as the ultimate determinant of the present world is disconcerting, to say the least. Therefore, it is only logical that different power regimes hide that nothingness from view. Different institutions and the mechanism of the market are complicit in this strategy. Literary works and the experience and knowledge they provide are not part of that strategy. This is why these domains are not solicited by economic concerns. Literature cautions us that man's economic life is much too serious an affair to be left to economists or suchlike specialists. To expect them to give us an explanation of its complexity, particularly after they let pass under their disciplinary screen its slippery ontology, if not its nonbeing, is wishful thinking.

(Stipe Grgas, "What Does Melville See")

The spatial turn, which to a certain extent I read as responding to a rampant etherization attending theory, has itself been taken over and evacuated of exactly that anchorage which it sought to bring into prominence. This is a consequence of the prevailing social constructionism and the modes of enquiry it has spawned, in which reality is always the product of human interpretation.

(Stipe Grgas, "Notes on the Spatial Turn," 2012)

In preparing this *Festschrift*, we had in mind a specific inflection of the concept of errancy, one that comes from the rich and layered work of the American scholar and philosopher William V. Spanos, who conceived it as a way of rendering the logos and telos of the American project subject to thorough rethinking and redefinition, both in history and at present. By calling attention to the complementarity of the work of the two scholars, Grgas and Spanos, who both hone their critical skills on the theme of the logic of the American project, we do not so much intend to claim a direct influence but rather wish to highlight the confluence, commingling, and inspiration that working in the humanities may engender. This commonality is featured in the work of Spanos and in the work of Grgas as a dedicated and passionate engagement with the practices and possibilities inscribed in the discipline, which also requires the scholar to move beyond the given and inhabit what Spanos calls a meta-level of thinking. Grgas's work, located at the intersection of several disciplines within the humanities and social sciences (which is reflected in the principal themes of this *Festschrift*), reveals precisely such a commitment that has in the course of his long, fruitful and versatile career charted out a scholarly position always in the process of becoming, and never quite stabilized and domesticated.

Grgas's academic career has been as diverse as the humanistic disciplinary habitus allows: a provocative and popular lecturer, a researcher of tireless intellectual curiosity, a scholar testing the boundaries of disciplines, an enthusiastic and motivating mentor, a thoughtful and sensitive translator, or, as one of the contribution shows, an unobtrusive poet, Grgas has always displayed a remarkable intellectual energy in every aspect of his engagement with the varied and nowadays often embattled debates in the humanities.

However, Grgas's work as an Americanist, cultural theorist, translator, writer, mentor, and teacher doesn't merely reflect the exciting, if uncontainable, shifts marking the discipline in the last couple of decades; rather, his intellectual labor has been committed to offering a new way of comprehending this change, its scope, direction, and consequences, so as to create an intense web of connections and interrelations where different disciplines talk to one another, without hastening to provide answers so much as to provoke the right kind of questions. The questioning and questing nature of Grgas's work has marked his writing from the start, but it has intensified in his later writing as the humanities find themselves facing a whole new set of questions for the new millennium. His sustained effort to bring a new awareness of economic issues

to discussions of culture and literature in the recent period has been both timely and critically engaged in its reflection on why this issue is particularly significant at this point in history.

The layout of the Festschrift may be said to loosely reflect and acknowledge Grgas's scholarly interests that have charted out his career in the field of the humanities. We are glad to note that Grgas's international stature shows in the contributions of our colleagues from Austria, Denmark, and the United States. The latter two countries—each in their own right and at different points of Grgas's life—have both been hubs of his academic activity. We would therefore like to extend our appreciation to our international colleagues whose collaboration testifies to the borderless dimension of Grgas's work and career.

The Croatian contributors, and the topics pursued in their articles, provide a collegial testament to the ties, debts, and influences located closer to home, in Croatian academic circles, where Grgas has made central contributions over his long scholarly career to the development of American Studies, Irish Studies, cultural geography, the study of spatiality in culture, and the economic study of literature, as well as to the criticism of poetry and fiction. While American Studies, for instance, was already established in Croatia by efforts of an earlier generation of Croatian scholars, Stipe Grgas's work in the field helped strengthen its institutional position in Croatia and expanded its scholarly archive, but also provided an important vantage point from which to discuss local as well as global trends in the discipline. In each of the other above-mentioned areas, Grgas has also left an indelible mark in the local context and has very often carried the work in the Croatian humanities toward a more international and interdisciplinary reflection.

The opening section, entitled "Geographies of Imagination," is inaugurated by Svend Erik Larsen's article, concerned with the contemporary development of "global literary theory," which he claims can achieve relevance only if it takes into consideration two key phenomena, migration and translation. Larsen advocates a move away from the narrow aesthetic focus of literary theory or comparative literature, as well as a move away from the national literary canon, calling attention to the phenomenon of world literature, which should be examined through an interdisciplinary lens. Larsen illustrates this approach through a detailed linguistic and narratological reading of one of the key novels of migrant, international American literature, *Call It Sleep* (1934) by Henry Roth. He proposes that the novel's handling of language varieties as well as experimentation with points of view make it interesting as a possible example of a developing paradigm of world literature.

Vladimir Biti's essay "The Dis/location of Solitude: The Disaggregation of Empire in Joseph Roth's *The Radetzky March*" offers a close reading of Roth's novel with a special focus on the theme of loneliness. Biti's examination of the novel is primarily concerned with identifying the patterns which connect the location of loneliness and the dislocation of loneliness in the narrative, especially those patterns by which parallelisms between different characters are established. The recognition of those narrative patterns enables him to read the novel as a text about the "disaggregation" of

the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to suggest, through an analysis of the relations between the narrator and the characters, that the narrative strategies of dislocation in the novel reproduce the politics of dislocation related to the novel's main characters, and simultaneously the politics coinciding with the Empire's "disaggregation." In this regard, Biti's article unfolds as an attempt to connect the novel's narrative strategies with the wider historical context in which the novel is lodged.

In her article, Vanja Polić proposes to read Guy Vanderhaeghe's historical novel *The Last Crossing* by invoking the concept of "blindness" so as to help explain the invisibility of excess historical material from ideological historical narratives that are constituted against this excess. Polić sees the complex structure of Vanderhaeghe's novel as a strategy of questioning the boundaries of such ideological narratives and as a mechanism of reintegration of the excluded excess into a literary rewriting of Canadian national history. Through this strategy, and through focusing on the complex problematic of identity construction and cultural exchange, the polyphonic structure of the text deconstructs the binaries of colonial ideology and writes an alternative, polyphonic history of the Canadian Wild West.

Leo Zonn and Josip Lah read Sean Penn's 2007 film *Into the Wild* (based on the 1996 novel by Jon Krakauer) as a generic hybrid, which relies both on the literary tradition of the *Bildungsroman* and the genre of the road movie. Although challenging middle-class conformism—an integral part of U.S. national ideology in the authors' view—the film ultimately ends up presenting subversive interventions in the socially integrative genre of the *Bildungsroman*. The reason for this might be the narrative's insistence on radical individualism, surely another crucial element of the American character, as a response to conformism.

Beginning with the assumption that the representation of space in the Gothic genre is fluid and lends itself to a multitude of interpretations, Marko Lukić's text "Displacing the Dead: Remapping of Post-apocalyptic Geographies" examines "the transformative processes that spaces / places undergo" in the comic and TV series *The Walking Dead*. Those processes, according to the author, develop progressively through three spatial paradigms. Lukić's analytical procedure reflects this progression and conceptualizes it by identifying the three main spatial paradigms as the space of home (where the main theoretical references are Yi Fu Tuan and Gaston Bachelard), the non-space (Marc Augé), and the neoliberal space (David Harvey). This, in Lukić's words, "non-uniform theoretical approach," is then applied in a close reading of *The Walking Dead*.

Nikola Petković's contribution stands apart in this collection of essays, not only in that it discusses Grgas's foray into poetry, an unpublished manuscript of verse, but also because it consciously sets itself against the presumption of the hierarchy of discourses in which poetry always comes up short against theory and scholarship. Petković discusses a seemingly supplementary status of Grgas's poetry (in relation to his scholarly output) and unpacks a rich array of meanings presented in his verse, which is in turn beholden to his theoretical and philosophical orientations. The "I" that speaks in the poems places itself between languages (English and Croatian), as

it puts together lyrics composed from various inflections (of Zabláće, Croatia, and America). Grgas, in his understated verses (the description of his verses as poem he refuses as too presumptuous), recreates local history, the homeplace, his family history as already fractured and destabilized by the infusion of grand narratives to which his poetics (of modesty, microhistory, and bestiality) is incipiently suspicious.

The section titled "Croatia, America, History" delves into subterranean and overt links and exchanges between America and Croatia. In her article, Maša Kolanović juxtaposes the literary traces of America's utopian potential with the reality of its capitalist development. Kolanović's interest is in the place of America within the Croatian literary canon, as well as in socialist Yugoslav popular culture. Starting from the first echoes of the "discovery" of the New World in the works of sixteenth-century writers Mavro Vetranović and Marin Držić, Kolanović mainly focuses on the play *Kristofor Kolumbo* by Miroslav Krleža in its 1918 and 1933 versions. For Krleža's Columbus, "America" represents an abstract idea of utopian newness opposed to the Old World. At the same time, this idea is underscored by America's anti-utopian, capitalist logic. Kolanović concludes that the representation of the twentieth century as the "American century" in Croatian literature is characterized by a progressive de-mystification of the meaning of America, and a disintegration of the older utopian representations of the New World.

In "Notes on 'Command of Money' and the End of Socialism," Sven Cvek offers a reflection on the end of Yugoslav socialism by way of a reading of Stipe Grgas's more recent work. Relying on Grgas's claim that the U.S. presence in former Yugoslavia reflects the mutations of American capitalism, the author comments on the ways in which the experience of socialism's demise was registered in the Yugoslav culture of the nineteen-eighties up to 1991. Arguing that the existing approaches to this period generally favor the experience of the elites, Cvek stresses the need for more expansive archival work and consideration, in future analyses, of the class aspect of the end of socialism.

In "The Institutional Framework of Post-Socialist Literary Production: Literature as Creative Writing," Hrvoje Tutek looks at the post-socialist transformation of the Croatian literary field. During its "transition," Croatia witnessed the first attempts at the institutionalization of creative writing, an organizational model imported from the U.S., where it has had a long institutional history as well as its own literary tradition. Tutek discusses creative writing not merely as a cultural practice, but also as a social-organizational paradigm with its own institutional infrastructure, ideology, and socially determined aesthetics. In a historical outline of the shifts in the understanding of literary autonomy, the author shows how the literary field transformed in line with the exigencies of the capitalist restoration in the European periphery.

The next section, "Rethinking America," opens appropriately with Grant Farred's essay engaging in a dialogue with Grgas's articulation of American exceptionalism as a logic of exclusion and often violent elisions. Farred conjoins Grgas's historical-materialist analysis with recent critiques of democracy in late capitalist society, such as the one proposed by Wendy Brown. Focusing on Frederick Douglass, Farred evokes

the long-term pull of exceptionalism that requires the process of exclusion as its operating principle. In the context of the recently proposed negative theory of democracy, Farred casts Douglass as a prescient philosopher of a negative theory of democracy and an even more clear-sighted critic of exceptionalism as applied to the status of African Americans in the American polity. Farred demonstrates how particularly Douglass's text "The Nation's Problem" lends itself to a vigorous critique of the relentless machine for creating and sustaining the state of exception for the nation's black population. Douglass's response to this exigency, however, is surprisingly innovative and ought to be heeded even today.

Tatjana Jukić proposes a highly original and packed reading of Henry James's gem of a novel, *Washington Square*. By mobilizing the apparatus of Freudian and post-Freudian inquiry, Jukić contends that Oedipal structures permeate the novel but cannot be read adequately without engaging the notion of metonymic displacement of death drive onto a whole set of relations—individual (female) identity, paternalistic family, American national identity, and the state—all of which therefore become invested in managing melancholic structures. This configuration, articulated in the novel, interestingly enough, in the private and feminine sphere, allows Jukić to activate another layer in the novel's texture, the possibility to read the heroine's, Catherine Sloper's fate as an American Antigone. Jukić further argues that the melancholic processes of preemption, abjection, and mourning ought to be considered not only insofar as they organize Jamesian discourse, or even that of his philosophical contemporaries (William James, Emerson), but also as they become formative in different stages and at different levels of the discourses of American emancipation and its separate, exclusive identity. Seeing Sloper as potentially the American Antigone, and latching this insight onto a later melodramatic cinematic rendering of the novel (by way of Stanley Cavell), Jukić seeks to explicate the novel's view that an American fate and the fate of America, perhaps, hinge on the genealogies of the tragic, melancholic, and, finally, melodramatic.

Jelena Šesnić echoes in her contribution Grgas's interests and ongoing work pre-eminently as an American Studies scholar while launching a discussion of the early stages of the discipline, when it was deeply immersed in and subsistent on Cold War imaginary. By focusing on two scholars, one the designated founder of American Studies, F.O. Matthiessen, and the other its "secret sharer," C.L.R. James, whose contribution has only recently begun to be acknowledged, the essay contrasts their differing but seminal contributions and draws a more expansive and complex image of the discipline's constitution. On such a view, it shows that Matthiessen's legacy is much more contestatory than customarily allowed by its canonical appropriation, as attested especially by his marginal and hybrid memoirs-cum-travelogue in Europe, published in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. On the other hand, James's underappreciated contribution in the early stage of the discipline comes forth in his misunderstood study of Melville's *Moby-Dick*, which took a long time to get out of the shadow of the Cold War and could only be appropriately gauged within a new transnational orientation in recent American Studies.

The section entitled “Capital in Contexts” presents essays that deal with representations of the economic realm. In his essay, Ozren Žunec analyzes what he terms Karl Marx’s “meontology,” a conceptual position that he delineates by referring to a wide range of Marx’s writings. Discussing Marx’s critique of philosophy, Žunec seeks to demonstrate that Marx’s position is a meontological one, and that it is a departure from the entire philosophical tradition that preceded him. Žunec states that in his critique of the discourses of both philosophy and economics, Marx presented a meontology in a clear albeit unsystematic fashion. The essay also focuses on Marx’s analysis of the functioning of capital and its pervasive social effects, and concludes with a discussion of Marx’s conception of “communism”; Žunec suggests that Marx’s notion of “communism” could actually be said to describe capitalism as it is today. He also adds that in this regard Marx’s analysis is similar to some accounts of the contemporary moment, such as Zygmunt Bauman’s analysis of “liquid modernity.”

The essay by Borislav Knežević, “Contours of Capital in the Novel,” deals with the question of representation of the economic sphere in the genre of the novel. Knežević opens the essay by stating that novels present specific forms of social knowledge, and discusses the claim by the economist Thomas Piketty that nineteenth-century novels (such as those by Honoré de Balzac and Jane Austen) may provide a valuable source of knowledge on economic and social history. In the rest of the essay Knežević discusses two novels, Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*, and their different narrative strategies of dealing with the economic. He also examines Mary Poovey’s reading of Austen’s “gestural aesthetic,” by which Poovey means a form of indirectness in the narrative representation of the historical setting. In this regard, Knežević brings into focus other aspects of Austen’s narrative representation of economic (and social) matters, which evidence different, more direct ways in which Austen engaged with social realities. His analysis of Gaskell’s novel focuses on its directness in the treatment of economic matters, and he points out that the novel regards economic issues as a matter that belongs to everyday conversation.

The case studies in the final section also engage some of Grgas’s cherished interests and pursuits. Martina Domines Veliki, in an essay entitled “Romantic Constructions of Nature,” examines texts by Rousseau and Wordsworth for their treatment of the concept of “nature” as a central ideologeme of the Romantic period. In particular, she points to a tension between the concept of nature and the democratic views elaborated by the two writers which have often been emphasised in traditional critical approaches. Both Rousseau and Wordsworth posit humankind and nature in a relationship of parallelism, which is a conventional Romantic topos; in contrast, Domines Veliki emphasizes the distance constructed in Wordsworth’s poetry vis-à-vis the massive changes effected by industrialization on both people and nature; a similar enthusiasm for isolated rural communities that she finds in Rousseau she describes as a conservative ideological illusion. In this way, the essay calls for a more careful appreciation of Romantic discourse in the historical context of the rise of capitalist social forms.

Lovorka Gruić Grmuša's essay visits one of Grgas's longstanding and passionate preoccupations—the oeuvre of Thomas Pynchon that figures prominently for Grgas both as an inspiration for his scholarly work on the United States and as a superb illustration and indication of the emerging global problems that await proper articulation. Gruić Grmuša discusses Pynchon's canonical but elusive novel *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), analyzing how the novel creates a space-time complex analogous to the world of natural sciences, in particular modern physics and chaos theory. Pynchon's encyclopedic reach knots together global and local knowledge systems and joins science, literature, and culture into recursive and interconnected loops. Pynchon's borrowings from physics in particular, as Gruić Grmuša shows, are substantial and reflect on the author's appropriation of discontinuity, non-linearity, self-organization, and even backward causation as structuring and interpretative principles for the novel. The protagonists, their trajectories in the novel, but also the reader's processing of data, proceed in a looping, disconnected fashion, as shown by Gruić Grmuša's reading, as plotlines behave in a manner analogous to the discontinuous movement of subatomic particles.

An endeavour of this scope could not have come to light without the expert and dedicated work of many contributors, colleagues, and friends, only some of which can be acknowledged here. A first round of thanks goes to all the contributors, who have graciously and enthusiastically responded to the call for papers. The editors express their gratitude to the reviewers for their assiduous engagement. Special thanks to Hrvoje Tutek, who lent a hand in the key phases of the manuscript preparation. We would also like to extend our appreciation to the Department of English at the Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and its Head, Irena Zovko Dinković, for recognizing and supporting the project from its inception. In addition, we are grateful for the support by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia in the publication of the collection. Several articles were written as part of projects supported by the Croatian Science Foundation. Finally, we appreciate the invaluable assistance of Alex Hoyt, the language editor, and Boris Bui of FF press, the publisher in the preparation of the manuscript.

Sven Cvek
Borislav Knežević
Jelena Šesnić

GEOGRAPHIES OF IMAGINATION

Svend Erik Larsen
Aarhus University

Literature, Migration, Translation

In recent years two themes have been instrumental for the advancement of world literature studies. One is migration, the other is translation. As disciplines, neither migration studies nor translation studies belong to the field of literary studies in their own right. Migration has for many years been a study field within social and cultural studies, and is now acquiring increasing urgency in today's geopolitical context, but with the rapidly growing number of works representing various experiences of migration, it has also irrevocably entered literary studies. Likewise, as an academic discipline translation studies was for years a subject hosted by linguistics before new trends emerged in the 1970s and gained ground in the 1990s with a theoretical perspective to also encompass intermedia translation and a broad register of cultural discourses, literature included.¹ Of course, practicing translators have always worked with literature, but not as a field of research.

These recent developments have made migration studies and translation studies ripe for literary scholars working within a world literature perspective.² They have added a political awareness, in as much as both migration and translation involves power relations, the power of place and the power of meaning production. Moreover, they have added a much needed theoretical and contextual ramification to literary studies, which has been mainly closed in on itself since its emergence in Europe as an academic research field around 1800. This inward gaze turned in two directions, firstly, towards the aesthetic particularities of literature. From the mid-eighteenth century, with the aesthetic theories of Ephraim Lessing and Alexander Baumgarten in particular, literature was singled out as a quasi-autonomous object of study. The broader cultural outlook, typical of the Renaissance and also the Enlightenment in general, became more and more myopic. Secondly, literary studies tended to look towards the national characteristics of literature. Such features were believed to constitute the immanent essence of literature (and other art forms as well) with a whole panoply of ideological implications ranging from nationalism bordering on fascism to a self-conscious minority awareness.³

Among both writers and critics the effect was that the preoccupation with a shared European literary history beyond the boundaries of national languages and territories withered away. At the same time, comparative perspectives with the potential of open-

¹ Lefevere and Bassnett 1998.

² Just a few recent examples from a growing bulk of literature: Walkowitz 2006, Apter 2006, Thomsen 2008, Beecroft 2015, Walkowitz 2015.

³ Lionnet and Shih 2006.

ing or re-opening the larger cultural and linguistic context only came second, mainly considered to consist of comparisons between authors, works or entire literatures with an already established and primary national definition (Larsen 2015). Consequently, the emerging interest in world literature, as it occurred with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's critical ideas and poetical practice in the 1820s as the most widespread inspiration, took on an idealistic aspect relying on immanent literary values cast in trans-historical and universalist terms.

In contrast, the revival of world literature today consists in breaking away from this inward-looking idealistic take on world literature and, in particular, from the fervent cultivation of national literatures and its package of ideological implications. Of course, today's world literature studies have also utilized the many and varied critical methodologies that have developed from the founding years of literary studies. Yet, more importantly, the reorientation of literary studies meant a keen receptiveness to other continents, other languages, other types of local cultural formations, other genres, other themes – where 'other' always means other than the physical and colonial boundaries of European culture and the national thinking that underpins it. However, given the century-long global impact of Europe, this so-called provincializing of Europe (Chakrabarty 2007) always unfolds in a dialogue with the undeniable influence of European culture around the world, both in academia and in culture at large. Literary studies as a discipline is also involved directly in the power relations as they are articulated by migration and translation.

Hence, this approach has also called for new theoretical and analytical foundations for literary studies, or at least for a fresh inspiration coming from new angles. As the aim of world literature studies is to re-contextualize the reading of known texts and to enlarge the entire field and awareness of its context by integrating new texts, whether overlooked by tradition or produced today, this inspiration had to come from outside the established paradigms, especially with regard to issues of contextualization. At the same time, the ambition was, and is, to also turn the inspiration 180 degrees around and send it back, transformed, to inspire anew the field where it originated. When translation was exposed to the cultural turn outside linguistics, linguists also had to change perspective. Likewise, when the study of migration moved on from the field of economics and geopolitics and came to include religion, ethics, language, narratives and imagination, migration studies as it has been conceived by social studies acquired new dimensions. In other words, migration and translation are concerned with much more than geopolitics and efficient communication, just as literature is about much more than plot, character and rhetorical devices. In this sense world literature becomes a truly interdisciplinary enterprise.

1. A Helluva Country

So far, politics and the political have only been mentioned in the subtitle, and will remain so until the end of this essay. In between I will take a look at a somewhat neglected American masterpiece with migration and translation as its backbone and,

by doing so, also offer a relevant perspective on the political. The text is Henry Roth's debut novel *Call It Sleep* from 1934, one of those texts that explodes in the hands of the reader – and the writer as well: drawing on his own experiences Roth, then only 28 years old, emptied his imaginative resources for quite a while, unable to write again until late in life, even close to his death in 1995, but never at the same level again.

The novel is set in the United States before World War I, during the great influx of immigrants through the port of New York and Ellis Island. The Schearl family, a young Jewish family, settles in New York in 1907, first in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and then on the Lower East Side, Manhattan. The first location was the major Jewish neighbourhood of New York with about 50,000 Jews when the Schearls arrived, the second one was closer to the metropolitan turbulence of the big city, but still a Jewish neighbourhood although in much closer contact with other immigrant groups.

Albert has crossed the Atlantic first, arriving from the rural areas of Austrian Galicia. Later he welcomes his wife, Genya, and their young child, David, to New York. Galicia, in today's Western Ukraine around the town of Lviv/Lwow/Lemberg close to Poland, was then part of the Austrian-Hungarian double monarchy. This is a region where European conflicts have moved boundaries and peoples repeatedly over the centuries, the twentieth century included. In Mary Louise Pratt's apt terminology (Pratt 6f), it is a contact zone between German/Austrian, Ukrainian, Polish, Hungarian, Russian and Yiddish languages and cultures. Coming to New York means changing one type of multicultural locality of a vanishing feudalism with another, the urban multicultural contact zone of an emerging modernity. The protagonist is young David, living with his embittered, grumpy and often violent father, Albert, who changes jobs several times, but eventually ends up as a milkman, and with his gentle and infinitely protective and loving mother, Genya. Her sister, Bertha, comes over and other people, mostly Jews from their neighborhood and boys from the street, enter David's world. He is about three when he arrives and eight when the novel ends.

Among migrating peoples, the Jews have an almost mythical status, related to the Jewish diaspora. Likewise, New York is the mythical destination for migrants. With the foundation of Israel, the post-holocaust history of Jews has added to the myth – in contrast to the foundation of other states over the centuries in the wake of great wars, this foundation was by many interpreted as a fulfilment of a religious prophecy more than a repetition of a geopolitical reorganization that is common when conflicts have shattered a stable geopolitical arrangement.

New York as an embodiment of the American melting pot also represents a myth, but a secular one, often expressed as the entrance to the land of the American Dream – “the Golden Land” as Genya says, nervous and hopeful, when she leaves the ferry (Roth 11)⁴ – where everyone can advance from rags to riches by his, and to a lesser extent her, own force and initiative. However, the idea of America was first shaped and dressed in religious garments by the Quaker and Puritan settlers in the seventeenth century before it lost its religious core, which is only echoed today in the religious fun-

⁴ All references to the novel are given only with page number in brackets.

damentalism used in public rhetoric to present the USA as a place selected by God. Jews and New York have been attributed with a global transcendence, the stuff myth and dreams are made of.

It remains to be seen whether the reality of history will come back with a vengeance in Israel and the USA when it challenges their proto-transcendental self-interpretation. Yet, it is clear that after the formation of the state of Israel the mythical status of Jews as the iconic migrating people against whom the fate of other diasporic peoples has to be measured, has been profoundly contested. In his introduction to historical types of diaspora, *Global Diasporas* (1997), Robin Cohen shows how the Jewish diaspora and its diversified developments is only one among several diasporas from the older and also more recent history of mankind of an equally tragic nature, not a comprehensive and trans-historical model of them all, an alleged *Idealtypus* in the sense of Max Weber with an added mythological twist. Diasporas should not be understood through a model, but as intersections of different and thus comparable historical processes.⁵

In their essay on globalized memories, “Memory Unbound. The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory” (2002), Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider point to the fact that the memory of the Holocaust has gone global and thereby entered a field of de-localized myths, in this case as the prototype of extreme atrocity compared to which other genocidal horrors appear less important. In this position the Jewish people run the danger of losing a sense of the historicity of their persecution, and other victims of genocides, filtering their sufferings through the Holocaust model, may have difficulties in approaching their misery in its particular historical conditions. In other words, diasporas and their commemoration should not be organized vertically under the umbrella of a trans-historical model, but levelled out horizontally as different events with an equal importance to those involved, each of them to be captured and commemorated on their own historical conditions.

A similar questioning of a mythological logic applies to New York as an iconic destination of immigrants with the Statue of Liberty meeting the newcomers next to Ellis Island. In this context, the city becomes a concept in the history of migration more than a place. In 1907, when the Schearls arrive, and in the 1930s, when Roth came to the city, the immigrants did not enter a land which was a nation in the same way as the old European or Asian countries were. Only as late as 1893, during the world’s fair in Chicago, did Frederick Jackson Turner introduce a collective sense of national identity in his much debated speech on the closure of the frontier (Turner). At that time, this idea had not yet seeped down to the inhabitants, least of all to the host of immigrants who did not come to a nation with a closed frontier, but to a land of infinite possibilities and endlessly open spaces.

Nations or local communities in the traditional sense had for centuries been the homes for peoples, their cultures and languages, all of which was immediately visible and audible in the landscapes and cityscapes, to the inhabitants as well as to visitors.

⁵ Cf. Knott and McLoughlin 2010.

Such places where everything already has a place and a meaning, are not easy to be part of for immigrants, in 1907 and today as Europe amply exemplifies in 2015 and 2016. However, the Schearls' situation is different. Although they leave a region where migration and political changes since time immemorial have moved around with rulers and political borders, and still do, by 1907, the clear outline of the local place and its traditions had not moved. This was a place with a *genius loci* for its peoples, in spite of the fact that it was a multicultural locality, as feudal states and many modern nation states were and still are, although this aspect has been underplayed, more or less violently, in nineteenth-century national ideology.

After the family has been re-united in the first chapter of the novel the sense of belonging evaporates, not only because they are immigrant but also because the place is different. They soon find out that the vague ideas they had about an American Dream have no foundation in the everyday reality in the Jewish community in New York and probably not anywhere else. We do not hear much about "elsewhere". Yet, they cherish their memories from Galicia, a point of comparison for what a "real" place means, and Genya buys a picture of an unspecified rural landscape that keeps their memories alive. There is no evocation of any competing American national idea or reality to which they have to adapt, not even to an American Dream. We are not in the world of social climbers of, say, Theodore Dreiser or Scott Fitzgerald, but of people seeking security. The Schearls are definitely not rich, but are not destitute either. They would never figure in Jacob Riis' shocking photo report *How the Other Half Lives. Studies of the Tenements of New York* (1891). Their main task is to adapt to the tough urban reality where survival and not social advancement comes first, supported only by the Jewish faith and traditions. At times, they are confronted with habits and beliefs of other migrant communities in the neighbourhood, but with no requirement from die-hard Americans to accept a new national identity. The opposition between indigenous and foreign does not apply, only different types of foreignness are involved.

There is no notion that this place is the home of somebody else with a shared history, identity and language necessary to know and adapt to; it is only a living place for many people whose home was elsewhere but is now of no common relevance but for themselves. Place bound identity is something definitely lost and is only retained as a fantasy. Here, home is the known apartment, the street, a few people, maybe the neighbourhood, the broken languages they use, often different broken Englishes. Outside, the bustling city is a place of confusion, surprise and sudden danger. A helluva country, as frightening as it is promising (cf. the title of Larsen 1991).

Roth's novel is built upon these two mythical phenomena, the people of the iconic migration and the iconic city of migration, but the hierarchy of each of the mythical entities and other waves or places of migration, considered as less typical or less important when measured against the Jews and New York, is broken down in the novel. The center of the story is the Jewish community, because that is where the main characters belong, though it is never seen as a particularly noteworthy example of a migrating community compared with others. It just happens to be theirs, and neither the identity of the Schearls nor of anybody else is related to New York or America as

a particular historical place, a nation, but to a social entity and its human and social relations which could be located in any other place than New York, a free floating Galicia carrying them further and further away from their old home. The shared language of most of the characters is Yiddish, a vernacular language but not a national language; it is an Eastern-Central European *lingua franca* amalgamating German, Hebrew/Aramaic, Polish and other Slavic languages as well as a bit of Romance languages and Hungarian, and with an adapted Hebrew script including vowels, although often written in Roman script. This is a travelling language of migration.

Roth anticipates the more recent take on globalized migration assuming that people do not move from one home to the home of others, from which they may strive to go back to the old place which defines their identity, or where they have acquired a new identity by being successful in the eyes of the indigenous population. The world he depicts is a world where migration itself is the basic condition for identity without one community serving as a model for others, but where they all share this condition whether they are settling somewhere or moving. The Austrian Galicia of the Schearls had dissolved by the time when Roth grew up and moved to the USA. Should the Schearls have wanted to go back in the 1930s, there would have been no place to return to. After World War II, Hannah Arendt's *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft* (1950) pointed to the many refugees who had no home left, but were on the move and could not be returned to anything. Their home was not necessarily physically destroyed, but like that of the Palestinians or the Kurds it had no sovereign political status. In Arendt, Roth's intuition meets with a philosophical reflection which finally explodes as a social reality today.

2. A Place of Migration

Nevertheless, Roth does not write in the post-World War II world of globalization. New York is still a locality with clear boundaries between neighborhoods, but is also described as a globalized micro-world. The way this generalizable effect is obtained has to do with Roth's use of the narrator and point of view. The Prologue, the arrival of Genya and David in New York, is related to us by what is traditionally called an omniscient narrator, with a transpersonal point of view, in the know of everything about history and life in general, but not quite as much about the interior life of the characters: "It was May of the year 1907, the year that was destined to bring the greatest number of immigrants to the shores of the United States" (9), or: "The truth was there was something quite untypical about their behavior" (11), "they" being Genya and David. The narrator knows things, but not about the two newcomers: "They had been standing in this strange and silent manner for several minutes, when the woman, *as if driven* by the strain into action, tried to smile, and touching her husband's arm said timidly, 'And this is the Golden Land.' She spoke in Yiddish" (11; ital. mine).

When it comes to interior motivations and thoughts, even the narrator will have to rely on inferential guessing: "as if". This is the key to the narrative strategy for the

rest of the book. The protagonist is David. He carries the point of view, the incomprehensible new world is seen through his perceptive, scared, attentive eyes, often with no clue to any understanding of what is going on. If David is guessing about the ways of the world, the narrator is doing the same with David. He is balancing on the edge of David's consciousness and the world around David, often using not only free indirect discourse but also increasingly interior monologue as David's experiences and reflexive capacities grow through the novel. There is also plenty of direct speech and at times de-personalized descriptions of the external world. David is only between three and eight years old, but his small world embraces the significance of the whole universe; his insecurity represents the general insecurity of human life.

This strategy of enlarging the limited individual perspective is applied to the two separated worlds, the outdoor world of the city and the indoor world of David's apartment. *Outside* is the turbulence of the foreign city, now and then with a fragile familiarity along the streets he comes to know, but taking a wrong turn, one is lost. When they move from Brownsville to Lower East Side, David realizes that Brooklyn after all has become somehow a familiar space. *Indoors*, David feels the cosiness and safety emanating from his mother, while the Jewish traditions make it a safe haven for him, only interrupted by the threatening demeanour of his father. Here, memories from Galicia now and then are contrasted with the tensions of their urban life, but also recalling the hidden traumas of the past which, maybe, made them leave the old home. In a fit of anger Albert has caused his father's death by leaving him alone with a raging bull, and Genya's affair with a local Christian organist of Hungarian descent, a *goy*, made her pregnant with David. His parents have no love for each other, but need each other in order to leave the local shame and contempt behind. So, all three spaces, the city, the home and the memorized old home, are penetrated by a fragile balance between familiarity and insecurity, but mostly tending towards insecurity. The characters dangle in empty space, frightened, lonely and left to their own limited powers. David's love, angst and hope are condensed into a prism for the same feelings and losses in everybody else's life.

The slight change in David's thoughts and reactions at the beginning and at the end shows the quiet development of a three-year-old to an eight-year-old, from someone who does not know anything about his new abode to a boy who becomes slightly more acquainted with new life conditions, but then is also caught up in new unanswerable questions. All the way through, the fragile individual grasp of a situation is rendered with a general perspective.

In the opening paragraph of the novel David is just three. He is thirsty, but the passage is about his own entire life and about the whole world:

Standing before the kitchen sink and regarding the bright brass faucets that gleamed so far away, each with a bead of water at its nose, slowly swelling, falling, David again became aware that this world had been created without thought of him. He was thirsty, but the iron hip of the sink rested on legs tall almost as his own body, and by no stretch of arm, no leap, could

he ever reach the distant tap. Where did the water come from that lurked so secretly in the curve of the brass? Where did it go, gurgling in the drain? What a strange world must be hidden behind the walls of a house! But he was thirsty. (17)

Towards the end of the novel the same embedding of situation, individual life and outlook on the world at large is still made by a child who does not comprehend the world around him, but with all the experiences he has had, his thoughts mushrooming into a confused bundle of fears and memories. The situation is that he has been promised a rosary from his admired older Catholic friend, Leo, who is free and resourceful, who has skates and a kite, who helps himself in the family kitchen. David is supposed to help him secretly to find an opportunity to grope David's step-cousin, Esther, without exactly knowing what this early sexuality is about, but clearly recognizing that this promise and the rosary will cause trouble.

This morning it is going to happen. Genya is cleaning the windows. David is thinking both of his trip with Leo and of mother on the window sill, and looming behind that the memory of some of the street urchins who had been peeping from the roof when Genya washed herself in the kitchen, naked:

High morning.

His nervous gaze wandered from frosted window to the clock and returned to the window. . . .

– Wish she came in! Get scared when she sits like that. Fourth floor too – way, way down! If she –! Ooh! Don't! And that window it was. Can see the roof from here. Yes, there where they – Son-of-a-bitch! – there where they looked.

Irritably, he shifted his gaze to the other window, which was open and looked out on the street. The sky above the housetops, rinsed and cloudless after rain, mocked him with its serenity. In the street, too far below the window to be seen, the flood of turmoil had risen with the morning and a babel of noises and voices poured over the sill as over a dike. The air was exceptionally cool. Between the drawn curtains of an open window across the street, a woman is combing a little girl's hair with a square black comb. (329)

As in the opening lines, this is a concrete situation with an intense sensual perception at the centre. Here, the focus is not a simple faucet, but a complex interwoven set of observations; some, like the window, motivated by things present, others, like the clock, by the secret excursion with Leo he is going to embark on, and others again, like the very precise registration of the girl and the "square black comb", are signs that his thoughts are easily being diverted by his double fear, both of his outing with Leo and of his mother. Again, with the noisy city below and the sky above the situation is extended to the world at large.

When the narrator dives into David's flickering thoughts, the free indirect discourse, blended with inner monologue, shows that the complexity of the outer world reigns also in his mind. He has not thought of the rosary as an anti-Jewish symbol – he is just eight – but as beads bringing him much needed luck:

The beads made you lucky, he said. Don't have to be scared of nothing. Gee if I had! – but don't want it, that's all. Ain't going. And that funny dream I had when he gave me it. How? Forgetting it already. Roof we were with a ladder. And he climbs up on the sun – zip one two three. Round ball. Round ball shining – Where did I say, see? Round ball and they busted it off with a cobble and puts it in the pail. And I ate it then. Better than sponge cake. Better than I ever ate. Wonder what it's made of – Nothing, dope! Dreams. Just was dreaming – (330)

Here his fear of actually going with Leo is overshadowed by the dreams triggered by the acquisition of the rosary beads: to be without fear, eating the sun and taking in the light and the whole universe. But then, as with his thirst at the beginning, he returns to the world of immediate sense perception, thinking of sponge cake. His mother, now coming in from the window cleaning, senses his nervousness, but with no idea about the inner turmoil of her child. His world is expanding, but with it his fear and his loneliness. The familiar space of the apartment has been invaded by the outside space, the city and the big uncertain world.

After a noisy, violent family brawl, the rosary is found by his father and David flees into the street, now seemingly a safer place than home. The world is turned upside down:

Dusk. Storelight and lamplight condensed – too early for assertion. The casual, canceled stur and snarling of distance. And on the sidewalks, men and women striding with too certain a gait, and in the gutter, children crossing, calling, not yet conceding the dark's dominion. The world dim-featured in mouldering light, floating, faceted and without dimension. For a moment the wild threshing of voices, bodies, screams, the fury in the pent and shrunken kitchen split their bands in the brain, flew out to darkened east, the flagging west beyond the elevated, the steep immensity of twilight that dyed the air above the housetops. For a moment, the rare coolness of a July evening dissolved all agony in a wind as light as with the passing of a wand. And suddenly there was space between the hedges of stone and suddenly there was quiet even in the fret of the cities. And there was time, inviolable even to terror, time to watch the smudged and cluttered russet in the west beckon to the night to cover it. A moment, but a moment only, then he whimpered and ran.
– Can't! Ow! Can't! Can't run! Can't! Hurts! Hurts! Ow! Mama! Legs! Mama!
(403)

For a moment he is transposed to a surreal space of peace and rest and loses contact with physical reality, as he experienced when he went with his father through the city to distribute the milk: “He felt as if his mind had slackened its grip on reality” (274). This lasts only until the physical pain in his legs calls him back; the dreamy space of tranquility without dimensions, encompassing the whole universe, disappears in a flash of a second.⁶ Belonging is nowhere in the real world; migration is turned into a human condition.

3. Lost in Translation

Can one at least talk about it? Yes, but only with a shared language across the different peoples and cultures meeting or colliding in the urban space of migration. This heterogeneity of languages is a key problem, also for the narrator who has to translate David’s inner life into a language we can understand and which also exposes the increasing complexity of his life and thoughts. David’s thoughts are mostly articulated in Yiddish, the first language of his family and many people in his surroundings. The same goes for the actual conversations between the characters, if not in Yiddish, then in broken Englishes not able to contain what David has on his mind, but only rather practical things. The characters are lost not only in space but also in translation. In this way translation is a central driver in the novel on two levels where mutual communication and understanding are at stake in a world which for most characters is a place of alienation, transition and loneliness, interrupted only by passing moments of love and reconciliation. There is the level of the characters, and there is the level of the narrator who has to translate the speech and thoughts of the characters into readable English without losing the linguistic and cognitive confusion, if not despair, of the characters. The novel is a huge experiment on the necessity, the limits and possibilities of translation in a world of migration.⁷

The sense of alienation and confusion is transferred to the reader as well. In some places we have unfiltered sentences in Hebrew, though transcribed into the Roman alphabet, in Italian, Hungarian, or Yiddish, not always translated by the narrator into English. When David registers that he cannot understand Aunt Bertha’s babble, we learn that she and Genya speak Polish as well, which at times is not translated into

⁶ At the end David makes an experiment with tram rails, creating a flashing light by making a short-circuit with a piece of metal as he has seen other street boys do. He hopes to see the light of God as he has heard from the book of Isaiah in the school of the local Jewish rabbi. God touches the lips of Isaiah with burning coal, his sins are forgiven and he sees the light of God. David has an obsession with light as a vision of safety, purity, freedom, security beyond his day-to-day world, but also an experience he can have in this world. In this final section we are also beyond the daily mind of David who is knocked unconscious and believed to be dead. Here, the narrator can no longer just represent the inner and outer events in broken English, free direct discourse or inner monologue, but inserts passages of poetry as well. The whole novel moves to another discursive level.

⁷ Cf. Wirth-Nesher’s afterword to Roth.

English but simply left out. When English is used in direct speech, it is rendered as more broken than most readers will be able to decipher without some re-reading of many passages. If David finds the world impenetrable and hard to decode, we are at times at no less of a loss than he is.

Let us take a random passage to show how the narrator represents the conversation between the characters, the like of which can be found on any of the c. 450 pages. David is talking with the older Leo, from a Catholic Polish family, while David is a Yiddish-speaking Jewish boy. They have to bridge their cultural differences and their different types of broken English as well. However, they are united by the shared kind of kids' street language of mixed linguistic backgrounds. The narrator has to translate all this for the reader together with the mental state of David. They are talking about David's aunt, Bertha, who now has a candy store:

"Is she got a reggiler big canny staw?" Kneeling before the ice-box, Leo had been buttering bread. And now he pushed several objects from a large platter onto a small one. "Ice cream poller too?" He arose.

"My aunt? Naa. She god just a –" [David] broke off, gaped at what Leo had placed on the table. In one of the plates was a stack of buttered bread, but on the other, a heap of strange pink creatures, all legs, claws, bodies – "Wod's dat?"

"Dese?" Leo snickered at his surprise. "Don'cha know wat dis is? Dem's crabs."

"Cre-? Oh, crebs! Dey wuz green-like, w'en I seen 'em in a box on Second Evenyeh-"

"Yea, but dey a'ways gits red w'en ye berl 'em. Dey're real good! Gonna eat some?"

"Naa." His stomach shrank.

"Didntcha ever eat 'em?"

"Naa! Jews can't."

"Cheez! Jew's can't eat nutt'n." He picked up one of the monsters. "Lucky I ain't a Jew." (319f)

This is an amazing piece of phonetic writing, one of the easier examples in the novel. The problem with the use of plural and singular in verbs, some problems with some of the vowels and with English [ð] and [ɒ] are obvious, and some of the deviations from standard English are not unusual in colloquial speech in many places. They are just boys, so they talk about concrete things, like eating habits, not about the larger religious ramifications.

First of all, David is horrified and then uses his Jewishness as a shield. Crabs are not kosher, but he does not know crabs when he sees them. Although the narrator interrupts with passages in standard English, he is not neutral. He sees things with David's eyes all the way through. From the observant use of the word "objects" when the crabs are just unspecified things to David via creepy-crawly descriptions, to the

generic word “monstrous” when the full digestive horror has entered his timid mind, supplemented by his knowledge of forbidden food without knowing why.

If the theme of migration opens the question what it means to feel at home in a volatile world of migration, or just safe, translation brings up another issue of safety. This is the topic of trust and mistrust. Matters of language, cognition and honesty are compressed into the problem of translation. Can we trust that we are able to understand what we hear? That people speak the truth? That people are able to express themselves so what they want to say actually comes across? – Clearly, David is ambiguous with regard to crabs, hiding his immediate fear of the food with reference to Jewish habits that he cannot explain. He admires Leo, but does not trust him, and with good reason: Leo wants to exploit him to get close to his step-cousin. When Leo uses the word “crab,” David repeats it, slightly stuttering, a pronunciation different from Leo’s (“cre–, crebs”), showing that this is an alien word to him, as “rosary” is a little later. David cannot understand the life of Leo and the words and things that belong to it – and vice versa.

Can we trust the narrator in spite of the meticulously phoneticized rendering of speech? In the beginning he represents David’s Yiddish, as spoken by a three-year old, in simple English: “Mama, I want a drink” (17). The same applies later when David has lost his way in the city and a woman addresses him:

“Little boy.” The words were in Yiddish. . . . “Are you a Jew?” For a fleeting instant, David wondered how he could have understood if he hadn’t been a Jew.” “Yes” (237).

They both speak Yiddish, not street English where “yes” would have been written as “yeah”. On the written page, Aunt Bertha seems to speak colourful English with lots of scolding and swearing, but she actually speaks Yiddish, not English. As with the boys’ broken English translated into phonetic writing, the narrator renders Bertha’s forceful outbursts into a well pronounced and grammatically correct but non-idiomatic English, echoing her Yiddish way of speaking: “He was an old monster, the Baron, may he rot away! His eyes were rheumy, and his lips munched as though he were chewing a cud. He had a back as crooked as his soul” (147).

At times, though, aunt Bertha’s Yiddish accent is shown. David visits her in her candy store:

“Hea, I giff you an pineapple vit’ emmend. Do I speak English better?” – “Yea.” He pocketed them. – “End a liddle suddeh vuddeh?” – “No, I don’t want it.” He answered in Yiddish. For some reason he found himself preferring his aunt’s native speech to English. (309)

No wonder that David finds her loud Yiddish in the streets embarrassing, now that he himself is more accustomed to variations of migration English. It gets even worse when she escorts him to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the small boy

has to calm her down and translate for her in his combination of children's language and broken English (147-51).

David has an astute awareness that language is a source of doubt and mistrust needing translation which, however, only adds to the doubt and discomfort. Hence, what the narrator does when he both thematizes and practices translation, is to represent how the persistent questioning of trust among the uprooted characters is attached to the limits of language and translation just as much as it is connected with the urban turbulence of New York. David's father, Albert, is the extreme case. He does not have the command of a differentiated language, either of Yiddish or of English, and translates his linguistic deficiency into violence, or a threatening silence, when he is overwhelmed by powerlessness.

In one situation in particular, the narrator uses the whole scale of narrative devices to expose how translation at the same time moves the boundary between trust and mistrust with regard to language, cognition and honesty. David, now aged five, is in the kitchen sitting on the floor near Genya and Bertha. His presence is forgotten by the two sisters who talk about painful memories from back in Galicia. These memories also involve David, although he only vaguely intuits what it is all about, a lack of understanding which is amplified by the women's mixing of Polish with Yiddish. That it actually is Polish, he does not know. It is just a strange tongue, the narrator tells us. David is still the eyes and ears of the narrator, but as the narrator also offers us fragments of the conversation in direct speech, which David does not quite apprehend, the adult reader has no difficulty in grasping that it is about Genya's love affair and David's biological father.

David only understands that something about him and his beloved mother is hidden, and this remains with him as a mistrust even of her, the safest person in the world. Nobody is lying to him, though, and he is not lying either. They are just talking about things he should not know, and he is just in a place where he should not be at that moment without having the courage to make his presence known. So, whereas the two sisters trust each other when sharing the hidden details of the past – "Can't you trust me?" Bertha exclaims (192) – the situation as a whole produces mistrust.

It is a long sequence, comprising the whole chapter 9 of book 2, but a few selected details will illustrate the point. David hears and sees his mother:

"There are only three people who know," she began with an effort. "Mother, father, myself of course, and – and another – in part. I shouldn't want –"

"Oh, No! No! No! Trust me Genya."

David squirmed, shivered with anticipation, fear. . . . The oblique nod of her head seemed to beckon her sister to join her in the realm of another speech [Polish]. For when she spoke again her words had fused into that alien, aggravating tongue that David could never fathom. . . . Her eagerness tantalized him, goaded him into sharper listening. It was no use. He scrutinized her mother. The color has risen to her throat. Now her eyes stared and were dark and she spoke rapidly. Now they narrowed and the wide brows knit crookedly. Pain. What hurt her?" (195)

Now and then the two interlocutors again shift into Yiddish and David snatches some words, but also new words he does not know. So he still has no clue to what the sisters are talking about:

– But – Listen! That was a Yiddish word! A whole phrase! “After the old organist, dead” . . . Another! “Alone in the store” . . . A word! “Handsome” . . . Like mica-glints in the sidewalk, another phrase! “A box of matches” . . . He turned steadily to watch her. . . . What was an “orghaneest”? He was educated, that was clear. And what else, what did he do? He might find out later if he listened. (196)

He has to make a combined linguistic and conceptual translation beyond his abilities. The transcription of “orghaneest” both mimics the foreignness of the word to him and the accent of the two women. Moreover, like his mother who has “no words” (198) and asks: “How shall I put it into words” (200), David is also engaged in the initial translation of experience on the brink of comprehensibility into language.

Toward the end of the conversation, his confusion becomes almost unbearable and the disquieting shift to Polish only adds to his uneasiness:

With the same suddenness as before, meaning scaled the horizon to another idiom, leaving David stranded on a sounding but empty shore. Words here and there phrases shimmering like distant sails tantalized him, but never drew near. . . . It seemed to him, lying there almost paralyzed with the strain, that his mind would fly apart if he brought no order into this confusion. Each phrase he heard, each exclamation, each word only made the tension within him worse. Not knowing became almost unbearable. He felt as nothing he had ever known were as important as knowing this. (197)

David’s whole world depends on his capacity to translate the words and their meaning and wider bearing on his life. He has an acute sense of being lost in translation without ever being found or being able to find a way out.

4. The Political

I promised eventually to come to the issue of the political. Politics, as we know, involves the governance of a state, a community, an institution or a company and the principles and power relations these are based upon. Political is an adjective that will specify different aspects of the type of governance and power in question – political programmes, political decisions, political parties, political discourse, political propaganda, political power, political intrigues etc. Of course, literature with a marked political profile is also political, that is literature engaged in certain ideological battles or addressing political issues as constitutive themes with a decisive influence on plot, characters etc. such as migration, finance or geopolitics. However, there are endless

shelves of books without any such political features, or books that engage with political issues so as to create a backdrop for the narrative, the imaginary language or the use of other aesthetic devices that does not determine the basic structures of the text. Roth's novel is clearly a novel of that kind.

Hence, the term "the political" may be more relevant. Both politics and the political have to do with *polis*, the city state. If politics concerns its governance; the political involves everything that defines the shared life of humans in a larger social organization on an individual and collective level. "Everything" ranges from language, the orchestration of sense perception, psychology, cognition, communication, rhetoric, ethics, imagination – to the extent that such factors shape the shared life of humans.

Chinua Achebe, who more than many writers brought the political onto the literary scene, makes the following point:

The matter is really quite simple. Literature, whether handed down by word of the mouth or in print, gives us a second handle on reality, enabling us to encounter in the safe, manageable dimensions of make-believe the very same threats to integrity that may assail the psyche in real life; and at the same time providing through the self-discovery which it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with these threats whether they are found within problematic and incoherent selves or in the world around us. (170)

A novel like Roth's could be said to be such a second handle. Highlighting place awareness and language as crucial, also outside the field of politics in the narrow sense, Roth makes the political a concrete experience in human life, determining the identity of humans in a social and cultural setting where the power and limits of place and language are questioned through the themes of migration and translation. The use of politics in literature is based on reference, whereas the unfolding of the political has to do with a contextualization that reveals the political as a dimension of most literature.

To look for references to geopolitics and capital in this novel will not bring us very far, although both aspects frame people's lives. The task at hand is rather to challenge literary studies to constantly work in a more subtle way with new contextualizations of literature in order to make it engage with the political through literary strategies. This is a pressing issue in a cultural setting of intensified globalization. It is important to make us recognize that politics belongs only to isolated spots of the larger landscape of the political. We need more detailed maps to cross the whole landscape of literature and open our eyes to new social and cultural vistas encompassing a larger and more complex dimension of culture than the space of politics.

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The Dis/location of Solitude: The Disaggregation of Empire in Joseph Roth's *The Radetzky March*

The condition of solitude, no matter whether it is coercive or intentional, collective or individual, disengages the rules of the community in which it comes into being. Inasmuch as it deactivates the political and social parameters of its location, it presents itself as an operation of dislocation. However, is it not the case that any *dislocation* is, by necessity, related to a *location*? Does solitude's dislocation not act, therefore, as the prerequisite of its location, and vice versa?

In order to clarify this paradox of solitude's dis/location, let us consider the status of former imperial provinces. They were certainly politically located within respective empires but, at the same time, linguistically, socially, and economically dislocated from these empires' core zones. In governing them an imperial administration followed different rules than those applied in its centers. The derogation inherent in these rules, however, enjoyed a much wider dissemination, characterizing the manner in which the representatives of central imperial constituencies perceived and treated the members of the provincial ones in everyday contacts. The isolation and immobilization of the provinces was the imperial center's broad and joint operation, but the provinces nevertheless played an active role in determining its end-effects. Since the division existed not only between the center and the provinces but also within both of them, it persistently ruined their homogeneity and stability. Although, after the collapse of the political entity that housed them both for centuries, the divided constituencies used to blame each other for this demise, the perpetual resurfacing of the empire's structural gap within them interrogates the plausibility of such unilateral interpretations. Instead, it hints at a deeper problem that encompasses and surpasses them both.

While such tarrying of the one constituency by the other is comprehensible in the enflamed atmosphere of the immediate post-imperial decades, it makes much less sense in the recent historiography as well as reception of literary works that are focused on the breakdown of empires. The case I want to investigate in this connection is Joseph Roth's novel *The Radetzky March*. In spite of the monarchist opinions occasionally put forth in Roth's journalistic work, my claim is that the novel's complex structure resists being read in any such ideological frame.¹ Under closer inspection, it

¹ For a recent summary of the novel's dominant reception in such a frame, see Adam Koźuchowski's *The Afterlife of Austria-Hungary: The Image of the Habsburg Monarchy in Interwar Europe* (112-21). The historian Koźuchowski himself subscribes to it.

portrays its main characters as firmly encapsulated by solitude. This is represented as a grave condition that governs their communication not only with other characters but also themselves. The elderly Emperor, who approaches his provincial “sons” absent-mindedly, indifferently, and negligently, serves as the epitome of such inaccessible loneliness. Of course, disinterestedness suits the supreme position in any political hierarchy and therefore should hardly be seen as astonishing.² Yet the Emperor appears to be absent-minded not only in relation to the provincials but also himself. An entity appointed to rule the whole empire – as omnipresent among its inhabitants as God in the world³ – is not exactly sovereign. On the contrary, the Emperor, who is responsible for the well-being of millions of people, leaves the impression of being an extremely distracted person. At the age at which he enters this novel he has ceased to even master his own self.

Portrayed on innumerable public walls and reproduced on coins and stamps as coffered up in the “crystalline armor” of his “icy and everlasting, silver and dreadful old age,” he casts a tough and freezing glance upon his subjects (75; 85-86).⁴ Remote and unapproachable, his face lacks personality and familiarity. Under such conditions, some subjects remove his portrait from their walls (109; 124) and others consider him to have been definitely abandoned by God (176; 196). Even to the Emperor himself God begins to appear as mysterious as he himself regularly appeared to his soldiers (240; 267). The Emperor for his part felt as if he was drifting away from them, as though they were all shrinking and “the things they said reached his ear from a vast distance and then bounced away meaninglessly” (243; 273). This increasing detachment from his subjects makes him incapable of carefully listening to his visitors and interlocutors. During an inspection of his troops in Ukraine, he thus promotes a barber from Olmütz from corporal to sergeant completely against the man’s wishes. Although he thereby destroyed the barber’s life, the narrator presents the Emperor as extremely pleased for having accomplished a good deed and making the barber happy (242; 269).

The Emperor’s profile within the novel has wide-reaching impact. His officers of provincial origin, while unreservedly committed to him, display an analogously radical solitude, replicating the Emperor’s humiliating disregard for the “provincials” in an even stronger form. The way the novel represents its characters leads the reader to the conclusion that the desperate *dislocation* of some imposes an equally devastating *location* on others, and vice versa. Is the proliferation of solitudes an unavoidable corollary of the divided imperial coexistence? Their mutual instigating resurfaces in all relations between the main characters in *The Radetzky March*, as well as between its major and

² For a classic study of the ruler’s aloof loneliness, see Leo Strauss’s *On Tyranny*.

³ *The Radetzky March* (75); *Radetzky marsch* (86). In the following text, the first parenthesized number refers to the page in Michael Hofmann’s English translation of Roth’s *The Radetzky March*, and the second, italicized and separated by semicolon, to the German original.

⁴ Hofmann translates “in seiner eisernen und ewigen, silbernen und schrecklichen Greisenhaftigkeit eingeschlossen” as “coffered up in an icy and everlasting old age,” astonishingly dropping “silver and dreadful.”

minor characters. The novel obsessively returns to the complex relationship between imposed mobility and immobility, the solitudes of Austrians and provincials, those of the dominating supranational individuals and of the dominated national and workers' collectivities. As these solitudes foster one another, *The Radetzky March* renders a distribution of sympathies between them obsolete, which seriously questions its supposedly nostalgic character.⁵

Following three generations of the typical imperial Trotta family, Roth lets their solitudes deepen rather than ameliorate one another. Baron Joseph von Trotta, who saved the Emperor's life at the battle of Solferino (1859), is ennobled, whereupon he breaks his personal relationship with his Slovenian father, concealing him from his Bohemian wife due to a sense of provincial shame. After having renounced his familial father in favor of a political one, in a typical gesture of repetition compulsion, he, as a father himself, ceases his personal relationship with his own son, raising him toughly and coldly. This guides his son to likewise repeat the same gesture toward him, instead becoming attached to the Emperor. Raised by the Baron in such an impersonal way, District Commissioner Franz Trotta, as the father, reproduces the same attitude towards his son Carl, who, for his part, also chooses to instead admire his grandfather and the Emperor.

In the frame of the Habsburg Empire, it appears that a family could only ensure its external reputation by consenting to its internal discontinuation. The narrator reminds us, as if pointing out the price of the Great Father's love, that a "great chain of hills" separated the Commissioner from his son (170; 188) and the Baron from his father (8; 11).⁶ The Dual Monarchy's officers of provincial origin had to detach themselves from taking care of their family bonds, since attachment to one's original family was considered provincial behavior. If one wanted to overcome it, one was expected to abandon this "primitive" loyalty in favor of binding oneself to the Emperor. Families could improve their social status only via the latter, which required of its members mobility across various imperial provinces, often located great distances from their family's home. Once cut off from their geographic, social, cultural and linguistic roots, the Emperor's supranational officers were compelled to live a free-floating, dislocated life. Their career development affiliated them with locations to which they were all but emotionally attached and which, in turn, regarded these settlers as foreigners.

The novel carefully investigates how the protagonists' feeling of non-belonging and the distrustful reception that they are afforded by their new surroundings generates their unbearable solitude and concomitant attempts to come to grips with it. There seems to be no exception to this rule. After having fought for his Emperor and,

⁵ For a recent reading of the novel along more ambiguous lines, see Ana Foteva's *Do the Balkans Begin in Vienna?: The Geopolitical and Imaginary Borders between the Balkans and Europe* (173-95). Foteva, however, does not address the problem of the dis/located solitude that figures centrally in my reading.

⁶ In the latter case, Hofmann translates "schwerer Berg [lit. severe mountain] militärischer Grade" as "a great weight of military distinction."

in the process, become a military invalid, Baron von Trotta's father, born in Slovenian Sipolje, becomes a gardener in the Emperor's Laxenburg castle in Lower Austria, which becomes, incidentally or not, a surrogate milieu for his indigenous one. Baron von Trotta himself, disappointed with the Emperor's mendacious administration, withdraws from the military service in South Hungary, which has confronted him with daily mistrust and gossip (5; 8), and retreats into a silent Bohemian landscape. District Commissioner von Trotta, for his part, is sent to Silesia and then Moravia, whereupon, faced with complete isolation, he undertakes a trip to Ukraine to reestablish his personal relationship with his endangered son. Lieutenant von Trotta was stationed in Moravia and then Ukraine, where, after quitting his embarrassing military service, he tries to integrate into the domestic peasant population.

At the beginning of their appointment to various provinces, however, neither of the Trottas cares to identify his new location exactly. They want their provincial surroundings to remain indistinctive in order to project onto it the self-pleasing, therapeutic fantasies of their solitude without facing resistance from the domestic population. Only after such resistance arises and the provincials announce dissatisfaction with their imposed identity do the Trottas become frustrated with their dislocation. Yet, even then, they prove unwilling to approach the provincials, for whom they are responsible, in distinctive terms, instead continuing to heal their dislocation through stubborn detachment. In demonstrating such obstinate blindness to the perspective of the provincials that they are expected to take care of, they unwittingly replicate the Emperor's utter disinterest in his subjects as exemplified, among everything else, by the aforementioned treatment of the Ukrainian barber.

This compulsively reemerging ignorance deserves closer examination since it manifests itself diversely. To recover from his frustrating south Hungarian appointment, Baron von Trotta withdraws into his Bohemian refuge because he confuses it with his "native" Slovenia. The narrator states twice that he became "a little Slovenian peasant" (14; 18, 19) there, as if taking up the protagonist's indistinctive point of view.⁷ In a sudden outburst of anger induced by his unbearably divided identity, the Baron renounces his Imperial Father, reattaching himself to his Slovenian one. Yet, although it now seems that he has definitely quit his relation to the Emperor, his loyalty to him proves irrevocable. Despite the Baron's intention to reintegrate, his rapid aging and the isolation caused by the consecutive deaths of this father, wife, and father-in-law echo the Emperor's traumatic self-enclosure.⁸ He also reminds us, through his inability to remember the face of his recently deceased wife (19; 24), of the Emperor's notorious forgetfulness, as well as, by his growing habit of treating his own portrait as the only

⁷ I say "as if" because the narrator himself does not really distinguish between various imperial provinces, usually treating them "summarily." I will return to his unplanned repetition of the characters' behavior in my conclusion.

⁸ As is known, the Emperor's only son committed suicide, the Mexicans executed his brother, an Italian anarchist assassinated his beloved wife, and a member of a Serbian liberation movement assassinated the heir to his throne. For his traumatic self-enclosure, see Kozuchowski (163-64).

interlocutor that has remained to him (18; 23), of the Emperor's self-seclusion. Finally, the Emperor is most exemplarily resurrected in the Baron's disregard for the personality of fellow beings. They must unconditionally obey his traumatic self-enclosure, above all his son Franz, to whom both the military career of his father and the desired return to the peasant life of his grandfather are strictly forbidden (17, 19; 22, 24).

The Baron's unwilling reduplication of the Emperor makes his attempted return to his familial father fail. The very structure of the Dual Monarchy, circling around its absent center, prevented its subjects' return to their mutual personal relationships. The attachment to the impersonal Common Father, hammered into imperial subjects' consciousnesses through the daily rituals of identity-formation, sentenced any attempt at personal belonging to failure. The novel obstinately reminds us that the Emperor's portrait supervised his subjects from all public walls, coins, and stamps, and that the performance of the Radetzky March was notorious at all public occasions. It is heard at the Baron's funeral, as well as that of his Slovenian father (20; 25). All concerts on the main square of Commissioner von Trotta's small district town in Moravia began with it (23; 27); it was even played in brothels (81; 92) and public bars (109; 124). It is no wonder, then, that the young Carl Joseph imagines his future death for the Emperor as followed by the tones of the Radetzky March (26; 32) and that his patriotic fantasies at the Corpus Christi procession are stoked up by the same music (210; 235). The contact with the omnipresent Emperor's portrait sometimes takes a detour via the portrait of his representatives, such as that of Baron von Trotta's, which supervises his grandson from afar with equal persistence (70, 104; 79, 118). Since every officer is but an embodiment of the Emperor, when the grandson inherits the Baron's qualities, he ultimately inherits those of the Emperor. The Impersonal and Indifferent Father thus spectrally multiplies in all his subjects. Commissioner von Trotta even inadvertently imitates his famous "elastic stride" (168; 186-87). The narrator does not let us escape his irony.

Inheriting his personal father's disrespect of the other's personality, District Commissioner von Trotta also indirectly reaffirms the aloofness of the Supreme Father. The Commissioner's disrespect holds not only for his relation to the son but also for all his other social relations. For example, Bandleader Nechwal's wife and children are not deemed deserved of his exact memorizing (31; 37). As regards his other provincial subordinate, Sergeant Slama, he silently passes over the affair of his son with the Sergeant's wife and expects Slama to do the same, as if provincial wives are somehow "naturally" apt for the sexual initiation of the Emperor's youth. Due to his mother's early death and his predominantly motherless childhood (which is repeated in his son's life), District Commissioner von Trotta does not hold women in high esteem. As they are expected to satisfy men's appetites, in a conversation with his only friend in his late age, Doctor Skovronnek, he designates the unknown woman who caused his son's fatal passion as a "person of the opposite sex" (*Frauenperson*), reserving the concept of a "lady" (*Dame*) only for females that a man intends to marry (263; 291). The same despising is afforded to his house staff, i.e., his housekeeper madam Hirschwitz and, and at least initially, his butler Jacques. After the latter dies, Commissioner von

Trotta tries, in a similar “self-evident” vein, to impose the name Jacques (invented by his father, decades ago, as a “noble” nickname) upon his newly hired successors and wonders why they refuse to accept it (unlike the “original Jacques,” 251; 277). The same ignorance concerns the Commissioner’s relation to the imperial provinces’ exact location. He refuses his son’s wish to continue his military service at the Empire’s “Southern frontier” in Slovenia (because an Austrian officer must remain cut off from his place of origin, 138; 151), directing him instead to its “Northern sister” Ukraine (138; 152). At that time, incidentally, the Empire’s Southern frontier was Dalmatia, while Ukraine could only be its “Eastern” and not “Northern sister.”⁹

Yet a supranational Austrian servant, as a true copy of the Distracted Supervisor, was not expected or even allowed to distinguish between the various “Slav tribes.” One must not address them by their individual names but exclusively by their collective name—i.e., as “Slavs” instead of as “Russians or Serbs” (154; 170).¹⁰ This is why the District Commissioner resolutely refused the distinct national claims of particular “Slav tribes,” treating them as a typically revolutionary disobedience by ignorant “sons” to their Benevolent Father (155; 171). Using his immediate provincial ethnic surrounding as a metonymy for all irrational barbarians, he identifies all rebelling nations with the “unruly, stubborn and stupid” Czechs who proliferate everywhere (252; 278). In a conversation with Nechwal’s son, who pays him a visit, his guest’s face strikes him as typically “Czech”—i.e., reminding him of an “animal” (255-56; 282). Heavily disappointed with the invasion of “barbarians” that bring the world of the Radetzky March to collapse, he rapidly ages, drawing ever nearer to his Emperor until, perceived as “the ghost of the history of the fatherland” (302; 336), he looks almost like the Emperor’s younger brother (307, 309; 341, 343). Indeed, he increasingly sees the world in the same amorphous manner as the Emperor, who perceives Ukrainian Jews as “strange black grain in the wind,” a “black rout” that approaches Him who absent-mindedly rides his horse, and for who knows what reason (242-43; 270). Increasingly, the Emperor’s eyes begin to look into the distance, where the edges of eternity appear, so that everything in his close proximity is blurred. He even overlooks a crystalline drop on the end of his nose that everybody else is staring at (247; 276). The same negligence concerning his own appearance happens to Commissioner

⁹ Once again, it is unclear who in the last instance allocates Slovenia to the south of the Monarchy and Ukraine to its north – Commissioner von Trotta as a focalizer, or the narrator. As I have pointed out above, both are equally ignorant of the exact location of imperial provinces, confusing them unconcernedly with each other. I will return to the narrator’s unintended duplication of his protagonists’ detachment from their surroundings in my conclusion.

¹⁰ This can be understood as a continuation of Herder’s benevolent treatment of the Slavs as itinerant peoples “taking up a much larger space on earth than in history.” Because nature denied them “nobler gifts,” attributing them instead a terrible “slavish inertia,” Herder obliges the Germans, as the carriers of humankind’s history, to protect and cultivate them (Herder 696–98). Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Dual Monarchy, in order to prevent its own disintegration, switched to a new administration of its provinces along these lines.

von Trotta, whom the Emperor's cynical officials perceive as if having arrived into their present "from a historically distant province" (302; 336).

Both these distracted "living dead," the Emperor and Commissioner von Trotta, suddenly become distant provincials within the same Empire that offered them the most central accommodation only a few years earlier. The world they blindly trusted becomes completely strange, catapulting them out of their privileged location. While Commissioner von Trotta tries to reconnect with his son in order to regain his abruptly lost position in life, he faces a series of traumas, duplicating like a typical "imperial clone" the analogous experience of his father and, via him, the Emperor himself. He consecutively learns about his son's unheroic death (351; 391), the mental breakdown of his son's mentor, Count Chojnicki, who is now housed in an asylum (358; 398), and finally, the prosaic death of the Emperor (360-61; 400-01), from whom, during the requested audience, he had vainly expected a personal exchange (306-09; 339-43). Yet for His Majesty he remains the same weak echo of *déjà vu* others that fellow beings were for the Commissioner himself for many decades and that the Commissioner himself ultimately becomes for other people (including his own son, who perceives him as the Emperor's copy; 185; 206). In the world of the Great Mediator, who multiplies his doubles everywhere, even the people closest to one another fail in their attempts to establish mutual personal relationships. On two occasions Commissioner von Trotta wishes to tell his son that he loves him but, inhibited as he is, cannot enact this wish (170, 186; 189, 207). Even in the communication with his friend Doctor Skovronnek, he cannot find the right word to enter into an intimate conversation with him (259; 286).

The third Trotta, Lieutenant Carl Joseph, replicates for his part the grandfather, whom he perceives as his true father since he experiences his actual father as a foreigner (66, 185; 75, 206). This is, after all, the father's fault because Commissioner von Trotta directed his son to continue Baron von Trotta's military career in order to make his own castrated wish come true. By being the Baron's remote copy, the Lieutenant resumes the Baron's non-belonging within the milieu of his military appointment (77, 227; 87, 252), driving his relation to the Emperor into a similar ambiguity. On the one hand, he manifests unreserved loyalty, deeply admires his Emperor (26, 210-11; 32, 234), and rescues him from humiliation in Madam Resi's brothel (82; 93) and the Ukrainian garrison (328; 364-65). On the other hand, the Emperor strikes him as a complete foreigner (76, 185, 328; 86, 206, 364) who deserves only indifference and pity (246; 275). Divided like his grandfather, he yearns for a return to the native Sipolje of his forebears, a location that he imagines in equally blurred terms. As a true descendant of his grandfather, the Lieutenant does not really distinguish between the Czech and Slovenian peasants and languages (66; 74-75), but adds to his forebear's ignorance a touch further. By imagining mosques and praying Moslems as constitutive parts of Sipolje (124; 140), he confuses Slovenia with the newly occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina. He beats his grandfather's disinterest for the others in some other respects, too, by depriving all women that attract him of distinctive personalities, i.e., Madams Slama, Demant, and Taußig. The Lieutenant gets to know them via their

husbands, approaches them as substitutes for his early deceased mother, and, in his clumsy treatment of them, replicates his young father, who, according to his former classmate, the painter Moser, was extremely shy with the lasses (48; 56).

As for his subordinates from the lower social strata, he treats his Ukrainian servant Onufri in an even less personal manner than how his father handled his butler Jacques. Both Onufri and Jacques are certainly destined to fulfill the literal and symbolic wishes of their masters. Yet the Lieutenant cannot memorize Onufri's strange Slavic name (68; 77), cannot bear to direct his gaze at Onufri's provincial face, and therefore does not really know what Onufri looks like until he finally learns his name (69; 78). After all, the man's teeth remind him of a horse (68; 77) and his behavior of a bear (71; 80). This contempt for "lower" beings beats that of his father because, unlike the Ukrainian Onufri, Jacques is supranational "family property," and also because Lieutenant von Trotta, unlike his "true Austrian" father (28, 138; 34, 152), is dispossessed of his identity from the outset. In fact, the gaze of his furious grandfather directed at his neck consistently irritates him (70, 104, 328; 79, 118, 364). He also feels continually haunted by numerous deceased beings who seem to be blaming him (such as his mother, his surrogate mother Madam Slama, his friend Max Demant, Jacques, and the striking workers, as well as his own buried self; 42, 171, 183, 232, 275, 337; 48, 189, 204, 258, 305, 375). Besides, instead of representing himself, in relation to Madams Slama, Demant, and Taußig, he usurps the roles of their husbands; in relation to the Emperor, the role of his grandfather; in relation to Count Chojnicki, the role of son; in relation to his father, who suddenly strikes him as his son, the role of father (333; 371); and in his relation to Doctor Demant, he copies his father's relation to Doctor Skovronnek. Feverishly searching for the proper location of his identity, he also compulsively identifies with inferior grandsons (e.g., Doctor Demant who admires his grandfather, as the Lieutenant does his; 110; 125). In the outcome, he increasingly feels from the outset to have been an instrument of inimical and disastrous destiny (122, 281-82; 138, 313). In order to get rid of such an unbearable othering of his own personality, he compulsively dispossesses the others of their personalities by imposing on them his remedial fantasies.

In this novel, however, the absent center of the Dual Monarchy does not only push the Trottas and those who depend on them – such as their fathers, sons, grandsons, wives, mistresses, servants, friends, and provincial subordinates – into irrevocable solitude. Consider the case of the rich and independent Polish landowner Count Chojnicki, a figure from the group of so-called frontier men (*Grenzmenschen*) located at the Empire's Eastern margin, i.e., Ukraine's periphery with Russia: He is described as an extremely mobile person, a "migrant bird" familiar with many regions, metropolises, social and political milieus, a strange fellow with innumerable acquaintances but no single friend or enemy, a man of oscillating moods, belonging at the same time to the center and the province; in a word, an "alchemist" who merges all manner of various identities (146, 174; 162, 194). As Roth himself was born at the Eastern frontier of the Empire, many commentators pointed out his continuous sympathy towards

these kinds of people.¹¹ Besides, Chojnicki's antidemocratic and monarchic worldview (148, 184; 164-65, 205) apparently sides with Roth's opinion expressed in his journalistic work. Yet neither Count Chojnicki's nor Roth's worldview (as articulated in this novel) are that simple.

Chojnicki despises and spits on the "new nations" (the Austrians, Hungarians, Czechs, Ruthenians, Croats, Slovenes, Poles, and Jews) as well as on the dispossessed working class, which does not want to work anymore (149; 165). However, he also calls the Emperor a "senile idiot (*ein gedankenloser Greis*)," the government "a bunch of morons," and the parliament an "assembly of credulous and pathetic nitwits." The Empire, he states, is in such terrible condition that it must perish (148; 164). It has lost contact with historical development and misapprehended the key agenda of modernity: nation and technology (176-77; 195-97). In sum, Chojnicki, as the Lieutenant's second father (179; 199), shares with his true father merely the scorn for democracy and nations, but is much more critical toward the Monarchy. Being dis/located both at its center and its frontier (like Roth himself), he unmistakably senses its impending catastrophe. As a frontier man who, unlike the District Commissioner, who is firmly located at the Monarchy's center, rejects all values almost to the verge of nihilism, the Count would most probably commit suicide were he not an extremely curious reader of the announcements of catastrophe. Catapulted out of all comfortable identity locations, he remains in life out of sheer curiosity for what is going to happen (171; 190)! At the Monarchy's denigrated, ruined frontier (as opposed to its self-aggrandizing ceremonial center), one can clearly discern the omens of the forthcoming decline (141, 179; 156, 199). Ultimately, whereas the centrally located Viennese enjoy the Monarchy's cheerful end time without the slightest presentiment of its approaching breakdown (211-12; 235-36), Count Chojnicki's dislocated clairvoyance drives him into a mental asylum (356; 396). This is the sad life trajectory of probably the most attractive of all the frontier men in the novel, but this group is, as one might expect, extremely heterogeneous.

The other frontier men in this story embody the Ukrainian province's other dangerous advantages. The smuggler Kapturak flees from Russia, where the secret service is after him because of his having traded with deserters, the same activity that he comfortably and lucratively pursues in Habsburg Ukraine. The hotel owner Brodnitzer, who has arrived in Ukraine from Silesia for dubious reasons, opens a casino and offers girls (189-90; 208-10). Unlike the Count, who is a generous benefactor, these petty settlers draw huge profits from the Empire's approaching catastrophe.¹² While the in-

¹¹ Roth locates the concluding events in his novel in the small Ukrainian town of B., near the Russian border. This fit his birthplace of Brody.

¹² Roth's narrator does not share the enthusiasm of the simple people for their benefactors. In the same way that receiving an act of charity satisfies these people's desire for a magnanimous master, the benefactor, committing this act, nourishes his conscience and pride. See the narrator's explanation of Count Morstin in Roth's novella "Die Büste des Kaisers" in *Die Erzählungen*. Although *The Radetzky March* does not contain such direct explanations, the narrator's attitude towards Count Chojnicki is equally ambiguous.

dependent and well-positioned landowner Chojnicki is mobile, their problematic past and lucrative present bind them to this frontier zone, to which they do not belong and which, for its part, considering their murky business, does not welcome them. This forces them into a growing isolation and a stigma of foreignness that culminate with Kapturak's expulsion and the prohibition of Brodnitzer's casino (311; 345).

In fact, the foreigners can never really understand the "swamp" of the frontier, which is the epitome of dislocation without the clearly established rules of behavior genuine to locations (141; 155-56). In its small towns, the streets are without names and houses are without numbers (143; 158). This "forgotten world," covered by the "dust of centuries" and accompanied by the "incessant fat chirruping of frogs" (141, 222; 155, 247), even aggravates the amorphousness of the province from which the Trottas are at continuous pains to keep their distance. When Commissioner von Trotta undertakes a journey to his Monarchy's remotest province, he packs a revolver to protect himself from bears and wolves, among the numerous perils there that endanger a "civilized Austrian" (167; 185). Austrian officials arrive in this penal colony only on account of the most embarrassing misconduct (167; 185). It resolutely resists all democratic changes characteristic of the center (184; 205). This outmost dislocation that hosts the "last of all the stations in the Monarchy" (142; 157) swallows the lives of uninitiated settlers, soldiers, and officers (141; 155-56), while the natives circulate across it as "living ghosts" "jammed in" between "West and East," "day and night" (139; 154), struggling to come to grips with its indeterminacy. To outmaneuver the perilous tricks of this godforsaken transit zone crisscrossed by the most diverse of earthly interests, they develop techniques such as trading, smuggling, negotiating, usury, and spying or offer various hospitality services (such as hotels, taverns, salons, brothels, casinos, post offices, and banks).

Of the traders, bankers, and caterers, the Jewish population is most representative (141; 155). In Commissioner von Trotta's typically anxious imagination before his Ukraine trip, the Ukrainian Jews "waged an incessant campaign of rapine" against foreign property and belongings (167; 185). Yet, in the memory of Lieutenant von Trotta's friend Max Demant, who stems from this region, his Jewish grandfather, with the huge silver beard, sitting in his tavern and waiting for his customers, was beloved by all but anxious that his progeny would betray his legacy (84-85; 95-96). In fact, the upcoming change to the world takes care that only a few Jews of his sort survive into the twentieth century (340; 378), and, as they entrust their protector, the Emperor, on his inspection of troops in Ukraine, they have no doubts that the end of the world is approaching (243; 271). After Ukraine lost the Emperor's protection, the specific Jewish dislocation within its general provincial dislocation became disastrous indeed. Ukraine's terrible *provincial* solitude drove the Jews into an even more frightening *ethnic* solitude.¹³ If a Ukrainian identity was regularly *confused* with other provincial identities, the Jewish identity was, in the Ukrainian defensive reaction against this

¹³ The very name of Ukraine means something marginal, at the edge of visibility, from the Russian perspective, obviously, but it applies to the Habsburg point of view, as well.

accumulated denigration, sentenced to *erasure*. Consider also that Roth finished his novel in Berlin shortly before the Nazis seized power.

As if contributing to the delineated diversity of the frontier men, the narrator himself inhabits the *historical* in the place of their *geopolitical* frontier. He is divided between the yesterday world of before the First World War *about* which he writes and the present world of after the war *in* which he writes, and never tires of reminding the reader of this predicament. Such a position is analogous to that of Stefan Zweig, who finished *The World of Yesterday* (orig. 1942) ten years after Roth. Drawn into the traumatic solitude of emigration, Zweig also incessantly compares the past and present worlds but with the emphasis on the traumatic fate of the Jews, which, of course, also became his personal destiny. Yet, while he personally testifies in his memoirs, Roth's novelistic narrator is impersonal, an old-fashioned mediator of past events. He behaves like a typical epic narrator who never addresses his protagonists, since they do not belong to his world anymore, but exclusively his readers.¹⁴ Taking advantage of his historically later position, behind the backs of the protagonists whom he permanently ironizes because of their shortsightedness and naivety, he enters with the readers into a kind of initiated partnership. For instance, he objects to his characters on the following bases:

- a) None of the Austrian officers were able to hear the machinery of the great hidden mills that were already beginning to grind out the Great War (98; 111);
- b) the Ruthenian peasants did not know that the Empress had died many years before (133; 150);
- c) Commissioner von Trotta did not know that Fate was spinning more sorrow for him while he slept (269; 298);
- d) Lieutenant von Trotta overheard the grim wing-flap of the vultures that circled above the Habsburg double eagle (212; 235);
- e) the Emperor himself, ultimately, failed to notice that a crystalline drop had appeared on the end of his nose (247; 276).

¹⁴ For these characteristics of the premodern epic as opposed to the modern novelistic narrator, see Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* (39). Cavarero polemicalizes against Arendt's epic understanding of the narrative by opting for its novelistic understanding. By introducing the epic narrator into his novel, Roth bereaves his figures of the possibility of shaping their own life trajectory, which was genuine to the novel's protagonists, by making them mere toys of a predetermined fate. Hofmannsthal applies an analogously anachronous technique by introducing the typically baroque figure of the fortune-teller into his lyric comedy "Arabella" (finished in the same year as *The Radetzky March*). Such fatalism finds its explanation in the atmosphere of the 1930s, after the First World War destroyed the nineteenth century's optimistic conviction that the human is the carrier of his history. This idea, of course, first became problematic in the imperial provinces, in which Roth places the action of his novel and where he was born. Taking recourse to an "antiquated" epic technique – in the same way as Hofmannsthal in his lyric comedy or Brecht in his contemporaneous epic theatre reach for an "anachronous" baroque technique – Roth simultaneously prevents his readers from identifying with the novelistic characters.

Along with introducing his readers in this way to the benightedness of his protagonists, Roth's narrator directly compares the past time about which he writes (1859–1914) with the present, which he shares with his contemporary readers (1932). For example, he remarks that in the Dual Monarchy a deceased person habitually entered a long memory whereas in the accelerated nation-states he or she is quickly forgotten (120; 136). In addition, the prior concepts of class, family, and personal honor disappeared from the uncompromising present, as did the former elastic aristocratic principles (206, 292; 228, 324). Via his Doppelgänger Doctor Skovronnek – the only important character who survives the catastrophe (like Roth himself) and whose “fondness of people matched his low opinion of them” (comparable to Roth's ambiguous stance towards his characters, 258; 286) – he states that in the present compartmentalized world nobody can take responsibility for others anymore. The Emperor cannot be responsible for his subjects, nor parents for their children, nor husbands for their wives, nor men for women. Social cohesion is forever lost, and every individual and group must follow his, her, or its own way at his, her, or its own risk (258, 268; 285, 297).

This neatly corresponds with Count Chojnicki's statement that, in today's world, trust in God has given way to trust in the nation-state (176; 196). Given that Chojnicki and Skovronnek strike the attentive reader as the author's two Doppelgängers that contest and complement one another, this correspondence is hardly accidental. However, although Chojnicki spits on the forthcoming petty nations¹⁵ and Skovronnek is somewhat skeptical concerning emancipated wives and women,¹⁶ this does not mean that they yearn for the old world. On the contrary, in the same way as Chojnicki dismantles the illusion of the Empire's political cohesion, Skovronnek clearly sees that its social cohesion is fake and the emancipation of its constituents is necessary. Yet inasmuch as, in the opinion of these *Zeitdiagnostiker*, full emancipation of nations or women or children merely substitutes one solitude for another, they cannot welcome it enthusiastically, and neither can Roth. The self is an equally elusive shelter of one's identity, as is the other. Equipped with the bitter postwar experience – in which many liberation movements resulted in reactionary nation-states – Roth's narrator realizes that anchoring identity in one's self instead of the other merely reestablishes solitude, which proves to be non-locatable.

Therefore, rather than being an uncritical adherent of monarchist ideology, the narrator of *The Radetzky March* oscillates like the frontier men among the novel's protagonists. However, in his particular case, being located at the historical frontier means being dislocated from both the epoch before and the epoch after the First World War. Like Brecht's interpreter of the happenings on stage, Roth's narrator belongs neither to the darkness beyond the stage nor under the lights of the stage itself.

¹⁵ According to Chojnicki, Austrians are “waltz dancers,” Hungarians “stink,” Czechs are “born to clean boots,” Ruthenians are “treacherously disguised Russians,” Croats are “broom-makers,” Slovenians are “chestnut-roasters,” and Poles are “fornicators and barbers” (148; 164).

¹⁶ According to Skovronnek, “there was nothing in the world that did not trouble them” (258; 285).

As for the latter world of today, the narrator of *The Radetzky March* keeps a distance from the petty nation-states in which the outcome of the First World War has pushed him. As for the former world of yesterday, the supranational Empire from before the War is definitely over, which gives him the opportunity to reconstruct the trajectory of its catastrophe, as he trusts, *sine ira et studio*. As seen in this supposedly impartial perspective, the trigger for the Empire's breakdown was the dislocation of its center that, withdrawn into solitude, unavoidably generated further dislocations instead of the desired cohesion.

Unexpectedly though, one of the effects of this fateful concatenation of dislocations turns out to be the narrator's own dislocation from the world of his protagonists. If they are forever gone, then his dislocation is enforced, which means that the narrator is affected by the same developments as they are. He is an involved transmitter rather than a distant master of this concatenation. As if suppressing this undesired involvement and taking advantage of his distance instead, Roth's narrator locates his protagonists in their predetermined fate, which they supposedly cannot comprehend. At one place in the novel, for example, he states that Lieutenant von Trotta was unable to express the reason for his depression but that "we" (i.e., the narrator and his reader) can say it on his behalf (122; 138).

However, precisely by using his temporal dislocation to locate his protagonists in their own time, to rivet them to their fate, he unwittingly replicates their pattern of keeping the others at a distance. All the Trottas mercilessly apply it to their fellow beings and especially provincial subordinates, thus multiplying their own solitude. In doing so, they blindly follow their Emperor, whose unbeatable detachment forces all his subjects into repeating it. Yet, if this universal pattern ultimately catches up even with Roth's narrator, then he is its carrier rather than a critical observer, an exemplary representative of the literary world that he is at pains to antique from his quasi-outside life position. This is how the second and hidden narrator's frontier position, next to the highlighted temporal one, comes to the fore: that between the protagonists' *literary space* and the author's *life space*. Despite his consistent striving to exempt himself from his protagonists' destiny to reach his author's supposedly sovereign freedom, the narrator's dislocation turns out to be no less located and his solitude no less enforced than that of the protagonists.

As Roth's narrator compulsively repeats the politics of an empire that it claims to have placed in a museum, the question that must be raised reads as follows: Who locates whose solitude, the narrator that of the protagonists, as we have had the impression hitherto, or the other way around, as we are now about to realize? As no final disentanglement of their intertwined relationship is possible, the protagonists' and the narrator's solitudes turn out to be deprived of their clear location, which makes them interact with those of their readers, who are seemingly placed beyond the aesthetic area. The spaces of literature and life thus penetrate one another, inducing the mutual dislocation of their identities. Therefore, in *The Radetzky March*, against the intention of its author, not merely does the disaggregation of the Habsburg Empire take place but also the disaggregation of literature's empire. Inasmuch as this empire is estab-

lished by a frontier man as a typical go-between, it loses its traditional sovereignty and self-sufficiency. Although in reintroducing the epic narrative into his novel Roth did his best to procure for literature's solitude a protected location, this solitude breaks free from the envisaged shelter into an unforeseeable dissemination.

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White Civility and the Im/Possibility of Crossing in Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Last Crossing*¹

In his book *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* Daniel Coleman identifies the concept of white civility as the “central organizing problematic” (6) and “the normative concept of (English) Canadianness” (4) that emerged in Canada in the late nineteenth century and to a certain extent is present in the Canadian popular consciousness even today.²

Coleman first analyzes the term civility by noting that it “combines *the temporal notion* of civilization as progress that was central to the idea of modernity and the colonial mission with *the moral-ethical concept* of a (relatively) peaceful order—that is to say, the orderly regulation between individual liberty and collective equality that has been fundamental to the politics of the modern nation state” (Coleman 10; emphasis in the original). Inherent in the notion of civility are, on one hand, the ideas of civilization as progress measured with the normative ruler of European or, more precisely, British civilization, and of enlightenment of the more backward or uncivil societies. On the other, in the civility are subsumed the notions of liberty and equality shared by the individuals belonging to the civil society, which begs the question of Others who are excluded from it for one reason or another. Coleman argues that, even though civility is a positive concept, it is structurally ambivalent because, while it “involves the creation of justice and equality, it simultaneously creates borders to the sphere in which justice and equality, are maintained” (9). The notion of civility, therefore, not only determines that which falls within its sphere and that which falls outside it, serving as a tool of self-definition through the separation from the uncivil Other, but the concept of civility also justifies the use of “uncivil violence and unfair exclusions” (9) outside its border in order to ensure justice and equality within it. Understood in this way, civility allows those societies that define themselves as civil to rationalize and justify the use of violence and suppression against societies they

¹ “As Cormac McCarthy created a passionate tribute to the frontier between the U.S. and Mexico, Vanderhaeghe is in the process of developing an equally important ‘Border’ work that looks at the idea of the 49th [parallel].” (Endicott n. pag.) In a chapter of his book *Ispisivanje prostora: čitanje suvremenoga američkog romana* (*Writing Space: a Reading of the Contemporary American Novel*) (Zagreb: 2000), Stipe Grgas examines the South-Western borderland of the American West as represented in Cormac McCarthy’s *Border Trilogy*. My article, as homage to Professor Grgas’s work, will discuss the North-Western, Canadian–U.S. borderland by analyzing one novel from Guy Vanderhaeghe’s *Western Trilogy*.

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proclaim as uncivil. Moreover, the very borders between civility and uncivility are interpreted as “the sites where new projects of civility are under negotiation” (9, 13), allowing civil societies to increase their territories as the borders are continually pushed back and new lands are claimed. This kind of rhetoric, prominent in late nineteenth-century Canada and especially the British North-West Territories, is strongly reminiscent of Frederic Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, which celebrated the creation of the authentic American nation on the frontier between savagery and civilization, where new civility was forged by pushing aside the wilderness. While Turner used phrases such as “winning the wilderness” (2) and the “advance of the frontier” (4) to emphasize the discourse of progress and the self-begetting of the “true” American nation in the West, the emergent Canadian nation used similar rhetoric to mimic instead the already existent model of British civility.

The late nineteenth-century British North-West Territories that were in the process of becoming the Canadian Western settlement were a site “under construction” and therefore a site in-between. Alan Lawson famously notes that “the in between of the settlers is not unbounded space but a place of negotiation” (159) between “‘mother’ and ‘other’, simultaneously colonized and colonizing” (155). He also elaborates on the double inscription of the settler societies between the two First Worlds, where the settlers were caught between the empire on the one hand—hence the struggle for authenticity and authority through the adoption of the model of white civility—and the First Nations, who the settlers needed to displace, but not entirely replace, because then they would lose the Other by which to define themselves (154–58).³ Consequently, the persistence of borders was necessary; the frontier between the self and the other, the civil and the uncivil, had to exist in order to “signify the boundary of the self, to confirm the subjectivity of the invader-settler” (157), which relied on white civility.

Coleman further explains that the concept of civility in late nineteenth-century Canada was conflated with “a specific form of whiteness based on a British model of civility,” and as such, white civility “has been naturalized as the norm for English Canadian cultural identity” (6). The concept of (British)⁴ white civility in Canada provided a grand narrative of the emerging and expanding Canadian nation which allowed the notions of progress, liberty, and law and order to be celebrated, while the means by which these were achieved were justified as necessary and/or marginalized in

³ See Coleman (15), where he rephrases Lawson’s model for his own argument of white civility.

⁴ Throughout this article, I use the terms British and English interchangeably because of the way the notion of Englishness was transformed into the “pan-ethnic” (Coleman 17) concept of Britishness to give greater legitimacy to the different nations subsumed under Great Britain. The term, as Coleman explains, was coined by “Lowland Scots after the Treaty of Union in 1707 to manufacture a looser cultural identity that would represent them not as junior partners in the larger project of English imperialism but as senior members and equals” (17). Translated into the colonial context, the label of Britishness provided the different nations of the British Isles greater legitimacy in the invasion/settlement of colonies and the enforcement of white civility.

the public view. The practices of inclusion and exclusion of peoples and events and of sanctions and incentives for the creation of the desired white anglophone civil society were selectively praised or suppressed in order to articulate the official mythopoeia of Canadian identity as white civility.

From the late twentieth century onwards, however, when official histories started to be renegotiated, this grand narrative was revealed as an “imposition of an imperial culture and that truncated indigenous history which colonialism has meant to many nations”, as Linda Hutcheon (73) notes when speaking more broadly of the similarities between postmodern and postcolonial literatures. One such example is Guy Vanderhaeghe’s novel *The Last Crossing* (2002),⁵ in which Vanderhaeghe tackles the issue of the official monologic history of the white settlement of the West in late nineteenth-century Canada. Vanderhaeghe offers a historical revision of the myth of the settlement of the West by exposing its underlying colonial ideology as “conceptually challenged, woefully lacking in vision” (372), as Len Findlay notes with regard to the broader issue of addressing and redressing colonialism. Vanderhaeghe exposes the deliberate blindness of colonialism effected by its strategies of isochronous approach to non-European and non-British societies and of the doctrine of the *terra nullius*. The novel’s polyglot narrative, with its complex structure of juxtaposed narrators and framed narratives, includes the voices of white settlers of different nationalities, women, indigenous people, and English gentlemen. It zooms in on the grass-roots level of life in the locale of the Whoop Up country on the very fluid border between the British North-West Territories and the United States. With such a narrative structure, a very specific chronotope, and insight into historical circumstances of everyday life in the West, Vanderhaeghe’s reinscription of history negotiates and juxtaposes “the once tyrannical weight of colonial history . . . with the revealed local past” (Hutcheon 73). Starting from these premises, this essay will analyze the notion of blindness as the central metaphor of Vanderhaeghe’s novel. Blindness will be examined on the level of individual characters and of society, this latter as colonial blindness, as a deliberate consequence of the blockage and erasure of that which was perceived as threatening or subversive to the dominant discourse of white civility.

On a basic level, *The Last Crossing* is a novel of quest or quests. In late nineteenth-century Victorian England, the Gaunt family patriarch, a rich middle-class railway investor, sends two of his sons in search of his third son, Simon, who has gone missing in the vast spaces of Western North America. While one son, Charles, Simon’s twin, is genuinely concerned about his brother, the other, Addington, sees the trip as

⁵ *The Last Crossing* is the second novel in Vanderhaeghe’s so-called Western trilogy. The first was the highly acclaimed *The Englishman’s Boy* (1996), and the third one was *A Good Man* (2011). By offering a pastiche of alternative histories, all three novels expose and deconstruct the myths and stereotypes of the Wild West and the frontier, the grand narratives of the settler history of the United States and Canada. All three are primarily historical novels, even if Vanderhaeghe sometimes calls them “literary westerns” (Vickers). The label of western is impossible to avoid when one situates the plot in the Western American landscapes in the second half of the nineteenth century, the chronotope of the Wild West.

an adventurous expedition where he will play the explorer. After their journey across the Atlantic, the brothers arrive in Fort Benton, an outpost in the American West, where they hire a Métis scout, Jerry Potts, to help them in their search. The search party increases in number to include several other characters who are each on a quest of their own: Lucy Stoveall, the only woman in the party, is searching for her sister's murderer; Custis Straw, a well-to-do horse salesman pursues Lucy with the intention of marrying her; Aloysius Dooley, an Irish saloon-keeper, wants to ensure that Custis, his impulsive friend, does not spiral out of control. Even the search party's scout, Jerry Potts, a historical figure, who is half Kanai and half Scottish, is on a quest to reconcile (or try to survive) the two disparate halves of himself. To use Dooley's words, the search party is a veritable "game of fox and hounds" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 120) in which each individual pursues another. In the party are also two hired hands and a journalist sycophant who is there to record Addington's "heroic" undertakings. The trail leads the party gradually westward and northward across the North American plains, and they freely cross the very fluid border between the United States and Canada in their wanderings from Fort Benton, in Montana, to Fort Edmonton, deep in the British North-West Territory. There the mystery of Lucy's sister's murder is solved and Simon is found. Eventually, only Charles returns to England; Simon refuses to leave North America, and Addington is killed in a bear-hunting accident.

The novel's narrative structure is complex, as there are three story-lines which constitute a Chinese boxes structure of time-space: the outermost narrative frame occurs in 1896 in London; the central plot occurs in 1871 in the Whoop-Up region in the border-area of future Montana and Alberta; and that plot is interspersed with memories of the Gaunt brothers' childhoods in England approximately two decades earlier. The narratorial role in the novel changes hands rapidly and dynamically, for there are four quite different first-person narrators (Charles Gaunt, Lucy Stoveall, Custis Straw, and Aloysius Dooley). There is also a third-person narrator with internal focalisation who switches focalizers, the technique offering a zoom-in and zoom-out of characters' consciousnesses and providing a view from the inside as well as the outside of each character. All of the narrators and focalizers possess a limited point of view, making them unreliable narrators, and their blindness and blind spots are often visible to other characters, who in turn are blind when it comes to their own biases and motivations.

In part, the inevitability of blindness in the novel can be explained by the extreme diversity of experiences and backgrounds of the ensemble of characters who journey together. Perhaps Lucy Stoveall, a pioneer, describes it best when, close to the end of the novel and her love affair with Charles Gaunt, she ruminates about her uncertain communication with Charles: "I understood how the signposts of each of our solitary roads can hardly be read by the other because they are so unlike. Sometimes Charles and me can scarce make out each other's speech. Him with his high-flown turns of phrase and his high-stepping words, me with my homely country talk, all knots to him that he can hardly pick apart" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 319). Here the inability of mutual understanding, not for the lack of trying but due to differences in

the worlds they inhabit, is brought forward through the medium of English. Mother tongue to both characters but so different for each of them due to their disparate backgrounds and experiences, as well as race, class, and gender,⁶ it engendered two different paroles to a single langue. Despite Lucy's awareness of the blind spots, she is incapable of enhancing her vision to overcome them, and she is aware that Charles can do so even less.

Blindness is additionally caused by the very different goals that guide characters in their actions. In fact, each character is so preoccupied with his or her own mission that it makes him or her biased and short-sighted with regard to outside circumstances and other personages: for example, Addington in his ego-mania sees others only as his pawns, Charles cannot understand Simon's desire to stay in the West, and Simon is oblivious to the world outside of his missionary zeal. Despite the thematic and narrative complexity of the novel, it is possible to discern a dominant trait, idea, or goal that rules each individual character to the point that they can be defined as flat characters (Forster 73). That is not to say that these characters' "personalities" are unconvincing; on the contrary, because of the force of their beliefs they are very impressive. And because of their singular focus, these characters are blind—both oblivious and deliberately blind—to alterity. As such, they are a useful means of exposing the fabrication behind the ideology of white civility with its related settler/invasor official history and national myths of both Canada and the United States, which take the Western North-American spaces as their centre stage.

Connected to this, Lucy's words about the signposts on two solitary roads that "can hardly be read by the other because they are so unlike" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 319) reiterate the novel's theme of crossing as only a temporary meeting of different individuals or cultures. As Patricia Linton observes, the "cultures intersect, but they are not contiguous or reconciled," because the crossing "is not analogous to the crossing of two plants to create a hybrid" (2). The encounters in the novel do not result in a productive cross-cultural crossing nor do they produce a viable example of hybridity in Homi Bhabha's sense of "the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities" ("Signs Taken for Wonders" 154). In the novel, the colonial authority is represented as insisting on discriminatory strategies and clear binarism between "Europe and its Others, of colonizer and colonized, of the West and the Rest, of the vocal and the silent" (143), as Stephen Slemon notes in the larger context of postcolonial criticism. Hybridity is negated within the imperialist discourse that superimposes blindness—that is, lacunae and firm borders—over those places that produce the mixing of diverse cultures, histories, and civilizations. The impossibility of crossings on the story-level of the novel is counteracted by the revelation of the instability of colonial power that is always affected by the colonized subject, even though the imperial metropole "blinds itself to the reverse dynamic, the powers colonies have over their 'mother' countries" (Pratt 4).

⁶ The topics of gender, class, and race in this novel have already been discussed in detail in Linton and in Wylie; hence this article will not focus on them directly.

In connection to this, Herb Wylie analyzes the ways in which Vanderhaeghe explodes the encounter of the Old-World Victorian society with the newly emerging North-American settler society, stereotypically perceived as order and civilization meeting anarchy. In Wylie's words, "Vanderhaeghe complicates not only the stereotype of the rectitude and propriety of Victorian England but also the stereotype of the licentious anarchy of the Wild West, suggesting how the former is not as honourable, nor the latter as dishonourable, as it has been made out to be" (61). According to Wylie, Vanderhaeghe invalidates this opposition by showing how the centre exports its excesses, personified in the crazed former military captain and violent killer Addington Gaunt, to the colonial margin of the emerging West. Addington abandons the thin veneer of "social surveillance and sexual regulation" (Wylie 61) that constrained him in England as he gives way to his egoism, and his obsessions with hunting and playing the explorer. While still in England, Addington enjoyed hunting and the thrill of the kill, as exemplified by his clandestine pleasure in poaching his father's cherished deer with a bow and arrow, but once in America, the veneer is shed and he pursues his own excesses, including the rape and murder of Lucy Stoveall's sister Madge. Through his character, the imperially imposed clear-cut boundaries between savagery and civilization—which maintain the difference and distance between the empire and the Other—are upturned, and the concept of the Western frontier, Turner's meeting point between savagery and civilization, is destabilized. As such, Addington represents the extreme invader and extreme case of blindness; however, he is unstoppable and unpunishable because he holds the position of ultimate power. Through the extremity of this character, Vanderhaeghe uncovers and invalidates the binary opposition of English civilization vs. New World anarchy, the dyad which the imperial centre uses as an argument for colonial expansion and which the emerging Canadian nation reinforces through the concept of white civility.

By upturning the received binaries of the dominant imperial discourse, and by grouping together divergent characters and their stories, Vanderhaeghe offers a cross-section of the complex political power games occurring in the relatively small territory of Whoop-Up country. Almost everyone in the group is a new arrival to the West: the Gaunts are English, Aloysius Dooley is Irish (there is mention of the Fenian raids into Canada), Lucy Stoveall is a dirt-poor Tennessean who ends up in the West because her husband goes to sell whisky to the Indians, Custis Straw is a Yankee in Fort Benton, a town populated by Southerners after the American Civil War. Jerry Potts, as the only native inhabitant of the group, is a synecdoche for the forced convergence of numerous indigenous peoples from across the North American lands into the confined space of the West due to the policing methods of civility, which for the Other included disease, starvation, forced relocation, and threat of extermination. In the larger context of the novel, Jerry Potts as a hybrid represents a (failed) potential towards a more productive meeting of cultures and a potential for intervention and ambivalence.

Speaking more broadly of Western Canadian authors as well as of Vanderhaeghe, Claire Campbell notes that Vanderhaeghe uses multiple stories and narrative strands to probe the received myths of the Old and New Worlds and to "expos[e] the artifice

and authority in the arrangement of a linear, teleological order” of history (159). In other words, he foregrounds the emplotment strategies of history-making and myth-making, revealing them as subjective, selective, and arbitrary, and therefore as no different from the narrative techniques used in fictional texts. In this way, Vanderhaeghe urges readers to question the veracity of the received historical accounts and “to contemplate and examine the making of history in all its various manifestations” (“History and Fiction” 430). Instead of the received dominant narratives, Vanderhaeghe offers an alternative way of writing history which establishes “a past for the West that could correct (if not replace) its endemic characterization as a frontier” (Campbell 152). He dismantles the myths of the West as ‘the manifest destiny’ and the cradle of the American nation, and of the Canadian North-West Territories as the cradle of “law and order,” where Canadian law and the North-West Mounted Police (later the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) supposedly maintained civilized and protective relationships with indigenous peoples. What is more, Vanderhaeghe deliberately situates the plots of both *The Englishman’s Boy* and *The Last Crossing*—two novels of his Western Trilogy—in the period before the North-West Mounted Police was established in order to further underline the lawless foundation on which the ideological foundation of the myth of “law and order” was later fabricated. These nation-making myths of success are more realistically replaced with failure because, as Arnold Davidson explains, the “expected epic of victory . . . gives way to an epic of loss—what the Indians lost, what the Métis lost, and what the prevailing whites lost, too, through those two other losses” (22–23). In *The Last Crossing*, this is perhaps best seen in the character of Charles Gaunt, who personifies this failure despite his position of power in the imperial hierarchy: in him is concentrated the colonial ideology enforced by the British and mimicked by the Canadians on the Western territory of future Canada. Out of the three brothers he is the only one who returns to England and who remains, at the end of the novel, the last of his English family line.

Charles is portrayed as the English upper-middle-class gentleman who has not inherited his father’s lower-class cunning and entrepreneurial spirit and who is governed by inactivity coupled with *post factum* regret for missed opportunities. He deludes himself that he is a talented painter, but none of his paintings are finished because he lacks vision. He is so tied down by conformity that he cannot exit his often self-righteous shell, and his twin, Simon, in their crucial confrontation, tells him he never scratches beneath the surface of things (Vanderhaeghe, *Last Crossing*, 203). As such, he is reminiscent of a type in Margaret Atwood’s 1972 study of Canadian literature, that of the paralyzed artist. Charles’s paralysis is obvious in his impotence as a painter and in his penchant for introspection that does not, however, penetrate the blind spots of his own personality. As an artist, in Atwood’s formulation, Charles has a choice to “stay in the culture and be crippled as an artist; or escape into nothing” (189). If he who is “frozen, paralyzed” chooses escape, “does flight unfreeze him?” (190). Flight does indeed unfreeze Charles, for after the Canadian experience he leaves England for a while, fleeing “the culturally unhealthy climate” (188). He goes to Italy, where he sheds his conformity and consequently is able to create art. His fame as an artist

comes late in life, ironically not from painting but from a collection of love poetry written in homage to an idealized Lucy.

While in Atwood's typology Canada is the culturally barren country, in *The Last Crossing* that role belongs to England, where Charles produces no heir either biologically or artistically. However, during his stay in Italy, he "fathers" a collection of poetry, and in Canada, unbeknownst to him until the very end of the novel, he has fathered a daughter with Lucy. In this manner, English culture and society are shown to be "dead" and "inaccessible" (Atwood 184), but there is hope for life and artistic production outside of England. The margin has, in a manner of speaking, survived the centre, branching off from the dried-up trunk into a new entity that needs to acknowledge its own past blindness and failures in order to gain self-awareness and move into the present.

And while the ending of the novel holds a certain open-ended promise for Charles, in the majority of the novel his paralysis causes him to suffer from both claustrophobia and "fear of the 'outside'" (Atwood 184). Claustrophobia is in Charles caused by his conformity and Englishness. His fear of the "outside" manifests itself as incomprehension and unacknowledged fear of the O/other, and in the novel, it works on two levels: as dislocation, where the other/"outside" is the new land which he cannot read because it is too different from England. But the "outside" is also the outside of his self: namely, his twin, Simon, who should stereotypically be his mirror-image and yet is his unknowable other. Even as an adult, Simon has always been "as innocent as he was at ten, oblivious to other's opinions" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 111) and Charles, ever a conformist, cannot comprehend Simon's turning a blind eye to the norms of his societal rank and Simon's wish to become a missionary in the American West.

The crux of Charles's incomprehension of the other occurs when, close to the end of the novel, Simon is discovered in a Crow camp near Fort Benton. During his search, Charles imagines Simon helpless, lost, and marooned in the wilderness, but instead finds him in a Crow camp living with a *bote*, an indigenous person who represents "the mystery of two spirits in one body," a person who is "holy, a creature both male and female, yet more than either" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 355). Once he learns that the *bote* is biologically a man, Charles cannot accept the impropriety of Simon's relationship, which he is predetermined to read as homosexual. Yet even while he still believes that the *bote* is a woman, he tries to persuade Simon to move to Fort Benton with his "country wife," to the community of white men. Charles absolutely dismisses both Simon's wish to remain where he is and his, as Charles phrases it, "willingness to sacrifice himself for primitives who never asked for his help, or could be improved by it" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 108). Charles's disparaging tone demonstrates his belief that "things ought to fall into place just because he want[s] them to" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 354), by which he mirrors the colonizer's firm belief in his inherent power in the colonies. When he realizes he is not going to succeed in changing Simon's mind, Charles "act[s] as a man is liable to do when everything he wants is thwarted. Now he's throwing all his energy into doing what he

can do to avoid facing what is outside his power to accomplish” (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 356). In other words, Charles cannot cope with the possibility that his wishes will not be heeded, and yet he is eventually forced to leave the West without his brother because Simon’s tenacity matches his own. Charles’s deliberate blindness to alterity is absolute and reflective of the colonizing ideology: he sees only cultural difference and not cultural diversity in Bhabha’s sense of the terms (“The Commitment to Theory”), and he absolutely refuses to accept any culture, opinion, or belief other than his own.

The taboo of homosexuality is the breaking point for Charles where he must admit defeat. Interestingly, both Linton and Wyle read Simon and the *bote*’s union as homosexual and consequently interpret Simon’s decision to leave the heteronormative British and North American cultures as necessary in order to live out his homosexuality freely. However, there is another possible reading of the union between the *bote* and Simon. It can be read as asexual. This reading is corroborated by Simon’s “Christian idealism” (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 353) and his unswerving missionary zeal. Simon sees his rescue by the *bote* as God’s plan with himself cast as a saintly figure among the people he is sent to Christianize. When Charles first visits, Simon tells him of a prophetic dream that is as parabolic as the Pharaoh’s dream from the Book of Genesis: it is a dream presaging Charles’s arrival in which he sees Charles as a blind horse with glass buttons for eyes who, in its endless hunger, tears into Simon’s and the *bote*’s lodge (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 352). Simon, furthermore, describes himself to Charles as shedding the natural body and embracing the spiritual one (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 350), quoting a verse from Corinthians which speaks about resurrection. It can be argued, therefore, that his union with the *bote* is entirely spiritual and not physical, for in the novel there is no mention of sexuality with regard to Simon, while it is quite openly mentioned with regard to other characters. On the contrary, Simon’s behaviour toward the *bote* is described as that of a benevolent father or brother—very Christ-like. The analogy with Christianity and Simon’s vision of himself as saintly does not stop here: having rescued Simon, the *bote* has claimed him, but the *bote* has also adopted an orphaned child, so their small community could be said to mimic the Christian holy family deep in the bush.

The argument regarding Simon’s putative homosexuality is relevant only with regard to the ways in which said homosexuality is interpreted by different characters in the novel, reflecting divergent viewpoints in white and indigenous cultures. First of all, neither Charles nor Custis nor Potts are able to comprehend Simon’s relationship outside of the frame of sexuality despite their different cultural backgrounds. This is their shared blind spot. But since Charles is determined to remove Simon from the Crow camp and relocate him to Fort Benton, both Custis and Potts offer Charles stories reflecting two different outlooks on homosexuality. In order to open Charles’s eyes with regard to the *bote*’s sex, Custis delivers a story about a pair of soldiers living in Fort Benton as man and wife and the town’s derision when they are found out, indicating the impossibility of a homosexual union in a western-based society. He also offers another story to explain the *bote*’s holy status within indigenous societies. Potts

follows Custis's second story by underlining how important it is for the Two Spirit to follow his/her dual nature, and the relevance s/he has in the community as auspice of good fortune. The indigenous stories offer a counter-narrative to the white one illustrating a different conception of genders in indigenous cultures. Potts's story confirms Walter Williams's theory that "Indians have options not in terms of either/or, opposite categories, but in terms of various degrees along a continuum between masculine and feminine" (Williams 80). A *bote* or Two Spirit is considered to be a holy person, a spiritual leader, his/her position "an established social category fully integrated with other sanctioned social identities" (Linton 3) and as such not taboo. Despite the two different worldviews offered to Charles, Charles is only able to comprehend one of them because he dismisses the relevance of a culture and beliefs that are not his own.

And while it may appear that Simon in his nonconformity disregards white society's notions of race, class, and gender, possessing instead a more liberal mindset, his actions reveal that he is the same as the other characters in the novel, blinded by his missionary (and colonial) zeal. Simon sees the *bote* as a paragon of charity (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 353), one of the three fundamental concepts of Christianity. He has converted the *bote* to Christianity and has effectively cut her/him off from his/her own indigenous traditions and her/his very important role in the indigenous community. In his missionary zeal, he perceives this act as the salvation of the race because he is taking "the message of Jesus to [Indians] with the utmost respect" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 218). His blindness is most obvious in the word "respect," which Simon believes to be his to dispense to the community. However, by Christianizing the *bote* he has superimposed his set of beliefs over indigenous ones, reiterating the colonial mission of white civility: enlightenment and Christianization. Simon is stratifying societies and beliefs, and in a manner identical to Charles's, he does not accept alterity. His underlying imperial upbringing is merely shrouded in humility and Christian mission, all the while perpetuating "the idea of civility as a (White) cultural practice" (Coleman 12). His actions, predictably, bring forth hostility and instability within the tribe, and it remains an open question as to how long the *bote* will be able to protect Simon from the tribe's retaliation. The concept of white civility, as formulated in Potts's observation that "[n]othing exists for white men unless they give it a name in their own language," and "[o]nce they give a name to a thing, they think that is enough to understand it" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 98), successfully encapsulates this unilateralism in the contact of cultures. Consequently, the *bote* is labelled as homosexual, indigenous societies as savage, indigenous peoples as wild men in need of salvation or destined for extinction. Both Simon's and Charles's blindness represent a gap between what they want to see and what is "outside"/other—a cultural and semantic gap between that which can be described by white culture/language and that which does not possess a label in English (even "Two Spirit" is a misnomer) and is therefore dismissed as non-existent or inconsequential.

However, Vanderhaeghe shows that the concept of white civility is not as easily applicable to the ideology of colonialism as it may appear at first sight. By juxtaposing two views of white civility in Fort Edmonton—one from the white inhabitants

of Fort Edmonton and the other from Charles, who is a newcomer to this outpost—Vanderhaeghe reveals the problematic nature of the concept and the ideology behind it. Charles's first impression of Fort Edmonton is that it is "a sterling testimony to British commerce and industry," but soon he starts wondering whether "this place bears less resemblance to Manchester than it does to some Roman outpost huddled forlornly on the periphery of the Empire, a polyglot and bastard village" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 281). Charles also notes that the chief factor and his men "feel themselves as exemplars of everything British and are blissfully unaware that we visitors from the "Old Country" soon conclude the barbarians have had greater influence on the character and habits of their rulers than the rulers on their subjects" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 282). Charles's observation from the outside offers an insight into the blindness of those within. The chief factor and his subalterns live within the garrison: in their isolated and forlorn outpost, they are separated from the culture of the centre, huddled into a garrison, the epitome of Northrop Frye's "garrison mentality," "confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting" (225). They can rely only on themselves for "distinctively human values" (ibid.), that is, white civility. Fearing "contamination" by the indigenous other, they abide by the imperial concept of the colonial frontier, which on the one hand "implies not only a hierarchy of colonizer (European and political centre of power) over colonized (non-European and marginal) but, more importantly, a one-way process of influence in which the colonizer remains immune from any contact with the colonized" (Grace 14).⁷ Formulated in such a way, the concept of the colonial frontier promotes a sense of security in the inhabitants of the garrison through the (illusory) assurance of a firm hierarchy in the colonies as well as of immunity from "going native."

However, Vanderhaeghe shows on the example of Fort Edmonton that the idea of firm boundaries between the British within the garrison and the indigenous peoples outside of it is only an illusion. Instead of the colonial frontier, Fort Edmonton is a contact zone that exists out there on the colonial margin. Mary Louise Pratt famously defines the contact zone as "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish on-going relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (6). Despite the inequality of power relations, the process of cultural exchange occurs because contact between cultures occurs. The boundary between the colonizer and the colonized is more porous than the imperialist ideology allows, but the chief factor and his men are blind to this reality because they do not have a reference point to measure their degree of deviation from the centre. It takes someone from the centre looking onto the margin to reveal their blindness.

It is interesting to observe what happens to the binary of wilderness vs. civilization once Charles notices that "the barbarians have had greater influence on the character and habits of their rulers than the rulers on their subjects" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last*

⁷ Sherrill Grace discusses the concept of the colonial frontier with regard to Vanderhaeghe's novel *The Englishman's Boy*, but the concept can be applied equally well to *The Last Crossing*.

Crossing 282). Charles correctly identifies that, in Fort Edmonton, the binary has collapsed, but his interpretation does not lead to the binary's invalidation and erasure. On the contrary, Charles's use of descriptors such as "bastard," "polyglot," and "barbarians" reveals that he has remapped the binary to exclude the contaminated white men, shifting the binary's boundary closer to the centre. With his elitist view, Charles now performs the othering of the Hudson's Bay Company men of Fort Edmonton. In this way, Vanderhaeghe shows how the garrison mentality "renders explicit the colonial urge to seek protection against intrusions from the outside and, simultaneously, the reluctance to tolerate excursions beyond prescribed limits" (Omhovère 90). Imperialist ideology, in its unwillingness to tolerate transgression, programmatically introduces another blind spot into the paradigm of the margin first by establishing a stratification within whiteness and then by removing those members who violate its principles, that is, the code of white civility. Instead of exploring the potential of such cross-cultural contact, Charles, as the representative of the imperial centre, needs to defend its illusory "cultural purity and authenticity" (94), as Donna Brydon argues in the context of contamination as a cultural and political project of postmodernism and postcolonialism.

The Hudson's Bay Company men, disavowed by Charles as contaminated and parodying imitations of white civility, are in fact examples of settler society, situated in Lawson's "liminal sites at the point of negotiation between the contending authorities of Empire and Native" (155). As examples of hybridity, they point more broadly to the fact that "colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders" 150). They expose "the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (154) that Charles cannot acknowledge for fear of destabilizing the colonial power and consequently white civility.

This rigid colonial distinction between self and Other imposed by Charles and, more broadly, by the colonial power is further destabilized in the novel by Jerry Potts, a historical figure who was the epitome of "the crossing" in the American North-Western spaces around the 49th parallel. He is a product of the contact zone who personifies hybridity and its potential but also the results of its negation.⁸ The novel juxtaposes the "sentimental myth" of Jerry Potts "as genuinely hybrid, successfully crossing racial and cultural boundaries" (Linton 6) with the complexity and limitations of such a hybrid life in late nineteenth-century Western landscapes. Half Scottish and half Kanai, Potts is historically referred to as a "half-breed," neither one nor the other, "defined by a lack of identity" (Linton 6). Within the imperialist setup, he is not allowed to have both racial identities; his hybrid identity is used pejoratively to emphasize the negative aspects of racial impurity.⁹ He cannot be accommodated into the dominant narrative because he is seen as subversive. As a consequence, in the

⁸ For a detailed analysis of Jerry Potts, see Linton and Wylie.

⁹ See Young.

dominant discourse, his narrative becomes riddled with blind spots as the colonizing culture turns him into a sentimental illusion that glosses over those aspects of his life which are deemed subversive to colonial ideology. The emphasis is placed, instead, on those elements of Potts's life—a great scout, a guide of the North-West Mounted Police on the Plains—that reinforce the dominant narrative of white settlement.

The complexity of Potts's in-between status does not end here, however. As Linton explains, in *The Last Crossing* Potts is unable to realize his hybrid nature. His wish "to be both" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 105) Scottish and Kanai is impossible, but he blindly persists in this desire until the end of the novel, when he is reconciled to the fact "that to live life divided is dangerous, a confusion that sickens the spirit" (Vanderhaeghe, *The Last Crossing* 100). He then realizes that he needs to choose between either/or because in the imposed colonial circumstances there is no option to choose both—and.¹⁰ However, Linton argues that, in the context of the novel, his narrative is "mitigated in two ways" (Linton 7): first, all of the characters in the novel try to survive their circumstances as best they can, and in this sense, Potts's story does not stand out too starkly from other individual destinies. Second, claims Linton, "Potts (in Vanderhaeghe's representation) sees the impossibility of a hybrid social identity not as the specific denial of him and others like him by Euro-American culture but as the way of the world" (7). He is denied the choice of hybridity in both native and white cultures, so there is no possibility of reconciliation between the different aspects of his self. Like the other characters in *The Last Crossing*, he is unable to realize the crossing, but he does, however, function as a symbol of hybridity. He is shown as a potential that is not exploited, a crossing made impossible in the context of that political makeup.

Thus, in *The Last Crossing* Vanderhaeghe shows the inability of crossing, of making connections and relationships between the white and the Other within the colonial ideology that dominated nineteenth-century Canada. Vanderhaeghe shows that, as Slemon famously notes in a slightly different context but regarding postcolonial and anti-colonial literature, "the binarism of Europe and its Others, of colonizer and colonized, of the West and the Rest, of the vocal and the silent" (143) is an ideological illusion. Myths of "manifest destiny," "law and order," and white civility are in the novel exposed as myths; gender binaries break down in the *bote*; racial binaries break down in the Métis character of Jerry Potts; and Charles Gaunt exemplifies the porousness of the contact zone in his own flight from the empire and its rigidity. Vanderhaeghe's novel, as a "re-historical fiction" (Slemon 148), shows the awareness of complicity that the postcolonial settler culture brings to sight as a counter-discourse to the grand narrative of white civility.

¹⁰ Cf. Linton 6.

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Crossing to the Imaginary: *Bildungsroman* and a Journey *Into the Wild*

Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice.

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In 1990, twenty-two-year-old Christopher McCandless left his comfortable upper-middle class suburban lifestyle in Annandale, Virginia on a two-year journey that would eventually lead to his death in an isolated and abandoned bus in the Alaskan wilderness. McCandless was clearly and intentionally rejecting the society to which he belonged on the one hand, while on the other he was choosing the wilderness as a place of refuge. Early in his stay on the bus, McCandless wrote a “declaration” on a “sheet of weathered plywood” stating that he was “An aesthetic voyager whose home is the road . . . No longer to be poisoned by civilization he flees, and walks alone upon the land to become lost in the wild” (Krakauer 163).

The story became widely known after the publication of Jon Krakauer’s article about McCandless’ journey in *Outside Magazine* in 1993, and even more so after his bestselling book *Into the Wild*. However, it was only after the book was turned into a highly-regarded film of the same name, written and directed by Sean Penn in 2007, that the story achieved wide-scale recognition and popularity. One of the reasons for the film’s considerable success is its romantic, youthful defiance to what may be perceived as the smothering nature of an inhumane capitalist society and the possibilities of escapism from the constraints of civilization into the innocence of wilderness. A. O. Scott of the New York Times wrote that the film “is infused with an expansive, almost giddy sense of possibility, and it communicates a pure, unaffected delight in open spaces, fresh air and bright sunshine,” that the book and film “persuasively place him in a largely apolitical, homegrown tradition of radical, romantic individualism” that reflects an “Emersonian dimension,” and that its essence “arises from a passionate, generous impulse that is as hard to resist as the call of the open road.” The story as such has been praised for its subversion by some while being condemned for its naiveté by others. In this essay we would like to consider these readings by analyzing the different and often contradictory forces at play in the life of McCandless as represented in the film.

We frame this filmic critique by emphasizing the journey and life-changes of McCandless within the literary genre of *Bildungsroman*. In essence, we study his journey as a coming-of-age experience that can be simultaneously framed within the psychological shifts of the protagonist and her/his movements across space and through places. At the same time, and in its simplest form, *Into the Wild* is a “road movie” (Cohan and Hark) in which the protagonist has changes of mind, heart, and visions of the world as s/he traverses the landscape. We propose that an integration of the journey within the frame of *Bildungsroman* allows for a particularly rich interrogation of the story, and from this perspective we come to the conclusion that Penn’s final section, not found in the book, attempts to complete the personal and spatial journey of life change for McCandless by creating a vision of his return home, whereupon he continues his life, with elements of personal growth as part of his history. We conclude that this brief statement undermines the purportedly subversive nature of the film, in which a dominant social and cultural ideology is being challenged.

Our article is located within the tradition of cinematic geography, and as such is informed by and contributes to this research direction. The origins of the subfield can be traced to the 1950s, although “it is only since the 1990s . . . that sufficient quantities of critically engaged research articles and books on this popular medium have been produced to allow for a disciplinary subfield to emerge” (Dixon 40). Several contributions during this period have attempted to define and frame cinematic geography,¹ but the subfield is still far from realizing an overarching framework.

Mobility is a common and integrative theme often found within cinematic geography, and it is used here to help contextualize the nature of the journey that lies at the heart of the narrative of *Into the Wild*. The consideration of mobility in film begins with an emphasis of movement within space as constructed for the screen, which “is, after all, a particular kind of movement, the movement of the image created by the movement of frames in front of a light, which separated the new art form from its more static predecessors” (Aitken and Dixon 332). Indeed, it is the movement in space of the image and within the image that gives cinema its unique power, but despite the fact that “film is a visual representation of a mobile world” (Cresswell and Dixon 4), the literal study of mobility as narrative has not been systematically examined. In response, this essay is a cinematic geography of mobility as it is manifest in a story of journey and self.

This movement narrative can be found in several cinematic geographies, including McHugh’s non-performative interpretation of *The Straight Story*, which he says “offers dramatic illustration of the entanglement of movement, memory, and landscape” (209); Aitken and Zonn’s essay (“Weir(d) Sex”) that includes a gendered focus on two young soldiers traveling to Gallipoli for war; and Zonn and Winchell’s description of the travels of two young American Indian men from the reservation and back in order

¹ See Aitken; Aitken and Dixon; Aitken and Zonn, “Representing”; Clarke; Crang; Cresswell and Dixon; Dixon; Dixon and Zonn; Doel and Clarke; Kennedy and Lukinbeal.

to gather the ashes of one of their fathers. These studies explore film, people, and their movements, while implicitly centering on the framing of changes in self-identity that accompany the journey through space. A more explicit concern with this latter notion can be found in Aitken and Lukinbeal, which uses *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, *Paris, Texas*, and *My Own Private Idaho* to “suggest that the vehicle as a rationalized panoptic cell and the road as a linear vanishing point provide spatial metaphors for the journey that constructs a political identity of maleness” (357).

Bildungsroman and the Journey

The journey of Christopher McCandless, studied here as a film text, can be critiqued within the literary genre of *Bildungsroman*. The subject of *Bildungsroman*, also called novel of emergence, novel of formation, or sometimes coming-of-age novel, considers “the development of the protagonist’s mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis—into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one’s identity and role in the world” (Abrams 193). This is essentially the process of enculturation, “by which culture is learned and transmitted across generations” (Kottak 14). McCandless sets off on a journey that is supposed to shape him as an educated, socially integrated, and middle-class American who has become an adult. It may be argued that he is too old to be a protagonist of such a novel, but as Millard points out, “The term also carries an imprecision and a cultural relativity that needs to be taken into account. When exactly does a character come of age, and what specific experiences are deemed to be relevant to it?” (4). Jeffers paraphrases Buckley’s outline of a typical *Bildungsroman* plot:

A sensitive child grows up in the provinces, where his lively imagination is frustrated by his neighbors’—and often by his family’s—social prejudices and intellectual obtuseness. School and private reading stimulate his hopes for a different life away from home, and so he goes to the metropolis, where his transformative education begins. He has at least two love affairs, one good and one bad, which help him revalue his values. He makes some accommodation, as citizen and worker, with the industrial urban world, and after a time he perhaps revisits his old home to show folks how much he has grown. No single *Bildungsroman* will have all these elements, Buckley says, but none can ignore more than two or three. (52)

As a popular literary genre, *Bildungsroman* played an important role in nineteenth-century society. The novel in general “has been particularly sensitive to the diverse ways in which individuals come to terms with the governing patterns of culture . . . novels in effect thematize their own place in culture, for works of art are themselves educational tools. They do not merely passively reflect the prevailing ratio of mobility and constraint; they help to shape, articulate, and reproduce it through their own improvisatory intelligence” (Greenblatt 15). Literature can be construed as a hegemonic insti-

tution (in the Althusserian sense; Althusser) and as such may play a crucial role in the formation of society's norms and values. In support of this structure and at the center of *Bildungsroman* is the belief that "the self would grow up only at the moment it came to terms with the demands of other people—with the exigencies of marriage, of vocation, and of socioeconomic realities" (Jeffers 39). As Raymond Williams has claimed:

[M]ost writing, in any period, including our own, is a form of contribution to the effective dominant culture. Indeed many of the specific qualities of literature—its capacity to embody and enact and perform certain meanings and values, or to create in single particular ways what would be otherwise merely general truths—enable it to fulfill this effective function with great power. To literature, of course, we must add the visual arts and music, and in our own society the powerful arts of film and of broadcasting. ("Base and Superstructure" 27)

Film, as perhaps the most important medium of popular culture, has taken over the novel's function in shaping the social and cultural values of its audience. It is precisely through such popular texts, which "embody and enact and perform certain meanings and values," that our perception of the world is formed. This point owes much to Derrida's "view that we can have no access to reality that is not mediated by language, no glimpse of history that is not refracted through representation" (Ryan 3). The narrative of *Into the Wild* is based on a reconstruction of a real chain of events. That fact is supposed to lend credence to the narrative, claiming it is not fiction, but rather a real story transposed from reality into a book and finally into a film. Realistic representation, however, is not to be taken for granted, because it is only "an aesthetic tool that tries to make a narrative more real to the viewer" and "attempts to hide its mode of production" (Lukinbeal 16). The fact that it is based on a true story only serves to "naturalize" the ideological foundation of the film, to make us believe that, in this particular instance, reel is indeed real. We as audience, therefore, more easily identify "not only with specific characters but more importantly with the film's overall ideology" (Sturken and Cartwright 73). Since its invention, the camera has been perceived as "a scientific tool for registering reality" (Sturken and Cartwright 17), so it is not surprising that film, as a popular narrative form, has been appropriated by the dominant culture for the purpose of social and cultural incorporation (in Williams's sense). Rather than simply portraying reality, "images interpellate or hail us as viewers, and in doing so designate the kind of viewer they intend us to be" (Sturken and Cartwright 52). *Into the Wild*, as a mainstream cultural product, will of necessity advocate precisely those mainstream values that it seemingly subverts.

The life trajectory of McCandless as represented in the film can be described within the framework of *Bildungsroman*, although there are some obvious and fundamental differences when compared to the traditional model. He does not go to the metropolis, but instead travels the country and eventually ends up in one of the most remote places in the United States that is in every respect antithetical to the

metropolis. One possible reason for this crucial difference is that in many European countries—and *Bildungsroman* is, after all, originally a Western European genre—national culture was defined by reference to a high-class urban tradition, while American national mythology very often drew upon a Frontier trope, often based on the experience of overcoming the challenges of nature. What is significant in either case is that formal school education as such is deemed insufficient for the complete formation of a person's character. In the words of Mikhail Bakhtin, "This kind of novel of emergence typically depicts the world and life as experience, as a school, through which every person must pass and derive one and the same result: one becomes more sober, experiencing some degree of resignation" (22). It is not surprising, therefore, that a young American should feel the need to experience nature, ultimately ending up in Alaska, a place that is "considered one of the world's only remaining wilderness areas" (Kollin 42).

We should note that the *Bildungsroman* literary genre has long been gendered by being male in presumptions, structure, and use, although more recent and certainly insightful studies of female contextualizations are increasingly found in literary critiques, as with the interesting studies of Toni Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston by Feng and of Margaret Atwood by McWilliams. Exploring this literature and context would be of considerable value to a fuller understanding of this genre, most immediately within the frames of space, place, and mobility, but such an effort is well beyond the scope of this study. Our critique of the film *Into the Wild*, then, must remain an examination of the evolution of the nature of a young man within the more standard features of *Bildungsroman*.

The relationship between McCandless and his parents, especially his father, is shown to be intensely contentious, and the family history includes domestic violence and other forms of bullying, and he considered everything his parents had told him to be "calculated lies masking an ugly truth" (Penn 00:52:52-00:52:56). Such "absconded or absconding parents" (Jeffers 17) are found in almost every *Bildungsroman*, whether in a real or figurative sense. It is also the "impulse toward self-determination that . . . prompts a youth at some point to resist his parents, especially his father" (Jeffers 13). For a male protagonist, the relationship with his father is often crucial. As Millard points out:

An important issue in the coming-of-age novel is the way in which finding a place in society is coterminous with finding a satisfactory relationship with the father. For the young male protagonist especially, the relation to the father is a vital means to socialisation, and he is often the principal figure through whom the codes of society are learned. Coming of age is thus a drama of coming to terms with the father, and with all the social and cultural governance for which he stands. (15)

Finally, traveling is crucial to the genre of *Bildungsroman*. A young person—often an apprentice who has finished a formal education and is now ready to start living as

an adult—leaves the family nest and goes into the world, where s/he gains the necessary experience and knowledge to become a successful and functioning member of society. The very fact that McCandless chose to travel “into the wild” is understandable with respect to the peculiarities of American culture on the one hand, but on the other it clearly represents a rebellion against society and its notions of “normal” life. Trying to experience nature is perfectly fine; indeed, it is at the core of the national ideology, but it is acceptable only if it is done in socially acceptable ways, which are essentially conservative, that is, the traveler must minimize the amount of risk and ensure that the s/he is going to return to “normal” life, to a socially defined position, while his (or less likely, her) youthful adventure soon becomes just a story about the folly of youth. So even though wilderness is a salient theme in American culture as a part of the Frontier trope, in reality it belongs in the past. It is respected only in relation to the formative period of American culture, while nowadays it can only be ritualized in benign forms—e.g., camping, hiking, etc. On the other hand, if a person refuses to conform to social pressures and tries to escape, to go beyond the scope of dominant ideology, s/he becomes a threat to society. McCandless apparently went to the extreme by often taking unnecessary risks, including going ill-prepared to Alaska, which in itself seems subversive enough.

A Journey *Into the Wild*

The introduction of the film *Into the Wild* prefaces the five chapters that frame the story of the journey of Christopher McCandless by establishing background details of his life and by giving the viewer the first glimpses of his Alaskan destination. He is shown being dropped off at the end of a road by the last person to see him alive, and as he trudges through the knee-high snow, and as he wanders away, the opening credits roll. Taken from his journal, across the screen are the words “I now walk into the wild,” which is followed by spectacular shots of the remote Alaskan countryside. It is April of 1992. He eventually finds an old abandoned bus on a rise—with “Fairbanks City Transit System” emblazoned on the side—and with apparent excitement, he writes in his journal “Magic Bus day.” The bus will become his home for the next 113 days and is the place where he dies.

The screen then turns back to the end of his college days, with “Emory Graduation: Two Years before Magic Bus” presented on the screen. A celebratory restaurant scene in Atlanta begins, with his sister, mother, and father, and here the viewer is given an example of McCandless’s ideology of life when compared to his parents’ views. They offer him a new car to replace his old one, and words are exchanged, with him saying, “I don’t want a new car. I don’t want anything.” Soon after, he is seen alone, sending his remaining college savings to a charity and then destroying his credit cards, driver’s license, social security card, and quite powerfully, a photograph of his parents. He is about to begin his journey (00:03:05-00:21:30).

Into the Wild tells two parallel and linear tales: McCandless’s journey from Atlanta to Alaska over the course of two years, and his mental and physical changes at the

Magic Bus over the course of nearly four months, from his arrival to his death. The camera changes—usually abruptly but nearly always effectively—from the progression of one part of his life to another. On a few occasions, the story shifts to a part of his life with his sister (Carine McCandless) and family, usually accompanied by the sister’s voiceover. The heart of the film is comprised of five chapters, each introduced by a title across the screen that describes a life phase. Each chapter begins with a transition as he leaves one place and continues his journey to another. Although the introduction of the film sets the stage in terms of his background and general state of mind, the journey of his life—his *Bildungsroman*—doesn’t begin until the moment he is literally on his own.

Chapter 1, “My Own Birth,” begins with a shot of McCandless driving away from Atlanta. His parents and sister in Virginia do not know he has left. His voiceover says, “It should not be denied that being footloose has always exhilarated us. It is associated in our minds with escape from history and oppression and law and irksome obligations. Absolute freedom. And the road has always led west” (00:22:14-00:22:35). Soon afterward, his car gets stuck in a flash flood in an arroyo in Arizona. He seems unperturbed, takes off the license plates, and then burns his money, all in a symbolic purging of the last of his material possessions. He is seen hitchhiking and is eventually picked up by a man and woman in their early forties who drive a “hippie van.” The couple begins to develop a close relationship with him, and at one point the woman says, “Where are your mom and dad?” to which McCandless responds, “Living their lies somewhere” (00:29:30-00:29:40).

Chapter 2, “Adolescence,” begins after McCandless leaves the couple. He is shown walking, hitching, and resting within a variety of usually picturesque rural landscapes, and eventually stops in South Dakota, where he works on a farm and begins a close friendship with Wayne. It is to Wayne that McCandless first expresses his desire to go to Alaska: “I’m gonna be all the way out there . . . You know, no fucking watch, no map, no axe, no nothing. No nothing. Just be out there. Just be out there in it. You know, big mountains, rivers, sky, game. Just be out there in it, you know? In the wild. Just wild!” (00:46:10-00:46:35). But it is winter in Alaska, so his travels then take him to the American Southwest, where he experiences a series of adventures.

During these travel sequences, the sister’s voiceover describes his trip to California the summer after high school, when he discovers family stories and lies that came as a shock to him and his sister, including the fact that when Alex and his sister were born, their father had been married to another woman, and yet their own mother was aware of this relationship. In essence, they had another family in California. The siblings were devastated, and the viewer is reminded of the dysfunctional family that is a part of his being.

Chapter 3, “Manhood,” follows McCandless through yet more travels in the Southwest, which are interspersed with scenes from Alaska (“Magic Bus Week 7”) that show his increasingly futile attempts to feed himself, and his inexorable physical decline. Flashbacks and the sister’s voiceover during this chapter describe the domestic violence that occurred during their childhood, only adding to the image of the fam-

ily's dysfunction, but she continues as in a letter to him saying their parents have been changing since he left, "Even their faces had changed. . . people soften by the forced reflection that comes with loss" (01:22:30-01:23:50).

In chapter 4, "Family," McCandless returns to California to visit with the couple he had met in chapter 1. He enjoys his time here, becoming yet closer to the couple, while befriending a young woman of 16 who is clearly enamored with him. At one point, the older woman painfully speaks of her son, who she hasn't heard from in two years, whereupon she holds Alex's face with her hand, and says quietly, "Do your folks know where you are?" (01:38:16). Her anguish is palpable.

McCandless leaves, and the camera returns to Alaska; he has clearly declined physically, while his exuberance in earlier segments seems to be missing. He is reading Tolstoy's "Family Happiness," and reads aloud,

I have lived through much, and now I think I have found what is needed for happiness. A quiet secluded life in the country, with the possibility of being useful to people to whom it is easy to do good, and who are not accustomed to have it done to them; then work which one hopes may be of some use; then rest, nature, books, music, love for one's neighbor—such is my idea of happiness. And then, on top of all that, you for a mate, and children, perhaps—what more can the heart of a man desire? (01:46:35-01:47:28)

At this point, it appears he has seen the error of his ways, and he jumps up and starts packing for a return—to exactly where we are not sure—but he wants to leave the bus and the isolation he has experienced. He quickly retraces his steps, but when he reaches the river he easily crossed before, he sees that it is swollen by the thawing of spring and that he cannot cross. He returns to the bus during a heavy rainstorm, clearly dejected and writes, "Rained in—lonely, scared."

The final chapter, "Getting of Wisdom," moves back and forth between the two timelines of McCandless's travels to Alaska and his decline toward death in the bus. While in California, he develops a friendship with a lonely but pleasant old man who has lost his wife and child in a car accident. They share stories and feelings, and once again the tale weaves its way back to family and McCandless's parents. At one point, the man says, "Son, what the hell are you running from?" (02:00:23) and later, in reference to the young man's parents, he tells a religious story of the meaning of forgiveness.

The scenes in Alaska show McCandless wildly shooting his gun in the air, frustrated that the game animals have disappeared; he is intensely hungry. The beginning of the end is when, relying upon his book on native plants, he mistakes a poisonous plant for an edible one that looks very similar. He becomes ill and his condition worsens. As he lies on the bed in the bus, he writes in his journal, "I have literally become trapped in the wild." The final scene shows a dying Alex, who slowly and painfully edges to a sitting position and then writes in between paragraphs in his copy of Dr. Zhivago, "Happiness only real when shared." Soon after, as he lies looking out the

bus window at the shifting clouds, he is taken back to a moment of reunion with his parents: "What if I were smiling and running into your arms? Would you see then what I see now?" (02:19:56-02:20:25), and then he takes his last breath. It is this brief moment of reconciliation that we now consider for our conclusion.

Discussion

The story of Christopher McCandless as told in *Into the Wild* is an odyssey in which his movement across spaces and through places is one and the same as movement through phases of his life-changing experiences, which can be described within the frames of *Bildungsroman*.

Movement clearly lies at the heart of this story. The nature of such movement as seen by Aitken and Lukinbeal in their studied films and in road movies generally includes an inseparability of the vehicle with the road and journey. This linkage is not found in *Into the Wild*. In an early and important scene, the parents' offer of a new car as a graduation gift to replace the 'junkie' becomes a heated issue, because McCandless considers the Datsun to be functional and any attempt to replace it with something new to be crass materialism. Even then, he readily abandons the car after a flash flood, which he does without hesitation or seeming regret. He had used the car for his post-High School trip and for the early phase of his final journey, but from the point of abandoning the car onward he rode in trains, cars, trucks, buses, travel homes, a kayak, and he walked; but getting another car never seemed to be an option. These rides were with new acquaintances, friends, and strangers, and so the process of movement and the journey itself, independent of the nature of the form of travel, becomes the frame for telling the story. It is ironic, then, that the end of the tale finds him alone in the Magic Bus, a "panoptic cell," where he becomes "trapped in the wild" within an extreme scalar opposition of the vehicle and wilderness.

Each point McCandless encounters along the path of movement becomes a unique engagement of place and person, marking an inexorable, subtle, and yet cumulative shift in his very nature, as expected of his *Bildung*. At so many of his stops, when he gets to know people there are inevitably conversations about the family lives of his acquaintances, which in turn lead to references to his family life, which he ignores. As he goes through space and stops at each place, then, there are allusions of family from the couple in the "hippie van," the old man, the enamored young woman, and his friendship with Wayne. His movement and the associated stops, moments, and engagements with people help define the nature of his journey.

At the same time, and throughout the film, there is a frequent and often abrupt shifting of scenes of wilderness to scenes of civilization. Wilderness is seen by McCandless as the ultimate goal, because it represents freedom and truth, while civilization stands for enslavement and deception. He sees his journey as a "climactic battle to kill the false being within and victoriously conclude the spiritual revolution" (00:12:35-00:12:46). The main opposition, civilization/wilderness, is also visually represented in different ways. His parents' home in Annandale and the domestic violence that

happens there is represented in the form of a family film, showing anguished faces in close-ups that suggest “claustrophobic intensity” (Rose 49). For McCandless, home is a small, suffocating place from which he wants to flee. This can be contrasted with the scene of him standing on top of a mountain, with a long-shot of the bus, and with the camera panning across the landscape, suggesting physical and spiritual freedom. He is presented as a radical anarchist who defies every law of capitalist society, with the goal to be able to live off the land and not be defined by the relations of a market economy. He wants to be poor in material wealth and rich in the spiritual, believing that “careers are a twentieth century invention” (01:54:22). He does not want to get a job, get married, etc. because those are the imperatives of his social class. A person who does not participate in the circulation of money and goods is of little worth to capitalist society and so a person who proves s/he can live without (and outside) the system represents a subversive force that potentially jeopardizes that system. During the whole film, then, he is dedicated to that task by doing the opposite of all that is expected, either by the standards of his parents or society.

The death of McCandless is the central motif of the narrative, of course, both structurally and symbolically. The fact that he dies makes his rebellion more appealing to the imagination of much of the audience and constructs him as a sort of a modern romantic hero. However, and quite important here, even though it seems to function as the culmination of the whole process of subversion, his death actually has the opposite effect. In new historicist and cultural materialist criticism this effect of turning apparent subversion into its opposite is called “containment,” i.e. the “capacity of the dominant order to generate subversion so as to use it to its own ends” (Montrose 8). In McCandless’s case the goal of destabilization is not realized, while at the same time the prevailing norm is reinforced. The story of McCandless’s rebellion is therefore used because of its ability to support rather than subvert the dominant social and economic system. When he is starving, literally getting closer to death, he has to tighten his belt, punching new holes one by one as he is getting thinner and thinner. He is thus disappearing literally and physically, but what is also disappearing is the experience he has acquired, which is invaluable for the process of personality formation central to the genre of *Bildungsroman*. As he tells the old man at one point, “the core of man’s spirit comes from new experiences” (02:00:56). Each new hole in his belt destroys an image, symbolically undoing his journey towards freedom. Instead of the sought for freedom, then, he has “literally become trapped in the wild.” He was trying to find freedom in wide open and isolated landscapes, but in the end, he was confined in the small space of the bus, looking out its windows at a spectacular wilderness.

In spite of all the romantic ideals, McCandless is still defined by his social position within society and by his background. The set of skills he possesses is inadequate for survival in the wilderness. He has been defined by the place where he grew up, literally and symbolically. He knows how to deal with the everyday challenges of living in upper middle class suburbs, but the Alaskan wilderness is too much for him. Even though the narrative apparently celebrates a heroic attempt at a fundamental change in the way of life in the social as well as the spatial environment, in reality it represents

such a possibility only to contain it. Instead of breaking away from the society he despises, McCandless in fact regresses. His notation “Happiness only real when shared” would indeed be an appropriate ending of a *Bildungsroman*. Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister, one of the greatest protagonists of the *Bildungsroman* genre, “realizes he has got to fit in, that is, in a mature can’t-beat-’em-join-’em accommodation, he internalizes the community’s norms by getting married, that classic comedic symbol for the self-limiting social contract” (Jeffers 51). McCandless is on the path to becoming a “good” citizen. He has sought solitude and individual experience of nature, far from the influence of society, afraid of being poisoned by the norms and values of his social class, but toward the end, he shows signs of conforming to middle-class values, which are reflected in his quote from Tolstoy.

He has indeed become “more sober, experiencing some degree of resignation,” as Bakhtin puts it (22). Just before McCandless dies, there is a kind of a vision, represented in the form of a family film, in which he is reunited with his family. This is clearly Penn’s addition to the story, presumably representing the protagonist’s last thoughts, for which there is no basis in Krakauer’s book. The film consciously emphasizes McCandless’s return to society, even though in reality his death prevents it. The narrative thus enacts a containment of the apparent subversion, restoring the social order that was ostensibly under threat. *Into the Wild* is in fact no more subversive than any other *Bildungsroman*, in which the hero inevitably returns to his social environment, becoming a model citizen.

We are intrigued by the apparent rebellion against that which Williams calls the “central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values” (“Base and Superstructure” 23). Viewed within the genre of *Bildungsroman*, *Into the Wild* shows us the possibility of radical individualism and its subversion of the values of the capitalist system, but it does so only to contain it. Even though individualism is one of the key ingredients of the American national imaginary, it is clearly only acceptable insofar as it does not threaten the overall social hierarchy. In spite of his apparent rebellion, McCandless stays within the frame of a dominant national ideology. It is fallacious to assume that nature, i.e., the Alaskan wilderness, is a realm beyond an ideological scope (Kollin 44). Even though the wild is supposed to be a place in every respect antithetic to the upper-middle class home of McCandless’s parents, it is in fact a part of the same system. Dominant culture is not monolithic, its ideology is not simply imposed by force; rather, it relies on “the alternative meanings and values, the alternative opinions and attitudes, even some alternative senses of the world, which can be accommodated and tolerated within a particular effective and dominant culture” (Williams, “Base and Superstructure” 24). Seemingly subversive forces within the system are still a part of the system, and rather than threaten it, they actually help consolidate it. This viewpoint closely resembles that of new historicists, who “are prone to regard cultures as regimes of constraint, designed to absorb resistance or ultimately turn it to their own account” (Ryan xv). These various contradictory forces are all part of the process of hegemony; as Williams has claimed, “The reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is

never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in the society” (*Marxism and Literature* 112). The dominant social forces, far from being threatened by subversive elements, actually profit by the portrayal of subversion and its subsequent containment. They make use of cultural products such as film or the novel, which participate in the process of cultural integration, because cultures are not only integrated by explicit social patterns, “but also by enduring themes, values, configurations, and world views” (Kottak 41).

Literary texts are cultural not only with reference to the outside world, but also by their social values and contexts (Greenblatt 12), and the same is true of film. What we should focus on when reading such a cultural text is therefore not only the text itself, but the role it plays in a wider arena of cultural processes. As Greenblatt stresses, “[C]ultural analysis must be opposed on principle to the rigid distinction between that which is within a text and that which lies outside” (13). This is particularly true of such media and genres which have the pretense of conveying documentary truth. Discourses of the “real” and of the fictitious (or “reel”) are equally subject to interpretation in terms of power relations and ideology (Aitken and Zonn, “Representing”). Indeed, it is precisely the capitalist social system that “has produced a powerful and effective oscillation between the establishment of distinct discursive domains and the collapse of those domains into one another. It is this restless oscillation rather than the securing of a particular fixed position that constitutes the distinct power of capitalism” (Greenblatt 24).

In this essay, we have offered a different reading of *Into the Wild* that does not take the narrative at face value, but tries to examine the film critically with respect to a wider cultural context. We have analyzed the film as it is informed by *Bildungsroman*, emphasizing the element of mobility as crucial to the genre, and its role in the formation of the protagonist’s personality in terms of his social and cultural values. Although the narrative of the film purports to be subversive of the dominant ideology, it is our contention that the film, as a cultural artifact, in fact reproduces the values of the dominant ideology. Subversion and its subsequent containment are intrinsic to the genre of *Bildungsroman* in general, both in literary and film form, because it involves the protagonist’s departure from the dominant social values and, inevitably, his return. Even though the death of McCandless prevents him from physically returning to his social niche, his character development shows a clear tendency towards reconciliation with the norms of his social class. The fact that the film is based on a real story only serves the purpose of legitimizing the narrative in the audience’s mind and blurring the distinction between real and reel. Even though the narrative of *Into the Wild* seemingly represents an attempt at subverting dominant ideology, it does so only to enact containment of the apparent subversion and to reinforce the structure of that ideology.

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Displacing the Dead – Remapping of Post-apocalyptic Geographies

Dying Maps

To question space within gothic or horror narratives means attempting to understand the concept of the “failure of the map,” a notion very closely related to the production of gothic narratives. Based on the premise that the “gothic map” can never be fully understood or grasped, gothic narratives invariably manage to manipulate and play upon the reader’s or viewer’s attempts to locate the narrator, protagonist, or to a certain extent themselves within the space at hand. Additional complications arise from the transitional moment between space and place. Following Yi Fu Tuan’s notion of this transition based on the process of inscribing meaning into space, thus opening the doors to literally countless forms of places, the gothic manages to constantly offer new narratives, or at least old narratives, encapsulated in alternative (and often innovative) spaces/places.

The problem arising from this interpretative fluidity is the inability to properly trace (at least from an academic point of view) the contours of these mostly fantastic and always dark places. A possible alternative to these perpetually changing spaces can perhaps be found in various zombie narratives, where space, still bound by the “absence of rules,” does not offer a conclusive solution to the constantly reinvented gothic map but, being so strongly rooted in our contemporaneity, allows for a more contextualized and therefore relevant theoretical reading of space. Such understanding of space surpasses the potential storyline-bound initial questions of setting and its relevance, and moves forward towards problematizing the politics of zombie spatiality. Accordingly, this analysis aims to observe three different space paradigms that appear in zombie narratives, with particular focus placed on one specific narrative—Robert Kirkman’s comic book series *The Walking Dead*, as well as the later TV series developed by Frank Darabont. Although the television series only initially coincides with the storyline present in the comic book, the analysis will consider both as part of a unified narrative universe. The purpose of such a potentially unorthodox analytical approach therefore will not be to provide a detailed reading of a particular narrative, but will instead propose and delineate different theoretical space paradigms that characterize, in this case Kirkman’s, zombie narrative.¹

¹ Regardless of the involvement of Frank Darabont, together with other writers and contributors, Robert Kirkman continuously oversaw and directly contributed to the production and development of both the comic book and the television series. Such an approach to the creative process assured a strong initial adherence to the source materials, as well as the appropriate adaptation of the new storylines to the originally set post-apocalyptic world.

With this in mind, the analysis will offer three different theoretical points of view—starting with Yi Fu Tuan’s and Gaston Bachelard’s perception of domestic spaces and their specific theoretical function and presence within the narrative at hand, Marc Augé’s creation of “non-places” as well as the notion of the *traveller* as the key to the spatial transition that follows, and the final articulation of space within zombie narratives, one which occurs through the construction of neoliberal context/space as defined by David Harvey. It is important, however, to point out that all of the proposed readings of space/place are not necessarily diachronic in their nature, or more precisely, that one analyzed spatial paradigm is not necessarily the evolutionary product of a previous one. Although an argument for such an evolutionary progression could be made, the focus of the article is firmly based on presenting and expanding different possible theoretical readings of space/place within the *Walking Dead* narrative as separate theoretical paradigms. A more comprehensive analysis of the potential interlacing of these complex theoretical readings would be possible, but such an endeavor would surpass the limited scope of this article. Nevertheless, all of the proposed interpretations mark in a way a progression in the process of reading space within zombie narratives, but also, as will be shown, they offer a more tangible, although strictly theoretical, delineation of what can be described as zombie geography.

However, this attempt to trace the (de)construction of space in *The Walking Dead*, or many other contemporary zombie narratives, heavily relies on a non-uniform theoretical approach. What could be defined as the now dying maps of the lives that we once led are in fact potential insights into a multitude of cultural uncertainties that characterize our contemporaneity. As will be discussed later, the issue of zombie narrative space from its initial articulations develops into a multi-discursive concept, simultaneously allowing for an understanding of a debated issue, while consenting only to a limiting reading/understanding of a particular narrative. The initial spatial paradigm will therefore be constructed and proposed on what could be considered a “classic” or, more precisely, strictly anthropocentric, reading of space, as offered by Yi Fu Tuan and Gaston Bachelard. Both authors primarily outline a space defined by men and through men, which, when superimposed over the analyzed narratives, creates a powerful opposing image between the site of domesticity and the now post-apocalyptic setting. This dichotomy between the once romanticized home and the stark violent reality of its disappearance will define the initial theoretical reading of the spatial turn that has occurred.

The following analysis, however, will move beyond the initial traditional binarity between space and place and focus more on the unstable spatiality of particular zombie narratives in relation to its significance to our contemporary political contexts and conditions. What the analysis proposes is a shift from a binary but nevertheless stable space/place opposition into what Marc Augé defines as a state belonging to supermodernity. Postmodernity, or what Augé refers to as supermodernity, presents a different theoretical approach to the space/place relation by introducing the notion of *non-places*. According to Tim Cresswell, “Non-places are sites marked by their transience – the preponderance of mobility . . . By non-place Augé is referring to sites

marked by the ‘fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral’” (45–46). Augé continues by pointing out the importance of the notion of the traveler, whose space is in fact the archetype of non-place (*Non-Places* 70). Augé’s *traveller* and the concept of *non-place*, as contextualized within the analysis of *The Walking Dead*, will indicate a potential new spatial phase, projecting the inherent instability of contemporary spaces. Once again it is important to point out that the presence (or emergence) of a new spatial paradigm does not negate the continuing existence of the established space/place binarity proposed by Tuan and Bachelard, but instead functions only as a possibly different theoretical perspective on reading space in zombie narratives. The third spatial turn that the analysis will address is premised on David Harvey’s concept of political economy of place in relation to capitalism, or more precisely, when contextualized within the present analysis, on the relationship between entrepreneurial freedoms and a post-apocalyptic world. As the analysis will propose, this last spatial turn can in fact be observed as further distancing from the construction of space/place founded on an individual and subjective experience. What is left is a reading of post-apocalyptic spaces that share an uneasy resemblance to contemporary living practices. Premised on the tension of mobile capital and fixed places, or narratively contextualized as the need to accumulate “capital” necessary for survival in an ever-transforming space, the last theoretical frame offers perhaps the most direct insight into the relevance of the political discourse looming under the surface of zombie narratives. However, as stated earlier, the proposed theoretical readings are in no way definitive, nor do they represent everything that this genre has to offer. What they do represent are challenging insights into the critical multi-discursive nature of zombie narratives.

Housing the Dead

When analyzing the connection between spaces/places and gothic or horror narratives, it becomes almost instantaneously obvious that this relation is complex and almost uniquely based on the premise that space, or the subsequent place, cannot be charted out, defined, or confined to some type of fixed meaning or map. However, when considering the development of the spatial paradigm in zombie narratives, it can be observed that the relevance of the spatial element in their early American incarnations differs from their later development.

A keystone example and a classical case study in discussions of zombie narratives is George Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). One of the central points of reference in discussions of the numerous issues presented by this milestone of American cinema has been the representation of the house. In accordance with the by then well-established tradition, present within various American-based narratives, of the representation of the house as a relevant topos which acts as a catalyst or a set of symbolic values necessary for the further development of a particular storyline, Romero’s house presents itself as one of the key features needed for the construction of the story. Similar to the historical burden that characterizes European castles, imbued with the symbolic meaning of family, bloodline, and history or, generally speaking, imbued

with an elaborate and specific social and cultural set of values, the house also stands as a symbol, as well as an active and now re-defined gothic space.²

The pattern presented by Romero is a rather simple one, and one that will be followed and emulated by countless other authors in their reinterpretations of the (sub)genre. It consists of an initially small group of people joining with other individuals or groups in their attempt to find a safe location where to regroup, organize, and potentially rationalize the apocalyptic events surrounding them. The house, however, initially specifically defined as a safe location that will separate the unfortunate characters from the surrounding horrors, soon becomes a limiting space, forcing the (purposely) contrasting characters to face each other, which allows Romero to construct a meticulous social critique. Nevertheless, even though the house, with its rich symbolical tapestry, should in fact transcend the topographic simplicity of a safe location, it fails to do so. This failure to “spatially evolve,” or to allow the characters at least an attempt to start Tuan’s process of “inscription,” is caused mostly by Romero’s insistence on constructing and presenting the house as an allegory, whose purpose is to provide a symbolic articulation of the American dream and the initial phases of its deconstruction, the disappearing post–World-War-II “family values”, the impeding sexual revolution, and the brutally obvious racial issue, among other things.³ With this in mind, regardless of the constant interaction of the various characters with the space at hand, the house is limited in its functioning as a setting, void of the level of intimacy needed for the completion of space–place transition, while simultaneously failing to project the experience of any of the characters, and thus failing to become, in a way, an active participant within the narrative. What the viewers are left with is a space functioning within a reality whose symbolic value and meaning is quite clear to both the participating characters and the viewers themselves, but whose reality is stripped down to a very basic scenography needed for the ongoing problems existing between the numerous conflicting characters.

² Interestingly enough, the symbolic value of the castle within the classic gothic genre has been overwhelmingly debated and analyzed. The house, however, simultaneously very present but also theoretically somewhat neglected, represents the continuation and development of the values initially set forth by the imagery of the castle. As Barry Curtis elaborates, “Since the mid-eighteenth century the haunted house has incorporated elements of the feudal castle, the ruined monastery and the remote cottage and sustained fictions of illicit ownership and the ghostly resilience of rightful inheritance. Within the framework of the conventional haunted house narrative there is a trans-dimensional archetype that incorporates these themes” (*Dark Places* 34).

³ As stated by Kyle William Bishop in *American Zombie Gothic*, “As a metaphor for the modern age, Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* presents audiences with the true monster threatening civilization: humanity itself. Whereas the screen zombies of the 1930s and ’40s function primarily as allegories for racial inequality and imperial injustice, the “new” zombies of the late 1960s and beyond work as uncanny manifestations of other repressed societal fears and insecurities, such as the dominance of the white patriarchy, the misogynistic treatment of women, the collapse of the nuclear family, and the unchecked violence of the Vietnam War” (95).

A much more intimate representation of the domestic space (and, in a way, the first actual spatial paradigm that I would like to discuss) is the representation of the domestic surroundings in Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* (2003-present), both in the comic book series and the television show, whose visual representation of space strongly relies on the above-mentioned interactions with both the symbolic value and the real value of the depicted domestic spaces. But what is the initial *domestic* space within *The Walking Dead* series? This initial space is, in all its apparent simplicity, the home, or more precisely, the house(s) of the main characters. Nevertheless, this supposedly simple space projects an ambivalent meaning. At first it is a space of safety, or as Gaston Bachelard would define it, domesticity, "our first universe . . . a group of organic habits" (viii). The home is therefore a safety zone, a purposely confining space that we can experience, or while acting as viewers, that we can easily identify with. By following the initial couple of issues of the comic, as well as the much more dramatized and visually stronger depiction in the television series of the now ruined home and its initial rediscovery by the character of Rick Grimes, what we are offered is not Romero's vision of the house as an accumulation of cultural or social symbols, but instead a familiar setting, now warped and destroyed by the apocalypse, that still retains the detailed familiarity that makes it a home. Frame by frame (regardless of whether we observe the comic panel or a video segment) we are exposed to the abandoned bedrooms of the house, living rooms, family portraits together with numerous other details, as well as the angst and sorrow accompanying the ongoing realization of the main character that the notion of his once familiar and safe place is rapidly dissolving in front of him. However, the familiarity persists, and for a very brief and uncertain period of time, the familiar place once again projects the sensation of safety over the main character. It is this familiarity that allows the initial transition into a place of meaning, regardless of the obvious apocalyptic influence that can be felt at this particular juncture in the narrative. Using the perspectives developed by Yi-Fu Tuan or David Seamon, it could be said that this familiarity allows the transformation, even if it is brief, of a space into a place of attachment, belonging, and rootedness, an intimate place of rest where one can retreat to from the hustle of the outside world (Tuan *Language* 684–96; Seamon 78–85).

The projected possibility of a brief pause from the outside horrors, however, is completely dispersed in the later episodes and seasons of the television series. A particularly strong take on the topic of deconstructed safety of the home, along with the longed-for peacefulness of domesticity, can be observed in the fifth season of the series. The ninth episode of the season, titled "What Happened and What's Going On," once again revisits the continuous need of the wandering group of survivors to find safety in a new home and to rebuild the now lost place of intimacy. The episode begins with a pastiche of intersecting images foreshadowing the events that will take place in the episodes ahead, combining flashbacks, family photographs, and what appears to be a child's bedroom. This initial sequence ends with the image of a small painting of an idyllic house, surrounded by peaceful nature scenery. The painting is located on a

dirty and bloody carpet, and blood, from a non-visible source, soon starts dripping over it, covering the image and eerily suggesting an imminent traumatic end to the projected notion of safety and peacefulness. The challenge to the projection of the home, however, does not stop at this “simple” metaphoric level. As the viewer soon discovers, the characters are scouting a gated community in hope of finding, if not a safe place, then at least some additional supplies. The search escalates with Noah, one of the members of the scouting party, returning with a companion—Tyreese Williams—to his original house, hoping to find his mother and his twin brothers. However, the mother is dead, decomposing on the living room floor, and Tyreese, while exploring the rest of the house, is attacked and bit by one of the twins, now turned into a walking dead.

The proposed final deconstruction of the domestic space/place that was, as mentioned earlier, only momentarily reclaimed by the character of Rick Grimes during the exploration of his house, is now made explicitly visible through a progressive dissection of space/place. A better understanding of this progressive dissection might be achieved by framing these spatial alterations within Tuan’s generally accepted initial organization of space. By placing the human body at the center, Tuan proposes a reading of space according to human perception. The front space therefore becomes “primarily visual” and “illuminated”. “Back space,” he continues, “is ‘dark,’ even when the sun shines, simply because it cannot be seen” (*Space* 40). This division and notion consequently applies to concepts such as temporality (front – future, back – past), or human relationships and behavior (with the front side of the human face suggesting dignity, while the back is profane and shadowy [*Space* 40]).

In the context of the present analysis, the distinction may be said to affect the construction of our domestic spaces, where the opposition of “front space” to the concept of “back space” encapsulates a whole spectrum of meaning and types of behavior. While the front spaces of our living quarters, such as living rooms or dining rooms, serve as a type of stage where moderated and presentable behavior is being performed, the back spaces, such as guest-rooms and bedrooms, inevitably project a sense of concealment and invisibility. These rooms are implicitly our spaces of intimacy where one can feel completely safe and relaxed, and where the notion of domesticity is most fully epitomized. It is through this division of front and back spaces that the proposed final deconstruction of the “sites of our intimate lives” (Bachelard 8) occurs. The front space of the house, the public one, finds Noah’s mother, once returned from the dead, but now just lying motionless on the floor of the living room. The setting evokes any number of houses visited by the group over the period of time, most of all the quintessential confronting moment between Rick Grimes and the now post-apocalyptic reality that marks the beginning of the *Walking Dead* narrative.

However, what was an introductory and a safe interaction with the space that was once Grimes’s home is now being replaced with multiple layers of corruption and a tangible and gradual deconstruction of a place. As Tyreese moves away from the living room towards the bedroom located in the back segment of the house, the viewers become aware of an almost measurable penetration into the intimacy of the house and

the family that lived there. While Grimes, during the exploration of his own home, experiences for a brief moment what was once his inner sanctum, only to continue his search for other survivors, Tyreese explores what was initially left unarticulated, or more precisely, he faces the no longer safe home surroundings. He reaches the children's bedroom, where he finds one child dead, while the other attacks him, sealing his fate with a bite. Although the portrayed attack does not significantly differ from numerous other similar zombie attack scenes, the spatial context is an extraordinary one. The ensuing polarity between spaces continues within the children's bedroom, which, besides being (from a locational point of view) opposite to the front spaces, is also immediately featured as a place whose privacy is emphasized by toys, posters, and other small significant elements, symbolically setting it apart from the living room, which is now perceived as an almost barren theatrical stage. A strong dichotomy is instantly constructed through the variation of images that include various photographs placed on walls and shelves, showing now almost phantasmagoric happy family moments, only to be alternately replaced by the image of a rotting corpse of a child looming behind the character of Tyreese. The climactic final moment of deconstruction of what was once a safe place of home takes us back to the initial painting of the house lying on the now bloody carpet. Dripping blood now defiles the painted image of an idyllic home, set within a beautiful and peaceful backdrop, indicating the unstoppable transformation of the place.

Observing the Dead

By returning to the initial narrative arc, we encounter again the character of Rick Grimes, who is forced by the now no longer hospitable home to push on with the exploration of the new world surrounding him, as well as to continue with the search for his family. Reflecting for a moment on the earlier mentioned traditional gothic and/or horror notion of the failure of the map, we notice a decisive shift in the process of construction and perception of space. As opposed to the previous inability to define a horror space due to its perilous vagueness, the zombie narrative provides a precise moment in time, as well as in space, where the main character can accurately locate himself and observe, if capable and willing, the transitional moment that characterizes his surroundings. In many ways, this precise moment functions within a zombie narrative as the basis for both the progression of the narrative as well as the analytical turning point through which we can observe the formation of a new spatial pattern.

The ambiguity of the once simple space/place is now becoming more prominent, inevitably leading to the creation of a spatial dichotomy comprised of the initial place of the home, with all of its domesticity and the protection it provides, and the simultaneously present and imminent future development of the narrativized space/place. The genesis of this dichotomy stems from the apocalyptic moment. The zombie plague, the birth of the monstrous within and from the domestic place, disintegrates those Bachelardian spatial alveoli containing compressed time (*Poetics* 8), or

more precisely, it disintegrates memories⁴. All of the articulations of the emotional inscriptions that allowed the construction of *place* are now being soiled by the sudden evolution of an intimate monstrous “Other,” whose domestic nature affects not only the unfortunate characters, but also the given space/place. Following the pattern set by Romero, through which a house becomes an unhomely/*unheimlich* space, the contemporary zombie narratives, in this case *The Walking Dead*, are now located first in an estranged place, only to be shortly followed by a location that could only be defined as *placelessness*.

An example, and the setting of a general tone, can be observed in the brief but meaningful opening sequence in the first three seasons of the television show. The opening sequence consists of a series of grainy, washed-out segments alternately portraying images of characters, obviously contextualized as family photographs, newspaper clippings, and the like, contributing to the instantaneous familiarization of the viewer with the characters, and a series of images rapidly escalating from an initially domestic context to images of dwellings and cityscapes, schools, hospitals, and urban centers, and finally stopping with an overview of a city with two highway lines—one outbound, crammed with fleeing vehicles, and the other one inbound, completely deserted.

The proposed imagery, therefore, very clearly states that something has happened, even though the viewers are not explicitly told what. The abandoned houses and cities undoubtedly evoke an apocalyptic situation, an image enforced by the metaphorically expressed but obviously shattered everyday existence of the protagonists. However, in addition to presenting the context of the story, the introduction also offers an additional reading of the issue of space/place within zombie narratives. Following the proposed, somewhat diachronic spatial evolution, the opening sequence marks the creation and perpetuation of the second spatial paradigm. Each of the frames contributing to the imagery functions as the earlier-mentioned Bachelardian “spatial alveoli,” or in other words, as a “potential” memory. Each potential memory in turn, when placed within a particular spatial context, is simultaneously also located on the verge of becoming a place. But the proposed transformation, the inscription of meaning, remains unaccomplished, and what we are left with is the position of Marc Augé’s traveller – an observer of a sequence of events, a succession of “partial glimpses, a series of ‘snapshots’ piled hurriedly into the memory of the traveller” (69). The theoretical “status” or “role” of Augé’s *traveller* is not, however, a position shared and experienced by all of the characters present within the post-apocalyptic setting of *The Walking Dead*. Instead, this particular approach to and

⁴ Bachelard introduces the notion of the *spatial alveoli* while discussing the practice of topoanalysis (“systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives” [8]) in relation to concepts such as the house and memory. By entering our own house, our memories are triggered by any number of different locations. As explained by Bachelard, cellars, garrets, nooks, and corridors have the possibility to contain and refer to some type of memory (8)—a specific occurrence suspended within a particular space and (past) time. These alveoli therefore function as compressed time, unfolded into a memory the moment a person revisits and (re)experiences a certain location.

reading of space is almost exclusively constructed and developed around the character of Rick Grimes, through whom the readers (and viewers) experience the initial exposure to the new world.

This idea of the presence of a second spatial paradigm can be further developed through Augé's notion that "if a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with an identity will be a non-place" (63). The first notion proposed by Augé, the concept of the *traveller* and his/her perception of the surroundings while on the move, and the simultaneously moving surroundings, frame the multi-discursive spatial problematic of the introduction. It clearly indicates the now obvious detachment of the characters from what was once their home, and by doing that, deconstructs the complex symbolical network of meaning formerly embodied in the imagery (or place) of a home or a house, while simultaneously infringing upon the *fourth wall* and allowing the viewers to actively partake in the role of the *traveller*. The viewers, now sharing the *traveller's* position with the protagonists, experience the moving surroundings as what could be defined as perpetually promising tourism leaflets. Augé expands his discussion of the displacement of the *traveller* in relation to his surroundings through the notion of the "spectator in the position of the spectator [being] his own spectacle" (70). The *traveler*, through the projected imagery proposed by tourist leaflets, is offered, as stated by Augé, a "reversal of the gaze . . . his own image in a word, his anticipated, which speaks only about him but carries another name . . ." (70). This promise (or perhaps simulation) of a potential inscription of meaning, or creation of memory, conforms to the ongoing promise of a new (safe) space which could be inhabited, inscribed, and therefore transmuted into place, which is a dominant motif of *The Walking Dead* storyline.

The notion of the *traveller's* space as the archetype of *non-place* (Augé 70) deserves another look. In terms of Augé's definition *non-place*, in which relational, historical, and identity-related contexts can no longer be applied, it could be said that characters such as Grimes, as well as many others trapped in the post-apocalyptic moment, are forced to confront two separate *non-place* projections. The dominant one is the one that will assure survival, the dynamic movement of the perilously promising surrounding *non-places*. However, a conflict-based projection emerges between the characters and the past memories. The premise of the conflict between characters and the initial domestic space/place is constructed upon the potential emotional and subjective infusion of the described spaces. This infusion, present in the beginning, is still there, but it is limited by memory. To use Bachelard's words, "[The] memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home" (6), which severely disturbs the characters, now aware of the terminal mutation of their once safe place. Following once again Bachelard's notion of the house as a place which "shelters daydreaming . . . protects the dreamer, [and] allows one to dream in peace" (6), the characters are forced almost instantaneously to face their own displacement from active daydreamers into Augé's *travellers*, unconnected and alien to the once romanticized womb of safety.

The familiarity of the home, the safety of a house, the almost poetic romanticizing of the safety it provided, is now made completely sterile and distant due to the complete degeneration of the initial domestic space/place. The trigger for this is the unstoppable rise of the monstrous, which regardless of its indisputable *otherness* embodied in the decaying bodies of the walking dead, still retains the once known intimacy. As opposed to the many other genre-bound monsters and monstrosities, the zombie retains a particular intimate quality precisely due to its “re-birthing” context. Re-born in intimacy as someone’s spouse, sister, father or child, the zombie simultaneously embodies its monstrous nature, as well as the familiarity associated with the construction of a (home) place. The gravitational pull of the home therefore includes all of its elements of familiarity and memories, while the zombies, once family members and the living articulation of familiar surroundings, are now nothing more than walking dead memories, or, to use Bachelard’s terms, they are now walking dead spatial alveoli. The conflict therefore lies in the character’s need to deal with the remnants of a lost and now barren world, whose emptiness and sterility is not limited to the physical, or spatial dimension, but to an emotional one as well, achieving in such a way an ideal context for the construction of a *non-place*.

Controlling the Dead

What follows a complete (de)construction of a place is chaos. The characters, now placed in a distorted heterotopian projection of a world that once was, devoid of its former social constrictions, as well as fixed historical or emotional points of reference, are initially forced to face each other, but then, with the passing of time, and the increased necessity for the formation of some, at least apparent, social construct, they re-enter the process of claiming space and the later potential construction of place. In other words, using the perspective developed by Yi Fu Tuan in *Landscapes of Fear*, it may be said that the characters are trying to build both mental and/or material constructions, which represent components in the landscape of fear whose only purpose is to contain the chaos (6). Driven by the notion of strength and safety achieved through numbers, the now wandering group of survivors is constantly searching for larger groups of people, but also for a secure location where they could start rebuilding their “lives”. This is the moment that marks the beginning of the third spatial paradigm—the formation of what could be defined as a neoliberal construct, if not a proper neoliberal state. Following David Harvey’s debates regarding capitalism, globalization, and neoliberalism, an interesting observation can be made regarding the similarities between globalization—as a homogenizing system—and the post-apocalyptic spaces represented in zombie narratives.

The once diversified world is now unified in a unique paradigm of violence, while individualism, once moderated through various forms of consumerist “off-job control”⁵ (Chomsky 21), and now set free and raging together with individual

⁵ The control of the working segment of the population by controlling their free time, achieved through the implementation of various forms of consumerist practices, and allowing in such a way an uninterrupted influence of power, freed from the potential influences of the masses.

“rights” (regardless of how wild and inconceivable these might be within a civilized setting), is now becoming an imperative. The previously dormant and/or regulated violent behavior is now rising, much like the dead, and coming back to life, using the actual walking dead only as an opportune excuse. The behavioral norm is individualism at its worst, echoing in an eerie way Margaret Thatcher’s statement from 1979—“[. . .] there is no such thing as society [. . .] there is a living tapestry of men and women and people” (Keay). The similarities between the post-apocalyptic space and the formation of a neoliberal system extend to the attempts of the characters to establish a proto-society whose main purpose is the protection and accumulation of goods.

The formation of such a behavioral pattern can be observed through the activities of just about all of the characters present in the *Walking Dead* narrative. After Grimes’s departure from what was once his home, the storyline traces the fortunate reuniting with his family, briefly followed by a struggle over the control of a group of survivors. The conflict, simple in its purpose of defining the leader of the group, and complicated in its social context relevant for the story, indicates one of the issues that dominate zombie narratives, and in particular *The Walking Dead* series, and that is the issue of the restructuring of a post-apocalyptic society. The struggle over control, and the emergence of new entities projecting and creating new systems of power, resonates with David Harvey’s debate on neoliberalism beginning with his explanation of the inevitable re-introduction of class power. As Harvey states, “If neoliberalization has been a vehicle for the restoration of class power, then we should be able to identify the class forces . . .” (*Neoliberalism* 31).

However, “since ‘class’ is not a stable social configuration,” what neoliberalism has accomplished is a reconfiguration of what constitutes an upper class (31). Grimes’s example, as well as the examples of some other characters appearing later in the story, conforms to what Harvey defines as “‘traditional’ strata” that “managed to hang on to a consistent power base” (31). In the story, Grimes, a police officer before the apocalypse, retains the position of power and authority inscribed in the role of an officer, and symbolically articulated through the police uniform that he continues to wear even in a now de-contextualized world. Nevertheless, the creation and perpetuation of a new *upper class* is precisely what characterizes the *Walking Dead* narrative. Through the interaction of the numerous (anti)heroes in their attempts to define a commanding order, and actions of the murderous characters leading various (dangerous) groups, a new class order is established in disregard of the previous social or cultural norms.

An initial example can be observed in the attempts of the group led by Grimes to start building their new life first on a farm, attempting to create an agrarian utopia, and then later on within the walls of a prison complex. Once having the function of preventing people from getting out, the prison is now transmuted into a fort whose main function is to keep the zombies out. Additionally, the complex offers stretches of land that can be used for farming, therefore providing a possible system of self-sustainability. Simultaneously, the once established social order based on rules and

(self)regulations is rapidly vanishing, matching the social regression, and allowing for the strongest (and most capable) to rule over the rest. What this leads to is an increasing narrative focus on who is going to rule the group(s), or more precisely, what will become the acceptable amount of violence and distancing from the once existing social norms needed for the group to survive. The surrounding places, the now deconstructed prison, farm, or locations controlled by other groups of survivors, however, become subject to an interesting spatial turn, positioning these spaces into an oscillating limbo of purpose and use, but without the necessary emotional inscription needed for their transition into a place, contributing in such a way to a representation of a neoliberal spatial paradigm.

This potential “trespassing” or exploration of what is dominantly becoming the post-apocalyptic behavioral norm is particularly true for the various extremely militant and violent groups coordinated by characters such as the Governor and Negan. Both promoting themselves as progressive leaders in a now merciless world, they obtain a position of influence and power well beyond their pre-apocalyptic social status. However, the positive image is a complete farce, built on the corpses of those opposing them, or not conforming to their vision of the future. It is within the town of Woodbury, controlled by the Governor, or within the new world order envisioned by Negan, and implemented by his paramilitary forces, that we can look for additional founding moments of a neoliberal discourse. Both of these characters, each in his own way, construct a rhetoric based on notions such as liberty, the right to protect oneself, and in the case of this particular narrative, the liberty to exercise violence in order to improve one’s security or increase the amount of available goods (the ultimate form of wealth). However, the proposed and proclaimed liberties have certain limitations, or, as observed by David Harvey, “[g]overnance by majority rule is seen as a potential threat to individual rights and constitutional liberties” (*Neoliberalism* 66). Therefore, “Democracy is viewed as a luxury” (66) only possible under specific conditions. What is preferred as an alternative is a system favoring “governance by experts and elites” (66). Freedoms are therefore limited to either direct survival or the reinforcement of the powers that be, and they do not extend to the creation of alternative organizations or other types of social formations that could challenge the newly constituted power structures.

What follows is the structuring of a neoliberal spatial paradigm, premised on three separate elements. As stated by Harvey (*Neoliberalism* 2), the first notion is the stressing of individual entrepreneurial freedoms, which in turn means the dismantling of social or political regulatory structures. This is one of the main features of the post-apocalyptic world as portrayed in *The Walking Dead*. With only the personal interests of particular groups as potential regulatory guidelines, with no external supervision or control, individual entrepreneurial freedoms do not merely contribute to the construction of an extreme version of a neoliberal state; rather, they become its most prominent characteristic. Whether the analyzed actions are those of the supposedly “benign” group led by Rick Grimes or the explicitly violent acts committed by the group ironically named the Saviors and led by Negan, the presented behavior

of both groups is equally not extended towards anybody outside of the initial group. The second and the third aspects, as stated by Harvey (2), characterizing the neoliberal context, are the focus on private property rights and a free market, and the basic infrastructure provided by society which would guarantee the continuous existence of these two things. Both aspects are articulated in the analyzed narrative through the tendency of characters and groups to physically protect their private properties and to propagate “free market” through the simple use of violence. This is accompanied by an adequate infrastructure offered by the post-apocalyptic proto-society, consisting of the formation of larger groups of people as well as superior firepower.

It is from these elements that we can draw the conclusion that the space constructed by the surviving (anti)heroes conforms in structure to neoliberal space, or state. If we return once again to David Harvey’s reading of geography in relation to capitalism, we are told that capitalism “builds and rebuilds a geography in its own image” (*Spaces* 54). Harvey states that capitalism constructs a distinctive geographical landscape, spaces of transport, and communications, infrastructures and organizations, which facilitates the accumulation of capital during one phase, only to be torn down and reconfigured for further accumulation at a later stage (54). When this very specific spatial pattern is applied to the context of zombie narratives such as this one, what we are left with is a clear indication of the inability of any of the characters ever to succeed in regressing to the initial space-place binarity, or more precisely, to the proper construction of what they could claim as their place of home. When Rick Grimes says “We do what we need to do and then we get to live. But no matter what we find in DC, I know we’ll be okay. Because this is how we survive. We tell ourselves . . . that we are the walking dead” (*Them* 00:33:18-00:33:45), we become aware of the obvious *otherness* of the characters, primarily based on their use of violence. But in addition to that, we become even more aware of the inability of the now changed characters to emotionally relate to anything or anyone outside of their group. Their existence, now conforming to a neoliberal space and experience, and coinciding with the continuously moving map of neoliberalization, allows and forces them to experience always new spaces. Yet these spaces remain just that—spaces—defined by the unceasingly violent behavior of the characters whose incapability of any consistent inscription of meaning perpetually prevents them from the re-creation of place.

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Between the Rock and the Homeplace: Poetics of Bestiality

One can only study what one has first dreamed about.

Gaston Bachelard

me and Zabláće/I from Zabláće/me in Zabláće/I in front of Zabláće/I once or twice in flight over Zabláće//Zabláće all these years in me/Zabláće taught me about space/how extension coagulates into place/how you have a place/how you don't have a place/how it is being mapped/how it is being drawn and erased elsewhere/how we imagine it/remember it/how it is so much more than extension //in Zabláće I learned how to walk/on gravel and rock/on the red earth/wade through the puddle/the mud/nowhere else did I run so fast/as in Zabláće/I suffered falls there/there I picked myself up/there I became convinced /that the earth could be moved /from beneath one's feet

Stipe Grgas



*Stipe Grgas, 1962.*¹

¹ They say that a picture/says more than a thousand words/Many of those who know me/say this for a photo taken in 1962//A Varteks coat hanging below the knees/so that it serves you more than one year/Borovo shoes/with rubber soles/so that you don't slip/a French beret/to keep your head warm//An eleven year old kid/like a parcel/with the place of departure/and its destination/pasted on his chest/*from Zagreb /to New York//* What can't be seen on the photo:/his crying mother/his sad brother/the snow covering Zagreb streets/his father looking at the kid... the father the kid yearningly looks for/tomorrow/at the airport//What I see now on the photo:/the clenched jaws/the cramp before tears/lips between a smile and an unstoppable crying/eyes that ask/do they know what they are doing//I still haven't come up with an answer/to it (Grgas, *Homeplace* 69).

Introduction I: Toward the I-voice of Theory

Before it was “baptized,” the newest book by Stipe Grgas, *American Studies Today: Identity, Capital, Spatiality* (2014), underwent a process of naming and renaming. Its first working title was *Unconcealed America*. The author admits that, from the very beginning of his thinking about America within the discipline of American Studies, he struggled with terms, flipping their versions while meandering between *concealment*, *dis-concealment*, *un-concealment*, *uncovering/uncovered* . . . considering even words such as *disclosure* . . . all of them, it seemed to Grgas, having to do with semantic, contentual, contextual, and perhaps essential meanings of the United States.

In order to both underscore and justify the need for fixity of terms and concepts despite the prevailing context of floating experiences of reality, in the aforementioned study, Grgas uses (just to mention one among the many examples) the recent work of William Spanos.² Grgas starts by drawing a “demarcation line” in U.S. history that marked the core period of Spanos’s intellectual self-fashioning and articulation. It was the time of the Vietnam War that, according to Spanos, inaugurated the end of the discourse of the “American man.” The reason for putting an end to that discourse has to do with the collapse of liberal democracy followed by the utter marginalization of the relevance of capitalism as it once was. Spanos believes that, after the demolition of the center of the imperial circle, liberal democracy, along with the then dominant discourse of capitalism, has only residual power. And, while the discursive practices of the dying center of the imperial circle still attempt to remain historically and practically relevant and truthful, despite their historical weakening, they will survive (regardless of possible forthcoming requirements imposed on them suggesting adaptations and mimicry) as long as their argument retains the strength needed to convince and capture a global audience appealing to the hearts and minds of Others.

Spanos explains the proposed dynamics in a Derridean mode. He too talks of a decentered center—of a center whose axis is elsewhere and which operates beyond the scope of a free game by creating surplus emancipatory values—by occupying seemingly unoccupied free zones, pretending to surrender itself to a new paradigm. Simultaneously crossing and transgressing borders and shifting/widening its scope, determined to survive at any cost, such a decentered center hopes for its omnipresence. By virtue of such an almost paradoxical situation, where the center still holds for the sole reason that it does not hold any more, its elsewhere(ness) is forced to disclose itself—to surrender its boundaries to un-concealment that suggests a (paradigm) shift, or just its deferral for the time being. If the essence of a particular mode of disappearance (of production, apprehension, evaluation . . .) wants to prevail and to survive at the end of its reign as known to the world, making itself visible becomes an imperative. But, while making itself visible (for the sole reason of preventing its vanishing or absence as a result of its transforming into yet another mode of existence), it opens itself to

² In his study, Grgas uses plenty of Spanos’s works (6). The excerpt I refer to is from his 1999 book, *America’s Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire*.

vulnerability. And, in such a survival game, it has to enter into a dialogue with the world, assuming another, yet unseen, protean shape. Its change of appearance asks for additional adjustments: those of ideology, economy, psychological economy of self . . . adjustments of language, discourses, disciplines. . .

Although aware of the seriousness of Grgas's scholarly analysis as illustrated by this random example as well as other modes of openness, opening up, disclosing and disclosures, concealments and un-concealments, by his strategies of collapsing boundaries while "stepping out of the closet" . . . while reading Grgas's terminology list that floats above piles of his doubts, I think of these as being more of a personal nature and thus closely related to Stipe Grgas himself as a subject of disclosure. Since my aim here is not to test my readers' patience (and I am afraid I have come very close to it), I will return to the floating fixity of the proposed relationship between appearance and disappearance, between closures and disclosures, between covering and uncovering, offering a "hybrid"³ reading of a sliver of Stipe Grgas's work that, in my opinion, while functioning as a synecdoche, contains the wholeness of his intellectual, scholarly, and creative engagement. To put it simply, I will write about Stipe Grgas's yet undisclosed field of creative engagement—poetry.

Introduction II: *Homeplace* Between Free Game and Supplement

If the seven notes written to accompany his book of poetry *Homeplace*,⁴ as Stipe Grgas fears, might be seen as an unnecessary surplus to the entirety of his poetic text, then my decision to begin this essay using his introductory words might be seen at

³ I am extremely cautious when using the word *hybrid*, especially when it is used to emphasize merging in culture, genders, sexes, ethnicities, even genres and disciplines. Although often times it sounds convincing (or at least sexy) in academic circles, the word itself, just like any other word, is neutral. Becoming a key issue for cultural debate, hybridity, in my opinion, to a large extent, has lost its relevance. It is almost all-applicable when addressing not only races but (as I mentioned) genders, sexes, ethnicities, even genres and disciplines. If the word *hybrid*, whose semantic and conceptual intention is antiessentialist, is not used with caution, we may experience an essentialist backlash as a result of its overuse. Promoting the hybridity of the hybrid, we may (unwillingly though) agree that pure breed is the norm, while hybrid is a deviation. Therefore, I tend to think of hybrid as a position more than anything else—a position in which one approaches fixed issues, essentialist concepts, strict disciplines . . . from the outside. Not as a subversive mode of analysis, but as a supplementary one that can coexist within the shades of traditional understandings of the world.

⁴ I am profoundly grateful to my colleague and close friend, Stipe Grgas, who, for some reasons known to him, believed that I was a competent reader when he sent me the manuscript of his book of poetry. When asked to write my contribution to this collection of essays, I refrained from a strict scholarly discourse and decided to analyze parts of his yet unpublished shipshaped collection of poems for at least two reasons: (1) Grgas's poetry is a supplement (or a prelude, one will never know) to his scholarly engagement, and (2) *Homeplace* simply is a great book of verse. The book was originally written in Croatian. Its author drafted an English version of it and shared it with me in my preparations to write this essay. When using excerpts from his poetry, in order to illustrate my ideas of the inter-genres' interconnectedness, I rely on the author's English translation. With all due respect for Grgas' linguistic cultural adaptation of the book's Croatian original, from time to time, I took the liberty to intervene in his translation, adding yet another hybrid take to the already contaminated field of cross-creativity.

least as academic dishonesty, if not plagiarism. The unwanted-surplus-argument Grgas employs is based on the following assumption: a book of poetry (or any poetic text for that matter) is (or should be) a self-sustained and self-contained whole written on the “white emptiness of a page.” Poetry uses the blank void that negotiates with printed letters, with words whose intention is to enable a reader to read while the void (the page’s, not the reader’s) at the same time acts as both a limitation and an invitation. This assumption works for an ideal arch-reader’s position as explained either in Roman Ingarden’s and Hans Robert Jauss’s receptionist theory, or in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s tradition of hermeneutics. But when poets re-read the written, they cannot escape the captive self-imposed position: to recall the circumstances of their poetic creation. Unable to create “a distance,” poets can hardly escape questions such as: what was the impulse that made them speak out in verses? What criteria did they use when mentioning particular situations, recalling particular images, painting particular people, places, events . . . using them not only as motifs but also as the very triggers for their writing. And this parallel register—those explanatory notes of invitation inside the violated whiteness of the paper become especially acute in situations in which the genre of poetry is not the primary field of the author’s expression. It becomes acute in situations like this one, in which the poet is primarily a scholar who, after half a century of rendering great services to the transatlantic academe, working in his two native languages (Croatian and English), decides to take another, quite new venue—that of poetry.

Stipe Grgas’s work in American studies in general and in spatiality, territoriality, and lately, in stripping the seductive demons of Capital off their axis of power, certainly does not require poetry to back up his theoretical arguments nor to reinvigorate his scholarly cadence. Especially not his poetry. But the very fact of its existence (even in the shape of a manuscript for the time being) once again underscores the irrelevance of the question, What comes first? In this case: does theory precede poetry, or does poetry prepare one for more disciplinary and/or genre-ordered, more “mature” discourses? This particular question begs its appendix: what is more important, more relevant, more serious? Is it poetry, or is it academic and scholarly work that makes a scholar go full monty and strip himself of the “seriousness” of academic genres exercising vulnerability in admitting his poetic engagement? Or, let me return to Grgas’s invocation of Spanos’s “hybrid” adaptation of the already “hybrid” Derrida, and to their dialogue concerning decentered centers whose axis is elsewhere and operates beyond the scope of a free game—by creating a surplus of emancipatory values and applying it to Stipe’s decision to supplement his theory with poetry. Whether the decision for a genre-enrichment of his intellectual engagement stemmed from his sense of the limitations of a vanishing mode of production (i.e., academic textual production) or whether it was “just” his personal desire to survive as a joyful productive subject, Grgas did disclose himself. He surrendered his boundaries to un-concealment and made himself visible to the already existing circles of reception, this time entering the arena as a poet. By making himself visible, he opened himself to vulnerability. But, after reading his manuscript, which, again, I see as a continuation of his scholarly

legacy, I am certain that his gesture of entering into dialogue with the world this time as a poet—his very private and personal change of appearance—brings not only new adjustments of Grgas’s reading of ideology, of economy, of the psychological economy of the self, of language, of discourse, and of discipline . . . but also enriches the overall picture of Grgas’s contribution to the humanities and the social sciences.

In my essay, I hope (1) to collapse the hierarchy between the different modes of writing (i.e., poetry and academic, scholarly text), (2) to offer at least literarily suggestive (if not substantial) arguments that in Grgas’s case, his poetry is a logical and “natural” (structural) supplement of his scholarly work, and (3) that Stipe Grgas is a genuine poet who does not need to introduce himself to the audience in any apologetic manner. In my reading, I will address four distinct but organically connected parts of the manuscript: (a) experiencing experience as a concept, (b) experiencing the experience of a particular place, (c) experiencing the experience of immigration, and finally, (d) focusing on a specific “linguistic turn,” hoping to find arguments that would close the circle of generational and personal adjustments to oftentimes overpowering external requirements of the world I will offer my own reading of modes of “sacrifice” as expressed in Grgas’s verses.⁵ Aware that the majority of essays in this collection will address Grgas’s academic engagement, I will refrain from detailing his theoretical contribution to the field, to his specializations and sub-specializations, assuming that this hybrid reading speaks to the educated audience familiar with his academic work whose disciplinary competence exceeds the scope of my external and somewhat poetic intervention in the field as well in the author’s opus.

Experience I: Space-Writing Between “Home-Place” and “Neo-Home-Place”

In the very beginning of his manuscript, Grgas explains why he chose to write a particular physical place (Zablaće⁶) into literary existence.⁷ An answer to the question of why the space-theorist turn into a poetic geo-grapher of his birthplace can be found in the following contextualization of his po-ethics⁸: “I took up the work of writing

⁵ I need to stress the following: the introduction to *Homeplace* exercises an unparalleled level of professional correctness. It honestly speaks of Grgas’s scholarly and intellectual convictions and the need to translate them employing the media of poetry. Aside from (as I pointed out) being a self-sustained and self-contained poetic text, this book is a po-ethical textual testimony of the author’s religious devotion to the discipline of his choice, and an original and unique poetic supplement to his authorial theory. At the same time, this book spells out a substantial argument that points out the arbitrariness of disciplinary divisions, culturally imposed and thus paradoxically self-explanatory, and, at the same time, the overrated importance of the uniqueness of one’s disciplinary discourse/voice whose externally inscribed rigidity castrates the joyfulness of any science.

⁶ This small village nearby the city of Šibenik is Grgas’s place of birth.

⁷ As an expert on spatiality, Grgas wrote a noted study. *Ispisivanje prostora: Čitanje suvremenog američkog romana* [Writing Space: A Reading of the Contemporary American Novel], Zagreb, 2000.

⁸ I introduced the term *po-ethical* in the 1990s, and I used it in my book *A Central Europe of our Own* which first came out in Rijeka (Adamić, 2003).

the experience of a place which has been to me experiential, significant not only because I think that experience merits to be written about but also because I believe that the manner in which the experience of homeplace has been written about falsifies its complexity” (1).⁹

Grgas’s ruminations about the title of his most recent study that included many versions reflect this po-ethical take. The experience of a place *in res* is not the center of Grgas’s search *in verbis*. The center instead is the manner in which that experience is oftentimes written. Micro-historian¹⁰ Renato Serra, relating the departure of a group of soldiers for Libya, writes about biases that not only surround but determine memory. He admits that there are people who, *in bona fide*, imagine and believe that a document can describe reality. But in his opinion, all any document can relate is the document itself. And the reason for this is simple: a document is a fact. A (forthcoming) battle is another fact (an infinity of facts), and these two entities can never become identical—they cannot become one. A man who acts upon something (an event, a situation . . .) is a fact. A man who tells a story about another man who acts upon something is, again, another fact . . . The same goes for places and for memories of places. Whenever one writes of a place, especially through filters of time, some kind of (self-)censorship arises as a limitation. The paradox of this limitation is that this (self-)censorship sees itself as an enrichment of a sort—as an orderly story of the past that deserves to be written about because of the past event’s uniqueness. This writing is not based on depicting the past “as it was”; quite the contrary, it is ornamented, edited . . . in a word—censored. The awareness of the fact that, once written into existence through the media of language, a place as a topic of writing becomes transformed and reappears not as that place anymore but as one’s experience of it, as the newness of the place made Grgas rethink the terminology of spatiality. Determined not to falsify the complexity of place, Grgas gave up the already existing spatial and geographic terminology and replaced the term *homeplace* with the term *neohomeplace*.¹¹ In the same vein, Grgas introduces yet another terminological change. In the same way that he is uncertain whether he can differentiate the trueness of a homeplace from falsifications of its complexity, he asserts that, due to the fact that he is not certain whether or not he could undoubtedly ascertain what is and what is not poetry, in framing the genre of his book and circumscribing the space for his po-ethical voice, he opts for *verses* instead of poems.

Experience II: The Collective Life in a Place: Topophilia vs. Topophobia

Regardless of the genre, writing is to a great extent playing with language. And, at the same time, with reality. It is interesting that the overall treatment of reality in *Homeplace* reflects Grgas’s understanding of reality as related in his scholarly work.

⁹ Due to the fact that I am reading from a yet unpublished book, I am using the pagination as it appears in the manuscript.

¹⁰ I borrow the term *microhistory* from the Italian intellectual Carlo Ginzburg.

¹¹ In Croatian it sounds slightly different: *zavičaj-pseudozavičaj*.

In both cases, reality is collectivity enclosed within spatial and temporal coordinates (Grgas). Aware of the striking similarities between his poetic and scholarly facets of reality, Grgas warns the reader of his *verses* not to expect to find either geography or history in his “neohomely” spatial poetry. Then, without any intention of confusing the audience, he confesses,

True to say, what follows is both a geography and a history but something else also: I write about place and time through the prism of personal experience, an experience which has been mediated by reading experience, by dialogues with others, by lived experience and by memory. If empathy with a collectivity presupposes a dedication to a place and its inhabitants, it also marks a reckoning with its restrictions, a stepping out of its givens and its disciplinary practices. I see the origins of what I hoped to achieve with this book as deriving from somewhere between identification with and an aversion towards a collective life, somewhere between topophilia and topophobia. (1)

In order to understand Grgas’s po-ethical interventions that prepare his readership to grasp the connections between external inscribing and essentialist assumptions of the existence of *spacetime* as well as links between locality and collectivity, some contextualization is needed. As far as our homeland is concerned, the official history-in-the-making that started in the 1990s, along with the wars that struck the Yugoslavian successor states, made remembering the distant past an imperative. Caught in the restructuring of the present, the citizens of all the new nation states that came into being after Yugoslavia was dismantled were expected to “remember” what happened a thousand years ago but were not allowed to remember what took place only a few years ago. The distant past was politically forged as real and near, while the content of the (vanishing) present was marked with words such as “ex-” or “former.” Since Croats were seen as having been the prisoners of the Balkan version of internationalist communism in Titoist Yugoslavia, we were expected to exercise a substitution of remembered facts. The pure and true Croatian “identity” marked by the coronation of our first king, Tomislav, which took place in the year 925, became a demarcation point of the supposedly uninterrupted continuity of national memory that was mobilized in forging a new nation-state—a state that was not a successor state of the First or Second Yugoslavia but a “natural” continuation of its arch-identitarian event that, while skipping centuries of Croatia’s history, naturally continued to live after the 1990s. This is a unique example of simultaneous continuity-in-discontinuity that, while escaping logic, feeds itself purely on symbolic and mythical meanings. This invention-of-tradition process has a name: the “fulfillment of our thousand-year-old dream.”¹²

¹² Does this mean that, after centuries of hibernation, of not being who we are, we finally became who we were all the time (clandestinely though) before we came into being as the collective and individual true “us”? This inspires me to pose the question: *Who we were before we became us?* And this question

Perceiving the modern state as the reincarnation of its medieval matrix, which obviously could wake up from its millennial coma untouched by history and time, one cannot possibly question the very complex problem of the solidity/fragility of *identity-in-time*. Also, the imperative of originality, authenticity . . . the question of who came where first, and thus, whose in fact was the territory they settled, occupied, founded . . . is simply of no use. It is useless for the present to the same extent that it has been useless for historical narratives construed to “legitimize” our Oedipal claim to “our” soil. Even though immersed in questions of space-writing, of spatiality, aware of the importance of the territory in forging identities, Grgas, both in theory and in poetry, disclaims essentialist myths of originality and glorified collectivity. Using bitter irony in *verses*, he hopes to remedy those dangerous myths:

Were those who tended the livestock/Morlaks/were they Vlachs/were they
Croats /Serbs or Albanians /who gives a damn/just as those drovers /lost no
sleep/on account of those who had lived there before them (4)¹³

Such poetic juxtaposition of myths and the rough reality of migrations, driven by empty stomachs more than by a quest of founding collective selves, continues in Grgas’s corrective takes on the oftentimes overseen but real discrepancies between real reasons that made people, tribes, or nations migrate and romanticized falsifications of their basic needs:

If there had been an errand here/by command of either man or God/say
some decree given by a powerful lord/or some kind of exodus/it would be
remembered by archives/or at least in our oral heritage//Nothing, no such
things are to be found here//We came to the peninsula under the command
of our stomachs /the order to move was given/by the dull looks/of hungry
children/in their island misery/by the howling of beasts/on the craggy slopes
//Therefore when you probe into the darkness of the past/voices of your
kin and forefathers/will not reach your expecting ears/but the rumblings of

subsequently leads to the crucial identitarian question here: *Is there such a thing as “us” at all?* Especially seen in such essentialist modes? As for the public treatment of the *millennial dream* (or our hibernation) here are some illustrations of the continuities and discontinuities of “us-ness.” It is interesting that, in spite of many changes in national, social, and societal contexts (such as changes in governments ranging from nationalists to social democrats then back to extreme right wing nationalists [2015] entering NATO and the EU . . .) our identitarian terminology did not change in 25 years of Croatian independence. Quite the contrary: with the extreme right-wing rhetoric and mob-like practice of nationalism that marks our recent politics, such rhetoric grew even stronger, and, as I write this essay, it pollutes our present in the name of our past. Such a “future in the past” paradox is contained in the assumption that the re-birth of an entirely new nation essentially depends on its own reincarnation.

¹³ Jesu li tu stoku gonili Morlaci/jesmo li mi oni Vlasi/jesu li to bili Hrvati/Srbi ili Albaneži/meni je svejedno/kao što ni ti stokogoniči nisu marili/za one koji su tu bili prije njih

hunger/the howling of beasts/that we inherit/like all the other folk of the
Dalmatian Karst (11)¹⁴

Experience III: A Place of One's Own: Poetics of Modesty/Poetics of Bestiality

Official history in fact is to a great extent a patriarchal myth of nationalism.¹⁵ The fact that Grgas in his *verses* applies the Nietzschean model of genealogy enriched with Foucauldian understandings of counter-memory as the infrastructure of counter-history does not need further elaboration.¹⁶ It is impossible to avoid polyperspectivism—to see things through a crushed mirror. It is fruitless to look for the Truth because it cannot be grasped in its fullness. One can only grasp parts of it. Despite the fact that a curious and ideologically disinterested intellectual knows that s/he can deal only with slivers, s/he needs to remain interested and ask questions such as, What is 'truth' here and now? In so doing, s/he substitutes final and essentialist categories such as Good and Evil with more humane ones, such as acceptable and unacceptable or correct and incorrect.

In the later period of his work on territoriality, Grgas includes not only complex coastal lines but also the sea. In his *Homeplace*, he makes clear that the celebratory cant about the Croatian littoral covers up its faithful rendering. And that this celebratory process in fact erases true experiences making them uniform and in so doing fal-

¹⁴ Da je ovdje bilo kakvog poslanja/po nalogu čovjeka ili boga/recimo nekakvog dekreta velmože/nekakvog egzodusa/pamtili bi ih pismohrana/ili makar usmena predaja/Ne, ovdje nema ništa od toga/Na poluotok smo stigli po diktatu želuca/nalog su izdali tupi pogledi/gladne djece/u otočkom uboštvu/zavijanje zvjeradi/u kraškoj vrleti/Stoga kada pustite sondu u mrak prošlosti/do načuleni ušiju/neće doprijeti/pri-san glas srodnika i pretka/nego glasje gladi i zavijanje zvijeri/koje baštinimo/kao sva čeljad dalmatinskog krša.

¹⁵ It is interesting that, while I was writing this part of the essay somewhere in Ireland, three skeletons were found. They were 10,000 years old. After a forensic analysis, the expert concluded that none of the three ancient Irish skeletons are of Celtic origin. The question they asked in an anecdotal way, though, was, What is the future of the Irish past that makes the fabric of their future? Will the NBA basketball team *Boston Celtics* retain their name after the discovery that Irish might not be Celtic at all? And does this relate to our identitarian dilemmas over our Illyrian, Slavic, or (according to some) even Persian origin? Definitively seen as Slavs (and slaves) in the holes in the wall in Astoria, NY, where Grgas spent his young adult years, could the migrants from his homeplace care less about their true origins? Such random intrusions of fact into the bubbles of identity forging question the very use value of our perpetual searches for authenticity. They ridicule the importance of originality, they laugh at questions such as whose is the land, who landed where first . . . because answers to those questions really do not offer the answer to the question of who we are. Not to forget: The Irish, for the time being provisional, discovery of the non-Celtic origin of the skeletons took place on St. Patrick's Day. Steve's first published scholarly work was on W. B. Yeats (and F. Nietzsche). I would rather think of it as a joyful coincidence than a historical or identitarian errand.

¹⁶ It actually seems that Grgas writes his verses fully cognizant of the interplay between concepts of genealogy (F. Nietzsche), archeology of knowledge (M. Foucault), microhistory (C. Ginzburg), and metahistory (H. White). This is just an educated hint and my objectively founded belief. Elaborating on these interrelations would require an entirely new essay.

sifies “the human experience of the Adriatic coast and of the broader Mediterranean basin” (Grgas, 11). And he continues, “Doubtlessly there are common features of dwelling on the rim between the sea and the land. But different factors are always in play to make collectivities on the various configurations of the coast live the collision of sea and land in different ways” (11). In his attempt to do *post festum* poetic justice to both the coastal region and the sea, he invokes the quiet but convincing voice of Predrag Matvejević, who in his celebrated study on the Mediterranean said that it “has not written its *poetic of modesty*” (12). While, in excavating the Zablacé experience by substituting the emptiness of facts with a “poetic of bestiality” in his treatment of the sea, Grgas looks for verses that would objectively relate to the past embracing the task of modesty that also derives from Matvejević’s well-known concept of *geopoetics*.¹⁷ Also, the quote I use to illustrate Grgas’s po-ethical conviction to those familiar with the magnificent and modest Claudio Magris’s novel *Un altro mare* summarizes to a great extent its point of departure and place of arrival:¹⁸

Don’t speak to me of *mare nostrum*/mere gibberish/the sea is always foreign/
it always is and will always be/only its own (10)¹⁹

In recent years, we have witnessed sheer folly in coming up with slogans meant to attract tourists to visit our “pearls of the Adriatic.” In a ridiculous shake-and-bake process of inventing tradition, our state-sponsored agencies entered the race without rational rules of attraction. Its goal was to come up with the most seductive slogan. Among the more inane ones was “The Mediterranean as it once was.”²⁰ Aside from the fact that it speaks of the uselessness of the future-in-the-past identitarian process of self-legitimation, it also demonstrates the basic ignorance of the fabric of the past during which the inhabitants of “The Mediterranean as it once was” were not driven here by higher errands, or because they were tired of the dry flatness of the inland but, in their search for their neohomeland, they heeded the voices of their intestines. Constantly aware that he ought not to betray the experience of the homeplace succumbing to the manners in which it has been written about—manners that falsify its

¹⁷ The term *geopoetics* signifies the geo-cultural spaces of the Balkans and the Mediterranean that are multiple-layered, and, to those who want and know how to listen, these spaces disclose sediments of history emphasizing the enchanting beauty of a simultaneous mutuality and difference of traditions, underscore our historical mistakes and misconceptions, while encouraging poets to transmit almost pantheistic registers of Nature.

¹⁸ Thinking of the relation between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, Magris writes: “This sea is Mare Tenebrarum, shapeless and bitter nothingness where nothing happens. Ulysses and the Argonauts sailed the Mediterranean and the Adriatic . . . beyond the Pillars of Hercules stories simply end falling out of the world” (18).

¹⁹ Ma kakvo *mare nostrum*/koješta/more je uvijek tuđe/more je uvijek bilo i bit će/samo svoje.

²⁰ Another slogan that can compete with the former in its feeble-mindedness: “Croatia, a small country for a great vacation.”

complexity, Grgas decided to intervene using the bare and *appellative* codes of poetic language hoping to fulfill the *pragmatic function*²¹ of a poem.

Exhausted/their skin caked with the earth/let them walk home/Before they arrive/turn off the electricity/close the faucets/let them fall asleep dead tired/in the dirt and the sweat of their bodies/After this I guarantee/that not even in their dreams/will they want to visit /the Adriatic as it once was (14)²²

The Experience of Emigration I: Zabláče under the Shadow of America

Like in many other places and many other countries whose socialist/communist ideologies were on a mission to falsify historical facts, turning spontaneous peasant uprisings into working-class revolutions in order to justify the Marxist-Leninist idea of a proletariat as the agent of change, in Zabláče, farm workers suddenly became factory workers. Industrialization and electrification, running water . . . , transformed both the experience of place and time. Because of this, Grgas wholly disagrees “with those who maintain that the experience of factory work, the point at which Zabláče is caught in the process of modernization, contaminates the image of the village. On the contrary. I begin with an evocation of the moment when the person from Zabláče enters the factory gate, when the village becomes networked into a broader configuration” (35).

Aside from the regional and global benefits of entering the network of a broader configuration, those times of imposed but, to a significant extent, also spontaneous and enthusiastic collectivization, Grgas relates, were more human, fuller, freer than the now-dominant mostly nationalist-communitarian and neoliberal pseudo-leftist accounts reinvent them. However, as far as Zabláče is concerned, this period is overshadowed by the experience of emigration: “That is why the Zabláče peninsula is at times depicted as being under the shadow of America” (35). Grgas dedicates an entire section of his *verses* to the post-WWII experience and de-ideologizes it in very convincing ways, claiming that—in spite of all the misunderstandings, mixups, confusions; the plethora of armies that were marching through the area; the drafting and redrafting of individuals who never invited History to enter their privacy—“not ideologies but the geographical location of the village determined what befell the inhabitants” during the war. He writes of the shock and the anger that arises as a reaction to the oversimplification of historical facts (one of them being that Zabláče was marked as “the Chetnik village”). The fact that “many witnesses who had lived through those horrific times” expressed anger and sadness “when confronted with these allegations inspired [Grgas] to try to find words for that experience” (25).

And he does it in *verses* preemptively explaining that the reason for searching for poetic justice comes as a reaction to yet another experience of the place—the fact

²¹ These terms I borrow from the linguist Jan Mukařovski.

²² Trudne i prašnjave/pustite ih da pješače doma/Prije toga isključite struju/zatvorite slavine/neka zaspu mrtvi umorni/u prašini i znoju tijela svoga/Poslije toga više ni u snu/neće htjeti prizvati/Jadran kakav je nekad bio.

“that throughout all these years nobody from the village felt the need to show the said allegations to be unfounded lies. It saddens one even more when you realize that so little effort was needed” (25). But more than once, literary and cultural history, along with the history of ideas, has taught us that, where history as a discipline introduces silence, poetry takes over the task of disclosure and speaks up. And this is why, while preparing the reader for his version of “truth-experience” Grgas underscores (I repeat), “not ideologies but the geographical location of the village determined what befell the inhabitants during the last phases of WWII”:

It would be better in all respects/better for the innocent victim of the evil perpetrator/better for the peace of soul and for the memory of the witness to crime/it would have been so much better/if we didn't have to always explain anew²³

Without any intention to minimize the importance of the post-WWII complexity of the place, aware of the spatial limits of this essay, and cognizant of the prevailing experience of peninsular emigration that indeed overshadowed the post WWII period, I will turn to the partially-biased but “true” image of Zabláče being “under the shadow of America.” As in many other matters, claims Grgas, there are no precise facts about when the emigration of Zabláče folk to the Americas actually began. If there is anything distinct about Zabláče emigration, he underscores, then it is the number of people departing, on the one hand, while on the other, it is the continuous nature of the drainage.²⁴

The Experience of Emigration II: Immigrants Between Longing and Belonging: A Story of Four Apples

Stipe Grgas lived in New York between 1962 and 1969, during, as he says, the formative years of his youth. He visited Greater New York afterwards a number of times, and in his poems he erases the linearity of time, mixing experiences of his youth with those of his later visits. In addition to his own experience, he “gestures to” the accounts of his fellow-villagers who, “unprepared, habituated to a way of life determined by their homeplace, by its land and its islands, each lived through an encounter with the most wondrous of all islands, with Manhattan” (57). It is interesting to point out that in one of his earlier writings devoted to that experience, Grgas began his text with the following words:

a ring of islands has always stood in front of us. They served as shield, they tempted us with their beckoning, they were an obstacle. They truly were

²³ Bilo bi u svakom pogledu puno bolje/bolje za nedužne žrtve zlotvora/bolje za spokoj duše/i pamćenja svjedoka zločina/bilo bi puno bolje/da ne moramo uvijek iznova objašnjavati.

²⁴ People from Zabláče are literally all over the world. They now live in Australia and Canada, while some have lived in South America, but the main two centers of the Zabláče emigrant story are New York and San Pedro, California.

places that separate but that simultaneously challenge us to interact with others, with the world. In the row of islands that encircle the Croatian shore, protecting it but also creating a labyrinth through which one steered to the open sea, Jabuka (Apple) could be considered to be the last obstacle. And how could it be that sailors, in the name of that Adriatic crag, whose disappearance on the horizon signified the breaking of the last ties to the place of intimacy and origin, would not hear the siren-call of the other, big, Apple, the city-island that we, with uncountable other multitudes, headed for with both hope and anxiety. (57)

Hopes, anxieties, great expectation, homesickness . . . the dream of boundless opportunity, of being given a chance to become a new “American man,” fluid as it might be in its altogether elsewhere-ness, was unavoidably fixed in the bittersweet experience of the interplay of distance and closeness. The discussion on interconnectedness between spatial and temporal distance and personal feelings is an ancient one.²⁵ Perhaps the most important insight into the issue that bridges Ancient Greek thought with the Enlightenment is David Hume’s.²⁶ Hume insists that distance in time is superior to distance in space because it does more to weaken both our wills and our passions. When he writes on the moral implications of distance, after asking why distance in general weakens conception and passion, Hume continues to ask, Why is it that distance in time in particular has a greater effect on humans than distance in space? But what is important for the role of spatial (and, consequently temporal) distance in the experience of post-WWII emigration is the one Hume poses immediately afterwards, when he asks why a very great distance (also) increases our esteem and admiration (for an object). We might add, for the people we left behind, too. It is known that very great distance in space along with weakening feelings does increase our esteem and admiration for objects.²⁷ Each and every reasonable human being who has experienced emigration is fa-

²⁵ The first serious discussion can be found in Aristotle (*Rhetoric II, Poetics*). In his writing he favors distance in time as the agency that weakens feelings more than distance in space. Some later discussions, such as those of D. Hume (*Treatise of Human Nature*, “Of Contiguity and Distance in Space and Time”), D. Diderot: *Conversation of a Father with his Children* and *Letter on the Blind* (“On Morality of the Blind”), A. de Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, and most recently, C. Ginzburg, “Killing a Chinese Mandarin: Moral Implications of Distance,” recognize and reevaluate the importance of distance in time, putting its importance next to the importance of the experience of temporal distance.

²⁶ “[T]ho’ distance both in space and time has a considerable effect on the imagination, and by that means on the will and passions, yet the consequences of a removal in *space* are much inferior to those of a removal in *time*. Twenty years are certainly but a small distance of time in comparison of *what history and even the memory of some may inform them of* [my emphasis], and yet, I doubt if a thousand leagues, or even the greatest distance of place this globe can admit of, will so remarkably weaken our ideas, and diminish our passions” (“Of Contiguity and Distance in Space and Time,” 272-73).

²⁷ It is not too brave to assume that a person living, for example, in Rijeka will not bring home a rock from Venice but will be more than tempted to smuggle a stone from Ancient Mesopotamia or Jerusalem (distance in time) or that from Xian, China or some place in New Zealand (distance in space).

miliar with the experience of the interplay between emotional numbness and emotional exaltation when recollecting the homeplace's past or while thinking of the loved ones s/he left behind. Both mechanisms and feelings float above reality and can hardly be remedied or replaced by any item borrowed from the so-called real world. Immigrants can feed on fantasies and imagination, but just like their decentered centers, they do not have a palpable anchor. The dream of return is usually full of hopes that to some extent correspond with the hopes the immigrant had upon leaving his homeplace. Unlike their initial projections—phantasmic, oftentimes even surreal dreams—that gave them the strength needed to hush down emotions hard to control when leaving the homeplace, the hopes of return are definite, calm; they call for a closure . . . but, in most cases, they end up being unfulfilled. The question is: who changed in the meantime? Who or what became different between the departure and the return: was it a person or was it a place? These questions cannot be answered. And Grgas is perfectly aware of this when he writes about such experiences of displaced dreams of return. He writes of his uncle Josip, the emigrant and the returnee, on two occasions. First depicting his departure,

When before departure you embraced me/an embrace that still lingers/I
didn't know/that you knew/this to be your last parting with our shore (51)²⁸

And then his return,

My mother planted/an apple tree/in the part of our front yard/that in time
became my uncle's//My uncle loved that apple tree/sat in its shade/picked
up the apples fallen to the ground//When I once visited my uncle/on 49th
street in Astoria/New York/coming there from upstate Ithaca//more exile
than home/he said that he had already bought his plane ticket/that he could
hardly wait/to sit under his apple tree (52)²⁹

But he returned too late. Upon his return, being caught between longing and belonging, he spent only two days sitting under the tree. After he died he lost not only his two continents, his tale of his two cities; he also lost his name as the final frontier of his identity conundrum. Whenever they talk about Josip, those who survived him do not call him Josip any more. They “came to call him Apple.” Returning from the Big Apple that never became his, to sit under the apple that had ceased to be his, dead, the person formerly known as Josip symbolically survives scattered around the untended apple remains that cover the ground “like the footsteps/of the master of the house/making his weary way home” (52).

²⁸ Kada si me na rastanku čvrsto zagrlio/nisam znao/da si ti znao/da je to tvoj zadnji oproštaj od naše obale

²⁹ Moja je mater/u dijelu vrta/koje je kasnije pripalo stricu/posadila jabuku//Stric je volio tu jabuku/sjedio u njezinu hladu/skupljao plodove/koji su padali na tlo/Kada sam onomad iz Ithace/nipošto doma/rekao bih svojevrsnog izгона/posjetio strica u 49. ulici u Astoriji/u kući koja mi je nekoć bila dom/pričao mi je kako je već kupio avionsku kartu/kako jedva čeka da sjedne/ispod svoje jabuke

The Experience of Emigration III: Zabláće Between *eu topos* and *ou topos*

Along with its memory in the immigrant experience, Zabláće continues to exist in the gap between an ideal place (*eu topos*) and no place (*ou topos*). New New Yorkers, new San Pedro men, new Toronto Dalmatians all have one thing in common: they live on the hyphen. Both distance in time and in space plays a cruel game of closeness and distance, placing the majority of them in between two impossibilities: while yearning to be at home in the world, they end up being altogether elsewhere. The question who we are without our piece of land becomes acute in the immigrant experience. That emotional fact of immigrant inquisitorial experience by no means glorifies, romanticizes, or exaggerates the essentialist imagery of the a priori uncontested values inscribed to one's homeplace. The fact that this is an experience without that inscription does not mean that it, as an experience, does not exist. Grgas writes about that experience in an almost archival, diagnostic mode, taking the anamnesis of the experience of a multiple displacement.

If you typed in the surnames/what will appear on the screen is a net/that outlines how we stand/in the world at large/in the Big Apple/in San Pedro/ in freezing Toronto/in the Australian nowhere//How can Zabláće keep up with these cities/The enfeebled knot on this net/Zabláće will seep through its meshes/become a non-place/while you on outside points of the net/will still dream of returning/to a place that no longer exists (59)³⁰

In spite of sameness in difference, of various possibilities to find similar or almost identical things, situations, settings, on the other side of Atlantic, some items are not translatable; silenced by the rough rules of survival. All that is needed for survival for immigrants seems to reside within the limited scope of fast and small talk. Small and superficial talk replace meaningful and intellectually engaged conversation. And, as time goes by, this externally limited space of utterance circumscribes the boundaries of their daily life. What reduces the lives of immigrants to survival is the following: if you, as an immigrant, want to go on with living, you must survive in a rough environment of early liberal capitalism, a habitat you never had the chance to encounter in your homeplace. This is definitely not something you expected to befall you as a core ingredient of your American Dream.

Chased by hostile (usually Irish) foremen, "our people" had no time to reflect— Not even to exchange a word or two mentioning familial symbols that could have fed the remnants of their memory of home:

³⁰ Utipkaš li prezimena u tražilicu/na zaslonu će se pojaviti mreža/koja ocrtava kako stojimo /u domaji i u svijetu/u Velikoj Jabuci/u San Pedru/u promrzlom Torontu/u nigdini Australije//Kako da se Zabláće nosi s tim gradovima/Sve krhkiji čvor na mreži/ono će iscuriti kroz njezina okna/postati nemjesto/dok ćete vi na vanjskim kracima mreže/još sanjati povratak mjestu/kojega više nema

Neither lavender/nor rosemary ever found mention/in Hell's Kitchen/the fields in the old country rarely/the sea and the coast never/The talk was of loading and unloading /cargo/of Irish foremen/that gave them work/after inspecting their muscles/after assessing the prowess of neck/hands (61)³¹

The personal experience of an immigrant worker was not so different,

When harbors were still harbors/and longshoreman still relied on their muscles/before containers/before computers /the longshoremen from Zabláče/spilled out from the piers of the greatest of all harbors/headed for the New York boroughs/exhausted/moping/stupefied/after days of loading/unloading cargo//The docks were a school/in which Irish foremen taught the lesson/here you see nothing/here you hear nothing/don't even think of telling anyone/about what we do here /Marlon Brando/in that film about longshoremen/wears their clothes/has a hook/hanging on his belt/a man-killing hook/but Marlon Brando is not the longshoreman/ who unsteadily walks/down 49th street in Astoria/with a lobster/wrapped around his waist (62)³²

And often times their return, even if it is presented as an ultimate success to the folks back home, turns out to be a returnee's failure illustrated in particular anecdotal episodes that contain his continual disconnection. Such surprising impossibility to reach an imagined connection with the (obviously projected) essence of the homeplace—a lost unity with one's (obviously former) self, manifests itself in a disjointed line of grotesque experiences that entertain the village folk:

(He) did not brag about women/Short but sturdily built/he was the perfect stowaway/hidden amongst the bags in the hold of the ship/He carried cement bags on New York construction sites/drudged and slaved on the waterfront/worked and saved/Tenth Avenue does not remember him//I'll say two things about him:/After returning to the old country/he bought a Mercedes Benz/became the terror of local roads/until he crashed/and landed with his car/on a counter in a butcher shop/When he gave up the

³¹ U njujorkškoj Kuhinji Pakla/nisu se spominjali levanda /niti ružmarin/polja tek ovlašno/more i obala nikako/Govorilo se o istovaru i utovaru/irskim nadzornicima/koji su im davali posao/po izgledu mišićja/po procjeni snage vrata/ruku

³² Dok su luke još bile luke/dok su lučki radnici još koristili mišićja prije kontejnera i kompjutera/iz dokova najviše od sviju luka/razmislili bi se zabláčki lučki radnici/po njujorškim kvartovima/iscrpljeni/sneni /omamljeni/nakon višednevnog ukrcaja/istovara//Dokovi su bili škola/u kojoj su Irci nadglednici naukovali/ovdje niste ništa vidjeli/ovdje niste ništa čuli/da vam ni na pamet padne/zucnuti nešto o našoj radoti// Marlon Brando/u filmu o lučkim radnicima/nosi njihovu odjeću/za pojasom mu je kuka/kuka ubojita/ali Marlon Brando nije doket/koji nesigurna koraka/hoda 49. ulicom u Astoriji/s jastogom/omotanim oko pasa

steering wheel/he would say that it was because of age/because of his leg veins (63)³³

A Linguistic Turn I: Alien Skies / Sheltering Words

As Hayden White claims, history is not only an object one can study: “It is also, even primarily a certain relationship to ‘the past’ mediated by a distinctive kind of written discourse . . . a historical discourse is actualized in its culturally significant form as a specific kind of writing that we may consider the relevance of literary theory to both the theory and the practice of historiography . . .” (*Figural Realism*, 19). When he explains his metahistorical method, White underscores that forms of (meta)historical discourse are, in their nature, poetic because they ascribe and secure explanation and meaning to the historical facts. In history writing, White claims, all the results of literary imagination are opposed to the written material, which itself is a result of a search for historical truths. Historical imagination can be a venue for interpreting the meaning of historical data, but at the same time, it can serve as a veil that covers the absence of former facts. Regardless of its premise, the historical imagination is crucial to re-membering the dis-membered data, and is the most efficient way to enter the mental dynamics of historical figures we are curious to meet. In his further explanation of metahistory, White connects modes of writing, stating that “history is a form of literary expression, just like poetry—neither its subject nor its theory or methodology are purely historic” (*Figural Realism*, 1). The pragmatic value one can extract from White’s method is that it (a) weakens the widely accepted (modernist) idea that one must trust history because it serves a higher purpose, (b) reminds us that language, not reason or experience, is essential in knowledge (truth) production, and (c) warns that, if we are willing to decenter centers of official History we must be equipped with the apparatus needed to initialize practical interrogations of both the role and essentiality of power.

Grgas’s poetic work in supplementing the preexisting experiences as related through histories of his homeplace to a great extent confirms Hayden White’s learned convictions and echoes his interpretations of relating past experiences. Grgas’s treatment of historic experience stems from White’s “hybridization” of History in a specific linguistic turn where history is perceived as a form of literary expression: *just like poetry*. Again, neither history’s subject nor its theory or methodology are purely historical. Language, not reason or experience, is essential in knowledge (truth) production. And it comes as no surprise that Grgas in his *Homeplace* employs poetic language to (a) translate the subject he studied because it was the subject he first dreamed about into its supplementary mode and (b) to rewrite the disciplinary (historical) discourse

³³ Drugi se nije hvastao ženama/Nizak i stamen/bio je savršeni slijepi putnik/skriven među vrećama u štivi Vreće cementa teglio je na njujorškim gradilištima/crnčio na dokovima/radio i štedio/Nije ga zapamtila Deseta avenija//Dvije ću stvari o njemu pribilježiti:/Nakon povratka u stari kraj/kupio je “Marcedez”/ bio strah i trepet ovdašnjih cesta /dok se nije slupao/i s autom završio u “u mesnicu”/Kada je odustao od /ćorava posla/napustio volan/objašnjavao je/da je to zbog vena

of a place the experience of which merits to be written about, because he believes “that the manner in which the experience of homeplace has been written about falsifies its complexity.” The porous borders of disciplines that bring historical, theoretical, and poetic expression close to each other make Hayden White conclude that there is no accurate or truthful history that, at the same time, is not a philosophy of history. The overall textual evidence I found in Grgas’ poetry manuscript suggests the following “translation” of White’s statement: there is no accurate or truthful history that, at the same time, is not a poetry of history. And by history here I imagine an inclusive and open field that invites all the segments of Grgas’s theoretical work on space, land, waters, territories, their economies, ethnographies, semantics . . . whose common denominator is history (of literature, of philosophy, of ethnography, of geography, of hydrography, of travels . . .).

The essential role of language not only in knowledge or truth production but also in finding/reinventing one’s place in the world (especially after the experience of displacement) is written in the following verses:

We shrouded ourselves in a word/torn up from a language we didn’t know/
sewed ourselves into it/and became *pipecovers*//day in and day out/we covered/heating pipes/all kinds of pipes/miles upon miles of pipes/in New York school cellars/in hospital cellars/in the labyrinth of the New York subway//
later we tore down/mile upon mile/of these asbestos coverings/mute astronauts/on the moon/of man-killing dust//fiberglass stifles/fiberglass eats/at lungs/voice/so that if for the pipecover/over the red-hot boiler/I can say Hephaestus/what can I say/for the Puerto Rican superintendent/who cools his bum/behind the open fridge door/every once in a while brings to his lips/a bottle of Bacardi rum/is he watching/or is he laughing at us/pipecovers/and at our hellish business (67)³⁴

A Linguistic Turn II: I Name You Therefore You Are (Mine): A Story of Pipecovers

The word here is not only a communicational item but also a shield from the alien world of alienated labor that unifies all the difference of people whose destiny was made manifest by others—this time literally by those who came (t)here first. In this poem, this is a Puerto Rican whose date of arrival, closeness to the host land, the political role of his homeland as the U.S. dominion, and the linguistic familiarity of

³⁴ Pokrili smo se riječju/isčupanom iz nama nepoznatog jezika/ušili u nju/i postali/jednom riječju/*pajpkoveri*/danju i noću smo pokrivali/grijne/i druge cijevi/milje i milje cijevi/njujorških školskih podruma/podruma bolnica/labirinata podzemne željeznice/kasnije smo iste azbestne ovojnice/milju po milju čupali/nečujni astronauti/na mjesecu/ljudomorne prašine//staklena vuna guši – staklena vuna nagriza/nagriza pluća i glas/pa ako za cijevopokrivača/nad usijanim bojlerom – i mogu reći Hefest – što reći za domarportorikanca/koji guzicu hladi/iza odškrinutih vrata frižidera/svako malo ustima prinosi bocu/Bacardi ruma/gleda li/ili se to smješka/nama pajpkoverima/i našoj paklenoj raboti

Spanish or Spanglish in New York, makes him privileged among the wretched. People from Zabláće were known for covering pipes in the New York underworld. And they, as the voice suggests, shrouded themselves in that word: *pipecover*—the word torn up from a language they didn't know but in spite of their linguistic limitations they sewed themselves into it and gradually became the very word they did not invent: *Pipecovers*. And “day in and day out” they covered heating pipes working under the asphalt of New York. They did not name themselves. Others named them arbitrarily. And this external signifying of their individual and collective selves did not only strip them of their individuality but also made them their namer's property on more than a symbolic level.³⁵ *Pipecovers* were someone else's property being at the will and whim of foremen, those *capos* that were there to fence out first small territories of the American dream that for the underprivileged usually stretched between the proscribed and prescribed. Seen in such a context, they were not only alienated from the results of their work, they were not only deprived of joy that a labor based on free choice is supposed to bring, but also their labor itself was someone else's commodity.³⁶ And it is no surprise that, in his later work in American Studies, Grgas focuses on the triad of capital, spatiality, identity! Because this is the Holy Trinity of ingredients that define the struggle between settling, exploitation, and existence that can be found in the poem above.

Language was not only their shield. It was also a ticket to the world. A free pass whose energy could enable one to climb out from the pipe-covered underworld and bring him to the surface—into the light.

Every time I type in my PIN/and wait for the ooze of bills/on the cash machine /that put me more and more into debt/I recall the longshoreman/and the boy next to his side/on their way to the sanctuary/of Chase Manhattan bank on Steinway /I recall them in line before the Law of the Father/and the longshoreman telling the boy/be good in school/and you will not wear this rough cloth/but will stand on the other side of the bank teller's window//The longshoreman was shrewd/and wise /he sent the boy /who did not know English /to a school for children with special needs/asked tenants in his building to teach the boy/*this is a dog! this is a cat! the dog chases the cat!* and the boy entered the language/found work in a supermarket/because he was good at math/knew his divisors/dividends//It might have been better/ if the boy continued this line of work/it might have been better if the longshoreman/took the boy by the hand to the waterfront/recommended him to

³⁵ The French sociolinguist Jean Louis Calvet, writing on the French colonization of Algeria, stated that the right to name is the linguistic counterpart to the right to possess.

³⁶ There is a wonderfully precise and moving word in Spanish that describes the alienation of labor: *anejo*. In her song *Maria Lando*, Peruvian singer and activist Susana Baca sings of a manual laborer who works “day in and day out” states that her labor does not belong to her. In Spanish it reads: *y su trabajo es anejo*. The rum-sipping Puerto Rican from the poem, beyond reasonable doubt, knows the meaning of the word.

the foremen from Hell's Kitchen/if the boy had not taken to words/become enchanted with stories/that the longshoremen would find hard to understand/that he would not forgive him/because that boy now stands before the Law of the Father/that has devoured the son/and the Holy Spirit and because he knows that words and stories have no place/under the tyranny of the Law/and is at a loss /what to leave as testament/besides this oozing /this expiration of date/which is not in great demand/on the market of life (70)³⁷

Toward the Conclusion: At Home in the Words

To everyone who is familiar with the professional aspects of Stipe Grgas's work, it is crystal clear that the story of the language that, in its beginning needed crutches to free the tongue so eager to utter, has a happy end. This however, does not mean that it had a happy content all along. His work in theory and his existential experience definitely made Grgas aware that *language* liberates. But, as a *poeta doctus*, he cannot stop asking himself whether *language* is also a curse? He actually spelled it out: "It might have been better/if the boy continued this line of work/it might have been better if the longshoreman/took the boy by the hand to the waterfront/recommended him to the foremen from Hell's Kitchen/if the boy had not taken to words/become enchanted with stories..." But he did take the boy out! And because of this mediated "outing," that boy now "stands before the Law of the Father/that has devoured the son/and the Holy Spirit" and "he knows that words and stories have no place/under the tyranny of the Law." Well, what did the boy expect from words to begin with, a reader prone to irony may ask. Was it not enough that words more than anything else brought him to the surface? Would it have been better if the wise and determined longshoreman did not send "the boy who did not know English to a school for children with special needs"? That he did not ask tenants in his building to teach the boy English? Would that boy be happier today if he never entered the language? These questions are not meant to be answered. They are meant to be written about.

But the boy knows that the language (like the boy) is not one. And that without the language the boy, in an effort to look at himself today, could never have revisited his former self. It would be impossible without language(s) whose creative energy

³⁷ Svaki put kada utipkam PIN/pa na bankomatu čekam curak novčanica/kojim dublje zaglibljujem u dug/vrate mi se lučki radnik i dječak/na putu u svetište banke Chase na Steinwayu/vrate mi se u redu pred Zakonom Oca/u kojemu lučki radnik kaže dječaku/uči i nećeš nositi trliš/stajat ćeš s one strane pulta// Lučki je radnik bio promoćuran/dječaka nemušta jeziku/poslao u školu/za djecu s posebnim potrebama/anagažirao stanare svoje kuće/da pouče dječaka/*this is a dog/this is a cat/the dog chases the cat*/pa je dječak ušao u jezik/kasnije u katoličku gimnaziju/dobio posao blagajnika u samoposluzi/jer je bio znalac/znao je dijeliti/s dva/s tri//Bilo bi možda bolje da je dječak nastavio to raditi/bilo bi možda još bolje da je lučki radnik/pod ruku odveo dječaka u njujoršku luku/preporučio ga nadzornicima sa Zapadne strane/a ne da se dječak pomami za riječima/pričama/koje mu lučki radnik ne bi oprostio/jer nekadašnji dječak sada stoji sučelice Zakonu Oca/koji je pojeo i sina/i Duha svetoga/i jasno mu je da riječi i priče nemaju mjesta/pod tiranijom Zakona, /pa ne zna što bi mogao zavještiti/osim curenja/ovog isteka roka trajanja/koje ne kotira bogzna kako/na tržištu života

was essential in rewriting the boy's experience of former places, former times, former people. The wise and shrewd longshoreman put his life on hold and extended it as a favor of sorts to the second generation. And this was a usual practice among responsible and life-experienced laborers—with those who understood the cruel fabric of economic emigration. Because he remained deprived of a language, the longshoreman could never have told us his story. In order to do so, he had to borrow a voice. It is a happy coincidence that he had the voice to borrow from. The same voice he, at the expense of his lifelong silence, first lent to the boy years ago meandering through the pipelike darkness of their shared underworld. And this voice, along with the content of longshoreman's unuttered experience, is in front of us, articulated in the *Homeplace*.

Conclusion: The I-voice of the Verses: Tongue, Speech, Language

And it comes as no surprise that “the Boy” treasures language, writing, and speech that enabled him to reconfigure (to the best of his abilities) traumatic experiences that shrouded his multiple self in words. Now not torn anymore from a language he does not know but carefully chosen from languages and registers familiar to him. Toward the end of the book, in its final section, in which he frees his voice to the point of intimacy, creating the *I-voice of verses* whose “position is mapped not only by the inevitability of the passing of time and process of aging over which the I-voice has no command or control,” Grgas returns to language. Aware of his voice's centripetal “nature,” he uses the allegory of tongue as a muscle to single out the site of his poetic, existential, experiential, and professional essence.

When that hour finally arrives/when the all-too-human catches up with me/do not weep/do not keen/but /please/don't make it a feast/Don't cut branches on the palm tree/spare it/spare marble/there are enough crosses on Makala's field/Don't sing about shallows and crags/let the trumpeter take a day off/Be tight with money/you'll need it/I don't need a priest/forget about the stonemason/Don't prepare a wake/let those who followed the coffin/disperse/go back to the briscola table/maybe someone will remember/the fighting fullback on the Krš playing field/Tear up a bush of bramble/let the red earth show/in that red earth/dig a furrow/a hole/Lay my body in that hole/open the jaws/put between the gums/a pebble with bits of earth/so that I'll have something to suck on³⁸ Put a pack-saddle next the corpse/clodhoppers/white cloth-socks/a pickaxe/trowel/suchlike tools of our earth-bound craft/If you really must/right next the skull/stick a plate of Benkovac rock/so that there'll be no confusion about place of origin (97)³⁹

³⁸ Emphasis mine.

³⁹ Kada kućne i taj čas/kada me sustigne ono sasma ljudsko/nemojte žalovati/ali nemojte ni feštati//Poštedite palminu granu/poštedite mramor/križeva je ionako puno na Makalinoj zemlji/Ne pjevušite mi o škrapama i valu/trubač neka uzme slobodno//Uštedite/trebat će vam/Ne treba mi svećenik/zaboravite na kamenoresca/Ne priređujte sedminu/neka se povorka razide/neka se vrate briškuli/možda se netko sjeti požrtvovnog

Coming back to the future, at the point of departure, Grgas once more emphasizes the essentiality of tongue/speech/language,

let the spittle in the mouth dry up/in the mouth in which I now suck and roll/the language that I once forgot/the language that I've here forced to speak/between oblivion and remembrance/the language that I've here/let mutter (98)⁴⁰

The multiplying game of mutuality, of giving, borrowing, landing . . . communicating . . . living the experience of collectivity be it in chosen or assigned places . . . tends to result in splitting selves. Unlike the wise and shrewd longshoreman who put his life on hold and extended it as a favor of sorts to the second generation and quit thinking of the parameters of his voluntary loss, Stipe Grgas, then the boy on the receiving side, these *verses* suggest, still lives the experience of a divided self. Being an exemplary organic intellectual who was educated on two continents and decided to return home to share his knowledge with “his own” for many years (it seems, at least) he suppressed his desire to write poetry. Or at the very least, to share what he clandestinely wrote with a circle of friends.

Although the experience of his practice of theory now supplemented with poetry does not suggest a feeling of alienation, there is a moment in the manuscript that might be more confessional than any other simply because it is, unlike the rest of his “confessions,” implicit. It tells us a story of an experience of a conversation with his friend Miroslav Mićanović, a poet, who, during one of their walks, tells him:

Croatian poets do their job on the side/steal from the morn/steal from the night/steal from their employers/steal from their wives/steal from their children /I am not a Croatian poet/but I also work on the side/and say/that measured by robberies in Croatia/this is not a steal/that needs to be fussed about (104)⁴¹

Each and every one of us who writes poetry in a country whose politics of culture firmly believes that writing is a hobby has asked this question at least a dozen times. Hardly anyone, anyplace, anywhere in the known world can make a living writing poetry. And, for a poet, it is good to have a day job. Steve does have one and does

braniča na Kršu/Iščupajte pokoju draču/razotkrite crvenicu/u njoj iskopajte raku//U tu crvenicu položite tijelo/razjapite čeljust//između desni stavite kamen sa zemljanim mrvicama/da mogu nešto cuclati// Uz tijelo položite samar/suknene bičve/lašun i motiku//Ako već morate/kod uzglavlja zabodite ploču benkovačkog kamena/da ne bude zabune oko porijekla

⁴⁰ neka presuši /pljuvačka u ustima/u kojima cuclam jezik koji sam jednom zaboravio/jezik koji sam ovdje silio/progovoriti između zaborava i sjećanja/silio /da promuća

⁴¹ Hrvatski pjesnici svoj posao rade u fušu/otmu od jutra/otmu od noći/potkradaju poslodavce/kradu od žene/kradu djeci//Ja nisam hrvatski pjesnik/ali radim i u fušu/i kažem/da po mjerilima hrvatskih pljački/ovo nije bila bogzna kakva otimačina

it remarkably well. But still, in order to write (although he would say he was not a poet), he has to steal from the day, steal from the night . . . the feeling is familiar. The open question that closes this essay is the following: if he were to start it all over, what would he do? Would he write theory or would he write poetry . . . , or would he, as he does now, do both? This question is not supposed to be answered. Among other reasons, because it has just been written about.

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CROATIA, AMERICA, HISTORY

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Capitalism beneath the Mythical Beginning:¹ The “Discovery” of America as a Topic of Twentieth-Century Croatian Literature

To hell with such an achievement! You want me to sell natives with you?
To become a stockbroker? To establish a joint-stock company for the exploitation of Colombia? Ha-ha! Is this the New that I dream of?

Miroslav Krleža, *Kristofor Kolumbo* [Christopher Columbus] 142²

The “Discovery” of America—Myth, History, Fiction

The “discovery”³ of America is one of those grand historical events that has become petrified over time in its mythical significance and epic proportions. The mythical power of the “discovery” is certainly supported by its utopian projections that were

¹ The research for this article was supported by the Croatian Science Foundation in the project IP 2016-06-2613. I would like to thank Professor Stipe Grgas with this essay for his relevant and inspiring insights into the problems of the United States of America and capital(ism) in his books *Ispisivanje prostora: čitanje suvremenoga američkog romana* [Writing Space: A Reading of the Contemporary American Novel] (2000) and *Američki studiji danas: identitet, kapital, specijalnost* [American Studies Today: Identity, Capital, Space] (2014). His reflections on these particular problems far exceed the narrow disciplinary framework of American studies and are relevant for the humanities and social sciences in the broader sense as well as for the understanding of our present cultural and economic moment. In this essay, I want to show how the archives of twentieth-century Croatian literature that portrays some cultural and civilizational aspects of the United States can also be a challenging subject of reflection on the trace of the above-mentioned problematics. One such aspect is the theme of the “discovery” of America, which has an almost mythical framework and whose historical aspects are elaborated in some canonical and some less familiar texts of Croatian literature which until now have not been read from that perspective. The literary topic of “discovery” reveals its historical logic, closely connected with the imagination of capitalism, whose tensions are shaped and represented in the texts selected in this analysis. Some of the aspects of this topic I have already discussed in Kolanović 2014. My previous analysis is now highlighted by some valuable insights from Grgas’s latest book.

² All translations from the Croatian language in this chapter are my own unless otherwise indicated. The titles of books written in Croatian in their first appearance in the text are kept in the original, with the English translation in brackets. I also encourage the readers to check out the original texts, especially the poems.

³ With regard to the terminology used in this essay, it would be more appropriate to talk about the *European* discovery of America, which is why I primarily use the word *discovery* in this essay, regularly putting the term in quotation marks. For the native population that lived on the continent before the arrival of European conquerors, the continent was certainly not discovered. Creation and dissemination of the meaning of “discovery” is part of the problem that I will discuss in this essay.

inscribed in this event before it actually *happened*. According to literary critic Richard Ruland (9), even before it was discovered, “America”⁴ existed as a construct of the European imagination of the “promised land,” the “undiscovered paradise,” the New World, El Dorado, Arcadia, Atlantis and similar utopian fantasies, for example, in the works of Plato, Homer, Plutarch, Dante, and others. This fantasy received actual geographic coordinates when “America,” itself a metaphor, was invented to designate a geographical location of the possible utopia of the New World (Polić-Bobić 43). This “structural precondition for ‘utopic reprocessing’ of the modern world picture” (Blasopoulos 11) has in a way shaped Christopher Columbus’s perception, as well. At the time of his third journey, Columbus was convinced that he had found paradise on earth, as evident from his journal (Columbus). The “imaginative rationality” (Lakoff and Johnson 193) of Columbus’s perception of the paradise on earth which he believed he found on his journey anticipates the perception of “America” in a later period and is largely driven by the imagination from pre-Columbian times. From the very beginning seen as a “paradise,” “big mine,” or later, an “oasis of political freedom,” a land of “great possibilities,” “America” never ceases to generate utopian desires, which means that “our view of America is apparently largely shaped by images of America rather than its reality” (Fischer 45). Thus, in the primordial images of “discovery” of the American continent, we recognize the outlines of the myth of the American dream, the central imaginative narrative of the modern United States. This image of “America,” already inscribed in the topic of the “discovery,” quickly became the literary focus of numerous authors such as Lope de Vega, Friedrich Schiller, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Walt Whitman, Paul Claudel, Pablo Neruda, Ilf and Petrov, Carlos Fuentes, Paul Zumthor, Salman Rushdie, and others.

The “discovery” has long been articulated as a grandiose event, “the largest since the creation of the world,” as claimed by the sixteenth-century historian Francisco Lopez de Gómara (Wilford 355), despite the fact that, even then, critical voices of the Spanish conquest of a new continent were registered, like those of the Dominican priest Bartolomé de Las Casas, who testified to the cruelty of the conquistadors (Casas). Thus, the questioning of the grandeur of this event began to emerge parallel with the mythologization of the “discovery,” pointing to its devastating effects in which the

⁴ The word *America* here dominantly refers to United States of America, and I am deeply aware of the contradictions of that naming. Although the word *America* in its most common official meaning indicates the geographical space of the two continents, it is often reduced as a signifier of the United States of America. As Vladimir Mayakovski (74) lucidly puts it, the USA has definitely annexed the word *America*. Though at first glance the use of the word *America* in this chapter does not seem to change this traditional usage but continues to produce its conceptual inequalities (Sardar and Davies 10), I want to stress that my use of the word *America* when referring to the USA, much like my use of the word *discovery*, primarily implies a cultural and social imagery of the United States of America which stands between the real and the imagined nation, which is also part of the problem discussed in this essay. By putting *America* in quotation marks when referring to the United States, I want to stress that this articulated idea of “America” works in a deconstructive sense as a crossed term: the idea that you cannot think in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought (cf. Hall 358).

“discovery” of something *new* illuminates itself as a continuation of the “familiar story of the rise and power of the West, which began with the expansion of Europe” (Sardar and Davies 137). As an instance of the anti-mythological understanding of the immense importance of the “discovery” of America, we shall also note Marx and Engels, who referred to the “discovery” as a crucial event in the development of capitalism in the *Communist Manifesto*:

Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages. (15)

“Discovery” spelt trouble not only for local inhabitants of the American continent but also native people from other continents. As Grgas (259) notes further, “for African Americans the New World was not a place of redemptive beginning, but it meant ‘rejection, plight, and disaster’” where slaves proved to be the most profitable capital for the conquerors of the New World. These early and more recent deconstructions of the myth of discovery require a more comprehensive inclusion of the genealogy of capitalism in order for the full impact of that historical event to be understood.⁵ That is why the topic of “discovery” and its literary representation in this article will be discussed following the previously elaborated problems which are closely related to this issue lurking beneath its mythical gilding since it is the case that the mythologization was reinforced by its continuous literary articulation. From the sixteenth century on, Columbus was celebrated in poetry and plays as a Christ-like figure, and in Romanticism, he gained the aura of a genius,⁶ which he kept till the beginning of the twentieth century, when a significant rise in the critical literary articulation of the “discovery” in the genres of utopian satire and historiographic metafiction may be observed.

In the context of the demythologization and questioning of “discovery,” the literature of Latin America and the literature of American Indians have particularly important roles which put the issue of the conquerors and the conquered in the center

⁵ As claimed by Grgas (86): “perhaps we could consider the discovery of the New World, the development of the American colonies and the establishment of the new cross-atlantic republic as a ‘spatial fix’ ... that introduced tectonic changes on the world stage and contributed to the supremacy of the West in the last few centuries.” Following Christopher N. Matthews, Grgas also claims that the discovery of America has spread and empowered the interests of commercial capital, offering a space of seemingly unlimited possibilities of accumulation, especially in comparison to the restrictions imposed on feudal estates in the Old World (ibid.).

⁶ For examples in the poetry of Friedrich Schiller and Casimir Delavigne, see the anniversary issue of the journal *Treći program hrvatskoga radija* [Croatian Radio Third Program] (no. 39/1993), dedicated to the 500th anniversary of discovery of the New World.

of their problematization. Thus, a section of Pablo Neruda's epic *Canto General* bears the appropriate title of "Los Conquistadores" (Neruda 108).⁷ Although the theme of "discovery" was primarily thematized in the dramatic and poetic genres in previous periods, in the late twentieth century several novels on this issue were published. A good example of a revisionary historical novel is *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991) by Gerald Vizenor (himself of American Indian descent), in which the character of Columbus is a descendant of the Mayans and the Sephardi Jews who wants to return to America, while his modern descendants are trying to bring his bones *home*, making for a plot full of historical twists and turns, casting irony on the (hi)story of "discovery" and confusing the roles of conquerors and victims (Hardin 33).⁸

Similar approaches in the symbolic politics of the interpretation of "discovery" in the manner of counterfactual history can be found in the novel *Los perros del paraíso*, by Abel Posse (1983), in which the discovery of the Old World is represented by the superior civilizations of the Aztecs and the Incas, who finally do not engage in the imperialist conquest of Europe. In the novel *Cristóbal Nonato* (1987) by Carlos Fuentes, the character of Columbus is shown as a Mexican born in 1992 whose activity is directed towards the Pacific coast, i.e., the symbolic future, not the bloody past of the eastern side of the Atlantic. Michael Hardin's thesis is that, in these texts, the character of Columbus becomes a signifier discharged from Western colonial ideology and freed from the history of hegemonic discourse. Against the historically accepted mythic dimension of "discovery," Hardin posits that the representations in this narrative thus point to the hegemonic construct of history, causing the victimized to tell a different story of this monumental event.

More recent historical interpretations of the "discovery" also emphasize the aforementioned controversy. Thus, the very notion of "discovery" is stripped of its Eurocentric connotations by the more recent phrase of the "invention of America" (Riddel 904). After centuries of mythologization, the realization of the cruelty of the conquistadors, at least in recent historical and literary interpretations, escalated in commemorations of the quincentennial of the "discovery." The U.S. was then swept by a wave of anti-Columbus activities of Americans of native and Hispanic origin. As claimed by John Noble Wilford (359), "Columbus again become a symbol, this time a symbol of exploitation and imperialism," and one of the greatest results of this symbolic protest was the revision of the official interpretation of this event in the education system. Howard Zinn (628) commented on this interpretational change: "For generations, exactly the same story had been told all American schoolchildren about Columbus, a romantic, admiring story. Now, thousands of teachers around the country were beginning to tell that story differently." In the symbolic demythologization

⁷ An excerpt of this epic is available in Croatian translation; see also texts by Nicolás Guillen, Jorge Rojas and others in the special issue of *Treći program* (1993).

⁸ For the concept of the revisionary historical novel, originally taken from Brian McHale, as a novel that interprets official historical record in a new way and transforms the conventions of historical fiction, see Hutcheon 56.

of "discovery" which escalated around its five hundredth anniversary, it is unavoidable to mention Tzvetan Todorov's study *Le Conquête de l'Amérique* as a precursor to this momentous shift. Todorov analyzes historical sources related to the "discovery" as a literary text without losing sight of their historical implications, since history, unlike the myth, actually happened (4). The "discovery" of America for Todorov means a paradigmatic encounter of Europe with its Other that was also the largest genocide in human history that established the existing European identity (5). Since the "discovery" of America, Western Europe has been trying to assimilate the Other, looking at the space of the Other as a space for exploitation, not as the space where the Other actually lives.⁹ Thus, the history and fiction of the second half of the twentieth century are significantly changing institutionally codified interpretations of the "discovery," whereby historical, mythical, and utopian tensions overlap. Different national literatures and different authors developed a metaphor of the "discovery" of the New World in accordance with their own culture and worldview as well as the current historical moment as they sought ways to place the event of the "discovery" in relation to their own cultural, national, and political identities. A substantial archive of texts of Croatian literature has reflected this topic ever since the historical "discovery" of America.

Allegories, Panegyrics, and the Seeds of Criticism

In the absence of documentary sources, there are only assumptions that the news about the "discovery" of a New World reached the Croatian regions¹⁰ relatively early, and in this context we can observe the earliest echoes of overseas discoveries in Croatian literature. In the prologue of the comedy *Dundo Maroje* [Uncle Maroje], by Croatian playwright Marin Držić, the character Long Nose, Magician from the Great Indies, speaks about the exotic space shaped through images of material well-being under the influence of various utopian perceptions from the Renaissance, especially those of Thomas More's *Utopia* (cf. Fališevac 129).¹¹ In the above-mentioned monologue, the utopian image of such a paradise is located on the shores of the Ancient Indies, where "happy and sweet spring weather undisturbed by winter's cold, roses and varied flowers unshrivelled by the burning summer heat" abound and where "there is no 'mine' and 'thine' for all is everyones." The people inhabiting that land are "gentle

⁹ Together with Todorov's study, Kirkpatrick Sale's 1991 study *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy*, which also brings into question the mythical and Eurocentric dimensions of the "discovery," should also be mentioned (Hardin 29).

¹⁰ As claimed by Stjepan Krsić (9), sailors from Dubrovnik had merchant colonies all over the Mediterranean, so it would be hard to imagine that such important news as the "discovery" remained unknown. For example, thanks to Jakov Baničević of Korčula, who was the secretary of Charles V, people from Dubrovnik found out about the journey around the world made by Sebastian Elcano in 1522 less than a year after its completion.

¹¹ It is worth mentioning that it was the overseas discoveries that initiated the wave of the utopian genre in the sixteenth century, which indicates not only their importance in the world economic order but the importance of their metaphorical implications, as well (Claeys and Tower Sargent 3).

people, quiet people, wise and reasonable people” (Držić 9–10).¹² This utopian image is eroded by greed for gold that as a result has the activation of “would-be people” (11) who ruined the original harmony and well-being. Greed for material wealth at the allegorical level is also thematized in *Pjesanca lakomosti* [Poem to greed] by Mavro Vetranović, which was included in the special issue of the journal *Dubrovnik* dedicated to the five-hundredth anniversary of the “discovery” of America. Though the New World¹³ is not mentioned explicitly, material greed is mentioned as the generator of wars and conquests for which the editors, I suppose, have included this poem in the thematic issue of the journal. These literary texts, of course, are not examples of the explicit thematization of the “discovery” but can be seen as its allegorical echoes. Their authors articulated the first critical voices on this topic in the historical climate of the awakening of mercantile capitalism, driven by the overseas discoveries.

The first text of old Croatian literature in which the “discovery” of the New World is explicitly mentioned appeared a century later. This is a play by Junije Palmotić entitled *Kolombo* [Columbus],¹⁴ in which the “discovery” is articulated through a panegyric to Columbus and a Croatian sailor. Palmotić’s play thus supports the myth of Columbus and the local myth of Dubrovnik sailors who, according to legend, were members of Columbus’s crew (cf. Potthoff). The character of Columbus is presented in the text as a noble conqueror whose primary goal is not the material exploitation of the New World, but the spreading of Christianity.¹⁵ Palmotić’s play provided a basis for later literary shaping of the character of Columbus as a Promethean figure in Croatian literature (Franić-Tomić 160). For example, in the poem *Navis aëria*, written in Latin by Bernard Đamanjić in 1768, the character of Columbus is celebrated as a mythical hero who is superior even to Hercules and Odysseus (Đamanjić 131). In the poem, the utopian image of material wealth and exoticism is transmitted through the perspective of Columbus, who “brings a heretofore unseen prey from a foreign world” (131) and spreads the word about the great wealth and beauty of the new land, provoking the exploratory desire of sailors throughout the world.

On a similar track, the narrative of the “discovery” is shaped in a poem in praise of Columbus by the Franciscan Grgo Martić written on the four-hundredth anniversary of the “discovery.” Martić’s poem shows Columbus’s fate “from glory to chains,” which is told by the character of Columbus in the first person and later in the third

¹² Quotation from the English translation of Držić’s play by Sonia Bičanić.

¹³ Before the common use of the name America, derived from the name of the Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci, the names of the American mainland at that time included the *New World*, the *West Indies*, or simply the *Indies*. The very name *America* became common after it was used by the German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller in 1507 (Petrović 81).

¹⁴ According to literature about Palmotić’s text, *Kolombo* is usually classified as a shorter dialogue scene, a dialogue poem, a panegyric, given that in the text there is no real dramatic conflict (Fališevac 128).

¹⁵ As it stands in the text of the drama whose verses I find important to mention in the original: “er od zlata želja huda, / ko vitezom starijem prije, / od našega uzrok truda, / i od našega puta nije: / za uzvišenje vjere prave / svaki od nas naglo hrli / nove iskati sad države, / oćean brodit plahi i vrli” (Palmotić 129).

person by the narrator, who is celebrating Columbus's merits, of which the spreading of the Christian faith on a new continent is the most important. The representation of the New World and its inhabitants in this poem is not lacking in stereotypical representation of the natives as primitive and filthy on one side and the European conquerors as cunning and culturally superior on the other.

This brief overview of an array of texts that deal with the "discovery" of America in early Croatian literature allows us to conclude that the literary imagination of the "discovery"—with the exception of allusive texts by Držić and Vetranović that criticize the moral qualities of the time on an allegorical level—symbolically supports the myth of the "discovery" of the New World without problematizing the colonial policy of the conquerors.¹⁶ The aforementioned texts contribute to the forging of symbols which glorify Columbus as a Promethean figure and the New World as a promised land, primarily in terms of material well-being. Written in the spirit of the times, these texts primarily celebrate the spread of Christianity to a new continent through the act of conquest, and stand at the beginning of a transitional phase in which the "religious order" is supplanted by the "monetary order" (Greenblatt, qtd. in Hörisch 169). These literary imaginations of the topic of the "discovery" of America in Croatian literature do not bring this problem into question until the beginning of the twentieth century, although in non-fictional writings this approach appears a bit earlier.¹⁷ As the twentieth century progresses, critical voices in the literary articulation of this historical event become more and more prominent.

¹⁶ In the context of this literary politics of representation of the "discovery," we must also mention the discussions by the Dominican Vicko Paletin, who was in the Spanish army on the American continent roughly between 1530 and 1540 (Krašić 20). Paletin writes on several occasions about the discovery of the New World, especially the policy of conquest and the colonization of the Spanish way in overseas colonies. His most important work on this topic is *De jure et justitia belli contra Indos, ad Philippum II. Hispaniarum regem*, in which he discusses various issues of international law and the procedures of the Spaniards towards the indigenous peoples in what was morally and politically justified as the Spanish colonial policy. After a failed attempt to print his work in Flanders in 1558, Paletin received approval to have it printed in Venice in 1564. Nevertheless, the work was never published, and the original is gone. The controversy surrounding this work revolves around reports that Spanish King Philip II himself, probably at the instigation of Bartolomé de Las Casas, prohibited the printing of Paletin's work. Paletin was thus, together with the French Franciscan Jean Focher, one of two monks who defended Spain's right of conquest (33).

¹⁷ One such exception is the book *Kristof Kolumbo i otkriće Amerike* [Christopher Columbus and the Discovery of America], by the writer and maritime expert Juraj Carić. Carić's book was published on the four-hundredth anniversary of the "discovery." Although his book belongs to the genre of non-fiction, it has literary qualities, such as interesting, sometimes very tense narration in shaping the historical event of the discovery. But the greatest distinction of this work in relation to the above-mentioned texts is its explicit criticism of the colonial policy of the Spanish conquerors. Carić severely criticizes the "shameful violence," the "inhumanity and barbaric acts" against innocent people (201, 222), and the Spanish greed for gold (218), unambiguously condemning such a policy: "this much insolence history had not recorded so far" (220). Although Columbus's historic merit is unquestionable and he is portrayed as an ultimately positive historic figure, Carić's text was the first articulated critical voice in the Croatian cultural imaginary, which until then had always portrayed the navigator as "saintly."

The Dialectic of Utopia and History

The play *Kristofor Kolumbo* [Christopher Columbus], by Miroslav Krleža, stands at the beginning of the twentieth-century articulations of the “discovery” in Croatian literature as a kind of intertextual threshold for its later literary progeny. Although Krleža’s play has been considered from literary, theatrical, and theoretical perspectives, the ideological and historical aspects of its treatment of the “discovery” have so far evaded analytical attention.¹⁸ The possible reason for neglecting this topic in reflecting on Krleža’s play might lay in the fact that “discovery” in this text is primarily articulated as an abstract idea in which reference to its historical dimension falls into the background. Also, avant-garde concept of the play treats the historical personages and events symbolically and not as contingent historical entities which was my earlier assumption. In this section I continue to examine how in such a literary articulation elements of historical and ideological layers of “discovery” are particularly challenging for interpretation, especially when compared with the similar motifs from Krleža’s other texts which can be used the better to elucidate the argument. In fact, the very idea of the new land carries traces that reveal the literary consciousness deeply aware of twentieth-century “America” at the height of development of monopoly capitalism.¹⁹

But let us stop for a moment on twentieth-century “America” in Krleža’s texts. Although “America” is not among the prominent themes and motifs of Krleža’s literary texts and essays, we can assume that Krleža, as a leftist thinker, is critical of the foremost capitalist country, an assumption that is confirmed by some of Krleža’s later texts which illuminate the motif of the “discovery” in the play *Christopher Columbus*. As claimed by Darko Gašparović (“Američki motivi”), the explicit mention of “America” can be found in several of Krleža’s texts. For example, the character Joža Podravec, in *Povratak Filipa Latinovicza* [*The Return of Philip Latinovicz*],

had been in America twice, but he had no use for America, devil take it that made it! He had been told by old and experienced seamen, who had pissed often enough in those waters, to look out, for he would see sea-deer swimming alongside the ship. He had stood on deck for two days and two nights, and wouldn’t go to bed: he had waited to see the sea-deer, how they came up out of the water, but not a single sea-deer had he seen! (55)²⁰

¹⁸ See: Lešić; Foretić; Lasić; Gašparović, *Dramatica krležiana*. The topic of the “discovery” was briefly discussed by Branimir Donat, who compared Krleža’s play with *Columbus* by Paul Claudel (38-42).

¹⁹ Krleža’s play was first published in 1918 under the title *Cristobal Colón* and it was dedicated to Vladimir Ilich Lenin. After its first appearance in the book *Hrvatska rapsodija* [Croatian Rhapsody] the text was later revised, in 1933 when it was published in the book *Legende* [Legends] together with other plays from this cycle and in 1956 for premiere in Belgrade. In this analysis, I will highlight the significant differences of the different versions of the play when that is relevant for the topic discussed in this essay.

²⁰ Translation by Zora Depolo from the English edition of Krleža’s novel.

Also, the character Eva in his play *Vučjak* is a former owner of an African-American bordello, while her behavior and gestures are represented as a caricature of modern cosmopolitanism. Eva embodies the uncritical fascination with materialism of American provenance that is typical of a specific type of Krleža's female characters intoxicated by the "trivialities" of consumer culture: "This here is a scandal, not life! Now, Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Ohio—everything over there shines like a Christmas Eve mass! Those trams, that music, those turntables! Now, that's life! America! The United States of America! That's life!" (*U logoru; Vučjak* 40). Krleža's largely negative attitude towards "America" in his literary works can also be gleaned in his essay "Amsterdamske varijacije" [Amsterdam Variations]. In that essay, Krleža also reflects on Hollywood movies, among other things. His remarks about Hollywood, its cultural influence, and world audience are written in the spirit of classical Marxist criticism:

This Hollywood lamp has become a new opium of the masses and the people, even more dangerous than religion, whose intoxicating power in the narghiles of church doctrine is already quite weak. Poisoning of even the most innocent of personal tastes, falsification of the more or less innate human sense of "beauty," calculated killing and refined tainting of the most intimate forms of human excitement and of every sincere emotional feeling, conscious steering towards the overestimation of social lies, criminal hoaxes, and deception of all sorts, glorification of the hollowest of all business and commercial successes—in one word: that dangerous, black-and-white, of celluloid shadows and light woven Taylorization of social lies, that magic lamp of human self-deception, that refined inspiration of Messrs. Goldwyn-Mayer and Fox, today, in this European darkness that surrounds us, shines as the only lighthouse from the Malay Islands to the Transvaal and from Koprivnica to Greenland. (*Evropa danas* 48–49)

In this essay about film,²¹ "America" is unambiguously articulated as a negative symbol of superficial cultural production. As claimed by Gašparović, "a Humanist, actually an old-school moralist, grafted in the habitus of Central Europe (regardless of what he said about it), Krleža could only address the 'New World' from an ironic distance" ("Američki motivi" 237–38). It is in a similar vein that we can read the articulation of the New World in Krleža's play *Christopher Columbus*.

The setting of Krleža's play is the Santa Maria, as it sails the ocean on the eve of the "discovery" of the New World. Aside from the Admiral Christopher Columbus, the play has many characters, sometimes indicated just through their symbolic function (e.g., Broken, Defiant, Drunk, Timid, etc.) or indicating the tone of their voice (e.g., One Rescuing Voice, One Wild Voice, etc.). The inexorably driven crew, consisting primarily of slaves who keep the ship afloat, reaches the point of utter physical ex-

²¹ For a more detailed insight into Krleža's view on film in the book *Evropa danas* [Europe Today], see Kragić.

haustion and low morale because navigation seems both endless and without purpose. In this atmosphere, heterogeneous voices from the ship connect through their dissatisfaction, resignation, and even insinuation of rebellion against Columbus, who is considered to be the main culprit. The dissatisfaction of the exhausted and embittered crew is enframed and subdued by the voices of the Admiral's Phalanx, which persuade the mutineers to move towards the New World, adorned in their exhortations by utopian images of material abundance: "Bread grows where we are sailing to! There, that bread is before us! Men! Just this one more night!" (*Legende* 116).

Almost every mention of the New World by the Admiral's Phalanx is coupled with imagery of material well-being, from which I cite here only a few typical examples: "He is leading us to the New World! Men! There, the rivers churn up gold as our rivers churn up gravel! There, the sweet smell of honey and milk is everywhere! In the New World, bread grows on tree branches! Just don't give up this one night!" (116–17) or "Behold, land is before us! There, jewels abound just as ordinary stones back home! Gold! Spices! Bread! Have faith, men! We shall return as wealthy men!" (118). The "drama" of the first pages of this play is carried out by the dialectic of a utopian goal, on one hand, and the "real" navigation conditions, on the other, which radicalizes class conflict on the ship's deck. Against the Admiral's Phalanx utopian images, the Crowd exposes them as a lie, demanding that they return to Spain and that Columbus be executed (120). In the chaotic atmosphere of navigation in which the conflicts branch out at different hierarchical levels, the first ideological appearance of capitalist "America"—which was not present in the original version of the play in 1918—was added by Krleža in the 1933 version. In one such argument, the Crowd says to the Slaves: "Why do you protest, slave? Punch him in the nose so that his blood spurts! It's that simple! Beat the slaves! *A fistfight ensues*. Get below the deck! We're not anarchists like you. We can only be saved by the scientific organization of work! Taylorism! Get below deck on the double! Man the chain!" (129–30).

Taylorism is evoked as a saving recipe for the position of the Crowd, which is threatened by the rebellion of the slaves. A reference to the system of organization of labor named after the American Frederick Winslow Taylor, the father of so-called scientific management, is the first semantic link with the image of capitalist "America" in the early twentieth century. I am aware that this intentional anachronism is part of avant-garde poetics, but my focus is on the specific quality and critical potential of this motif. Taylorism was occurring at a time marked by the consolidation of monopoly capitalism and the growth of giant corporations (Foster xvi), which mark the context of the original version of Krleža's play. The principles of economic efficiency developed by Taylor form the core of the capitalist organization of labor even today (cf. Witt; Braverman 60). Taylorism was already at the time of its emergence criticized from the American left as an exploitative system in Upton Sinclair's sharp formulation (cf. Locke 20),²² while a critical thrust is to be observed even in late twentieth-century

²² Lenin, for example, argued that, while Taylorism epitomized the brutality of bourgeois exploitation, it was also the greatest scientific achievement, and that its best aspects must be implemented in Soviet industry

studies, such as Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. Braverman called Taylorism "explicit verbalization of the capitalist mode of production" (60). Braverman's focus on the three principles of Taylorism—namely, the separation of the working process from the workers' skills; the separation of the concept of work from its performance; and the monopolizing of knowledge in order to control each step of the working process and its performance (86–95)—is echoed by the mood on Columbus's ship. Because of the extreme polarization of those whose time is extremely valuable and those whose time is worth nothing, Taylorism contributes to the degradation of work in capitalism, to evoke the subtitle of Braverman's book. In light of the proposed divisions, we understand how this motif underlies the character of the Admiral's Phalanx as the "brains" of the operation, while the Slaves are the manual labor that moves the ship:

ADMIRAL'S PHALANX: We are all the same! That's right! From this night on, we are the same! Now you are no longer slaves! You are free sailors as are we! It's just that someone has got to pull on the oars! We must go forward! To your oars, free sailors! You are our equals, but rowing is your expertise! We are for the division of labor! (Krlježa 130)

A clearcut division of labor can be viewed here as a kind of metaphor for the historical role of the maritime classes in overseas discoveries that, according to Blasopoulos (131), will just become a prototype of the organized labor, dominant in industrial capitalism. Taylorism, which Krlježa ironically mentions when it comes to Hollywood (Krlježa, *Evropa danas* 49), is an explicit sign of the twentieth-century capitalist United States, incorporated into the topic of "discovery" in a later revision of the play as a kind of symbolic prolepsis of capitalist development in the further course of American history. In contrast to the pragmatism of the crew, symbolically contained in the motif of the evocation of Taylorism, on one hand, and Columbus's idealism, on the other,²³ lies the second point of conflict in this drama. Though the myth of the "discovery" is criticized and has been associated with twentieth-century capitalist "America," the genuine myth of Columbus is not brought into question in this play. Columbus thus remains an enlightened, idealistic Promethean character, not a "speculator whose greatest speculative gain is North America" (Chancellor, qtd. in Grgas 142). In fact,

(Braverman 8–9). Before the Cold War, the Russians closely followed American technological development in order to apply its achievements to improve their own progress. For example, in 1920 Vladimir Mayakovski wrote in his travel reports from America that the implementation of American futurism for the benefit of the Soviet Union could mean a "second discovery of America" (104). Mayakovski also harshly criticized the division of labor. As claimed, the division of labor is destructive to human livelihoods because capitalists appropriate all the material value to themselves, treating the masses of workers as inexhaustible goods (103).

²³ Taylorism is often interpreted in the light of pragmatism—the typical American philosophy—which contrasts with the traditionally understood European idealism (cf. Ormerod 907).

unlike the Admiral's Phalanx, which seemingly protects Columbus, advocating colonial ethos and material enrichment (*Legende* 123), Columbus's vision of the New World as a utopia is radically different from theirs. For Columbus in Krleža's play, the New World is primarily an abstract idea of the New as a negation of the Old Europe and its symbolic values. In contrast to this utopian abstraction, the Agents of the flagship perceive the New World as a real material given: "Forward, Men! Forward! We must hurry and to reach the New World! It is not Utopia, it is reality!" (129). The Phalanx finally manages to calm all who are dissatisfied by means of the rhetorical strategy embodied in the ecstatic "Rhythm of Revival Work" (131), which is the culminating point of the play. After that scene comes the Unknown, who as a character sows suspicion in Columbus by pointing out the fundamental difference between the abstract ideas of the New with what the rest of the crew actually want: "UNKNOWN: They are not seeking the New! They believe they will return! They want to go back rich and mighty! Mightier than they were before. Pirates—that's what they are—and they think that the New is their booty!" (133).

With the arrival of the Unknown, different ideas of the New cause Columbus to gradually distance himself from the rest of the characters. For the rest of the crew, the New is actually the Old in disguise, in whose name they will make a colonial march all over the new continent:

VOICES OF THE ADMIRAL'S PHALANX: And when we return home, laden with gold and spices and birds with tails of silk! And with diamonds as large as millstones! We will have to give such a diamond to the Queen as a sign of our loyalty! Oh—what a feast it will be! Bells will ring as on the Resurrection! And the Crown! The Crown will have to reward us! How many new lands must we give to the scepter? And when the King touches us with his sword! To name as the Masters of Calatrava! Maybe Calatrava as well as Alcantara?

The Church must proclaim us saints! How many provinces we will place in her lap?

And all the trade, gentlemen! Just think of the trade! . . . We will free all white galley slaves, declare them equal citizens, and pin the natives to the oars. Trade will restore our business life! Banks, currencies, profits, dividends. And we are the first! Hey! We are the first! We have discovered a new reality! We have opened a new period in history! What a glorious feeling! (138–39)

The New World is from the crew's perspective reduced to a "holy prey" (138), and with its "discovery" comes the "new historical phase of prosperity" (151), in which the utopian ocean is replaced by a mercantile one.

In Columbus's opposition to such an exploitative idea of the New once again speaks the twentieth-century critical spirit against capitalist "America," which only exists in the revised version of the play: "To hell with such an achievement! You want me

to sell natives with you? To become a stockbroker? To establish a joint-stock company for the exploitation of Colombia? Ha-ha! Is this the New that I dream of?" (142). Columbus's visionary insight into the further course of history firmly positions him in opposition to the idea of the Old. The idea of the New fell into the bilge of stock ventures, and the idea of "discovery" is articulated as "a continuation, and by no means a new beginning" (Grgas 257). Columbus as a historical figure is not questioned in this play. At the end of the play, he is crucified as a misunderstood genius, and his final words are different in the various versions of the play. In the version of the drama from 1918, Columbus's last words are: "A LIE! PEOPLE! IT IS ALL A LIE!" (Krlježa 1918: 115), while in the later version of the play, he remains consistent in following the utopian postulates of the New, believing that the people will one day "get rid of the specters"—"the gods, kings, cardinals, banks, and dividends"—and "swim to the other shore, discover new continents . . . and travel to the stars" (*Legende* 152). The two different endings in a way represent the dialectic of utopia and anti-utopia that shapes the idea of "discovery" in this play, thus linking it with the archive of representations of the event. These tensions will be taken up by two plays which later sprout from the intertextual soil of Krlježa's play.

The Intertextual Afterlife of Krlježa's *Columbus*

The radio play *Admiral Kristofor Kolumbo* [Admiral Christopher Columbus], by Nedjeljko Fabio, also takes place on the deck of the Santa Maria on the night before the "discovery." But in Fabio's play, the historical topic of the "discovery" is primarily articulated through existential symbolism, according to which the New World functions as a metaphor for a goal that must always remain out of reach. Similar to Krlježa's play, Fabio's Columbus striving towards the New World contrasts with the pragmatic goals of the other crew members.²⁴ For Columbus, coming to a new land and achieving the goal means the loss of a sense of his own existence, which is why he frantically insists on its delay. This Columbus is a much more cruel and unbalanced character than in Krlježa's text. He murders the messengers of the New World, and his prayer is directed towards the non-discovery of the land. For Columbus, the possible arrival in the New World means fame and power as the legacy of greedy old Spain: "If I set foot on land tomorrow, then I have thrown a greasy bone to the Palace and it will gratefully bite. It will triumphantly and greedily gnaw at its prize, as every authority does when it gets ahold of a bone and when that bone submits to it" (Fabio 84). Besides this comment, the historical reference to the "discovery" is barely indicated, while existential symbolism is central to this play. The ending resembles Krlježa's text: The New World is a lie for Columbus, and its "discovery" is a punishment.

After Fabio's play, dialogue with Krlježa's *Columbus* continues in Slobodan Šnajder's play *Dijalektički Anticolumbus* [Dialectical Anti-Columbus], the subtitle of

²⁴ In comparison to Krlježa's play, the number of characters in Fabio's text is significantly decreased and does not contain abstract sounds and appearances.

which is “Fantasy on a given topic.” In his play, Šnajder engages in more direct dialogue with Krleža’s *Columbus*, further radicalizing the dialectic of historical, mythical, and utopian layers, already problematized in Krleža’s play. Criticism of the utopian subtext of Krleža’s play is hinted at with the motto from Krleža’s repeatedly cited comments on the student protests in 1968, a year that, from distant historical perspectives, almost functions as a trope of revolt and the collapse of many ideals: “The difference between us and them is only that we already were what they are today, and what happened to us will also happen to them; that they will experience the realization of their ideals” (Šnajder 236). This quote anticipates the strategy of questioning utopian ideals as one of the main aspects of Šnajder’s *Columbus*, or rather, *Anti-Columbus*, which is also further elaborated in the extensive introductory note serving as a kind of prologue to this short play. The polemic with Krleža’s and generally utopian articulation of *Columbus* primarily takes the arguments from history that critically ground the Promethean symbolism so far inscribed in his character:

Indeed, only a poet, in building his poetry *res publica*, could believe that Columbus and Ferdinand, the Spanish king, spoke as two scientists before the crazy hypothesis, from Eros for the New, guided by inclinations to show Europe, which is being reborn, that it is much smaller than it flatters itself to be, and to correct Ptolemy. No, the persuader here is one of the smaller shareholders of a large company in which he would like to take the reigns. And Ferdinand, as the first shareholder, is basically finding out for himself how much it will cost him and how much it will benefit him. (237)

Columbus is shown here as a shareholder and not a Promethean figure, regardless of the the critical historization of the “discovery” in Krleža’s play. Not only does Šnajder attempt a polemical rewriting of Krleža’s *Columbus*, but he does so in a way that puts a considerable stake on the traces of twentieth-century capitalist “America.” In these fictional reflections on Krleža’s *Columbus*, the dramatic focus is primarily on the dialogue between Columbus and the Unknown, who has the role of anti-utopian agent with a highlighted historical perspective, similarly as in Krleža’s play: “. . . yes, like eternity itself. You will become immortal, Admiral. On the bones of laboring mortals – that’s easy. Your Utopia is well fed. Your journey is sprinkled with corpses” (246). The deconstruction of history and the synchrony of modernity are thus integrated into the mythical trope of the “discovery” by emphasizing the critical potential of the “discovery” but also every other utopian and ideological project in history. Columbus will ultimately rhetorically capitulate in front of the Unknown, and just before his arrival in the New World, he will be crucified “on a historical timetable” (252), where references to the conquistador’s conquest are mixed with allusions to the socialist work ethos as a sort of version of the “Rhythm of Revival Work” from Krleža’s play (254). But, in a specific way, the ending of the play still allows for the possibility of utopia: after Columbus’s death by crucifixion, the only one who hears his cry for the New is the poet Arthur Rimbaud (254). The ending of this drama thus leaves the

realization of the utopia of the New to a poetic language whose metaphor is Rimbaud, usually stamped in literary history with the phrase "revolutionary of the new poetic language." If achieving utopia, as shown by history, is not possible through political projects and ideologies, it is perhaps possible in poetry, as Šnajder's play suggests. Such an ending also points to future strategies in the articulation of the topic of the "discovery," where poetry will have a prominent place.

In Search of the *New* Poetic Language

A new strategy in the articulation of the "discovery" is based on a discursive turn that freed the topic from the Promethean pathos that invariably pervades the aforementioned texts. This symbolic step of realizing the Columbus depicted in the pathos-laden literary legacy in Croatian literature in an altogether different manner will be also indicated by the poem "Kolumbo" [Columbus], by Ivan Slamnig, from his book of poetry *Naronska siesta* [The Naronian Siesta]. Slamnig's poem can be read as a parody of sorts of Walt Whitman's poems "A Thought of Columbus" and "Prayer of Columbus," in the latter of which the lyrical voice is that of Columbus, who is "crucified" by great existential thoughts:

A batter'd, wreck'd old man, / Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home, / Pent by the sea and dark rebellious brows, twelve dreary months, / Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd and nigh to death, / I take my way along the island's edge, / Venting a heavy heart. // I am too full of woe! / Haply I may not live another day; / I cannot rest O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep, / Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee, / Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with Thee, / Report myself once more to Thee. (Whitman 476)

The speaking voice in Slamnig's poem is also that of Columbus, but unlike Whitman's Columbus, this voice is torn by the weaknesses of the opportunistic common man. Grouchy and nervous, a little bit unsure of himself, the Columbus in Slamnig's poem symbolically indicates a move from high to low register:

Nerves are after me so I walk on the deck. / It seems to me that everyone is watching. / They are actually happy for being in sleep. / If I could find at least a little island. / I'm unbearably nervous. / Horizon is flat. / How stupid of me to risk this / like I couldn't foresee all / emptiness, infinity and my frustration. // How fortunate it would be that I find / some small island, some land. / If I say that I was not mistaken, at least not completely. / I'm spinning nervously, I wet at corners over the side of the boat. (47)

In the poetic articulation of Columbus's thoughts, there is no Prometheus longing for the New as in the previously-mentioned plays. Columbus's thoughts in Slamnig's poem are dependent on the crew's approval: "Finally, I'd like to find something/ not

for the sake of finding it/ but this anxiety comes down to whether I can justify/ this journey of mine before these guys” (47). Slamnig’s poem thus symbolically opened the way for a new approach²⁵ in the articulation of the topic of the “discovery.”

One such articulation can be found in Dubravka Oraić’s book of poetry *Urlik Amerike [American Scream: Palindrome Apocalypse]*²⁶ from 1981 and its imagery of the “discovery” articulated as a search for the new possibilities of poetic language. Moving away from the Promethean-shaped figure of Columbus, Oraić’s poetry points to its ludic, linguistically creative, but also critical potential, where the idea of the New is primarily related to the avant-garde imperative for a new poetic language (cf. Katušić; Vidan). In shaping the topic of the “discovery,” its historical, mythological, and literary dimensions intertwine to the level of language puns and sound abstraction. The collection is crosslinked with multiple quotations by Dante and Baudelaire, from the Bible and Homer to Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, Gogol, Mayakovski, Khlebnikov, and many others, in which the lyrical subject builds its metaphorical vision of “America.”

The basic discursive strategy in forming images of “America” is thus contained in the work of tension between mythical, historical, and social significance, between its real and metaphorical images, in one word: between “ideology and utopia” (Ricoeur, qtd. in Moura 162). The pathos of the previous literary articulation is replaced by irony, whose central point is the paradox of Columbus’s “discovery” as a source of new poetic figures. India as a misnomer for the New World is one of the central motifs of the collection whose semantic metamorphosis is the main strategy in the construction of metaphoric images of “America.” The speaking voice searching for India regularly finds “America”:

One and the same thing everywhere
 Everywhere finding of the unfindable
 Everywhere research of the unsearchable
 Everywhere destructions within reach of home
 Everywhere Americas nowhere India. . . (Oraić 51)

The motif of the search for a New World blends with the motif of seeking new poetic language where the speaker of the poem recognizes her defeat:

With the striped flower of India / In the black buttonhole of America /
 Killing dust from the shoes / That did kiss the sea // And when my organ

²⁵ Here I insist on the importance of Slamnig’s poem as a shift in the articulation of the theme of “discovery,” whereby this importance should not be understood in the literal sense of its direct influence. It is rather an opening of a new sensibility and new possibilities in the artistic articulation of the topic of the “discovery.”

²⁶ Oraić’s book was translated into English by Sibelan Forrester and published in the United States in 2005. All quotations from Oraić’s book are from its English translation. It should be mentioned, however, that there are some important differences between the Croatian original and the English translation, such as the addition of new poems, by which the original sequence of the poems was changed.

that beats / On the left side under the rib / One wonderful day convincingly spake: // Poets can change the world / It's a matter of changing / The poems // I sensed I was no longer sailing anywhere, anywhere / I sensed I was shuddering along my whole body / I sensed I had two ankles / In the eternal dilemma of Columbus of the slime / Of new lands / New horrors / And I vomit / without warranties // In the name of the father and of the son / And there's nothing besides the circle / The white circle / Of high to high / Sky. (69)

The tensions between the mythical and the historical, the utopian and the critical are always associated with the poetry itself, and they implode in the voice of the speaker. But the mythic motifs of "America" are often shaped within its historical and ideological paradoxes that evoke the modern image of "America": "America! America! America! / On you broke the yellow tooth of discovery / All that happened afterwards was again that American / Americanic through plan and misappropriation / Through blood and sacred things Americanesquely / Das amerikanische, americheskoe ochen' / Ochen' americheskoe // " (71). The mythical symbolism of the New World is often carnivalized with contemporary American consumer culture. *American Scream* emphatically speaks with a literary awareness of twentieth-century capitalist "America," lucidly estranging its mythical, historical, and utopian dimensions. One such strategy of estrangement is the frequent use of its distinctive cultural markers, including the indispensable *Coca Cola*: "Water our water / Why are you so / Sought-after // Shore to shore shore / Sea to sea sea / Someone spake: 'We came!' / Someone added: 'A shame!' // And enormous merriment breaks / Through the hot lips of America / The icy-cold taste of / INDI-COLA // What refreshment / For traveling in place // " (50).

Coca-Columbus, or the Carnivalization of History

The motif of the famous American soft drink which conquered the world has often been used in shaping the topic of the "discovery" and its relation to the twentieth-century United States. In the context of the carnivalization of the "discovery" motif by signifiers of twentieth-century "America," it is not irrelevant to mention the satirical story "Columbus Approaches the Shore," by the Russian writers Ilf and Petrov.²⁷ In this Ilf and Petrov's story from the 1930s, the New World is shown as a contemporary "America" where the fifteenth-century Columbus arrives. The great historical gesture of the "discovery" happens on the land of the contemporary United States, where the natives carry on with their daily routines and activities, "not even suspecting they have been discovered" (Ilf and Petrov 6). In such a synopsis, Columbus's "discovery" is perceived by the natives in the context of the contemporary American "society of the spectacle," in which, in order for an event to actually happen, it must be covered

²⁷ In 1937, the Russian writing duo also published the famous travelogue *One-storied America*, in which the critical mode of irony shapes their view of the United States.

by the media: “If you are going to discover a new country, several cheerful jokes in written form should be prepared for distribution among reporters. Prepare a hundred photos, as well, because otherwise you won’t succeed. Publicity is required” (7). The New World is in the story shaped through the recognizable imagery of twentieth-century consumer culture and the “society of the spectacle” (Debord). The natives, for example, invite Columbus to Hollywood to play a role in a movie titled *Amerigo Vespucci*, the screenplay of which has been adapted from the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, by Alexander Dumas. At the end of the story, Columbus writes a letter to the Spanish queen in which he describes the New World as a place where the natives eat hot dogs, where everybody smells of gasoline, where everybody has

many gods, whose names are written with the fire on their huts. They mostly worship, it seems, the goddess of Coca-Cola, the goddess of the Soda Fountain, the goddess of Cafeteria and the great god of the gasoline aroma, Ford. Apparently, he’s something like Zeus here. The natives are very greedy and all the time they are chewing on something. (14)

Coca Cola, chewing gum, Ford, and other signs of capitalist “America” thus form the image of the continent, which can no longer be imagined in any other way.²⁸

The strategy of framing the topic of the “discovery” with signs of consumerist “America” will be used at the end of the twentieth century by Croatian poet Luko Paljetak in his poem entitled “Kolumbo” [Columbus], published in the special edition of the journal *Dubrovnik* commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the “discovery.” The theme of the “discovery” in this poem is articulated with recognizable signs from twentieth-century “America” which cannot imagine the pre-Columbian mainland as culturally innocent. So, for example, the first contact with the New World once again is unimaginable without the indispensable Coca-Cola as the first word said by the native people: “when they came to the New World, / they met an Indian bare naked. / What do they call this country? / He only said: ‘Coca-Cola’” (Paljetak 144)²⁹

²⁸ Here I would also like to mention the humor piece “Sreća zvana Kolumbo” [Happiness called Columbus], by an unknown author, which was published in *Vjesnik* in 1957 as a commentary on the opening of the American pavilion at the Zagreb Fair, which introduced modern American technology and consumerism to the Yugoslav public. In this piece, the issue of the “discovery” is ironically associated with the discovery of American consumer culture, which is blindly worshipped by the Yugoslav public, such as: “Our Columbus admiringly looks at the splendor of this precision mechanics. He simply forgets how many times he has struggled to find two five-dinar coins to put them in an ordinary local payphone and that he has put on perfume several times from an automatic bottle of cologne. . . . But that is nothing—there is also a slot machine which pours out Coke! People gather around that giant of technology, and in their enthusiasm, they forget that the machine is not pouring out plum brandy, but only a widely popular soft drink, and that the machine does not have a human heart, that in case of need, it can serve a customer on credit” (“Sreća zvana Kolumbo,” 4).

²⁹ In the translation of these verses, the rhyme *gola* [naked] – *Cola* has been lost.

The anniversary issue of the journal *Dubrovnik* is where we also find the poem "Otkriće Amerike" [The discovery of America], by Slavko Mihalić. The speaking voice of this poem is a native who is watching the arrival of the Spanish caravels. The perspective of the native warrior–observer anticipates the downfall of a civilization that comes with European conquerors whose trading contagion is spreading through the native people:

I do not know why priests took so long? Have they already asked the sky / and sacrificed the young men? Again, we can hear / those who are greedily staring at sailing ships / and think about the treasure in them. They mock with / the old people and say that the solution is / in trade! We warriors know the truth: / if we don't sink those ships / it is over with us. (142)

This kind of articulation provides a reverse perspective on the "discovery," shaped by the voice of the victimized as a kind of paradigm shift regarding the historic event of the "discovery" as already mentioned at the beginning of this article. The shift of paradigm is also present in a poem by Tonko Maroević entitled *Otkriće Europe* [The discovery of Europe], whose paratextual data reveals that the poem was written in Genoa on May 10, 1991, ahead of the Columbus jubilees. What remains from the great Columbus in this poem? Only the monument, which is "now closer to the tracks than to the waves / the seagulls don't even succeed in soiling it", and "the booty is embedded in the walls, daring is pulled taught / like cement, the sediment of heritage is piled up to the top / so that it encircles the entire space *intra muros*, / barring all challenge and response save from the outside" (141). In these civilizational layers of deposited wealth after centuries of European colonial history, the lyrical voice reveals his own position on "the first bank, which is actually the last" (141). The "discovery" thus comes down to an ontological impossibility of the "discovery," and only a possibility of transferring the old European idea onto new lands.³⁰

A New World After "America"

The twentieth-century literary articulation of the "discovery" of "America" as one of the great metanarratives of the West, as I have tried to show, cannot be exempted from the socio-political context in which they arise. Thus, in contemporary literary texts that thematize the "discovery," it is impossible to avoid the picture of twentieth-century capitalist "America," and the century that has been labelled as the "American Century" (Zunz). However, the twentieth century is also the century of demythologization, which is the fundamental strategy in shaping the literary motif of the New World, both around the world and in Croatian literature of the twentieth century.

³⁰ A decline in the belief in the *utopian* and the *new* could also be supplemented with the argument that the identical process of the rise in skepticism towards the utopian role of poetry, the belief in the restorative role of the poetic experiment, and generally, the belief in the emancipatory role of art in a historically changed context in general undoubtedly accompanies the articulation of this particular motif.

Twentieth-century solipsism in shaping the imaginary “discovery” of America is present in different proportions in all of these authors and inevitably reflects the consequences of the diachronic perspective in the development of capitalism and consumer culture in the United States of America. Such literary articulation disintegrates the utopian imagery of “discovery” whose roots date back to pre-Columbian times. The utopia of the New World is no longer on the horizon in the fictional representations in which the “earth can now no longer be thought to contain any spaces that are immune to or insulated from the predations of a capitalist mode of production, and there is nothing comparable to the early modern oceanic novum” (Blasopoulos 149).

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Notes on “Command of Money” and the End of Socialism¹

I

Taking the cue from the more recent work of Stipe Grgas, in this article I would like to reflect and expand on the thematic and disciplinary encounter that characterizes his latest scholarly undertakings. The historical conditions for the encounter I have in mind were created by the universalization of capitalism, for which the year 1989 symbolizes a milestone event.² Grgas’s remarks on this event and its implications for American Studies can be found in his “Changing American Priorities: A view from the ruins of its “communist ally,” a text that will serve as a starting point for the present essay. In it, the convergence of Grgas’s interests in America, capital, and socialist Yugoslavia is most explicit, and the encounter I have mentioned most cogently staged. This encounter is not only a thematic one. The cited triad should also be taken to indicate a tendency to stretch disciplinary limits and reconfigure the research field in line with the exigencies of the present moment, something Grgas has repeatedly emphasized.³ There is little doubt that this incursion of the “now” into scholarly practice can lead to problems of discipline, in both senses of the term, as its institutional limits may turn out to be unable to sustain the pressures and critical demands of the contemporary conjuncture. Here, I will touch upon disciplinary issues only implicitly, by practicing, as it were, a bastardized variant of disciplinarity. Such a move could perhaps be elaborated on in a more systematic manner at a different time, and, however modestly, examined for its potential to claim as its commons (for lack of a better term) the kind of knowledge production that usually gets subsumed under the denominator of “humanities and social sciences.”

As for the unruly encounter in Grgas’s recent work that provided the opportunity for my intervention, although it might not be readily apparent, its genealogy is entirely an Americanist one. Let the last item of the triad serve as the starting point for

¹ This essay is part of the research project “A Cultural History of Capitalism: Britain, America, Croatia,” funded by the Croatian Science Foundation.

² In my understanding of “universalization of capitalism,” I rely on the work of Ellen Meiksins Wood. For relevant formulations, see Wood 1997, 2002.

³ Most explicitly in “American Studies as a Contemporary Disciplinary Practice” (2014). Although Grgas would insist on the need for American Studies to turn critically to the field of economics, his own turn has equally been a philosophical one, with the names of Karl Marx and Martin Heidegger marking the formative influences.

an introductory explanation. Grgas's Americanist interest in socialist Yugoslavia was first articulated in his "Croatian Leftist Critique and the Object of American Studies" (2014), where he restates his argument about "the United States as the exemplary capitalist country," and attempts to read it through the archive of the Praxis group of Yugoslav philosophers. Here, Grgas explicitly appeals to post-socialist scholars "not [to] take the demise of the former [socialist] system as the zero-point of thought" ("Croatian Leftist Critique" 111). This appeal is an appropriate conclusion to an article that aims "to bring [William] Spanos's work not only to the attention of regional Americanists but to do so by retrieving the leftist critique in Yugoslav philosophy" (*ibid.* 109). Setting aside for the moment Grgas's nod to Spanos (and, consequently, to Heidegger), I would like to take this as a condensed summary of the direction of his recent research: its purpose is equally to inscribe capital in the object of American Studies and to inscribe the Yugoslav (post-)socialist experience in the disciplinary practice itself. In other words, the encounter announced by the convergence of Grgas's scholarly interests is the outcome of a specific historical conjuncture—the "Americanization of the planet"—and a critical reflection on disciplinary positionality—our peripheral, post-socialist present.

In "Changing American Priorities," with its suggestive enunciation of an almost apocalyptic sense of the current times ("a view from the ruins"), Grgas develops the established research agenda and argues for "the epochal significance of the collapse of the socialist world—or, put otherwise, the restoration of capitalism" for "the emergence of the contemporary moment" (9). Here, his interest is in "the history of United States's presence in Yugoslavia and in the region after the breakup of the federation," and how this presence "reflects the changing nature of the American economy" ("Changing American Priorities," 10). The moment of the country's breakup is understood here as being defined by "the command of money . . . its global reach and its intention to eradicate everything that stands in its way" (*ibid.* 19). Relying on the work of Panitch and Gindin, Grgas maintains that the United States today is uniquely positioned to "oversee" and benefit from the global movement of finance capital (*ibid.* 26). What appears central for the "Americanization of the planet," even as it is played out in the semi-periphery, on the territory of America's former "communist ally," is the domination of finance capital. In short, the moment of socialist Yugoslavia's breakup takes place within the international but U.S.-centered system of financialized capitalism. For Grgas, at least part of Yugoslavia's tragedy stems from the fact of its blindness to the new, post-Cold-War geopolitical reality: "To acknowledge that historical events had deprioritized the region to insignificance demanded a leap of the imagination or a sobering taking stock of a newly-created reality which neither the people nor their political leaders were capable of performing" ("Changing American Priorities," 14). In addition, he writes, "If . . . 1989 was Eastern Europe's 1968 and their entry into postmodernism, we can say that they were unprepared for that entry. They were unprepared to realize, to quote Christian Marazzi, that 'money has become the ultimate and most sophisticated instrument for world capitalist structuring today'" (*ibid.* 23).

Apart from its more obvious consequence, namely, the opening of the American Studies corpus to the forgotten or marginalized interventions of Yugoslav philosophers and social scientists (one which, curiously enough, implies a Marxist turn to Heidegger), another act of resuscitation implied in this gesture is worth emphasizing. If the inscription of capital in the United States is part of an act of "unconcealment," so is the inscription of capital in the present-day post-socialist Croatian reality. The importance of the latter should be obvious to anyone interested in the so-called "region." This euphemism, which works to erase not only the memory of a common past, but also the memory of a socialist past, can serve as a reminder that, despite being marked by conflicts of various kinds and intensities, the post-Yugoslav space has remained united in its disavowal of the Yugoslav socialist legacy, on the one hand, and a tacit acceptance and normalization of capitalism, on the other.

Grgas points to the consequences of this historical obfuscation for a moment when the "command of money, debt, and shocks of austerity are being given full sway, while systematic amnesia works hard to erase remnants of an alternative world" ("Changing American Priorities," 19). Indeed, today, outside of the relatively narrow circles of specialized researchers, it is not very well known that the Yugoslav nineteen-eighties were a time not only of deep political crisis, but also of massive social unrest caused by the implementation of "structural adjustment" measures and economic reforms predominantly dictated by the IMF and the World Bank, the country's main creditors.⁴ The more decisive reforms from 1988 onwards fundamentally changed the economy of Yugoslav society, effectively reintroducing capitalist social relations. Unlike the present-day disciplinary regimes of austerity, these processes were not indifferently or passively accepted, despite the consistent official proclamations about their inevitability. It is starting from this point of difference that I want to offer some remarks on and against the retrograde amnesia mentioned by Grgas. As a preparatory excursion into what should be a larger project of reconstructing the long politico-economic event and the hegemonic shift that set the stage for "the emergence of the contemporary moment," I want to consider some of the ways in which the experience of that transformative period—the mid- to late 1980s, up to the outbreak of war in 1991—was articulated in contemporary Yugoslav culture and society. Briefly, my intention is to offer a supplement to Grgas's account of the genealogy of the present moment with a different reflection on America, capital, and socialist Yugoslavia.

Before continuing, it should be made clear that here I will not be dealing with the financialization of the Yugoslav or Croatian economy, but rather with the transformative moment of socialism's demise under the conditions of international domination of finance capital. According to a report by the Croatian National Bank, due to the war, Croatia did not get access to world financial markets until after 1994 (Kačan

⁴ According to Giovanni Arrighi, "Yugoslavia represented one of the first, and most drastic, examples of the devastating impact of IMF policies on those countries worst affected by the debt crisis of the late 1970s," as Lowinger reports (199).

1). For Croatia, the “disequilibrium” between the financial and the real sectors of the economy, as a “consequence of a growth model based on a disproportional expansion of the financial sector”—that is, financialization “proper”—can be dated later, between 2000 and 2009 (Krnić and Radošević 4). Still, it could be argued that the clearing of the ground started in the reform years. As a 1991 World Bank report (to which I will return) informs us, in the reform year 1989, a money market was established in Yugoslavia, as well as “stock exchanges in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana which are regulated by a Federal Securities Commission” (37). The creation of a “Banking and Finance Institute” meant to “provide specialized training in banking and security markets” for Yugoslav “bank managers and staff” was announced for 1991 (38). Finally,

the Government recognizes that the financial sector must be further diversified to include non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) as well as banks. Specifically this means the establishment of a securities market and the development of different types of NBFIs such as collective investment funds, investment management companies, brokerage firms and insurance companies. (World Bank 40)

The reforms implemented and planned by the last Yugoslav federal government (and the World Bank) would remain unfinished due to the country’s disintegration and war. Yet they were indicative of the contemporary mutation of capital and its geographical diffusion. The broader meaning of the quoted passage can be surmised by taking into account the perspective on financialization offered by a work of fiction. In Po Bronson’s *Bombardiers*, a 1995 novel about work in the world of finance, the traders of “Atlantic Pacific” are set on profiting from the recent democratization of the European East. “In March of 1990, the Romanian democratic government mandated an instant free market economy,” writes Bronson (140). As part of the same process, “the entire history of Romania had been rewritten by Atlantic Pacific to emphasize its capitalist, commercial roots” (146). Bronson’s agents of finance capital “were rescuing this poor country rich with natural resources from the throes of post-communist economic inefficiency. . . . Romania’s twenty-first century belonged to Wall Street. Eastern Europe was the last frontier” (107). Yugoslavia was no Romania, but the key motifs of Bronson’s satirical take on finance capital’s entry into Eastern Europe—Western help, (post-)communist inefficiency, the occluding of socialist history—apply equally to its own experience of the restoration of capitalism around 1989.

II

The turbulent 1980s, the period of Yugoslavia’s increasingly definitive move towards capitalism, have received significant attention in literature. However, approaches to this crucial decade have largely been of the top-down kind and have consequently avoided any consistent discussion of the position and experience of the popular

classes.⁵ This is unfortunate, given that even a cursory look at the contemporary archive reveals the decade as a time of intense public debate about the problems of the Yugoslav variant of socialism and the future of Yugoslav society. The weekly *Danas* pointed to one of the central political issues of the time when commenting on the results of the shock-therapy reform measures of Prime Minister Ante Marković in 1990: namely, the issue of defining and understanding the priorities of a society in crisis. Depending on whether one preferred to emphasize the reform's consequences for the living standard of the Yugoslavs, or for the output of the country's industry (both of which fell drastically during 1990)⁶, or, on the other hand, the reform's purely monetary aspect (their success in stopping inflation and making the dinar convertible), the measures could be considered either as "agony of the socialized sector" or a "monumental" success (Jakovljević 29). Marković's adviser, the American economist Jeffrey Sachs, famously considered shock to be a necessary part of the transition out of socialism, a way for people to "realize that something fundamental has changed, that things will never be like before" (Sekulić 7). Both official history and the collective memory of post-Yugoslav societies seem to privilege Marković's monetarist success, despite the fact that the impact of the reforms on the country's manufacturing industry shaped the new times in grave and decisive ways. That the latter has been completely repressed from the ethnocentric histories of the post-Yugoslav nation-states in the process of recovering their supposedly stifled sovereignty, testifies not only to the shattering societal consequences of war, but also to the success of economic shock as conceptualized by the American economist and implemented by the Yugoslav (and post-Yugoslav) political elites. It should also be noted that there is a pronounced class aspect to the founding amnesia of the societies that emerged from the ruins of Yugoslavia. That is, this oblivion points to the material and ideological demise of labor in the said period.

⁵ This situation is certainly changing. An overview of relevant literature is beyond the scope of the present essay, but for a useful starting point, see Dragović-Soso 2008. More recent approaches to the topic can be found in Bieber et al. 2008. Vladislavljević (2008) offers a perspective "from below" on one of the crucial events of the time, the "antibureaucratic revolution." As for the labor strikes in the nineteen-eighties more specifically, anyone interested in the topic should consult Jake Lowinger's essential study, which offers a systematic account of the extent and impact of the industrial actions of that time. The ongoing research project of the Center for Southeast European Studies, "Between class and nation. Working class communities in 1980s Serbia and Montenegro," is another effort in the direction set by Lowinger. I have been working on a research project that focuses on the strikes in the Borovo industrial system near Vukovar at the end of the 1980s (cf. Cvek et al. 2015). Since I am extensively relying on data and conclusions from the Borovo project in the present essay, I would like to acknowledge the indispensable contribution of my colleagues Snježana Ivčić and Jasna Račić.

⁶ According to the 1991 World Bank report, between the end of 1989 and mid-1990, the buying power of Yugoslavs fell 41%, while industrial production decreased 11% (10).

III

It is to the class aspect of the transformative moment that I turn next. But before looking into “the hidden abode of production,” where the new realities of work and life in capitalism would be made most palpable, it is necessary to point out that Yugoslavs had been living under austerity measures of various kinds of intensity throughout the 1980s. A quick look at an unlikely example can help shed light on the ways in which this difficult experience was articulated in popular culture.

In 1985, three years into Yugoslavia’s “stabilization program”—a set of economic measures dictated by the country’s international creditors—the Sarajevo rock band Zabranjeno Pušenje [No Smoking] released a song that expressed well the anxieties of a society in crisis. (The year before, the group made fun of the government’s Long-term Program of Economic Stabilization in their television comedy series *Top lista nadrealista* [The Surrealists’ Top Chart]). In the song, entitled “Ujka Sam” [Uncle Sam], the protagonist is awakened in the middle of the night by Uncle Sam himself. After showing him his signature on a loan agreement, the American demands repayment. Taken aback, the protagonist offers excuses and political slogans instead of money: the economy is not doing well; “our wealth,” he explains, “is brotherhood and unity” and “the legacy of the people’s liberation struggle.” Uncle Sam remains unshaken, and concludes: “No problem, my boy! Uncle Sam will buy it all!”—foundational Yugoslav political ideals can be bought, too. The song ends with the protagonist waking up from the bad dream, his mind clear after the nightmarish visit from the creditor who talks like a thief. He rushes to his workplace, overhearing some empty phrases from a politician on the radio. He explains to his coworkers that the endangered “brotherhood and unity” cannot be defended by the manipulative rhetoric of Yugoslav politicians, but only by work, by labor itself.

The song is interesting not only because of the link it establishes between Yugoslavia’s debt and the United States, but also for the way in which it points to the local ruling elites as the more immediate carriers of the interests of capital (one might add: notwithstanding their actual awareness of such involvement).⁷ In that, it both resembled and differed from some of the existing critiques that focused more squarely on the power of global finance capital. For instance, in the same year in which Zabranjeno Pušenje alluded to the social work of international debt, the quite liberal economic magazine *Ekonomaska politika* published a text about the “forced measures” of austerity and structural adjustment that were imposed on Yugoslavia by the IMF, noting that that “the decision to engage in negotiations with the IMF does not lie with any single debtor country . . . but with the well-organized international finance capital”

⁷ Maša Kolanović notes that the depictions of “America” in Yugoslav literature and popular culture of “decadent socialism” (the 1980s) were often emphasizing its negative, “dystopian” aspects (2014: 209–12). She relates this trend to the aftermath of the stagflation and rise of conservatism during the Reagan presidency (2014: 202), at a time when Yugoslavia was witnessing increasingly conspicuous critiques of the state and direction of the socialist society. Elsewhere, she suggests that popular images of America at the end of the eighties were related to Yugoslavia’s self-perception during the time of crisis (2013: 209).

(Jovović 21). The socialist ideologeme that closes the song—its appeal to labor, the central political and ideological category of Yugoslav socialism—was still a persistent one during the 1980s, despite the fact that the burden of the contemporary economic reforms was increasingly being carried precisely by labor, now also exposed to austerity measures and unprecedented levels of unemployment (cf. Woodward 347–48). By the end of the decade, with the country effectively disintegrating during the initial phase of its transition to capitalism, the discrepancy between the official ideology's insistence on the centrality of labor, especially of the industrial kind, and the reality of a totally devalued Yugoslav working class reached its climax first in mass strikes and then in the layoffs and factory closures of 1990 and 1991. In the quoted song, the protagonist's refusal of the official political discourse—which often relied on old ideological language to justify the inevitability of new, market-oriented times⁸—and the simultaneous embracing of the highest socialist ideal, labor, pointed to the existence of social energies that still took at least some of the promises of Yugoslav socialism seriously.

While the party bureaucracies were busy implementing a stabilization program that, according to Woodward, "reflected . . . the 'realist position' [towards labor] emerging in the 1980s on the European ideological left as well as in the center" (i.e., the end of the ideal of full employment), the worsening of the living standard of the Yugoslav population, caused by skyrocketing inflation combined with cycles of austerity, did not pass without popular opposition.⁹ As Ramet noted in a contemporary analysis of Yugoslav "apocalypse culture," the number of strikes "increased 80 per cent between 1982 and 1983" (9). By 1989, hundreds of thousands of workers (especially in industry) were protesting shortages of raw materials, lack of work, and, consequently, insufficient income and a declining standard of living (cf. Lowinger 28). At the same time, the political elites were persistently making appeals "for a market economy," advocating and implementing policies of "liberalization and deregulation . . . that should open the space for entrepreneurship, inventiveness, and initiative of our workers and managers," as the Yugoslav President described the ongoing reforms in 1989.¹⁰ The power struggles within the League of Communists and the inter-

⁸ As late as 1989, the reformist federal government of Ante Marković was describing its goal as "new socialism."

⁹ Stuart Hall remarks that, in Britain, "the onset of recession in the mid-1970s" led to "the turn towards a Labourist version of 'monetarist realism'" (2). Keeping in mind contextual differences, "monetarist realism" seems a fitting phrase for the other aspect of Yugoslav government's economic policies at the end of the 1980s.

¹⁰ "Za tržišnu ekonomiju," *Borovo* 3096, September 22, 1989: 1. It is true that Yugoslav socialism has historically been characterized by a strategic reliance on the market. Johanna Bockman has analyzed in detail the theoretical and institutional underpinnings of "market socialism" and shown how, being based on neoclassical economic theory, Yugoslav socialism relied on, for example, notions of workers as "entrepreneurs." Such politico-economic commitments supported the reform of 1965, which meant, as Bockman puts it, "moving in the direction of *laissez-faire* socialism with worker self-managed firms competing on a market" (93). Bockman's informative study offers valuable insights into the relationship between economic theory

republican competition over the distribution of federal resources gave rise to populist ethno-nationalist politics, of which the rise of Slobodan Milošević, the banker-turned-politician, remains the paramount example. Evidently, the responsibility for the “apocalypse culture” Ramet mentions, or for the eventual demise of Yugoslav socialism more generally, cannot be simply put on international financial institutions. But my point is a different one. It seems to me that in this period Yugoslav society was registering both the distant forces shaping its future, and the class tensions that these were exacerbating locally.

In the economically and ideologically central segment of the Yugoslav economy, its manufacturing industry, the tensions, contradictions, and conflicts of the 1980s escalated with the advent of the full effects of the shock therapy measures in 1990. Despite the notorious and regularly emphasized problem of the country’s uneven development, Yugoslavia was in fact an industrial country. In 1983, the participation of industry in Yugoslav GDP was 41% (Feletar 85). Although industry had been experiencing a downturn since the late 1970s, the beginning of its virtual destruction—with all the consequences this would have for a workers’ state that based its legitimacy on a productivist notion of labor—is inextricably linked to the transformative moment ruled by the “command of money” discussed above.

IV

The example I want to focus on in order to flesh out the social aspect of this process comes from a Yugoslav industrial system with a particularly charged history, the shoe and rubber factory Borovo. Borovo is located near Vukovar, a city that today plays a foundational role in Croatian national mythology due to the fact that it was totally and tragically destroyed in 1991. But the historical significance of the factory and the town, as well as their destruction, transcends the boundaries of the nation. Borovo was founded and developed according to the Ford-inspired vision of the Czech businessman Tomáš Bata in 1931. The integrated industrial-residential complex of Bata-Borovo was one of the most complete instances of Fordist planning of work and life in our country.¹¹ Throughout its existence, Borovo was one of the backbones of the regional economy, as well as the engine of its modernization and industrialization. The factory has often, and for good reasons, been called “little Yu-

and policy in socialist Yugoslavia. However, I remain doubtful about some of its possible implications. For example, can we really speak, as Bockman does, of “left-wing origins of neoliberalism”? Yugoslav 1980s should definitely be viewed in relation to the international political-economic trends, but these were not quite, it seems to me, the result of a homegrown “neoliberal” (or neoclassical) historical development.

¹¹ Therefore, Borovo is also interesting because its beginning marks our encounter with what Gramsci termed “Americanism.” Bata’s arrival, with his “brutal business aggressiveness of the modern American kind” (Hrelja and Kaminski 9) testifies to the U.S. presence in Europe and Yugoslavia in a moment defined by an earlier mutation of capital, one which would set the direction for socialist Yugoslavia’s industrial development. My position would need to be corroborated by a more detailed account of the socialist cooption of Fordism, which is beyond the scope of this essay.

goslavia" ("Jugoslavija u malom"), a fitting description not only because of its multi-ethnic workforce and country-wide presence, but also because its development and decline reflected closely the development and decline of the Yugoslav socialist project, itself very much based on a process of rapid industrialization and urbanization after the Second World War. Borovo, like the rest of Yugoslav industry, was especially hard hit by the waves of austerity measures throughout the 1980s. Actually, one of the more massive strikes of the late eighties was the one that started in Borovo and ended in the federal assembly in Belgrade, when the workers broke into the parliament despite the presence of security forces. The final blow to this "socialist mastodon," as the contemporary phrase went, came with the shock therapy of 1989 and 1990. In 1990, the policy of monetary restriction (meaning no credit for industrial enterprises), combined with a new regulation meant to "deregulate" the economy, resulted in a wave of bankruptcies and liquidations and in mass unemployment. In this situation, Borovo shared the fate of other Yugoslav industries.

To get an insight into the workings of the "real abstraction" of capital as these played out in this particular time and place, I will refer to two different sources. The first one is the report on the industrial restructuring of Yugoslavia published by the World Bank in 1991, a technical, somewhat abstract account of global flows of capital that includes recommendations for the then ongoing economic reform in Yugoslavia. The real-life consequences of the reform measures are readily observable in contemporary Yugoslav media and cultural production. My focus will be on a neglected source from this archive: a weekly factory newspaper. The *Borovo* weekly, the oldest paper of its kind in Yugoslavia (established in 1932), was primarily meant to provide information to the employees of the Borovo system about the state and perspective of their company, but it also covered local amateur culture, sports, and, more generally, everyday life in Borovo Naselje; in short, all aspects of life connected to the workplace by way of socialized funding. The weekly provides a host of detailed accounts of the lived experience of the reform and the related crisis in a socialist (and Fordist) company forced to accept the inevitable. The pairing of these archival sources testifies to an actual encounter: Borovo is one of the Yugoslav enterprises analyzed in the report, as it was destined for restructuring according to the World Bank or market rules. At the same time, the difficult move towards the market can be reconstructed on an almost day-to-day basis from the descriptions of factory life in the company newspaper.

In the 1991 report, the World Bank recognized the fact that shock therapy was affecting the economy indiscriminately: "Many potentially viable enterprises are currently in a crisis situation due to losses and illiquidity" (xi). The report also stated that this was due, among other factors, to "slumping domestic demand for consumer goods and particularly capital goods as a result of the stabilization program" (xi). In other words, the ongoing reforms ("stabilization," "restructuring") were having devastating consequences even for the viable parts of Yugoslav industry.¹² In 1990,

¹² As other factors affecting crisis in enterprises, the report lists "loss of sales to collapsing CMEA markets; and losses due to price controls." (xi)

as already mentioned, industrial production declined by 11% due to these measures. In the summer of that year, a Slovenian economist and critic of Marković's reforms, Aleksander Bajt, estimated that the decline would reach 38% if the trend continued the following year, and that it would result in another "one million layoffs" (Jakovljević 29). This is actually quite close to the World Bank estimates, which found that the "loss-making enterprises" (LMEs) are employing, and consequently need to "shed" "1.2 million workers," or "about 20% of the total work force" (12).

The World Bank was also aware that one way of saving the viable enterprises would be through government bail-outs. This, however, this was discouraged, since it would "compromise the financial sector reform as well as the stabilization program." (xi) In order for the financial sector reform to remain uncompromised, the World Bank argued, financial assistance to enterprises,

either in the form of debt relief or Government contributions, should be given only after certain preconditions are met, including: (a) the preparation, by the enterprise, of a restructuring plan demonstrating long term viability; (b) the shedding, by the enterprise, of surplus labor; (c) ownership reform, including privatization; and (d) the implementation of relevant price reforms by Government. (xi)

So the priorities are clear: they are in the "financial sector." The projected collateral damage is also named explicitly: it is "surplus labor." In the context of the described recommendations for consolidation of capitalist relations in Yugoslavia, it is worth repeating Prabhat Patnaik's question, "why do the governments of metropolitan capitalist economies choose inflation control as an objective over higher employment?", as well as his answer: "inflation control is essential for the stability of the wealth-holding medium [money], and hence for the stability of capitalism; if, in the process of achieving price-stability, much higher levels of unemployment are generated, then they simply have to be accepted and imposed upon the working class" (Patnaik 5). Given such priorities, it is interesting that the report dedicates a disproportionate amount of space to the problem of labor. This is because the existing position of labor, together with its repercussions for the expected transformation of property relations (privatization), was understood as an obstacle to a successful transition to capitalism. This obstacle was two-fold: workers were legally the owners of "social property" (i.e., the enterprises, but also the property of the enterprises, such as holiday resorts, and other social infrastructure financed by socialist companies), and workers were, by this time really only nominally, participating in the management of their firms. So the report concludes that "ultimately the success of trade and fiscal reform . . . hinges upon the resolution of property rights over capital and the role of labor in self-managed social-sector enterprises." (71)

At the time of this dramatic transformation, the *Borovo* weekly was so marginalized that the only way in which it could exercise some sort of agency were its reports, sometimes of an almost ethnographic nature, on the dramatic events in the factory.

These painted a grim picture of the coming times.¹³ In Borovo, the credit restrictions led to a chronic lack of work and the inability of the company to provide regular pay for its workers. Nevertheless, since it "had no alternative," as the Yugoslav president announced in 1989, the restructuring continued—and so did the numerous, fragmented, and uncoordinated strikes. In early 1991, after difficult negotiations, an official estimate of workforce redundancy was finally reached: 5,600 people needed to be laid off. Out of a total of about 23,000, that was quite close to the 20% of "surplus labor" that needed to be "shed" in Yugoslav enterprises according to the World Bank. In the spring of 1991, Borovo's management hired experts from Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte, a multinational firm offering "professional services," to help with the restructuring. The weekly reported that the restructuring program for Borovo "especially emphasizes" "the need for an increase in labor productivity and the elimination of surplus labor," as well as "better organization, including authority, responsibility, and incentive."¹⁴ The notorious events in Vukovar in the summer of 1991 cut short much more than the company's plans. Still, the situation in which the workers of Vukovar found themselves on the eve of war is well worth sketching out, as it shows how the new, capitalist rules of the game that would eventually be generalized in the years to come were first experienced in the sphere of work.

Since the austerity measures made access to raw materials, capital goods, and credit impossible, and since Yugoslavia was declared a high-risk country for investment, Borovo had problems finding any work. About 15,000 people are put on furlough at the end of 1990. In the spring of 1991, bankruptcy proceedings began in Borovo, which meant immediate layoffs for all people employed in factories under receivership. By that time, salaries were already 3 to 4 months late, about 10,000 people in the old company town of Borovo Naselje were late on their rent, kindergartens were taking company-issued coupons instead of cash, and so on. The halt of production in Borovo became apparent in the decaying public spaces and services; in fact, the social infrastructure of the town was crumbling under the effects of austerity and restructuring.

In the workplace, the pressure for an increase in labor productivity, discipline, and responsibility in line with the restructuring program was acutely felt. A small number of workers returned to their jobs in factories under receivership. There, they found themselves under the absolute authority of the court-appointed receivers. One of these ad-hoc managers declared that bankruptcy was "an opportunity for workers and managers to get back to work free from bureaucratic restraints." He added that "workers have had enough of self-management, their rights, sick leaves, and fake

¹³ As an aside, let me mention an entry from the weekly's regular section called "Little Economic Lexicon." In the first 1990 issue, the Lexicon gives the definition of "Wall Street," which reads: "synonym for the financial oligarchy of the USA" (*Borovo* 3110, January 1, 1990: 8). The entries in the Lexicon were not chosen entirely at random, but were meant to reflect on the ongoing crisis in Yugoslavia that Borovo, as a relic of a past that was being abandoned, felt especially acutely.

¹⁴ "Prestrukturiranje Borova", *Borovo* 3170, April 12, 1991: 2.

solidarity. They want work, someone to give them orders and their pay.”¹⁵ For a short while, one of the Borovo factories under receivership (the machine factory) increased its productivity eightfold. This was based solely on an intensified—or “Western,” as the weekly called it—work rhythm. However, those lucky enough to be back to work were only receiving the minimum wage. The agony of the factory and its workers dragged on under those conditions, now complicated and aggravated by the outbreak of armed conflicts in the Vukovar area.

Looking at this picture of the concrete consequences of the reform measures, it is difficult not to conclude that one of its main effects was the disciplining of Yugoslav labor, its adaptation to new work (and unemployment) rhythms and living practices. Indeed, it seems rather obvious that the bulk of the social burden of the finance-centered process of stabilization and restructuring was carried by labor. It was labor—as the most likely and numerous owner of social property, and at the time still the legal subject of self-management—that represented the main obstacle to the reforms that were underway. The clearing of the ground for the new system involved what David Harvey called “accumulation by dispossession,” which in the Yugoslav case implied the dispossession of the vast majority of the working people of the expiring federation. With that in mind, it could be argued that the reasons why Croatian society does not remember the events and processes involved in its tumultuous return to capitalism are structural, and that the act of forgetting, which bars our socialist past from view, is a constitutive gesture in the formation of the new, post-socialist society.

There is no doubt that the present discussion could be enriched by looking at other instances of industrial action in the same period. Although archival material points to the existence of strikes in the non-industrial sector at the time, the almost total lack of research on this topic makes it very difficult to draw any far-reaching conclusions.¹⁶ We do, however, find some traces of these forgotten events in the literary production of the time. In Goran Tribuson’s 1991 crime novel *Dublja strana zaljeva* [The Deeper End of the Bay] the story takes place in the later part of 1990, after the democratic elections and during the intensified process of economic restructuring in Croatia and Yugoslavia. The main protagonist is an ex-police inspector who, in the spirit of the new times, decides to try his entrepreneurial luck as a private investigator. The shift from the social (or public) to the private sector, officially celebrated and encouraged as the desirable direction for the economy as a whole, finds a cynical expression in Tribuson’s work. Asked why he decided to change jobs, especially considering the fact that the police got a raise from the new Croatian government, the PI can only think of “independence” as the reason for the change, thus echoing another relative novelty in

¹⁵ “POLI – Stečaj izmjenio sliku”, *Borovo* 3176, June 21, 1991: 1, 2.

¹⁶ In a March 1990 interview, one of the leading Yugoslav authorities on strikes, sociologist Neca Jovanov, commented on an ongoing teachers’ strike by noting a “growing revolt of politically disenfranchised, exploited, and morally devalued people,” and warning of a “sudden increase in the number of strikes outside of the so-called working class. Strikes of the “producers of knowledge,” Jovanov claims, testify to the “devaluing of this country’s greatest creative potential” (Domazet 4).

the political vocabulary of the young democracy. National independence was, along with "sovereignty," one of the central points of ideological legitimation for the new ruling elite. But the ex-cop's early experience of personal and national independence leads only to resigned questions: "independence in what? Insecurity and destitution" (Tribuson 15). A sense of sober anxiety is deepened by the protagonist's reflections on intensifying class divisions as these are registered in the news media: "Big black letters announced the strike of the metal workers, which the government labeled as politicized. As in a grotesque kaleidoscope, news about fashion shows, champagne tastings, and charity tennis matches mixed with those of bankruptcies, layoffs, and increasing misery" (Tribuson 46-47).

V

In the chapter about the economic crisis in his *Američki studiji danas* [American Studies Today], Grgas writes that we begin to notice the economic forces shaping our reality only in the moment of their collapse and dysfunction, when the interpretive codes that normalize and naturalize their everyday operations are, in that moment of crisis, destroyed (112). This should also remind us that a crisis is a scene of interpretive struggle, of conflicting efforts to establish old or new codes and to inscribe meaning in the ruins of the social structure, and, consequently, to open up or occluding future prospects. Nineteen-eighties Yugoslavia were precisely such a moment. The above discussion has been an attempt to point out some of the repressed aspects of the Yugoslav crisis, as well as some of the less acknowledged interpretive positions that were operative at the time. With these in mind, I move onto my concluding observation.

In the quoted book (139), Grgas points us to Fredric Jameson's demand that we think about "the identity and difference between the stages of capitalism, each one remaining true to the latter's essence and structure (the motive of profit, accumulation, expansion, exploitation of wage labor) at the same time that it marks a mutation in culture and everyday life, in social institutions and human relationships" (Jameson 2011: 9). Arguably, Grgas's recent work revolves more around the difference or novelty of the present conjuncture. Acknowledging the importance of this position, I would like to conclude by saying that, despite the newness of the historical conjuncture defined by "the command of money," there is also something old and familiar about it. As the above discussion of our own transition to capitalism illustrates, this sameness in difference is class struggle. Jameson himself made a similar remark in his 1998 review of Arrighi's *Long Twentieth Century*, entitled "Culture and Finance Capital." In the financialized 1980s, Jameson writes,

We seemed to be returning to the most fundamental form of class struggle, one so basic that it spelled the end of all those Western-Marxist and theoretical subtleties that the Cold War had called forth. . . . This means that an older vulgar Marxism may once again be more relevant to our situation than the newer models; but it also poses more objective problems about money

itself which had seemed less relevant in the Cold War period. (Jameson 1998: 137)

This closing quotation is not meant to advocate a return to a “vulgar Marxism,” but to point out the actual, historical dynamic of identity and difference in mutations of capitalism. The recognition of this dynamic can only begin with understanding the history of the present moment, against the “systematic amnesia” that has been the order of the day in the last quarter of a century. Working against such amnesia does not necessarily imply a melancholic attachment to what has been lost, but it does represent a necessary precondition for a better and more truthful account of our present predicament.

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The Institutional Framework of Post-Socialist Literary Production: Literature as Creative Writing

Even though the main sources of the drama (or tragedy, to be more precise) of the capitalist restoration in former Yugoslavia (or “transition,” as it is usually called) are its most visible socio-economic consequences such as deindustrialization, ethnic wars, forced population movements, or skyrocketing social inequality, the changes occurring to the seemingly less dramatic constituents of the system, such as cultural production, should by no means be disregarded.¹ They should, however, be studied with a sharper critical and comparative focus on their systemic—institutional, political-economic—aspects, which are determined by pressures stemming from the realities of the social organization of production as a whole. This is necessary not only because such analyses are prerequisites for an informed understanding of specific cultural artifacts in their historical context but perhaps more importantly because they can shed light on the new types of hegemonic demands and limitations that are imposed on cultural activity, as well as ideological compromises that producers of culture are obliged to either internalize or at least consider and relate to in a necessarily political manner in order to have their work disseminated and understood in the public sphere.

As things stand at the moment, the existence of these ideological and institutional demands and limitations in the field of culture is visible only with difficulty, or when discussed, it is most often explained away as a consequence of temporary institutional disorder emerging from the chaos of transition and entirely corrigible by better policies. At its most abstract, the dominant contemporary ideological narrative (no matter whether deployed in its liberal pluralist or conservative nationalist version) of the emergence of the new national cultural fields in ex-Yugoslav countries is a familiar one: it considers the fall of Yugoslav socialism to be a “de-institutionalization” of sorts, a liberation of culture, public expression, and creativity in the successor republics from what is perceived as the stranglehold of the state and its institutional controls and ideological demands. As I hope to show in the following examination of what I consider to be crucial institutional changes to the literary field in one of the successor republics, not only does the establishment of such a facile dichotomy between “state” and “culture” make it more difficult to observe restrictive institutional mechanisms

¹ The writing of this article was supported in part by the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ-1543). The article is based on an essay entitled “Od socijalizma do kapitalizma, od književnosti do kreativnog pisanja,” originally published in the 2013 collection *Političko-pedagoško: Janusova lica pedagogije* (ed. Ivana Perica; Zagreb, Udruuga Blaberon), and then revised, translated, and expanded into its current form.

regulating cultural production in historical contexts where the state plays a less significant (or at least more indirect) role, but the implication that there is an essential opposition between the state and the cultural field crudely distorts a relation that is historically much more complex and varied.

The Context of Capitalist Restoration

It seems that the most recent capitalist crisis that hit peripheral European countries such as Croatia especially hard not only caused the institutional configuration of the post-socialist literary field to be revealed under strain, but also motivated new attempts to transform it in line with the realities of the completed transition. The necessity of coming to terms, post-transition and post-crisis, with the economic problems facing producers of culture has also created conditions for a new awareness of the political economy of cultural production under capitalism. After two decades of inertia, during which the systemic aspects of the post-socialist literary field and their problematic consequences—everything from multifaceted class alliances between new national cultural figures and post-socialist capital to the oligopolistic publishing market—were sometimes criticized but rarely addressed systematically or politically challenged,² the dire situation seems to have finally provoked a change in this passive attitude during the six-year-long Croatian recession. Consequently, several initiatives addressing the perceived dysfunction of the field from fresh perspectives appeared. The two issues that have received the most attention during those last several years are the legal status of literary professions (i.e., the regulation of literary cultural labor in relation to the state) and the related issue of the academic institutionalization of literary writing.³ Besides simply functioning as pragmatic answers to concrete problems, both have in the public sphere been positively framed as attempts to “modernize” the literary field, to guarantee it, after the chaos of transition and the difficulties of the crisis, a new form of stability and continued existence as one of the safeguards of a number of cultural freedoms that in bourgeois societies function as, among other things, legitimizing agents of that particular socio-historical arrangement, as symbols of democratic, civilized maturity.

The fact that precisely these issues have motivated new initiatives and organizational efforts, or in other words, that precisely these issues appear as fundamental for

² The exceptions to this trend indicate that the most productive genre for such criticism of the field has been more literary than academic: for instance, Borislav Mikulić's newspaper column in *Slobodna Dalmacija* collected in a book entitled *Kroatorij Europe*, the literary-philosophical essays of Boris Buden (*Barikade*), or Dean Duda's columns in *Feral Tribune* collected in the book *Hrvatski književni bajkomat* (see Buden, Duda, Mikulić).

³ It is important to note that the second issue, as in many other European countries, functions as an institutional innovation in the post-socialist context. Despite the decades-long history of institutionalized creative writing programs in, most notably, the United States and their normalization as a part of the academic field, no such institutional, pedagogical, or more broadly organizational model has existed in Croatia until recently.

the functioning and reproduction of the literary field, is related to its reorganization in the processes of capitalist restoration. The material conditions that today determine the position and options of agents in the field, as well as the field's institutional protocols, did not exist in the same form prior to the post-socialist rupture. One of those conditions, a crucially important one, is the already mentioned publishing oligopoly—a small number of large publisher/distributors that have the power to control not only the distribution of books but also more or less directly what appears in print. A recent study has shown that about 85% of the Croatian bookstore network is owned by a few large publishers, meaning that a very small number of private companies “monopolizes the market, blocks the distribution of books, dumps prices, and establishes a damaging dynamics of payment for sold copies, while often limiting the offer of books by other publishers in its stores” (Bartolčić et al. 85). One of the many consequences of this state of affairs has been the absurdly low and irregular fees paid by publishers to their authors, many of whom have been forced into a position with no bargaining power in which they have the option either to accept the very low fee and have their book satisfactorily distributed by the publisher-distributor or to try to self-publish or find an independent publisher and get another very low or no fee at all, but without any guarantee of satisfactory distribution because the supporting network of independent bookstores has been forced out of business by the oligopoly. This in combination with other problems has led over the years to a situation where hardly any contemporary Croatian writers can count on satisfactory remuneration for their labor and cannot expect to live off writing alone even after they have achieved a significant level of visibility in the field and their sales figures are, at least in the context of the post-socialist literary field, quite high. But more broadly and most importantly, it is not reasonable to expect that cultural production will be regarded as anything but a luxury in a society that structurally limits access to culture to the majority of its citizens: in a peripheral Croatian economy, devastated in the processes of capitalist restoration (for the sake of comparison, the country's GDP in 2014 was 7.7% lower than the GDP in 1986 after years of socialist crisis) (Domazet 2), the already low sales of books dropped even more drastically during the recessionary years that followed the 2008 global systemic crisis. There are no external empirical studies of this particular aspect of the publishing market, but as reported by the publishers themselves in 2012, the drop in sales between 2011 and 2012 amounted to 30–50%, depending on the field and genre (Mikuličin). Expectedly, publishers and booksellers complain this can only be compounded by the fact that the state has reintroduced the Value Added Tax on books (it was raised from 0 to 5% in 2013) in compliance with the EU regulations upon entering the Union (Piteša). And lest we forget—figures such as the average registered unemployment rate, which has long hovered not much below 20% (in 2015 it was 17.7%), do not exactly help boost the demand for literary commodities production, either.

For the producers of literary texts—for writers—this has meant that, in the post-socialist period, neither could they count on making it in the weak(ened) post-socialist market, nor could they expect to lean on the state, which before 2005 offered no in-

dividual programs of support for literary production, not even in the form of stipends or literary project grants, quite common elsewhere in Europe. Even though there have been some positive changes in this respect recently, and some of the above-mentioned professional initiatives have resulted in limited reform, such as the establishment of new grants and further opportunities for the public funding of literary production, with the continued emphasis on austerity as the inescapable model of grappling with recession and the post-crisis economic slump, this situation cannot be expected to improve with the help of the state in the near future and is in fact very likely to become worse.⁴

Working under these adverse conditions, Croatian writers have attempted to push for practical institutional reforms on the state level in order to reconfigure the institutional arrangement of the literary field to their benefit. The first step—and first limited victory—in this process was simply to publicly articulate some of the labor problems literary workers in Croatia face. The second step was to push for a reform of the legislative framework regulating the literary profession. In 2011–2012, Croatian writers, organized in the initiative “The Right to a Profession,” fought for and achieved legal recognition of their profession and can now expect a certain degree of professional regulation and related benefits. This might be an important improvement for many, even though the dynamics of the field remain tied to the negative impact of its post-socialist transformations and the difficult socio-economic conditions sketched out above. But what I would like to concentrate on in more detail here is a narrowly related and seemingly spontaneous development that follows from this change in the legal status of the profession.

The idea is that after literary writing has been recognized as a profession within the legislative framework of the state,⁵ it is necessary to develop state institutions within which the profession can be fully practiced and credentialed. In an attempt to create these institutions, the proponents of the idea looked to the U.S. literary field in search of inspiration and an institutional model. Consequently, in the past several years serious effort was put into the project of establishing the first Croatian public university creative writing departments. It is important to note, however, that this development did not come out of the blue. “Creative writing” both as a concept and an institutional model entered the literary field through a network of informal (in relation to the state) writing workshops that started appearing some ten years ago.⁶ The

⁴ Indeed, it already has become worse: approved state support for book publishing for 2013 was 12.5% lower than in 2008. This drop increases to 19.1% when subsidies for literary journals and electronic publications, literary events, and literary programs in bookstores are added and taken as a whole. (For a detailed account, compare Croatian Competition Agency 2011, 2008)

⁵ As a result of the literary workers’ initiative, the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development, the highest advisory body for scientific research, higher education and technology and a part of the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, issued the new *Ordinance on Scientific and Artistic Areas, Fields and Branches*, a document regulating academic professions, which under the area of “art” now contains the field “literature,” which includes two branches—“writer” and “literary translator.”

⁶ Perhaps the best-known creative writing workshops are organized by CeKaPe, the Centre for Creative Writing, where a number of well-known Croatian writers have taught since 2007 when it was founded.

best-known of the workshops are commercial, i.e. they are a platform for offering the experience and knowledge of established writers as a commodity. As such, their historical emergence cannot but be observed as a structural effect, a development within the broader context of the commodification of culture, leisure, and education under the conditions of post-socialist transition. As the workshops grow in popularity and become more entrenched, and as communication and resource exchange networks develop between participants, mentors, and others, the workshop model is becoming an important element of the literary field's institutional arrangement.

Thus it is unsurprising that the conceptual innovation that is creative writing as conceived by the workshops was seen as an integral part of the project of professional legislation described above. However, despite optimistic announcements, the project of academic institutionalization of the profession has not yet been realized. So far, no dedicated university departments, or even chairs, have been founded, and only several intermittent classes in creative writing have been offered in the modern languages departments at universities in Pula or Split. Nevertheless, the specific needs and problems the project was supposed to meet and provide answers to, together with the systemic conditions that motivated its emergence, still exist, and its rearticulation can most likely be expected in the future. An analysis of the logic and likely consequences of such institutional reforms that are lacking from cultural discussions in the post-socialist context is thus necessary and justified.

To limit this complex issue to something manageable in the format of this text, I would like to examine more closely the institutional history and ideological legitimation of the reforms promising to introduce academic credentialization of the literary professions, and the effect their consequences might have on what has been recognized, perhaps most notably in the work of Pierre Bourdieu⁷, as the defining principle of the literary field in bourgeois societies since the nineteenth century—the principle of artistic autonomy. Usually, without much historicizing effort, this principle is taken to be positive and immanent to literary-artistic practice, and is defined relationally, against “negative” socio-political entities that threaten its full expression. It is thus customary, from a post-socialist liberal perspective, to observe the socialist state (for good historical reason, no doubt) as the one that automatically comes to mind when we think of forces responsible for the curbing of artistic autonomy, whereas its guaranteed existence in capitalist liberal democracy is taken for granted.⁸ The truth is, however, not so unambiguous, especially in the case of socialist Yugoslavia and its

⁷ See Bourdieu 1995 for a historical study of the French literary field in which some of the conceptual tools this article relies on were developed and/or deployed.

⁸ In cultural-theoretical discussions, “autonomy” is often conceived in several different ways: a) as a defining characteristic of the literary field emerging from the complex social interactions in bourgeois modernity along with other related phenomena such as secularization or democratization; b) as a historical political-aesthetic attitude—a (proto)modernist cultural credo of emancipation from bourgeois commercialism and materialism; c) often, especially in the post-socialist context, it is also simply conceived as a relation to the state—a political right of the cultural producer to freedom from political proscription and censorship.

capitalist successor-republics. In order to explain what I mean, a broad historization of this problem is necessary.

Socialist Modernity

Literary historians often refer to Miroslav Krleža's speech at the 1952 Writers' Congress in Ljubljana as one of the central symbolic moments through which the fundamental ideological coordinates of the Yugoslav literary field – its specific ethos, role, and position within society – were determined. The speech was not only the final word in a twenty-year-long polemic on the social function of literature that has become known as the “Conflict on the Literary Left,” but also a public denunciation of Stalinism and the Stalinist-Zhdanovian model of state-directed cultural production. By sharply criticizing Stalin, Krleža was certainly acting in accordance with his role as the leading cultural figure in Titoist Yugoslavia, but he was also simply reiterating and developing his old, unrelentingly modernist ideas about the necessity of autonomous cultural production and the freedom of the field of art from dictates whose logic is foreign and hostile to its development, irrespective of whether those dictates are commercial, religious, or political. Krleža's strong and consistent position on this matter not only helped, but provided strong wind for the sails of post-war Yugoslav literary and cultural production in general, and was enthusiastically received by younger generations of authors. Thus it occurred, for instance, that the symptomatic title of an editorial written by Vlatko Pavletić for the first issue of the literary journal *Krugovi* [Circles]—“Neka bude živost” [Let there be liveliness]—was taken up as a motto for the post-war generation of writers gathered around that journal. This aesthetic liberalism⁹ (together with all the material limitations, political censorship, and state control that were still practiced despite variation in strictness during different periods) developed in step with the institutional reforms in other fields that were gradually introduced after the 1948 Yugoslav break with the Soviet Union and the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform. It is precisely the compatibility, or complementarity, of the democratic aspects of the Yugoslav system of self-governing socialism with the modernist ethics of autonomy argued for by Krleža that could lead people like Edvard Kardelj, one of the architects of the new system and for decades one of the chief Yugoslav party officials, to pronouncements such as the one issued as early as 1954 in a speech at the Third Congress of the Union of Serbian Communists: “it seems to me that this work can

⁹ To mention in passing: as it cannot be denied that such developments have given rise to the conditions for the creation of some of the most important literary texts and movements of Croatian (and more broadly, Yugoslav) literature, it is interesting to note that many literary authors in Croatia who benefited from those developments, despite in some cases first being shunned or condemned by the less liberal cultural politics of the immediate post-war period, and whose key works could be produced and canonized precisely because of the specific nature of the relatively liberal Yugoslav system, later opted for politically deeply conservative as well as aesthetically anti-autonomist nationalist options during the process of the breakup of Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and 1990s. Some of these people are the already mentioned Vlatko Pavletić, as well as Vjekoslav Kaleb, Slobodan Novak, Petar Šegedin, Dubravko Horvatić, and others.

succeed only if it rests on the initiative of the people who are personally connected to these forms of cultural production. Therefore, I think it is necessary to work toward a greater independence of educational and cultural organizations among the working masses, as well as toward connecting them vertically and democratically” (Kardelj 17).¹⁰ By the—at least for the contemporary horizon of political possibility—unusual term “vertical democratic connection,” Kardelj means the linking of ineffective local (primarily the poorly developed rural) party, trade-union, and other cultural organizations that were prone to bureaucratization and dependent on inert procedures and alienated committees with other cultural and educational organizations that had achieved a satisfactory level of “self-governance” and mutual cooperation beyond local levels. The aim of this linking of cultural and educational organizations, and of the seemingly paradoxical process of gaining independence through attaching to others, is the transfer of knowledge and experience, cultural exchange, and education, as well as, ultimately, the creation of conditions for the autonomous development of cultural institutions and cultural production that responds to the concrete historical needs of the people in the community. In the same speech, Kardelj goes on:

Consequently, . . . it would be completely pointless if the Party itself advocated a this or that “-ism.” This is a matter of cultural production itself. It will conquer the crisis and find a corresponding artistic form if it is an expression of the life and striving of today’s generations in their fight for social progress. This is a conviction that we as communists have and must have, and we have to fight for it. This does not mean that we have to proscribe the content, themes, or form of cultural expression. Even if we wanted to, we would accomplish nothing by such meddling. This was in his time already attempted by Stalin with his rules of “socialist realism,” and he only managed to prove that decadence can be expressed in that form too. (Kardelj 19)

And even though Kardelj in the quoted speech also espoused conservative beliefs about the corruptive influence of comic books and jazz music¹¹ and made contradictory statements that left much theoretical room for the possibility of direct political intervention and censorship in cultural production, this is the theoretical foundation upon which later systemic measures discussed by him in a speech at the opening of the Belgrade Book Fair in 1975 were created. In that speech, following a couple of decades of Yugoslav institutional and political experimentation with self-governance and the socialist market, as well as a major constitutional reform in 1974, he focused on the perceived social need to make access to books and literature as easy as

¹⁰ Most of the texts quoted in this essay have not been translated into English. Unless otherwise noted, the translations given here are mine.

¹¹ These sometimes come across as caricatures of the arguments of the Frankfurt School on capitalist mass culture, and would, in their cultural elitist aspect, have hardly been uncharacteristic of senior political officials of any state at the time.

possible. He reiterated that the constitutional reforms establishing the self-governing organizations in Yugoslavia opened up the possibility to solve particular problems autonomously, within the specific common interest bodies to whom those problems were of concern: “either within the framework of the self-management community of interests for culture, or within the framework of the autonomously organized, specific self-management community of interests for publishing; and with the participation and responsibility of the publishing industry, organizations of authors, organizations of associated labor, as well as the socio-political communities and organizations, and maybe other factors, such as libraries and others” (182). He added, importantly, that “problems cannot be solved only by subsidies. There is also a need . . . for better organized engagement of society to help the book” (182). The possible ways in which the proposed engagement of society to destroy barriers to accessing culture can materialize are mentioned in passing in the remainder of the speech. All of them are based on proposals to activate autonomous associations of labor and connect local community organizations and their diverse cultural institutions through common initiatives as opposed to—this is especially interesting if we have in mind that the Yugoslav society was structurally dependent on commodity production and the socialist market—simply strengthening the publishing industry reliant on individual consumption.

Such policies and initiatives should not only be read as attempts to decentralize the production of culture in relation to the state (decentralization was one of the functions of the institution of the “self-management community of interests” and other similar elements of the Yugoslav system of self-governance), but also as nothing less than calls to institutionalize the conditions of possibility of the modernist ideal of the truly autonomous field of art. (Or more precisely and fundamentally, the communist ideal of labor—cultural labor in this case—autonomous from capital and the state.) In this regard, Yugoslav experimentation should be taken and studied very seriously, regardless of the project’s flaws and structural limitations as exhibited through often contradictory historical experience. Its most important aspect is the implication that the conditions of possibility for artistic autonomy are not to be confused with either the cultural market or the self-exile of alienated spiritual aristocracies, but can be created only institutionally, by de-commodifying cultural production in an egalitarian society guaranteeing universal access to culture.

In contrast to the above institutional conception of autonomy, the canonical intellectual forbears of modernist autonomist radicalism, such as Flaubert or Baudelaire, who are often invoked as paragons of autonomy, were able to rely only on the individualist, perhaps even subcultural, ethics of autonomy. Their self-identification as artists and the pursuit of their artistic practice were in principle negative—they depended on the opposition to and disassociation from the bourgeois institutional order and on what they perceived as self-exclusion from any society except the one forming the great canon of the field. As Flaubert concisely puts it in a letter to his mother, “I am resigned to living as I have always lived, alone, with my crowds of great men as my only companions . . .” (Flaubert 161) The Yugoslav example, in contrast, offers an interesting attempt to institutionally guarantee autonomy of cultural production as

the central organizational principle of the literary field while still attempting to view literature as a productive activity with an important social function and producers of culture as integral parts of society. As Kardelj's statements quoted above show, this does not necessarily entail tying cultural producers to an official poetic doctrine. Such a position is based on a progressivist-humanist belief, common to both Kardelj and Krleža and exhibiting a considerable amount of revolutionary optimism, that leaving space for various aesthetic tendencies and related ideologies to battle it out on their own, without external interference, will lead to the victory of what Kardelj calls "truly artistic, scientific, humane ideas and values of our socialist society" (184).

It is precisely this belief, this particular openness of the system and parts of its bureaucracy, that made it possible for the later generations of Yugoslav authors—especially those who were maturing during Yugoslavia's final decade and became culturally dominant in post-socialist Croatia (e.g., the authors from the so-called "Quorum generation" and others)—to develop their postmodern, Western-pop-culture-influenced, sometimes self-indulgently aestheticist or self-referential cultural projects. One of the more important poets of that generation, as well as an important critic, publisher, and editor, Branko Ćeđec, could thus write in a 1983 essay on "the avant-garde and post-avant-garde developments" that, at the contemporary historical moment the "ideologically self-aware authorial instance abandons the literary orientation burdened by the notion of the text as a battlefield of ideas and, by reevaluating fundamental literary aims, turns its interests instead towards the analysis of the external and internal laws . . . of the literary text" (Ćeđec 6–7). It is very important to note that these proclamations come from a cultural figure who was on the editorial board of the journal published by the Association of Croatian Socialist Youth, or to put it more clearly—an "official" publication directly linked to central institutions of the state. This example of aestheticist radicalism at the heart of the establishment is enough to put to rest the superficially ideological assumption (often reproduced when post-Cold-War ideological pieties are observed and episodes from the complex history of "really existing socialism" are lumped together under the label "communist totalitarianism") that literary propagandism in the Yugoslav socialist period could be avoided only at personal risk, if an author was willing to jeopardize their social status or perhaps even their freedom due to pursuing aesthetic projects that could not be seen as promoting official doctrines or state policies.

Transition from the Transition

It is partly because of the inheritance of relative comfort of such a position within the system, ideologically legitimized by the socialist cult of education and culture, that it took so long after the breakup of Yugoslavia for post-socialist Croatian writers to wake up to the realities of their situation in the "transition".¹² As Robert Perišić, one

¹² This could probably be extended to cultural producers in other artistic fields, as well. The early history of transition is marked by a curious lack of self-reflection and systemic criticism in the cultural sphere, with rare exceptions.

of the most visible contemporary Croatian writers and the spokesman of the above-mentioned “Right to a Profession” initiative, sarcastically wrote,

During this whole process, the writers were victims who, you know, watched from the sidelines, as eternal part-time workers and individualists, thinking none of this had anything to do with them, even though they had to realize before long that books weren’t really being printed, and that, even when they were, there were no places to sell them (the network of booksellers having been devastated by privatization), so they were told that this is the reason why their own fees, this tiny right of theirs, were now gone. Because now they were “in the market,” and the market, what do you know, ain’t working at the moment. (Perišić)

During the two post-socialist decades, especially in the latter part of the ’90s and early 2000s, the last socialist literary generation was thus critically engaged with the *epiphenomena* of the transition, such as nationalist cultural kitsch, while the structural changes threatening the bare existence of their practice and profession quietly (at least for those privileged enough not to be existentially threatened by this) unfolded in the background. During that time, the main weapons against the intellectual and poetic mannerism of the ethnonationalists were radical literary minimalism, so-called *reality prose* (the model for which was found in the very influential Raymond Carver), and the subcultural ethos of the “independent” part of the literary field, created in the tradition of punk festivals and the DIY scene and institutionally integrated into the civil society liberal framework established in the transition. For that part of the field, the principles of autonomous production were still central and carefully guarded, and to defend them meant also to distance oneself from the politics of ethnonationalists, who viewed “Croatian literature” as national first and literature second.¹³

But with the normalization of capitalist social relations and ideologies on the EU post-socialist periphery, with the (illusory) signs of waning of right-wing nationalism¹⁴ and the imminent Croatian accession to the EU becoming the order of the day—or, in other words, with the transition complete—this “marginalist” attitude towards autonomy also started to change. Under the conditions of finalized capitalist restoration, which in practice meant exposure to the capitalist market in a period of serious economic crisis and reduced availability of public support for cultural production (i.e., the infamous “austerity”), there occurred a spontaneous turning to institutional models and frameworks for literary production already tried out in the

¹³ Referring to my earlier note—on the surface, this seems to be a rather contradictory development from the post-WWII flowering of literary late modernism that many of the “nationalists” were connected with in their youth. A more detailed analysis would, I wager, most likely uncover a form of continuity between the youthful modernist elitism and mature nationalist exclusivism of those cultural figures.

¹⁴ The most recent turns of events, as in the rest of Europe, have given rise to a newly radicalized and growing right wing for which even the 1990s nationalist ideological substrate seems too thin.

“ordered societies” of the idealized West. Thus, as already mentioned, an institution new to the post-socialist field and without precedent in earlier models emerged in an attempt to “modernize” the field, eliminate some of the problems that had emerged in the transition, and update modes of organization and communication within the field by adapting to the realities of capitalism on the EU periphery. This institution is known as creative writing.

From Socialism to Capitalism, from Literature to Creative Writing

I use the term *creative writing* here to signify an institutional arrangement of the literary field in which the academic writing program or creative writing workshop and their related sets of pedagogies and cultural practices become central frameworks of pedagogic exchange, communication, and literary production. Additionally, in the context of this particular analysis, the term also serves as a literary-historiographic orientation point marking a distinct phase in which the old public, autonomy-focused, social-democratic “literature” is displaced by “creative writing,” a more market-oriented framework emerging under the conditions of capitalist universality and post-socialist transition.

As already mentioned, the two institutional forms “creative writing” took in Croatia are the older semi-formal creative writing workshop (offered in the context of civil society and the cultural market as a service that aspiring creative writers can pay for) and the creative writing university program (potentially offered, so far, only in public universities). In order to understand how this particular transformation of the field facilitates abandoning the principles of autonomous literary production in an attempt to integrate the field into the capitalist market, or in other words, to demonstrate how, far from being a guarantee of autonomy of cultural production as it is often suggested in the post-socialist context, “the market” leads to an effective eradication of autonomy, it is useful to examine how a creative writing university program was recently conceived in Croatia.

In the words of its creators, Natalija Grgorinić, Ognjen Rađen, and Marinko Koščec, the program was ready for certification and enrolling students as early as 2013 (Mandić), but for whatever combination of reasons, its implementation is still on hold in early 2016. This particular initiative remains significant, however, because it represents the most serious post-socialist attempt to institutionalize the creative writing model. If successful, it would achieve an institutional integration of the literary and academic fields in the context of the Bologna university reform. Having these institutional coordinates in mind, or in other words, having in mind the Bologna reform’s role in preparing the university for subsumption under capital and its emphasis on skills-based education that “communicates with the market,” it is unsurprising that Marinko Koščec announced that what would be taught in the creative writing program besides “literary” writing is what he calls “various forms of ‘applied’ written creativity.” The ultimate purpose of the program, he goes on, would be to “produce a quality labor force for a myriad of activities” (Kolanović).

His colleague Natalija Grgorinić goes even further, saying that “Our aim is to produce professionals who would be able to work with any form of text, including, of course, various literary genres—short stories, novels, poems—but who could also write speeches for politicians or write economic reports, and we could also train people who could work in the media, state administration, etc.” (Mandić). Thus the most thorough recent attempt to transform the post-socialist literary field amounts to a capitulation of the previously dominant principle of autonomy and modernist ideologies of the aesthetic before the new institutional order of post-socialist society. This, of course, within the given framework, comes as no surprise, and the program’s creators respond quite expectedly when asked to legitimize their project: the creative writing program in the new university can structurally hardly be anything more than what its creators say it is—a mechanism for the production of a specific type of labor power and in-demand cultural commodities. One consequence of this change, as announced by Grgorinić, would also be the quite radical reconceptualization of the role of the writer. Instead of the Romantic activist-poet in search of the sublime, the analytically detached social scientist of the realist novel, or the self-exiled modernist *Künstler* whose only allegiance is to art, the creative writer becomes an efficient professional, the mythical contemporary “expert” trained in literary technique, useful in a “myriad of activities” where a market for some form of persuasive public communication, rhetorical savvy, or entertainment might exist. In other words, if we want to uphold the somewhat tired distinction between autonomous art and instrumentalized propaganda, there is no doubt that the creative writer as conceived by the post-socialist pioneers of academic creative writing is a propagandist. Laid out like this, there is nothing to distinguish the logic of this sort of instrumentalist thinking as it relates to the autonomy of cultural production from the aforementioned Stalinism against which Krleža and other Yugoslav intellectuals riled 60 years ago. Both of these positions, Stalinist and post-socialist, discard the principle of autonomy¹⁵ and tie the dynamics of cultural production to heteronomous systems of legitimation and control (be they the state or the market, or both).

The uncomfortable truth about the structural integration of creative writing institutions and the capitalist market might be one of the reasons for common expres-

¹⁵ It is perhaps superfluous to mention that “autonomy” as invoked in this text cannot mean either “freedom from all constraints” or the possibility of exclusion from the terrain of history / class struggle, and does not imply an illusory aesthetic exceptionalism or an apolitical aesthetics. Cultural production is immanently constrained on several levels: by the influence of immediate material and broader socio-historical conditions in which it is situated, by the unavoidable fact that it is a social practice in need of a type of communal consensus in order for what is produced to find reception, etc. In addition, the concept of autonomy assumes a different meaning and political aims in different historical situations. The concept of autonomy in the context of the contemporary discussion about post-socialist creative writing is not quite the same as the concept of autonomy referred to, for instance, at the time of the Conflict on the Literary Left. Thus, to offer a contemporary working definition, let us for the purpose of this analysis use a simple, Utopian one: autonomy as cultural production outside the capital-relation.

sions of doubt about the value (or at least pedagogical potential) of creative writing teaching. The existence of this doubt suggests a lingering modernist elitism that is still a key ingredient of ideologies dominant in the literary field. The seemingly endless discussion about whether “writing can be taught”¹⁶ is thus not a discussion about success rates of specific educational techniques, but a discussion between contradictory conceptions of the writer as a socially symbolic figure and the political implications these conceptions carry. (In this context, it should certainly be noted that arguing for the characteristic creative writing conception of writing as technique is not simply to argue for the field’s commercialization, but also to advocate a form of its democratization, as opposed to the elitism immanent to widely dominant modernist conceptions that conceive of writing as constant transgression of describable technique—and therefore, of course, fundamentally unteachable.)

In the Croatian case examined here, this precarious attitude towards creative writing, characterized by doubt and constant negotiation of the meaning and purpose of the project, can be found even among the ranks of the pioneers of its academic institutionalization. One important partner in the university creative writing project is the president of the Croatian Writers’ Association, Nikola Petković, who expressed it quite openly: a few years ago, before he ran for the function for the first time and based his mandate, among other things, on the academic institutionalization of creative writing programs, he stated in an interview that the only thing he hadn’t changed his mind about after years of teaching creative writing in the United States was the conviction “that creative writing workshops were rather . . . pointless,” and that in the United States they serve as “sinecures for poorly-selling authors who have to live off something.” Their only purpose, according to Petković, is that, “when they are successful, they make young writers aware of the editor’s role” (Pintarić). Similar doubts also plague other creative writing proponents. For instance, *Tema*, Branko Čegec’s post-socialist literary journal, dedicated a 2013 issue to the topic of creative writing and the editorial written by Kristina Špiranec begins precisely with a personal history of doubt about the pedagogical potential of the creative writing workshop: “To be honest, I was always skeptical myself” (Špiranec 10). Instead of entering this discussion yet again, it would make more sense here to adopt a more dialectical position and question the framework of the discussion as such by stating two things: firstly, that the constant reiteration of this discussion is an obstacle to observing the institution of creative writing in its systemic dimension, and secondly, that the discussion is founded on a dilemma that is false. Undoubtedly, as any other human cultural activity, writing requires socialization into sophisticated cultural knowledge, the recognition of established traditions of cultural communication, and a consistent study of technique. It not only can, but *has* to be taught and learned—the proper question to ask concerns the structuration of this pedagogical exchange by social institutions developed for that

¹⁶ For an interesting US iteration of this discussion, or more precisely, a discussion of the value of “program fiction” see Elif Batuman’s review of Mark McGurl’s book “The Program Era” and McGurl’s response. (Batuman 2010; McGurl 2010)

purpose: how do they relate to the broader institutional framework of the societies they belong to and what sorts of pedagogical subjects they envision and are expected to produce. There are crucial differences between various institutions in which writing has historically been practiced, discussed, learned, criticized, and edited. Enlightenment literary salons, modernist bohemian cafés, U.S. John Reed Clubs, revolutionary writers' societies in the early USSR, or creative writing workshops on the post-socialist EU periphery—all of these fulfill a basic pedagogical purpose as social institutions, but the meaning / historical purpose of specific cultural forms produced within their frameworks and the broader socio-historical conditions in which they emerged differ in significant ways. The question, and the problem with creative writing, is therefore not whether the workshop is an efficient learning environment, but whether its pedagogy is sensitive to its own position as a historical institution and whether it is interested in seeing its own limitations (as limitations of the society in which it exists) and willing to work towards transcending them.

So far in the Croatian context this has obviously not been the case. Despite the proclaimed goals of providing an opportunity for literary workers to make their livelihood, creating an easy entry into the field for “enthusiasts,” and focusing on what is perceived to be the modernization of the field, the institutional architecture of creative writing in its current form is, from a consistently critical perspective, a part of the problem and not a step towards a solution. Dedicated literary work, even if successful, has in the post-socialist years guaranteed to literary workers neither livelihood, nor an audience, nor the continued possibility of publication, nor even the pleasure of basic social recognition of the importance of cultural production within the symbolic order of society. The new academic creative writing programs approach these problems by redefining the entire purpose of the field (“if writing novels doesn't work, why not try writing speeches for politicians”) and transforming the modes of sociality practiced within the field into market relations—thus proposing that the structural reasons for the field's dysfunction become the field's principles of operation. Furthermore, their promise of providing a framework for practicing the recently legislated profession is a rather limited one. It is quite illusory in the context of the EU periphery to expect that the program will be able to achieve anything more than providing a small number of public university posts for people willing (and able) to train students in writing copy. In turn, they will (undoubtedly for a substantial tuition fee) produce a professionalized cadre structurally vulnerable to precarization and unemployment. Such working conditions are, to be fair and having in mind the history of the literary professions in bourgeois societies, not really a significant change for either better or worse, but without the Utopian promise of autonomy of artistic labor, there really is nothing to distinguish creative writing from, say, corporate accounting.

It should also be added that even the workshop form, meant to operate as a gateway for entrance into the literary field, a socialization platform, and a place for exchanging ideas, advice, and possibly contacts in the publishing industry, also partially thrives on an illusion. Having in mind the state and the logic of the post-socialist publishing industry and its problems on the level of both supply and demand, the

possibility of publication is for structural reasons virtually impossible for most workshop participants, notwithstanding the quality of their work or invested effort. As Kristina Špiranec's poll among workshop attendees in Zagreb published in the special issue of *Tema* indicates, about three fourths of the polled workshop attendees "intend to continue writing seriously," and almost 60 per cent "intend to send their manuscripts to publishers." Furthermore, what emerges from the same poll is that the social composition of attendees, especially as it relates to class and gender, is rather monolithic: 75% of the attendees have some form of tertiary academic education, with as many as 24% pursuing postgraduate degrees; 79% are employed and come from the Zagreb region (unsurprisingly, considering that the workshops are located in Zagreb), and only 12% of the attendees are male (although the workshop mentors named in Špiranec's account, many of whom are acknowledged writers, do not reflect this gender dynamic—6 out of 8 are men) (Špiranec 21—31). Fifteen per cent report they consider writing "a hobby," 73 per cent "a need", 6 per cent consider it "fun," and a further 6 look upon it as "therapy." Despite the informal nature of the poll, a sketch that emerges from these figures suggests that the workshop seems to serve predominantly as a relief from work and an avenue for the self-expression of educated urban middle-class women. Of course, with the awareness of the need for systematic inclusiveness excised from post-socialist cultural institutions, as well as with the commercial nature of the workshop and the structuration of the leisure market along class lines, one could hardly expect different outcomes.

On top of that, and this brings us to the final point, the described institutional transformation of the literary field comes at the cost of reconceptualizing what was once known as "literature"—a public and immanently social practice of creativity—as creative writing—primarily a practice of individual expression, and a service to be offered on the market. In his innovative critical study of American literature of the second half of the twentieth century, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*, Mark McGurl writes about quite a different context in which the creative writing program has not only had a long and rich history, but has proven to be the decisive cultural-institutional transformation of at least the past half-century. McGurl commends the creative writing program for "attempts to realize a diverse aesthetic democracy" in contrast to various exclusivist or esoteric conceptions of literature also present in the field. Simultaneously, however, he is aware of the possibility that the program "represents a further incursion of consumerism into the academy, a ballooning enterprise of mass vanity and anti-intellectualism" (74). In the post-socialist Croatian context, where creative writing is imported as a type of complex cultural product from a core country and preceded by no serious self-reflection or principled reform that would pave the way for a mode of its implementation that would be more open to considerations of public interest, cultural development, or pedagogical creativity, its effects are regrettably closer to the latter. In this context, as I have tried to show, the modernist idea of autonomous cultural production that was given early institutional form in the Yugoslav socialist period is jeopardized precisely by the implementation of the post-socialist creative writing program, despite that

model's origins in early twentieth-century democratic attempts to progressively transform higher education in the United States. At a time when equivalent changes are eroding the system of public education and other historical gains achieved in myriad democratic struggles across decades and centuries, it is necessary to observe the dangers of the structural logic of such supposedly desirable developments as they systemically lead to the bureaucratization and elitization of practices affected by them. This is in a completely opposite direction, in other words, from where the now scorned modernist innovations of Yugoslav self-governing socialism were supposed to lead to.

Towards a Creative Institutionalality

Having all this in mind, we can end with a quite banal conclusion: if a society aims to produce culture and literature as a living social practice, accepted, recognizable, and accessible to all, the institutional reconfiguration of the field within which it is produced needs to be carried out in accordance with those principles (let us for now put aside the fact that it is first necessary to politically create the social conditions in which something like that would be possible). Interesting attempts to grapple with similar ideas can be found in recent Yugoslav history, and as much as possible should be learned from them by those trying to battle the radical neglect of traditions and experiences of socialist modernity inaugurated with the restoration of capitalism during the post-socialist transition, and the global ideological triumph of capitalist universality. One of the consequences of this triumph seems to be the opportunistic abandoning of the principle of artistic autonomy, a development that should be considered rather suspect, as it is, in this context, a sign of radical resignation to the heteronomy of capital. Lest I be misunderstood: certainly—literature is, besides being reading and writing, a social institution, and as such, it demands its own logistics and organizational framework; it does not emerge *ex nihilo*, absolutely free, spontaneous, and autonomous. And literary work, and cultural work more broadly, also involves institutional, pedagogical, and other social components, as well as a specific structural position within the broader system of capitalist social relations. So it is precisely from there that its immanent and undeniable political responsibility stems. The form of this responsibility, as developed in opposition to subsumption under capital throughout the past two centuries or so, has been the principle of autonomy. Unreflectively importing and copying institutional models from the dominant center to the immobilized periphery for commercial purposes, therefore, from the perspective of a cultural worker, means avoiding this key, immanent responsibility; it is no more than a sign of resignation to subsumption and heteronomy, a servile nod to the boss. Truly creative literature should be thought of as creative in its entirety—aesthetically, politically, institutionally.

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RETHINKING AMERICA

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The Exceptional Exception: Frederick Douglass and the Problem of the Nation

A Negative Theory of Democracy

One way of having a critical purchase on the ideal of democracy is to remind ourselves of the groups and the pole that it excludes. There is a history to be had here, one of equivocations and prevarications deployed to camouflage the gap between the projected democratic image and the historical reality. Issues of class, race, gender and ethnicity would be chapters in this history.

Stipe Grgas, “Democracy and American Exceptionalism”

However we name our moment, as late- (or late-late-) capitalist (the U.S., Euro-America, the West),¹ oligarchical (of the state capitalist variety, Russia, China, Qatar) or neoliberal (a term that can be applied ubiquitously, as though we already know what “neoliberalism” is),² and however we conceive the rise of nativism (Donald Trump, Brexit, Marie le Pen, Geert Wilders) and fundamentalisms and the wars waged in its name by organizations variously labeled ISIS, Al-Qaeda (or any of their franchises, or those “affiliates,” either as loose groupings or condensed into individual sympathizers), or Boko Haram, we can safely say that ours is an age in which democracy is under historic strain. What does it mean today? How much resonance and ideological purchase does democracy have in the contemporary world? In her critique of neoliberalism, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*, Wendy Brown makes a telling contribution to this debate. Arguing in a vocabulary (but not exactly the spirit) that occasionally echoes Carl Schmitt while putting one in mind of Mosaic law (of the Ten Commandments, only one—“Honor thy mother and thy father”—is

¹ In this regard, see Jeff Nealon’s *Post-Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (2012). Nealon’s work is, as is detectable in the title, a critique in the spirit of Fredric Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991).

² In what might be named the “high moment” of neo-liberalism, a moment that many trace to the early-1970s, it is not only presumed that there is largescale agreement about what “neo-liberalism” as such “means,” that is, what constitutes it as a historical moment, but that there is no philosophical or political distinction in how “neo-liberalism” is thought. That is, the theoretical predisposition seems to be toward a flattening of the concept, of the historical moment, a tendency that will not acknowledge that differences between a Michel Foucault and a David Harvey; because of this proclivity, the refusal to think the political and economic complexities, on-going as they are, Harvey’s has, without too much dissent, become the standard, standardized, account of how we understand – apprehend – “neo-liberalism.”

affirmative), Brown proposes a negative theory of democracy. According to Brown, “More than leaving its contents and particulars unspecified, the bare concept of democracy (or the concept of bare democracy) features no continuous or consistent account of why the people ought to rule, only the negative one that we should not be ruled by others” (203). Not the negation of democracy (to eradicate or oppose it), but democracy as founded on a negative principle: “not to be ruled by others.”

It is a negative principle, however, that is replete with affirmation. The determination “not to be ruled by others” is grounded, one assumes, either in the commitment to ruling the self,³ or in the tradition of representation (representative democracy), to assent to being ruled by others for whom one has voted or elected to power; that is, the self—extended into its democratic political self—the member of parliament, the congressional representative, and so on, that political fiction so necessary to the functioning of parliamentary democracy.

The affirmative proclivities of Brown’s negative theory lend to her notion of democracy a dialectical usefulness. A negative theory of democracy,⁴ less astutely conceived, would reduce such a theory to negation, a negation that borders on abjection; a negation, then, that would not produce a Hegelian “advance” on/of history of the kind imagined by Nancy, who argues for a “two-stage” conception of “negation,” only the second of which, the “negation” of the “first” “negation” would secure a Hegelian “outcome” – the “infinite” of possibility enabled by the “negation of the negation.”⁵ In such a theory the people do not know what they want, leaving open to history—to the event, as such—what it is that the people (the “demos”) *do* want. Instead, Brown’s negative theory formulates democracy as an acute awareness of what is not permissible, all the while understanding the political effect of contingency—the event, as such, is the product of political work as much as it is about recognizing the impossibility of determining every political outcome. There is, reductively phrased, nothing remotely formulaic—i.e., predictable—about politics. The work of politics is to “delineate democracy’s positive *political* value” against this negative foundation (Brown 203; original emphasis). At stake in the delineation, which is also a delimitation, of “democracy’s positive political value” is a very specific need: to identify, to stipulate to,

³ The discourse of “self-rule,” of course, iterates a certain postcolonial discourse—the struggle for, say, “self-rule” in the British Raj (“swaraj”) or in Kenya (which is how one might, broadly speaking, conceive of “Uhuru”). The anti- or the postcolonial is hardly Brown’s political target, but her discourse evokes this struggle for “democracy.”

⁴ It is possible to suggest that Brown’s work, as regards its capacity to figure the political (future, the argument for that future) through the negative, or negation as such, speaks to the on-going resonance of Hegel. The Hegelian turn, or the persistence of thinking the political through Hegel, can in our moment be identified in the work of theorists such as Brown (in her most recent work, as engaged here), Jean-Luc Nancy (2002b), to say nothing of Hegel as rendered in the work of the Ljubljana “Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis” theorists Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar and Alenka Zupančič. Dolar, we might say, is the member of the “School” who is most inclined toward Hegel.

⁵ See Nancy’s *Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative*. See also “Lord and Bondage” section of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

the political desire that comes after accepting the negative—the opposition to being ruled by others—as the first act of democracy. What, exactly, or even vaguely, is it that the people want democracy to do? How do the people assert themselves, their voices, their political desires? What manner of “reality” do they imagine, in a democracy? Is the bare force of democracy nothing but, as that critic of “bare life” (βάρη λιφε) Giorgio Agamben (1998) insists in his designation of the “homo sacer” (χόμο σάκερ), the struggle against violence, the violence of struggle kept—for however long, but never forever—in abeyance? And if it is not violence as such, there is at least the threat of sovereign violence (that particularly Agambenian thread, derived from Schmitt), against which the demos, understandably, wants to shield itself.

It would seem that this line of inquiry, mapped here through Brown, Schmitt, and Agamben, compels us to begin, once again, with the negative so that we are, as it were, always working in the shadow of Hegel. It is in this way that Stipe Grgas’s essay, which traces the articulation of American democracy and exceptionalism to American literature from the major figures in the nineteenth century (“Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Melville” [“Democracy,” 462])⁶ to the second half of the twentieth century, resonates with Brown’s project on neoliberalism. (A critique of American exceptionalism might be said to be one of the resonant themes in the Grgas oeuvre. In other essays, among them “Where is Postmodernity?” and “Amnesia and the Geographies of Innocence and War,”⁷ Grgas repeatedly turns his attention to the issue of American exceptionalism.) Much as Grgas trains his eye on the exclusionary force of democracy, Brown too draws attention to the systemic failures of democracy. Brown understands that what matters in our thinking of democracy is how democracy is different under the current regime of capital: “hasn’t actually existing democracy always been saturated with class domination and inequality, racial subordination and exclusions, institutionalized sexual difference, colonial and imperial premises and practices, unavowed religious privileges and erasures? Why worry about neoliberal damage to this troubled field of meanings, practices, and institutions?” (Brown 202).⁸ What is

⁶ Grgas derives this figuration of nineteenth-century American literature from his reading of F. O. Matthiessen’s 1941 work, *American Renaissance*.

⁷ Reading William Spanos’s “application of Heidegger in comprehending the development and present of the United States,” Grgas argues that the “United States is no longer able to posit itself as a polity that stands outside the arena of history. In Spanos’s opus it is the Vietnam War that disabled the interpellative work that projected the United States as an exceptional nation” (“Amnesia and the Geographies of Innocence and War,” 232).

⁸ In his essay “Where is Postmodernity?,” Grgas notes, in passing, that the originary moment of modernity begins with an exception. To wit, against the “historical palimpsest” that is Europe, America is a “virgin land” except for the indigenous population: “The implementation of the modern project within the United States was greatly facilitated by the fact that it was not hampered by obstructive remnants of older formations or forces which had a stake in preserving an older order—excepting the Native Americans who, as it turned out, never had an option” (“Where is Postmodernity?,” 266). See also Fredric Jameson’s essay “An American Utopia,” in which Jameson proposes “universal conscription” to achieve a revolution on the order of Lenin’s “dual power.”

it about neoliberalism that should make us more concerned for democratic possibility? How should neoliberalism make us more vigilant and attentive to capital? What kind of Being, Hegel (certainly the Hegel of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, for whom “being-with” is crucial, that Hegel for whom the presupposition of the relationship between consciousnesses is decisive) would want to know, is or is not made possible by neoliberal capital?⁹ (What kind of beings emerge under the aegis of neoliberalism?)

Neoliberalism demands a specific democratic response because of its political implications. What makes neoliberalism distinct is—has been—that it signals the “vanquishing of *homo politicus* by *homo oeconomicus*” (Brown 207; original emphasis). This is a new subject, one shaped by ruthless economic efficiency (so deliberately critiqued by Michel Foucault in his lecture series *The Birth of Biopolitics* [2008] and now familiar to us as the discourse of downsizing, right-sizing, consolidation, privatization, and the auctioning off of state functions and assets to private capital) in which the “value—even the intelligibility—of popular sovereignty is rubbed out” (Brown, *ibid.*). Grgas and Brown are calling for the same “chapters in this history” to be written, the chapters about “class, race, gender and ethnicity,” which would displace “*homo oeconomicus*” (the rationalist creation of neoliberalism) and, once again, make “*homo politicus*” (Platonic man as a political subject first and foremost) the governing subject. Only the human as political subject (the human for whom *Dasein* and *Mitsein* are constitutive), under the various names iterated by Brown and Grgas, can return us to politics because *sans* politics, the economic logic of neoliberal efficiency will triumph. (Both Brown and Grgas recognize, in true Foucaultian fashion, that there can be disarticulation of the economy from politics, but their intent is to reinstitute politics as the first, but never disconnected, mode of critique; the inquiry begins with politics, if only to afford such an interrogation a momentary, and therefore unsustainable, primacy.)

Brown, it can be said, substantiates—in broad but not sweeping historical terms—the excluded constituencies which Grgas offers more categorically. Grgas senses that what exclusion alludes to is a “history to be had”; that is, not a history to be made, as such, but the need to articulate the untold account of those who endure/d the effects of American democracy and exceptionalism; this history, we might say, finds itself itemized by Brown. Hers is the effort to provide the accounts of, *inter alia*, workers, the unemployed, the lumpenproletariat, racial and religious minorities, the colonized, women, and transgendered subjects who constitute the bodies that bridge the “gap between the projected democratic image and the historical reality” of American

⁹ Hegel, in this regard, is important for Martin Heidegger’s thinking of *Mitsein* (let us translate it, for the sake of brevity, as “being-with”) because Heidegger does not turn to *Mitsein* (let us stipulate it as “being-with-the-other”) until he has “expended” his efforts on *Dasein*; the movement to the “plural” must, so the force of Hegel and Heidegger’s logic goes, follow the “singular,” which is, of course, as modern philosophers from Hegel through Heidegger and Nancy remind us, the “singular plural” (in Nancy’s phrase). See Nancy’s long essay, “Being Singular Plural” (2002a) for a brief summary of Hegel (and, secondarily, Heidegger’s) thinking on the “singular/plural.”

exceptionalism. The only way in which to militate against exclusion is to prioritize the interstices, to begin there, as it were, to train the critical gaze there for as long as possible. The “gap” is that political location out of which these names must be extracted, recovered, revived; the “gap,” that, those constituencies who are *entrée-nous*, “between-us,” related to and disarticulated from us in this hierarchized political that we inhabit, out of that which is *entrée-nous* we are able to gain direct access to the name that lays “bare” the face of American democracy; the names consigned to the “gap” are intensely political in their grammatical construction because they are the self-same names that refuse to be “camouflaged” any longer. The name of the “gap,” then, is nothing other than the name that American “historical reality” must be made to bear so that those names can stand against, however precariously and tentatively, the “equivocations and prevarications” that render the names of the “gap”—“class, race, gender and ethnicity”—obscure, even if it cannot eradicate them entirely. In Grgas’s terms, to expose the fallacious political logic that sustains the “equivocations and prevarications” is the work of ideology. For Grgas (whose interventions bear the imprint of Althusserian Marxism, broadly speaking), ideology can be understood as that set of socio-political ideas, reductively phrased, that give life, in the first instance, to the possibility of such obscurantism.

The rule is the exception

. . . the actualities of a political system that, throughout its history, has been plagued by undemocratic practices which are not exceptional but explainable by the contradiction of a socio-economic formation which has, one might say, reached its apogee precisely in the U.S.

Grgas, “Democracy and American Exceptionalism”

. . . it is our error that union amongst us is an essential element of success in our relations to the white race. This, in my judgment, is a very serious mistake.

They say that in union there is strength; that united we stand and divided we fall, and much else of the same sort.

My position is the reverse of this. I hold that our union is in weakness. . . . our position in this country is an exceptional position. The rule for us is the exception.

Frederick Douglass, “The Nation’s Problem”

Grgas’s literary lens, thinking the political exception through American letters, and Brown’s negative theory of democracy, “we should not be ruled by others,” find a strange conjuncture in the work of Frederick Douglass, especially Douglass’s essay “The Nation’s Problem.” Delivered on 16 April 1886 this was an address commemorating the

abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. It was also, however, a speech designed to reflect upon the perilous condition of the Negro, especially in the South, because of the failure of American society, and especially the judicial system, to enforce the Negro's constitutional protections. In the face of such legal vulnerability, Douglass makes the case that the Republican Party (the party of Lincoln), for all its shortcomings—"The Republican party is not perfect; it is cautious even to the point of timidity; but it is the best friend we have" (1886: 225)—remained the Negro's best political option.¹⁰

However, overlooked in Douglass's critique of American electoral politics is the political philosophy of "The Nation's Problem." Anachronistically phrased, it is the way in which this Douglass address "recalibrates" the Schmittian logic of the exception that lends Douglass's 1886 speech its salience—particularly as it regards his thinking on race and the state. (Carl Schmitt's critique of the sovereign and his notion of the political as articulated in works such as *The Concept of the Political*, of course, were formulated decades after Douglass's address.) For Schmitt, the sovereign is he who decides the exception; in so doing, the exception not only proves the rule but demonstrates how it is that the rule is subject to the exception.

It is in this regard that Douglass's thinking is signal. For the Negro,¹¹ Douglass asserts in his critique of (black) racial unity—"I hold that our union is in weakness," the "rule is the exception" (1889: 414). What is normative for the Negro in Reconstruction America is the Negro's non-normativity. Only in exceptional circumstances does the rule apply to the Negro, does the law, we can safely speculate, work in favor of the Negro. Other than that, and especially in the South, "the natural home of the colored race," the condition of the Negro is such that, Reconstruction or no,

Lynch law, violence, and murder have gone on about the same as formerly, and without the least show of federal interference or popular rebuke. . . . There have also been the usual number of outrages committed against the civil rights of colored citizens on highways and byways, by land and by water; and the courts of the country, under the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, have shown the same disposition to punish the innocent and shield the guilty, as during the presidency of Mr. Arthur.

(Douglass 1886: 215)

In the South, precarity is the normative experience for the Negro on every socio-political level.

Girding Douglass's thinking is a conception of political philosophy that would prove, unacknowledged because it is as unknown as it is ignored, foundational for

¹⁰ "The Nation's Problem" was one of two speeches that Douglass delivered in that moment (the other was an address to the Massachusetts Republicans on 22 May 1886) in which he made his case, reluctantly but not uncommittedly, for the Negro to remain faithful to Lincoln's party.

¹¹ I am using the term "Negro" because it is the one Douglass employs, because it is the name of his moment.

political theory in the next century. The force and clarity of Douglass's political insights is captured in the precision and prescience of his articulation, a phrase that echoes resonantly in our moment—and, in truth, it has been resonating for the last sixty or seventy years. Douglass's is a thinking that can, reductively or evocatively, be distilled to a single phrase, "The rule for us is the exception." (How can we not hear Carl Schmitt or any of his latter-day critics, *inter alia*, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben?) Unlike with Schmitt, where the rule is illuminated, brought to political life, by the exception, for Douglass the position of the Negro is a priori transparent—from before the moment itself, we might say.

Tautologically rendered, the Negro begins from the place of exception. For the Negro, it is the rule to be exceptional, or, to be the exception. The Negro's is a singular exceptionality in that the Negro, in the catastrophic moment that followed the Civil War ("Lynch law, violence, and murder"), a period of broken promises and new modes of violence (the triumph of Jim Crow legislation, attacks on Negro "civil rights," and so on), stands outside of the American polis. Under these conditions, it might be best to begin with the Negro in Reconstruction as a base arithmetical sign: subtraction (−).¹² The Negro is excepted—or, subtracted from, abstracted from, to borrow Alain Badiou's (2009) language—from the American body politic. Reconstruction was not, counter to the promises that followed the termination of the Civil War (what Abraham Lincoln called the "unfinished work" of the hostilities and the promise of a "new freedom" in the Gettysburg Address),¹³ added to the American body politic. On the contrary, the Negro continued, in the main, to stand outside, remaining external to the rule as it obtains to the American polis. The Negro is always subject to the rule as its exception, as the exceptionality that is excluded from the rule as it applies to the citizen. This is where the Negro begins: as subject to, and sometimes as the abjection of (the being presumed to be sans *Dasein*; the "being without Being," as it were), this rule. Or, the Negro as subtraction demonstrates the force of the exception; the force to which the exception is subject.

In this way, Douglass lends a historicity and, in so doing, a domesticity, to Grgas's critique of American exceptionalism as a globalizing phenomenon. As Grgas writes, "the issues of democracy and exceptionalism are no longer contained within America as a nation-state" ("Democracy," 472). In his turn, Douglass historicizes the externalization of America's logic of exceptionalism by offering its first articulation.¹⁴ The Ne-

¹² This is, as always when the subject is at the mercy of a violent state, a subtraction that bears perilously close on negation; that is to say, it must live daily with the prospect of being permanently eliminated from the body politic.

¹³ It is telling, of course, that the opening line of the Gettysburg Address is the foundational premise of equality, the very condition denied to the Negro not once but several times over: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" (Lincoln).

¹⁴ Here Nancy's explication of how it is that "interiority" can only be affirmed through what is "exterior" to it resonates. Nancy writes, "It is well known that dialectical logic requires the passage through exteriority as essential to interiority itself" (Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 30). In other words, the exterior US project, colonization, can be said to at once "validate" the (subjugation of what is) "interior" (first as the enslaved

gro's "exceptionalism" is the historic antecedent within, the foundational exception. It is in America's relation to its own, the Negro, in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War and the failure of Reconstruction, that we can trace the first articulation of American exceptionalism as "–": the literal taking away of citizenship of significant numbers of the newly enfranchised population. Through Douglass's explication of the "Nation's Problem," the stalwart abolitionist reveals a national, racialized interiority to the logic of American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism began at home; it began through its encounter with the black body, with the body of the enslaved whose freedom was nominally achieved but by no means guaranteed by the defeat of the Confederacy. In fact, as it turned out, the opposite proved to be true, regardless of which political party held office. (A residue still operative in our moment.)

The self-same force that rendered the Negro exceptional could not, as Grgas notes, be contained by the borders of the United States. The logic of exceptionalism is, by default, always an excessive force: it must extend beyond itself, if only to affirm its exceptionality before the world. The logic of exceptionalism is, per force, the politics of addition: it seeks to add to itself, to make itself more, more than it currently is. It is always rendered as >. How else is the world to know of (the nation-state's) exceptionality if it is not confronted with it? Before there was the "world," however, there was the "nation-state." And within that "nation-state" there was the Negro (the point of, the body of, philosophical first articulation) who lived under that condition where the "rule was the exception." In this way, Douglass is writing of the "chapter on race" for which Grgas calls (before Grgas's call: Grgas, as it were, "hears" Douglass, writes to - and of - the hauntology of Douglass). The Negro is both the exception before the exception, and the exception that proves the exception as the rule of the American political. How polyvalent, how resonant, how (always potentially) fatal, then, is Douglass's pronouncement: "our position in this country is an exceptional position." To be "exceptional" is to occupy a historically necropolitical position; it is to be alive while being legally intimate with (the prospect of) death.

More salient, however, is the exceptionality of "The Nation's Problem" within the Douglass oeuvre. This argument for exceptionality, and against racial unity and pride, is itself unusual among Douglass's speeches and public addresses. Much more frequent is his critique of the American political order (here his three autobiographies take pride of place), producing a call for a reimagined political dispensation—a nation founded upon shared citizenship. In Lloyd Pratt's carefully wrought conception of Douglass, he proposes "strangerhood" as the best way to understand Douglass's political project: "Douglass's writing reaches a form of strangerhood . . . a polis predicated on mutuality rather than either sympathy or disinterested personhood" (249). The intention here is not to claim "The Nation's Problem" as in any way representative of Douglass's work, but to recognize its exceptionality and, precisely because of this, to fully explicate what such exceptionality might entail.

body and then as the political body made abject) and to have its "origin," its "first" iteration, which is of course never a first iteration, in precisely this body/these bodies.

Against Unity

As regards exceptionality, then, we might treat this (Negro) rule, this rule that applies (only) to the Negro, as a *fait accompli*, as what we already know. The real force of Douglass's argument resides elsewhere. Specifically, in his understanding of the Negro's subjectivation (–) as subjugation (–), Douglass turns not so much against the rule—he seems more interested in alerting us to it—as much as he rejects the prevailing logic of “strength in unity”—“My position is the reverse of this.” In the face of subjection, the proper—the most politically efficacious—response is not to bond together and to seek strength, and possibly solace too, in that union, but to recognize, in a peculiar phrasing, that “our union is in weakness.”

The particular subject that Douglass's “our” designates is unclear. Is he referring to his critique of the Negro tendency to support, for its own sake, often without any self-reflexivity, other Negroes? Negro causes? Is this Douglass's refusal of the political truism that “in union there is strength; that united we stand and divided we fall, and much else of the same sort. My position is the reverse of this”? Or, does his “our” signal a universal assessment of an American “union” that is “weak”? The latter position appears less likely because Douglass's focus seems to be on Negro political expectation, tradition, and practice. There is, of course, an unarguable logic to advocating that a people unite for the sake of race. Strength in and through unity is an entirely plausible political strategy; it is not simply a truism but a political strategy that has served several communities well over the centuries, at least as far back as the uprising that was led by that Thracian gladiator-made-slave Spartacus, Σπάρτακος, *Spártakos*, against the Roman Empire, and, as political legend would have it, the rebellion of the slaves against the Roman oligarchy. (As cinematic irony would have it, Spartacus is played by that other American Douglas, the one of Russian descent, Kirk. We are never free of the quirks of history, history as the law of return, as Nietzsche might phrase it; or, we are always subject to the laws of hauntology, in Derrida's [1994] rendering.)

However, what is salient is Douglass's phrasing, signal in no small measure because of its ambiguity: “our union is in weakness.” The less plausible possibility is that he is suggesting that the Negro “union” is “weak,” that this union is politically inefficacious, a judgment that would have been more easily rendered in the declarative: the Negro union is weak. There is, however, a much more politically suggestive reading lurking in this sentence, a meaning that turns on the preposition *in*: the “union is in weakness.” The only way for the Negro (and, possibly, by extension, everyone else) to be fully in the union is to enter into this union from the position of weakness. (Here Pratt's notion of “strangerhood” is especially evocative because if—all Americans’—“constant state of coming-into-being necessarily forbids identification,” then theirs is a shared “strangeness” to the nation and, as such, to themselves [Pratt 249].) That is, to be a Negro who commits to this union requires the willingness to expose the black self to the logic of precarity: to join this union is to acknowledge the risk that the Negro is willing to expose her- or himself to; it is an act conscious of the potential

violence, humiliation, degradation, and yes, even death that the Negro is prepared to confront in the cause of joining the union. There are no guarantees of acceptance, immunization from violence, or protection against attacks on the Negro psyche. The union is joined, submitted to, we can even say, *in* weakness. This is the a priori condition of politics: risk, to commence the struggle for that which is not on the grounds of inequity. It is fair to assume that the symbol $>$, which of course evokes Brown's negative theory of democracy, is the only grounds for politics.

There is no struggle that is truly political that begins from a position of equality. Politics adheres, per force, to the logic of the symbol $>$: one force is greater than the other. The force being engaged is greater $>$ (let us call it A, or white America; for Spartacus, its equivalent would be the Roman Empire) in resources (this could range from control over the media to military superiority) than the force that seeks to engage (let us call it B, the Negro, in Douglass's phrasing; Spartacus and the slaves); that is, the force that seeks to produce another polis, an articulation of self that is not commensurate with the extant mode of being. (The Negro struggles to be a citizen in America, Spartacus and the slaves are determined to go home or to end slavery or . . . to march on Rome.) Politics can be summed up as follows: $A \neq B$; B commits itself to reversing the inequality so that $B = A$. (It is in this way that the exceptionality of "The Nation's Problem" within Douglass's thinking manifests itself most resonantly. Under these conditions shared citizenship is almost impossible to achieve. Again, to invoke Brown, it might be that any notion of an "equal" polity is the first fiction of democracy.) (Or, as Nancy argues in *Being Singular Plural*, the One that is at the base of the political is always an impossibility.) That, formulaically rendered and in conventional terms, is the logic of politics; it is the logic of political struggle; it is the logic out of which the event, which can variously be known as the "revolution," the "rebellion," the "riot," the "strike," or the "march" can emerge. "Right thinking," says Douglass, "is essential to right acting" (1889: 412). Douglass sequences politics as a matter of thinking: it is acting that follows thinking. (It is not that Douglass seeks to sever acting from thinking, it is that he assigns first place to thinking. On this ground alone, then, it becomes clear why Douglass would reject political truisms such as "united we stand and divided we fall." It is too easy, too commonsensical, even, to adhere to the politics of racial unity. This, for Douglass, is a position that is in "error" because it proposes a conception of politics in which it is the lack of solidarity among Negroes who cannot conceive of a politics that begins in weakness. It is thinking as such that makes it possible for him to imagine a position such as "our union is in weakness.") "Right acting" can only be achieved by—or through—"right thinking." It is imperative to think politics correctly, properly, if the "right" outcome is to be achieved. The "right" political outcome cannot be secured, Douglass insists, without the "right" thinking that precedes and grounds the political act. (There is, of course, no guarantee that the former will secure the latter, but for Douglass, all politics follows from "right thinking.") For Douglass this means that, in order to conduct politics, it is necessary, at the very minimum, to understand the terms on which the struggle—for equality, for a restructuring of the socio-economic order—is about to be, is already being, con-

ducted. That is what it means to think about politics in the “right” way, the ways in which thinking prescribes—and, as such, proscribes—the act.

In this regard, for the Negro, a fundamental element of the American political can be articulated as the negation of Brown’s negation. To think about it in the “right” way is, for Douglass, to accept the impossibility of democracy as a negative. The fact is that the Negro will be ruled by someone else: ($A > B$). As Douglass makes clear in his argument about the indivisibility of sovereignty: “A nation within a nation is an anomaly” (1889: 415). The Negro cannot achieve sovereignty as a people within the United States except on the (singular) terms of their, to coin a phrase, exceptional weakness. Not for Douglass was the ambition to found a nation for free blacks in Africa which motivated the politics of figures such as the Episcopal minister Alexander Crummell or, later, the inspired the back-to-Africa fervor of a Marcus Garvey; or, later still, the separatist imperatives of the Nation of Islam or even, we can speculate, the drive for “self-protection” that motivated the Black Panthers’ politics in the 1960s and ’70s. (As W. E. B. DuBois writes so lyrically of Crummell, “He fought among his own, the low, the gasping, and the wicked, with that unbending righteousness which is the sword of the just. He never faltered, he seldom complained; he simply worked, inspiring the young, rebuking the old, helping the weak, guiding the strong” [163].)

It is not only that the nation could neither be abandoned nor divided. Politically speaking, it is something more than that: it is the recognition—a recognition that demands a “right thinking,” the construction of an argument, thereby producing a theory of the Negro in America as the exception—that for the Negro the nation could only be entered upon unfavorable—exceptional—terms. As Douglass puts it,

It shows that in the reconstruction of our national institutions upon a basis of liberty, and equality is not yet accepted as a final and irrevocable settlement of the Negro’s relation to the government, and of his membership in the body politic. There seems to be in a lurking disposition, a looking around for some plausible excuse for dispossessing the Negro of some part of his inheritance conceded to him in the generous spirit of the new departure of our government. (1889: 408)

It is upon these exceptional terms, $B <$, that Douglass seeks to conduct politics. Inequality as such ($A > B$) is not the formula that Douglass follows because for him all politics that the Negro undertakes in America is, a priori (before the event of America exceptionalism), “exceptional.” “Liberty and equality,” as the history of Jim Crow laws convey only too vividly, remain unsettled matters—“not yet accepted as a final and irrevocable settlement of the Negro’s relation to the government” (1889: 408). The Negro’s place in the American “body politic” remains precarious, vulnerable before the force of “dispossession.” The Negro’s claim upon his “inheritance” is unsure. The “new departure” of the United States government, Reconstruction, remained tinged with the practices of its antebellum self—neither the Civil War nor the Freedmen’s Bureau proved effective counters to the force and history of American racism.

Here, again, Douglass's exhortation, his thinking of the "Nation's Problem," returns to his first principle of politics as it pertains to the Negro: "The rule for us is the exception." This rule, in Grgas's terms, derives from the "actualities of a political system that, throughout its history, has been plagued by undemocratic practices which are not exceptional but explainable by the contradiction of a socio-economic formation which has, one might say, reached its apogee precisely in the U.S." ("Democracy," 468). In the arc of his work, which spans somewhere from, shall we say, Walt Whitman to Don de Lillo, that is, from antebellum America to postmodernity, and in which issues of American particularity (that is, if we want to step away, momentarily, from the discourse of exceptionality) are pursued with some consistency, Grgas's thinking underscores Douglass's political reality. "Undemocratic practices" constitute the "actualities of the political system" that Douglass struggled against. Chief amongst these were the structural obstacles that made equality unattainable—Jim Crow legislation, state-supported violence, indifference to violence against the Negro—and the political logic—that "search for some plausible excuse" to dispossess the Negro—that ensured that the "Negro's relation to the government" would be experienced as an unfulfilled promise.

One cannot but wonder in bemusement, if this is the spirit of the day, at Douglass's ironic tone: "in the generous spirit of the new departure of our government" (1889: 408). Douglass delivered his address "The Nation's Problem" in 1886, almost a quarter century after both the end of the American Civil War (1861–65) and the founding of the Freedman's Bureau (1865). A "new departure" was yet to emerge, and it can hardly be said that a "generous spirit" obtained in the relation of the United States to its Negro population—one cannot pronounce, without equivocation, the Negro a citizen.

The Negro remains, instead, the exception. It is, as Douglass insists, precisely how things have always been for the Negro: to begin from the exception, to understand exceptionality—which can easily be understood as "exclusion"—as the rule of American life for the Negro. If, as Grgas argues about the role of the United States in the contemporary moment (having debunked the notion of American exceptionalism and the ways in which U.S. discourse yokes, forcibly, exceptionalism to democracy), "there is nothing exceptional, extraordinary about the behavior of the USA in today's world," then, in a strange and (even) unexpected way, it becomes possible to configure Frederick Douglass as one of the first American theorists of the exceptional ("Democracy," 472). And, as such, Douglass and Grgas can be seen to work together to critique precisely the discourse of exceptionalism.

In so doing, they both subvert this discourse. Douglass from the inside, as the Negro who theorizes "weakness," who raises questions about how, where, and in what moments, exactly, the nation might be "weak," and Grgas from the outside. Grgas, writing as he does in the twilight of the American empire, and only, mind you, the twilight—to phrase this as Cecil John Rhodes, the famed British colonialist, might have—because those on the inside cannot imagine that the sun will set on the empire. Or, to put the matter in the terms that Douglass delineates, they cannot conceive of

such an end because they cannot concede that their “union is in weakness.” They do not understand how to conduct politics under the sign of <; they do not know how to hold a position that is the “reverse” of A >. This equation, contracted here, demands a kind of exceptional thinking, the kind that understands that the Negro’s “position in this country is an exceptional position,” but will then not follow the logic of identity politics. Douglass, as we know well by now, repudiates any call for Negro solidarity or what he calls “race pride.” (Douglass abjures this: “I see no benefit to be derived from this everlasting exhortation by speakers and writers among us to the cultivation of race pride. On the contrary, I see in it a positive evil” [1889: 411-12].)

As much as Douglass theorizes Negro exceptionalism, he simultaneously refuses to metastasize it as a political force into ontological exceptionalism. Politically precarious, physically vulnerable, Douglass’s Reconstruction Negro nevertheless evinces not so much “weakness,” etymologically understood, but theoretical resilience. Only the exceptionally weak, to phrase the matter poorly, can understand the political imperative of risk. Only those denied democracy as a negative force may, in the end, be able to rehabilitate it so that it may, to misappropriate Grgas, “function as something other than a political commodity” (“Democracy,” 461). As much as any nineteenth century American thinker, Douglass grasps the machinations of “political commodities.” More than any other thinker, it is possible to claim, he is able to invest key American concepts—concepts integral to American self-definition—with theoretical difficulty. Who other than Douglass can transform the “weakness” of the Negro into so arresting a theoretical complication? Douglass alone makes of “weakness” a theoretical >. Only when the “union is in weakness” can it produce a thinking of itself. Only when the “union is in weakness” does it create the conditions for the “right” thinker of exceptionalism.

It is, then, “weakness,” not strength, the willingness to risk the self rather than assert “race pride” that provides the possibility for such a perplexing critique of American exceptionalism. To phrase the matter dialectically, we might say that it is only when a political theorist such as Douglass holds a “position in reverse of this” that exceptionalism can be properly apprehended. From an inside that is indefatigably “right thinking.”

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An American Antigone: Henry James's *Washington Square*

1. The Narrative Antigonized

Freud was famously critical of America.¹ Peter Gay, a renowned historian and Freud's biographer, observes that Freud's persistent unease about America amounted to a symptom—one that the founder of psychoanalysis failed to address. With one notable exception: while visiting the States in 1909, Freud was introduced to William James and was impressed by James's apparent indifference to death. The two men were talking about psychoanalysis when James was suddenly seized with an attack of angina; he refused to make much of it, however, and soon resumed the conversation, as if to suggest that his interest in the life of the mind was equal to death (see Gay 211). Tellingly, Freud's facing his own death was structured in similar terms, which is all the more symptomatic in view of the fact that, in the 1920s, Freud introduced the death drive (*der Todestrieb*) as a lynchpin to the conceptual grid of psychoanalysis, to then bring about the reconstitution of the method.

While this provides a passageway to understanding the complexity of America for psychoanalysis, it is also a position from which to approach the Jamesian America, shaped as it was by both William and Henry James. The two brothers shared an interest in the life of the mind where it stood to reconstitute philosophy, psychology, and fiction alike and, with it, the America of their intellectual legacy. Although each was a preeminent author in his own right, this is why they present an assemblage, with the Jamesian America to be accessed where their individual intellectual projects emerge as a network of metonymic relationships.

Henry James's *Washington Square* (1880) labors as a specimen story of this America. True, the same seems to apply to most Henry James narratives, because most take America as their narrative and intellectual point of departure (to then suffer deconstruction). However, there is an aspect to *Washington Square* which distinguishes this novel or novella, and justifies the claim to its being the specimen story of the Jamesian America. Namely, Henry James refused to consider it for republication in *The New York Edition* (1907–1909), suggesting that he wanted *Washington Square* ignored and repressed, even erased, from what he could acknowledge as his literary

¹ Research for this essay was supported in part by the Croatian Science Foundation.

² „For reasons of taste, and of space, and with a mixture of relish and regret, James selected for the blight of exclusion seven novels – *Watch and Ward*, *The Europeans*, *Washington Square*, *Confidence*, *The Bostonians*, *The Other House*, and *The Sacred Fount*“ (Horne 211).

legacy.² As a result, *Washington Square* remained unaccompanied by a preface like the ones James wrote for his other works, for their inclusion in *The New York Edition*. Moreover, as this prefatory material provided the groundwork for what was to emerge as narratology later in the century, *Washington Square* remained exempt also from the birth of modern narrative theory. In other words, *Washington Square* was to Henry James, and to modern narrative theory, what America was to Freud: a configuration treated with unease and contempt, shunned from reflection in a system based in reflection.

Interestingly, the story of *Washington Square* reflects precisely the conditions of its later treatment by James, as if preempting and exhausting the position, external to itself, where James establishes narrative authority. The story focuses on the battle of the minds of Doctor Sloper and his daughter Catherine, with Catherine being to her widowed father what *Washington Square* was to James (and what America was to Freud). The battle begins when Morris Townsend, who returns to New York after a long sojourn in Europe, starts courting Catherine, a timid heiress excessively devoted to her father. Both her father and the narrator perceive Catherine as so plain and dull that the only object worth pursuing about her is her fortune. Appraising Morris as but a mercenary, Doctor Sloper threatens Catherine with disinheritance should she marry Morris. Catherine's problem is that she refuses to renounce either of the two men, a problem complicated by the fact that Morris depends on her never renouncing her father, because that would equal her renouncing half the inheritance and leave her only the money from her dead mother's side. Morris makes up for the imbalance in power by exerting from Catherine the promise that she will never break their engagement: the promise he readily breaks as soon as he learns that Austin Sloper values his daughter as little as Morris himself does and will coldly disinherit her in the event of a disobedient marriage. This is also how Morris is exposed as but the story's MacGuffin: empty in himself, he does not provide Catherine with an autonomous object of desire and pursuit but serves chiefly to amplify her father's original claim to that position.³

Morris reciprocates Shoshana Felman's reading of Molière's *Don Juan*: his principle is that of repetition, anaphor, and anaphora, in the world where father and the law reside in the promise of metaphor (see Felman 2003: 24). Indeed, if *Don Juan* enters, repeatedly, new liaisons and new promises, Morris Townsend works for

³ A MacGuffin is a narrative device used widely by Alfred Hitchcock. In itself, it is "nothing at all, an empty place, a pure pretext whose sole role is to set the story in motion" (Žižek 1992: 6–7.) MacGuffins "are both at the core of the action and completely irrelevant; the highest degree of meaning—what everybody is after—coincides with an absence of meaning" (Dolar 45). Hitchcock himself points out that "the logicians are wrong in trying to figure out the truth of a MacGuffin, since it's beside the point. The only thing that really matters is that, in the picture the plans, documents, or secrets must seem to be of vital importance to the characters. To me, the narrator, they're of no importance whatever" (Truffaut and Scott 138). J. Hillis Miller notes a similar emptiness about Morris when he remarks that "[t]he Morris Townsend she [Catherine] fell in love with turns out to be non-existent" (78).

James by reentering the story decades later, after Doctor Sloper's death, assuming that the father's death grants him a new entry. Yet his reentry merely demonstrates that Catherine's response to him repeats the structure of her response to her father's final injunction, in the world where anaphora clearly cannot supersede the significance of metaphor. Namely, before his death, Doctor Sloper demands that Catherine promise never to marry Morris, should he happen to reemerge and start courting her again, after his death. Catherine refuses to make that promise (even though both she and the narrator know by now that she will not reconsider Morris), which in turn secures her disinheritance, a fact she eventually relishes. Similarly, in the end, she refuses to promise anything to Morris and dismisses him. What Morris ultimately demonstrates is that he cannot supersede the father, before or after the father's death, as if death somehow contains both the before and the after of fathers. Catherine, on the other hand, retreats irrevocably into the house on Washington Square, "for life, as it were" (2003: 220), these being the concluding words of the novel.

Oddly, perhaps, this is how Catherine reenacts, from within James, the script of *Antigone*: she ends up emphatically unmarried and literally buried alive, demanding that home be related to tomb and vice versa. Like *Antigone*, she does not merely interrupt the structures of kinship and the law of the generation; rather, she replaces these with life and narrative understood on chthonic terms. Moreover, Catherine's relation to Morris in the end corresponds to *Antigone's* relation to Polynices: it is not Morris who is significant to Catherine as much as the burial of his remains, a structured grieving made impossible by the figure of authority. (Indeed, Judith Butler describes *Antigone* as "devoted to an impossible and death-bent incestuous love of her brother." According to George Steiner, even if incest was irrelevant to Sophocles's conception of *Antigone*, the "magic" and the "seriousness" associated with this issue in the nineteenth century "must be grasped if we are to make sense of the special lustre of *Antigone* in nineteenth-century feeling.")⁴ Also, Catherine demands that the chthonic be understood in relation to melancholia: just as *Antigone's* decision to be buried alive proceeds from excessive mourning, Catherine's retreat in the end seems but the climax of her melancholia—of the injury to which she has ultimately been reduced by her father and by Morris. Finally, like *Antigone*, Catherine is cursed with a linguistic insufficiency that stands in the way of her speaking to the figures of authority on an equal footing. With *Antigone*, this has been variously described in terms of stammering, repetition, tautology, and negations (which "riddle her speech"); with Catherine, as "her confounded little dry manner," which Judith Butler situates at "the

⁴ See Butler 2000: 6, Steiner 14. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, the Oedipus-related narratives cohere around one structuring opposition, that of overrating kinship (and sexual reproduction) and underrating kinship (in favor of life explained around the chthonic principle). See Lévi-Strauss 215, 230. It is in this sense that *Antigone's* final act should be understood in chthonic terms, even if it proceeds from the actions implicated in overrating kinship (her insistence on the burial rites for the dead brother against the authority of the state). See also Lévi-Strauss 214. Judith Butler notes that "*Antigone* cites the chthonic gods as her authority" (2000: 51).

limits of language” and “the limits of the sayable.”⁵ The assemblage thus forming in *Washington Square* outlines a peculiar interpretive situation: the chthonic structures and melancholia liaise in James’s language in the positions where metaphor and authority are rejected or denied, and where anaphora is exposed as inoperative, in favor of metonymy as the figural logic at a remove equal from both.

This is also how Catherine imposes the Oedipus script on her father. Initially, she is the daughter whose exclusive, self-demeaning loyalty serves only to show him off as father first and foremost: to show off fatherhood as pure authority.⁶ There is another hint that incest is instrumental to this structure: Catherine is meant to replace, for her father, his beautiful and eloquent wife Catherine, who died in childbirth, as well as their dead firstborn son, Catherine’s brother. James insists on the importance of naming: “She had been named, as a matter of course, after her poor mother, and even in her most diminutive babyhood the Doctor never called her anything but Catherine” (2003: 30). When Catherine turns out to have succeeded her mother in name only, this is in fact only too logical, because it is only as such that she can provide the story with the narrative slot traversed, racked, and haunted by the liaising fictions of wife, mother, daughter, and sister—fictions constituent to Austin Sloper’s Oedipal fatherhood precisely insofar as they both invoke incest and keep it safely at bay.⁷ The same perverse logic demands that Catherine appears at her most loyal to her father at the moment when she refuses to obey him and make the promise he wants, because it is only then that she embraces language on his terms: she adopts the language of authority for the first time when she refuses to make a pledge to that authority.⁸ This moment is critical for the Antigone script in James. On the one hand, as this is also the moment when Austin Sloper is shown not to know all or enough, he, like Oedipus, turns out to be blinding himself, exactly when he can no longer contain the terms of

⁵ See Honig 2013: 97, Butler 2000: 68, James 2003: 219, Butler 2003: 208. Butler’s perspective on Catherine’s language, in 2003, corresponds in many ways to her position on Antigone’s speech, in 2000. Butler, however, does not acknowledge or explore the affinity of her arguments on Sophocles and James, so that her own language suffers, to an extent, the stammering and the repetition which riddle the speech of Antigone, and of James’s Catherine. It is as if, by taking a critical interest in *Washington Square* soon after completing a book on Antigone, Butler has carved herself a niche where she can enact Antigone for and from within critical theory, and for and from within America.

⁶ Freud called his loyal daughter Anna his Antigone. See Gay 442.

⁷ William Wyler makes brilliant use of this in *The Heiress* (1949), a Hollywood adaptation of *Washington Square*. Wyler rearranged the ending, so that Morris (Montgomery Clift), instead of being drily sent off at the end, returns to the house once again, beating frantically at the door and yelling “Catherine!” This is a reference to a similar scene in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, which Wyler had adapted into a Hollywood melodrama in 1939, so that the two Victorian Catherines are brought together, now from within classical Hollywood. An uncanny kinship is exposed: in both narratives Catherine is the name freely circulated between mothers and daughters in order to facilitate (near)incestuous networks.

⁸ I am bringing up perversion here also in connection with Lacan’s use of it, who relates perversion to *père-version*, and therefore to fatherhood, and perceives it as conditional to/of interpretation (45). See also Tardits 123, 155.

narrative knowledge. On the other hand, by engaging the language of pure authority in the act of refusing to make a pledge to that authority, Catherine assigns to Austin Sloper the role of Creon, too. As a result, Oedipus and Creon come to occupy the same narrative slot in James, with an important suggestion that an American Antigone cannot resolve her Oedipal issues without addressing those of the state. True, Sophocles's Antigone is structured around a similar position, bringing together the concerns of kinship and the concerns of the state. The story of *Washington Square* is different, however, in that it merges Oedipus and Creon into a single figure, as if to signal that its Antigone and her America depend on the insight that authority resides where it departs from any one single figure or position—that it resides in the departure itself, where death and the logic of metaphor join hands.⁹

This is relevant for the understanding of James's later fiction, too, because Austin Sloper is introduced into the narrative as a precursor to James's famed *reflectors*: he is insistently hailed as the cusp of reflection, "an observer, even a philosopher" (2003: 28). Also, he is the best physician in New York, so that the medical conditions he is asked to treat tend to come across as mind games, structures of consciousness. There is a reduction to consciousness and reflection about Austin Sloper that seems to be prefiguring James's own future work, but here with a proviso that there remains something of pathology and of the clinical to do with reflection thus brought into the world: a chthonic residue that this reflection can acknowledge only as pathology and as the clinical. Accordingly, when Catherine, whom her father considers dull, finally presents herself as a respectable problem inviting reflection, she comes to occupy the place Doctor Sloper assigns to pathology: instead of bequeathing his money to a now problematic her, he decides to divide it "into seven unequal parts, which he left, as endowments, to as many different hospitals and schools of medicine, in various cities of the Union" (2003: 207–208). This is not to suggest the removal of Catherine from her father's vision of legacy; rather, it suggests that the clinical is metonymic to Catherine, that Catherine to Austin has become pathological, so that leaving his money to hospitals and schools of medicine secures in fact Austin's continued clinical work on the likes of Catherine, now from within his death.¹⁰

There are hints in the text that this is consistent with what was only to emerge as psychoanalysis. Austin "was to a certain extent what is called a ladies' doctor" (2003: 32), known for explaining "matters rather more minutely than might seem of use to the patient" (2003: 27). Also, as if adumbrating Freud's, Sloper's "private opinion of

⁹ James explicitly invokes Antigone in *The Bostonians* (1885–1886). In a note he wrote for *The Bostonians* in April 1883, James claims that his "subject is very national, very typical. I wished to write a very American tale, a tale very characteristic of our social conditions, and I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life. The answer was: the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf" (1987: 20).

¹⁰ There is a signal in the text, almost a hitch, indicating that metonymy best captures the relation of Catherine and the clinical: instead of disinheriting Catherine completely, Austin Sloper leaves her one fifth of the intended sum (James 2003: 207).

the more complicated sex was not exalted": "[h]e regarded its complications as more curious than edifying" (2003: 32). Finally, Doctor Sloper falls terminally ill after "[d]riving out to Bloomingdale one April day to see a patient of unsound mind, who was confined in a private asylum for the insane, and whose family greatly desired a medical opinion from an eminent source" (2003: 207). Lauren Berlant calls him "a *Doktor-Vater*" (440), thus patently suggesting that he is proto-Freudian, not least where his reflection, like Freud's, participates in the structures of Oedipal fatherhood. In turn, this implies that James's manipulation of narrative into reflection is Oedipal in character, leaving in its wake a chthonic debris sedimenting both in James's Catherine and in Freud's America.¹¹

2. The States of Exception

The event of Austin Sloper's death, therefore, is not how the narrative puts an end to his authority. Rather, dying is how he becomes fully reductive to his last will, with his authority finally forever exempted from the contingencies of Catherine's metonymic language and chthonic eroticism, now as the authority effective as pure form, pure repetition. Put differently, it is as death or dying that Austin makes good on his narrative promise; it is only by dying that he can fully expose law and legacy as the format that defines him, also as the format that defines fatherhood. Incidentally, it is by explaining death where it yields pure form and pure repetition that Freud introduces the death drive, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, thereby snatching death in psychoanalysis away from the event and into a concept. This is exactly what happens in *Washington Square*: Austin Sloper designates the snatching away of death from the event into a concept, which is also how paternal authority comes to reside in form and repetition. The story suggests as much when it flaunts legacy, constantly, as the lever which is to keep in check both Catherine's eroticism and the appetites of her suitor, Morris Townsend. Catherine is instrumental to this exposure as a dull daughter: introduced by the narrator as emphatically dull, she enters the novel by blocking all libidinal investments into herself on the part of her father (and of the narrator), until legacy has been exposed to be the only bond structural to fatherhood. After all, Catherine's very name, reducible to legacy, points ultimately to the fact that only the name inherits, because the name is "destined to survive me [and] in this way it announces my death" (Derrida 1992: 432).¹² Catherine thus serves to mobilize fatherhood at its purest and into the void—into fatherhood as metaphysics. Of course: by excluding *Washington Square* from *The New York Edition*, where *The New York Edition* constitutes his literary legacy (literature as legacy?), James assumes

¹¹ Felman, too, hints at the affinity of James's narration and psychoanalysis, when she observes that James and Freud share an understanding of the joke as a structure of worry (1993: 97).

¹² That James's narrative coheres around this maneuver is reflected in the title adopted by Ruth and Augustus Goetz for their 1947 play based on *Washington Square*. They chose *The Heiress* as the title for the play, the name retained by William Wyler for the Hollywood melodrama he adapted from the play and from James.

the position of Austin Sloper, who disinherits Catherine. He thereby confirms not merely the convergence of authorship and authority, but the convergence of author with form and the repetition of the Freudian death drive. Ironically, James as author is thus preempted by the very narrative which he did his best to exclude from his literary testament, just as Freud's America seems to have preempted Freud's finding of the death drive.¹³

Both to her father and to James Catherine remains the figure that they admit into their world only in order to appreciate the crisis she constitutes for them. In fact, Catherine organizes for them a state of exception, much as Giorgio Agamben describes it, in which she takes on the role of *homo sacer*. According to Agamben, *homo sacer* is a figure of "archaic Roman law, in which human life is included in the juridical order . . . solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)"; hence *homo sacer* exemplifies bare life, which "may be killed and yet not sacrificed" (1998: 8). Of course, Agamben's Roman example reads also as an inflection of the Antigone story, because Sophocles's *Antigone* raises the same question, now as the question structural to Greek democracy.¹⁴ To be sure, Catherine does not seem to be included in the narrative order of *Washington Square*, judicial as it is, solely for her capacity to be killed, even though the relation that Austin Sloper establishes at the end between Catherine and pathology does mark her out for death wish. Also, there is a curious episode when Catherine registers that her father is contemplating her murder, during their European tour, hardly for punishment and certainly not as sacrifice, but rather in an attempt to demonstrate that her obstinacy is merely an aspect of her dullness. Conveniently, the episode is staged in the Alps, as if to suggest that the chthonic mass of the Alps is a fitting metonymic cradle to receive Catherine, dull or obstinate, dead or alive. Significantly, the doctor eventually decides not to go through with the killing, as if Catherine's life were at that moment revealed to be so bare that the taking of that life and the not taking of it would fail to make a difference.

Agamben cites the twentieth-century concentration camps as paradigmatic of bare life and the state of exception in modernity. The Alpine episode in *Washington Square* suggests a turn of the screw in this paradigm, because Catherine emerges as bare life defined not just by its exclusion from the law, but also by its metonymic ties to the habitat. To Catherine's father, hers emerges as the life that fails to cohere meaningfully around the opposition to death (so that murder, which is constituent to *homo sacer*, can no longer play a decisive role), precisely because it is bare and therefore contingent on chthonic folds and surfaces which yield no self-serving inside. In other words, that which is bare, as Catherine's life appears to be, demands to be understood as that to which metonymy is critical and constituent; this is also to say that Catherine

¹³ It is with this in mind that one should consider the claim (quite common in studies of James) that "the most intense identification possible" persists "between [the] author's childhood self and [the] heroine" of *Washington Square* (Flannery 17).

¹⁴ See also Butler 2000: 81.

fails to cohere from within, or around an inside.¹⁵ Therefore, the habitat to which she relates metonymically is neither vacancy (vacancy denoting a place that is excepted or exceptable . . .) nor the home, which Agamben understands in the analogy with the Aristotelian *oikos*, where life is enclosed and “merely reproductive” (1998: 2), and which stands to be renegotiated in the *polis* as (bio)political. True, Catherine persists for the narrative in the metonymy she forges with the house in Washington Square, which is her father’s house, so that she does seem locked in the script of the *oikos*, as daughter, if not as mother. Still, she maintains this metonymic habitation by outliving her father at a remove from his last will, so that the house in Washington Square signifies in the end an obliteration of the father, as a place where reproduction is cancelled so that life can be fully bared. In turn, this is how James preempts that which Agamben will describe as bare life, because—compared to James—the Agambenian bare life shows as a function of paternalism, at the expense of the configurations based in the chthonic, the melancholy, and the metonymic. This is also how metonymy in *Washington Square* comes to supplant metaphor. That the horror or miracle of life thus bared is James’s true interest in the story of *Washington Square* can be evinced from the closure of the text: James concludes the novel with the image of Catherine who has resigned herself to inhabiting the fatherless house “for life, as it were” (2003: 220).

The narrative insists on this position: while Austin Sloper is shown relocating around New York, sensitive to the city’s mutating fashions and its sense of history (the city’s sense of itself as historical), Catherine lives on in the house in Washington Square, as if to metonymize New York back to its American condition. I am referring here to the America instrumental to Agamben when he explains the state of exception. Following Carl Schmitt, Agamben argues that “the link between localization and ordering constitutive of the *nomos* of the earth always implies a zone that is excluded from law and that takes the shape of a ‘free and juridically empty space’ in which the sovereign power no longer knows the limits fixed by the *nomos* as the territorial order” (1998: 36). In the classical epoch of the *ius publicum Europaeum*, continues Agamben, “this zone corresponded with the New World, which was identified with the state of nature in which everything is possible”; he then quotes from Locke, that “[i]n the beginning, all the world was America” (ibid.).

To be sure, Catherine’s America does not designate the zone identified with the state of nature in which everything is possible. However, the metonymicity of this America does point to an interesting inflection in Locke, and—by extension—in Agamben, where America signifies a political beginning that is not pre-conceived in terms of law or codification. This, then, is also how to understand political modernity, whose symbolic space is radically opened precisely by the event of the American Revolution and the shift from royal to popular sovereignty. Immanent to this shift was the

¹⁵ When Freud introduces the death drive, he invents an inside to go with it, so that the death drive becomes inseparable from organizing an irreducible, voiding interior within a more general topology of psychoanalysis. This new topology, predicated on the death drive, can be observed for instance in “The Economic Problem of Masochism.”

crisis of legitimacy to do with the fact that the American republic was founded at a remove from divine authorization (implicit in the figure of a monarch), thus promoting authorization itself as fundamentally contractual, even an-archic in character.¹⁶

That this problematic is constituent to James's text can be deduced from its title, *Washington Square*. The text takes its name from the public place in New York dedicated to the memory of George Washington, one of the Founding Fathers; this is how the issue of fatherhood and paternalism again comes into play, now as the issue formative to America. However, given that the founding of the United States of America was premised on a deconstruction of paternalist authorization "from above," the Founding Fathers inaugurated in fact a structural crisis of fatherhood, just as they exposed the act of founding as critical in character. That this crisis entails a distrust of representation based in metaphor can be inferred from a commentary by Jacques Rancière, who points out that "[o]riginally representation was the exact contrary of democracy" (53). "None ignored this at the time of the French and American revolutions," says Rancière, adding that "[t]he Founding Fathers and a number of their French emulators saw in it precisely the means for the elite to exercise power *de facto*, and to do so in the name of the people that representation is obliged to recognize but that could not exercise power without ruining the very principle of government" (*ibid.*).

It is symptomatic that Austin Sloper enters the narrative as the father to Catherine only inasmuch as he assumes also the spirit of the Founding Fathers. The novel is set, explicitly, in the first half of the 19th century, "more particularly during the latter part of it," says James: "In those days in New York there were still a few altar fires flickering in the temple of Republican simplicity, and Dr. Sloper would have been glad to see his daughter present herself, with a classic grace, as a priestess of this mild faith" (2003: 27, 38). Catherine by extension assumes a relation to her father, and to the narrative, by becoming—or not—representative of America; this is why her final transformation of the house on Washington Square into Antigone's crypt signals a narrative reconstitution of American republicanism into a chthonic script. The narrative responds to this America by itself assuming the configurations characteristic of Catherine: while its father-dominated beginning is markedly historical, historicized and garnered with ante-bellum minutiae, its climax is organized around Catherine's melancholy breakdown, and structured as a massive near-ellipsis that amounts to a narrative stutter and engulfs decades of American history, mostly the 1850s and the 1860s.

¹⁶ See Arendt, Derrida (2002), and Honig (1991) on the crisis of authorization invoked by the American Revolution and the founding of the republic. Carl Schmitt (2006) suggests that the rupture in divine authorization was occasioned already by the Reformation; Schmitt's reading of *Hamlet* depends largely on this proposition, just as the political theory of his argument depends on approaching *Hamlet* as literature. Honig argues that Schmitt's analysis of *Hamlet* applies to *Antigone*, and speaks of the "Hamletization" of Antigone, because both entail "the transformation of the figure of the avenger into a reflective, self-conscious melancholic" (2013: 147). Interestingly, Agamben makes a cursory reference to Antigone when he analyzes revolutions alongside the state of exception, and addresses her as the figure of the ancient *laus* (2005: 28).

When Catherine breaks down, so does the narration, assuming for itself the language of melancholia. Symptomatically, the decades thus engulfed include the years of the Civil War, with the implication that the Civil War should be understood in terms of a melancholy breakdown—in terms of a historical stutter that disrupts irrevocably the articulation of American republicanism. It is at this point that the narration itself is Antigonized, Antigonizing in turn the structure of American history.

3. The Novel Between Legacy and Constitution

Doctor Sloper's fantasy of temples, flames, and priestesses evokes a picture of classical Rome, and it was to classical Rome that early American republicanism resorted in its search for legitimacy at a remove from the divine authorization of European monarchs. (Hannah Arendt insists on the preeminence of Roman thought in the ideology of the Founding Fathers. Hence the added value of *homo sacer*, with its Roman resonance, specifically to America and to the American ideation of exceptionalism.) Yet Austin Sloper's republicanism is immersed in religious imagery, with an emphasis on what about this imagery is institutional; as a result, his republicanism remains steeped in the religious figures of classical Rome, particularly those that were to adumbrate the paternalism of Christianity in the positions where Roman religion ended up cultivating ever more intense structures of authority.¹⁷ Conversely, the America of the Founding Fathers, especially Jefferson's America, reflects Roman philosophy rather than religion. Thomas Jefferson was deeply influenced by Epicureanism, especially by Lucretius, whose account of atomism introduced the positions where metaphysics is challenged and, with it, the supremacy of the metaphoric principle, as well as the imaginary of paternalism.¹⁸ This is also why the Jeffersonian America could not espouse legacy as its constituent feature, as that would have reintroduced into the American ideology the very paternalism that had been banished from it: precisely the condition of the James narrative, which revolves around the issue of inheritance.¹⁹

If this is to say that Austin Sloper fails as an American where he enacts his values and his mind by means of legacy, it is also to say that the narrator fails to capture

¹⁷ See Veyne (211) about Roman religion, which, unlike Judeo-Christianity, had not been based in paternalism but in contractuality, yet whose concept of deity evolved over time towards the structures of government and sovereignty that began "to prefigure the Christian relation to God" (218). See Sellers about the impact of the Roman Republic on the French and American Revolutions.

¹⁸ Stephen Greenblatt specifies that Jefferson "owned at least five Latin editions of *On the Nature of Things*, along with translations of the poem into English, Italian, and French. It was one of his favorite books" (262). Greenblatt remarks that "[t]he atoms of Lucretius had left their traces on the Declaration of Independence" and that Jefferson "had given a momentous political document, at the founding of a new republic, a distinctly Lucretian turn" (263). Symptomatic in this sense is the fact that moral precepts in ancient Rome were perceived to be in the domain of philosophy, not religion. See Veyne.

¹⁹ I am alluding, inter alia, to Jefferson's letter of 13 November 1787, from Paris, to William Stephens Smith, in which Jefferson comments on the American Revolution: "God forbid we should ever be 20 years without such a rebellion" (110).

America where he is entertaining genre as one such legacy: where narration is understood as heiress to genre. To James, the novel famously coincided with heritage, never so insistently perhaps as at the time of his work on *Washington Square*. In a letter to William Dean Howells of 31 January 1880, he insists that “it takes an old civilization to set a novelist in motion—a proposition that seems to me so true as to be a truism” (Anesko 146–147). James continues to qualify his claim, as if to make sure that a truism to him is granted universal validity: “It is on manners, customs, usages, habits, forms, upon all these things matured & established, that a novelist lives—they are the very stuff his work is made of” (Anesko 147). On 21 February 1879, in the note where he recounts the anecdote he heard from Fanny Kemble the night before—the anecdote set in England, that was to provide him with a *précis* of *Washington Square*—James adds how Kemble’s story will make sense in an American narrative he would use it for:

In a story, some one says—“Oh yes, the United States—a country without a sovereign, without a court, without a nobility, without an army, without a church or clergy, without a diplomatic service, without a picturesque peasantry, without palaces or castles, or country seats, or ruins, without literature, without novels, without an Oxford or a Cambridge . . .” (1987: 12)²⁰

It follows that James’s novels are not American, insofar as they are novels; they can only aspire to be *about* America, thereby promoting America as a state of exception to the novel itself. *Washington Square* testifies to this quandary, which was evidently of structural value to James, because the text hovers all the while between the novel and the novella, belonging fully to neither or, more to the point, failing to inherit genre as a particular narrative logic. (After all, genre boils down to defining narration in terms of inheritance.) Consequently, the narration itself behaves in *Washington Square* like Catherine Sloper: it finds its voice where it refuses to inherit. Hence, probably, James’s frustration with the prospect of revisiting *Washington Square* for his *New York Edition*, the edition that was to put a seal on his oeuvre as a thing matured and established, itself a manner, custom, habit, form. Symptomatically, when James was working on *Washington Square*, in and around 1880, he was simultaneously preparing *The Portrait of a Lady*. Both novels focus on young American heiresses and the terrible plight of their libidinal exposure to wily American expatriates, formatted by their experience of Europe. Yet, while James embraced *The Portrait of a Lady* as one of his finest novels, he despised *Washington Square*, as if reciprocating *The Portrait’s* Isabel Archer, who could and does inherit, at the expense of Catherine Sloper, who could and does not.

This is how Catherine Sloper ultimately hijacks the narrative, away from its generic predispositions and into a narrative state of exception: into narrative bare life. James testifies to this when, in the above quote from his letter to Howells, he attributes to America the lack of that on which “a novelist *lives*,” thereby suggesting that life in/of

²⁰ James heard the story of an unhappy heiress as a piece of gossip about Kemble’s brother who was engaged to the girl. See James 1987: 11–12.

American literature is a life apart, an a-generic life, which fails to register the affinity with form and establishment implicit to the novel as a genre.²¹

Catherine bears the brunt of this state, just as she suffers her father's disapproval, in the metonymic figures she cuts for the narrative. One such figure is her constitution. The narrator remarks that she is robust, even a glutton; after Morris has jilted her, she does not die of melancholia, even though her melancholia is so severe that few could survive it—the insight Doctor Sloper advertises with some contempt.²² This, however, does not entail health or recovery on Catherine's part but a sustained melancholia. Catherine thus comes to signify, both to her father and to the narrator, a certain consistent pathology instead of either death or survival. Furthermore, as melancholia is the pathology sustained in reflection or as reflection (though it is not contained in reflection), the melancholy Catherine compromises Austin Sloper's focalizing consciousness and, by extension, the rationale of James's fiction. In turn, Catherine's melancholia is reciprocated by the constitution of the narrative, whose closure is forever deferred and suspended. This is also how to understand the narrator's final observation, that Catherine settles to occupy the house at Washington Square "for life, as it were": the narrative cannot close properly because Catherine cannot, just as her life is the life that the novel cannot process from within—hence this life, for the novel, can only be "life, as it were." Accordingly, the Jamesian narrator, like Doctor Sloper, is not flaunting Catherine's constitution for its realism but as an excuse for contempt, however mild. It is almost as if the narrator, like Doctor Sloper, profits eventually from Catherine's constitution, because it allows him to address contempt as a structure of rationality that would otherwise remain inaccessible to him—in much the same way as Freudian psychoanalysis addresses the structure of masochism.²³ Catherine is thus to James's narrator what *Moby Dick* is to Captain Ahab: the life which presses on the constitution itself of sign and semiosis—the critical condition which ultimately coincides with the constitution of America, or with America as the ultimate sign, in modernity, for the questions of constitution.²⁴

²¹ James was born in Washington Place, the address adjacent to Washington Square, in 1843, the date consistent with the latter part of the first half of the 19th century, when the novel begins. James's decision to Americanize and historicize Kemble's story into a metonymy of his own birth is acutely symptomatic, just as it sheds light on the structure of the writings James openly acknowledged as autobiographical: his letters, his famous Notebooks, even his prefaces (which were to become the birthplace of modern narrative theory).

²² Freud describes melancholia as the wound that attracts all the available libidinal energy, from all sides, until the ego has been so impoverished that it can no longer sustain itself. See Freud 253, 258.

²³ Tellingly, masochism for Freud works alongside the death drive, as part of the same assemblage.

²⁴ Butler remarks that the concluding phrase in *Washington Square* "makes clear that this is a life constituted only metaphorically" (2003: 208). While this comment does not exhaust the narrative quandary peculiar to *Washington Square*, it does identify, and aptly, a more general strategy James perceived to be generic to novels: a processing of life which reciprocates metaphor. I am alluding again to James in his letter to William Dean Howells, when he founds the novel in form, custom, establishment, which Butler rightly relates to metaphor, and which Slavoj Žižek, in his reading of James's later fiction, ascribes to James's marked interest in the superego. See Žižek 2006: 124–44.

I am deliberately invoking constitution here, because it was in terms of constitution that America was inherited as a political and a philosophical project by important post-revolutionary writers such as Melville or Hawthorne, but above all by R. W. Emerson. This, however, is not to say that constitution is the principal legacy of America. Instead, this is to say that America makes sense only if the concept of legacy be supplanted by constitution, which inaugurates the ongoing process of critique and deconstruction, where legacy is no longer a fully operative concept. Stanley Cavell finds it preeminent that Emerson fleshes out the meaning of constitution for America: constitution to Emerson signifies that body and body politic are to be seen as part of the same assemblage. According to Cavell, Emerson “speaks of ‘my constitution,’ meaning for him simultaneously the condition of his body, his personal health (a figure for the body and or system of his prose), and more particularly his writing (or amending) of the nation’s constitution” (1988: 11). In part at least, this is Emerson’s political and philosophical debt to Jefferson’s physiocracy.

Emerson was in many ways the symbolic father to Henry James, not least (auto)-biographically, as the great American educator closely linked to the James family. Interestingly, James could come to terms with Emerson only by oedipalizing him away from constitution and into pure/Puritan fatherhood. In an essay he wrote in 1887, five years after Emerson’s death, James insists on describing Emerson as reducible to a conscience that “could not have been turned off, as it were, from one generation to another,” the conscience attributable to “the stock he sprang from, clerical for generations, on both sides, and clerical in the Puritan sense”; Emerson’s “perfection, in his own line, comes largely from the non-interruption of this process” (1965: 70). This is how James reduces Emerson to conscience as legacy, also to legacy as conscience, which in James’s opinion is evidently the legacy at its purest. When James qualifies Emerson’s mind as clerical and Puritan, he is invoking not merely its Judeo-Christian structure, but the stunning purity of this mind’s operation and the underlying self-sufficiency of the superego to which this mind has been reduced: the qualification evocative, again, equally of how James imagines Austin Sloper and of how psychoanalysis explains the operation of the death drive.²⁵

James observes that Emerson’s having had “a more vivid conception of moral life than anyone else” was in part due “to the limited way in which he saw our capacity for living illustrated”; his three journeys to Europe introduced him “to a more complicated world” (1965: 71). Put differently, it was only in America that James’s Emerson could refine conscience into pure concept: not because America provided him with no life, but because America seems to have sprung on the Puritan communities the bare life which exposed the condition of their thought to be that of the death drive. Hence, to this thought, the American life is bare as much as baring, just as America

²⁵ Julia Kristeva observes a distinct Judeo-Christian inflection in the psychoanalytic “subject supposed to know,” which, according to Kristeva, entails a derivation from St. Paul away towards psychoanalysis. See Kristeva ix–xiii, 3–5. The same inflection seems to resonate in James’s claim that Emerson was “the prayer and the sermon: not in the least a secularizer, but in his own subtle insinuating way a sanctifier” (1965: 71).

is entertained by this thought as limit and a state of exception. It is in this sense that James's puritanization of Emerson takes place at the expense of America.

What James occludes in his essay, however, is Emerson's appreciation of the constitution. Emerson's incisive constitutionalism translates the Puritan America, which James attaches to him, into an America that is metonymic, in much the same way as habitat is metonymic to Catherine Sloper.²⁶ This America is reminiscent perhaps of dwelling as Heidegger sees it. Heidegger relates dwelling simultaneously to being, building, and thinking, so that dwelling pre-organizes the three in terms of a metonymy. It is in this sense that dwelling to Heidegger is "always a staying with things" (149), a proposition evocative, in fact, of Antigone. But here with one significant departure: while Heidegger insists that "divinities" are integral to how dwelling is understood, so that in Heidegger the metonymic constitution of dwelling is forever reclaimed as a promise of metaphor (also as a metaphysical destination), Catherine's habitat remains consistently metonymic, inductive, and even empiricist in inspiration. In fact, Catherine's habitat comes close to how William James conceives space, in a letter to Josiah Royce, when he says that "[a]ll *deducers* of space are, I am sure, mythologists" (111; emphasis W. J.). Incidentally, the quote is from a letter that William James wrote in 1880, when his brother was working on *Washington Square*.²⁷

4. An American Tragedy

This is why *Washington Square* is only seemingly a misnomer. Certainly, the title appears to miss the narrative focus on Catherine, her father, and the battle of their minds, just as Washington Square, the location in New York City, ostensibly fails to target the house metonymic to Catherine, and refers instead to the public place which fronts it. Yet Washington Square is the metonymic extension of the house, just as the house is metonymic to Catherine, and vice versa. In the final analysis, this complex expands to incorporate New York City and, with it, the American city culture that was to recreate the logic, if not the architecture, of a polis.

When writing about "the place of the city in United States culture and literature," Stipe Grgas notes that "Winthrop's 'city upon a Hill' has been routinely drawn upon

²⁶ James reports, with polite scorn, that Emerson "rarely read a novel, even the famous ones" and was "little spoken to by works of art" in the Louvre and the Vatican where James took him in the autumn and winter of 1872 (1965: 84). Given Emerson's appreciation of writing in relation to constitution, his indifference to novels and to art in European museums, which James calls "an anomaly," seems but an indication of James's own exultation of genre and of authority.

²⁷ In empiricism, Gilles Deleuze insists, "the relations are heterogeneous and exterior to their terms, impressions, or ideas" (163). With Hume, "the empiricist world can for the first time truly unfold in all its extension: a world of exteriority, a world where thought itself is in a fundamental relation to the Outside, a world where terms exist like veritable atoms, and relations like veritable external bridges—a world where the conjunction 'and' dethrones the interiority of the verb 'is'" (Deleuze 163). Note the affinity of Deleuze's empiricism and of Jefferson's Epicureanism, specifically in relation to atomism; note also the metonymic logic implicit in Deleuze's affirmation of *and over is*.

as evidence that the rhetoric of the city was present at the originary moment of this polity's emergence onto the historical scene. One could argue that the various takes on the American polity engage the difference between this utopian vision emblazoned on its founding moment and the actualization of the vision in historical urban realities" (2005: 128). In his book about New York literature, Peter Brooker reports on Francis Baily, who, visiting the United States in 1796, "wrote in fulsome praise of the 'perfect regularity' and geometric order of the new American cities of Philadelphia and Baltimore, whose straight lines happily expressed the straight dealing of the American character and the destiny of the new nation. The new American city was felt to be an embodiment of scientific rationality, and a sign, therefore, in one of its senses, of modernity" (27). Brooker points out that "Thomas Jefferson's own simple replicable design for the new cities of the new nation had been a case in point. Jefferson proposed a checkerboard model with alternate open spaces to prevent the spread of disease and to provide the pleasures of the country in the city" (27-28).

While this seems to dovetail with Austin Sloper's rationality and with deductionism, the organization of the American urban space, in the event, was metonymic, even physiocratic in character. Brooker comments that "in the eighteenth as in the twentieth century, it was a matter less of such ideas or ideals in themselves than what they had been made to mean, what interests they in practice served" (27). Jefferson's design hardly contradicted the interests and the practice of the American cities, because its very logic was that of interest and practice, expressed in terms of a physiocratic imperative.²⁸ Freud could well have had this in mind when, travelling to the United States in 1909, he observed that he was bringing "the plague" to America.²⁹ Evidently, Freud wanted to advertise that psychoanalysis would affect America the way the plague would, also that it would spread in a similar fashion, possibly bringing about the extinction of the idea of America. What Freud's image implies, however—assuming America was to receive psychoanalysis the way it would receive the plague—is the metonymic character of America, also the likely reconstitution of psychoanalysis itself once it encountered metonymy in the places where metaphor had been structural to the psychoanalytic semiosis. Perversely, what Freud was in fact saying was that America could prove to be the plague of/to psychoanalysis itself.³⁰

²⁸ James was critical of the New York he witnessed after his return to the United States in 1904–5; he perceived its vertical growth (its skyscraper architecture) as alien to semiosis as such. Cavell, however, draws attention to the sentence in *The American Scene* in which James addresses this New York as "attesting the possibilities of the soil" (2005: 85). While Cavell takes James's comment as "an allusion to Emerson's idea of finding America (somehow) unapproachable" (2005: 86), what strikes me is the chthonic, metonymic, even physiocratic aspect of James's image.

²⁹ See Felman 1977: 189.

³⁰ Freud's discovery of the death drive in the 1920s coincides with a significant increase in the numbers of his American patients, in the wake of the First World War, almost as if the death drive was a metaphor-based response to the metonymic excess which the American cases presented to psychoanalysis. For the increased number of American patients whom Freud treated after the Great War, see Gay 2006.

This sheds light on the closure of James's narrative (if closure applies to the narrative of *Washington Square*, technically speaking). Not only is the father killed off for this America to become, unnerving as this America may have been to James, but there remains an irreducible residue of metonymy about the parricide, nowhere so visibly perhaps as in the fact that the father's ultimate refinement into the conditions of the death drive is premised on his remaining a physician, his capital being transferred to hospitals and schools of medicine. On the one hand, this means that an American *Doktor-Vater* can abstract himself from any singular fatherhood into the death drive, but cannot lose the "Doktor" in the process, thereby forever registering the residual physiocracy and Epicureanism of the American revolutionary becoming. On the other hand, this suggests that legacy cannot be reduced to the conditions of the death drive insofar as it entails capital—that there remains a metonymic residue about capital which does not tally with the concept of the death drive, or with metaphor, so that metaphor cannot fully explain, or contain, the logic of capital and of capitalism. (This may well be the American contribution to a cultural history of capitalism, especially in view of the recent emphasis on legacy and inheritance in capitalism, for instance in the work of Thomas Piketty.)³¹

The structure of the closure is truly climactic. When the *Doktor-Vater* demands from Catherine that she promise never to accept Morris's offer of marriage should it happen again, as the condition on which she will be granted legacy, Catherine refuses to give her word: this is how she disinherits herself *and* annihilates the father. What ultimately turns out to be killing off Austin Sloper for the narrative is Catherine's assuming language on *his* terms, so that her crime is faultless, because his narrative death comes out also as suicide. Catherine is thereby fully disinherited, because not even the crime (of parricide) can be attached to her.³² This in turn is how language is exposed to the contingencies irreducible to states of exception. Stanley Cavell alludes to this condition of language when he speaks of its "exposure to infelicity" and of language being predicated on "the incessant, unending vulnerability of human action" (1995: 53). Also, this is how Catherine eventually hijacks all language into a metonymic condition: metonymy, as noted, signifying a kind of empiricism, insofar as empiricism insists on the "*relations which are exterior to their terms,*" as Deleuze argues in his essay on Hume (163; emphasis G. D.).

This proposition is not unrelated to the American condition. The constitution of the United States, premised on the Declaration of Independence, hangs in the balance of a pledge (by the signatories of the Declaration) which was predicated, essentially, on exposure to infelicity. Most political theorists who were fascinated by the American

³¹ James hints at this particular configuration when he insists that money is problematic to Catherine only insofar as it relates to her father; otherwise money remains a vehicle of enjoyment which Austin Sloper, characteristically, considers vulgar.

³² This is how Catherine invokes, again, Butler's Antigone, who paralyzes the superego. Butler quotes from Lacan, who defines the superego as "[t]he discourse of my father . . . in so far as my father made mistakes which I am absolutely condemned to reproduce." Yet Antigone, "significantly, by obeying the curse upon her, stops the future operation of that chain" (Butler 2000: 52).

Revolution were fascinated by this circumstance: that “a new body politic,” as Arendt calls it (34), was constituted around a pledge which did not rest in any pre-conceived authority but was predicated specifically on the incessant, unending vulnerability of human action. Arendt in particular insists on this: for instance, when she observes that “the task of the revolution, to find a new absolute to replace the absolute of the divine power, is insoluble because power under the condition of human plurality can never amount to omnipotence, and laws residing on human power can never be absolute” (39).³³ When Catherine refuses to pledge herself to her father, she is therefore enacting her condition as that of America: not because the pledge would bind her to an act, of obedience or of rebellion, but because she draws attention to the pledge as an act in itself, whose rationale is that of violability.

This is why Catherine's narrative promise, if anything, is the promise of tragedy. Just as the *Antigone* story is singularly reducible to speech acts, to how language is used, denied, and exchanged, until the language of tragedy has come into full effect as the tragedy of language, the same is true of *Washington Square*. Catherine coheres around language reduced to violability—around the exchange and denial of promises, injunctions, threats, seductions—until the reason of language has been exposed as that of tragedy, with speech acts amounting to the tragic flaw.³⁴ One could almost propose that Catherine's logic is that of tragedy, where her father's logic is that of modern detective fiction; she takes on the language in the condition of metonymy and of parataxis where modern detective fiction depends on assigning guilt from within the law implicated in hypotaxis and metaphor. It is in this sense that Catherine contaminates James's idea of the novel, because James's idea of the novel depends actually on the reason of modern detective fiction, while American narratives, as he perceives them—it turns out—depend on reconsidering the rationale of tragedy.

Greek tragedy was instrumental to inventing the language and the structures of thought constituent to democratic procedures in Athens, even to the type of rationality implicit to democracy.³⁵ Honig argues that this logic remains residual in modern melodrama and situates the residue in the structures of mourning, where they assume the

³³ Honig (1991) expands on this position and argues for the specific linguistic, philosophical, and political properties of the speech act as foundational to the Declaration of Independence.

³⁴ Cavell argues that, for the same reason, J. L. Austin's speech act theory reads as a critical theory of tragedy (1995: 53).

³⁵ Jean-Pierre Vernant points to a singular coming together of the political, the literary, and the affective in the Greek tragedy of the fifth century. According to Vernant, this is why already Euripides's tragedies do not compare to those of Aeschylus, just as Aristotle's theory of tragedy comes too late after the fact to take fully into account the reconstitution of language and of rationality that the tragedy effected for the democratic Athens to become (see Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 89). (One could almost propose that tragedy therefore constitutes the tragic flaw of Aristotle's philosophy. Symptomatically, J. L. Austin was a leading British expert on Aristotle.) That this is relevant to a reading of James is supported by Martha C. Nussbaum's extensive comparisons of James's novels and Aristotelian thought, with James often serving as a point of departure to Nussbaum's situating practical reason in Aristotle's philosophy (see, for instance, Nussbaum 1992: 84, 2001: 313). Nussbaum focuses on “practical reason” in order to rescue Aristotle from

function of melodramatic constitution; she draws on the examples of Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt, who focus on mourning and melancholia where they intervene into the structure of tragedy, in order to describe the rationale of modern political theory (Benjamin in his study of *Trauerspiel*, Schmitt in his study of *Hamlet*). “Melodrama may, indeed, be the democratic genre par excellence,” says Honig, because, “[f]amously said to be written for people who could not read . . . , melodrama . . . is also anti-grandiose” (2013: 93). It therefore “makes sense that a so-called low-culture genre merits consideration by democratic theory, especially when that genre is one that calls attention to affect, body, subjectification, thwarted agency, and the quest for emancipation, often amid the cover of double-speak or in circumstances of isolation” (Honig 2013: 93).³⁶

The last quote is such a fitting description of Catherine Sloper that *Washington Square* could be taken as a specimen story for a theory of melodrama, not least where it presses the nascent novelistic reason of Henry James into conditions other than those of modern detective fiction. How this particular trauma of birth registers in James’s later fiction can be inferred from the comment by Peter Brooks that James’s late fiction is characterized by “its *insistently metaphorical* evocation of melodramatic states of consciousness” (172; emphasis mine)—suggesting that James finds metaphor instrumental to domesticating melodrama for or within novelistic reason, at the expense perhaps of metonymy. This bears relation to Cavell’s “philosophical placement of the melodramatic as the hyperbolic effort to recuperate . . . the familiarity or banality of the world” (1996: 40). Cavell relates his understanding of melodrama to Brooks’s, and notes that Brooks approaches melodrama in terms of “a historical event” and “the loss of conviction in a transcendent basis for the distinction between good and evil” (1996: 41). Significantly, Cavell mobilizes melodrama to address, from within philosophy, the political project of America as the laboratory of modern democracy. Cavell, too, thus seems to be classing melodrama with metonymic excess, insofar as metonymic excess is implicit to his idea of the world which is hyperbolically familiar, banal, and disturbingly reducible to event where event signifies the crisis of transcendental authority.³⁷

Platonic metaphysics and reclaim him for pre-Platonic thought, which Vernant finds constituent to Greek democracy. She finds her claim in Aristotle’s “criticism of Platonic generality in favor of an emphasis on the grasping of contingent particulars,” and relates it to James’s criticism of the narrators, who “might be ever so strong on method, but . . . fall short of the fine responsiveness of ‘tone’ that is the mark of true practical wisdom” (2001: 310). Yet Nussbaum neglects to insist that Aristotle is strong on method first and foremost, which inevitably informs his grasp of the particulars, and that the same is true of James’s narrators; indeed, like Austin Sloper, James’s narrators respond finely to tone only where their method precedes it.

³⁶ Styles of mourning were structural to Greek democracy too, insofar as they pressed on the polis as a type of rationality. Honig rightly notes that Sophocles’s *Antigone*, a play about styles of mourning, is critical in this sense because it “repeatedly explores the question of how permissibly to grieve not just ungrivable life but grievable life as well” (2013: 96). Equally, Honig admits to “[b]eing open to reading *Antigone* as melodrama,” even if not just that (2013: 94).

³⁷ The same structure seems to resonate in Grgas’s claim that the project of the United States has been most insistently effected as a contestation of space, a position he relates to Sacvan Bercovitch’s hermeneutics of non-transcendence (2000: 9, 240).

Central to Cavell's understanding of melodrama is the figure of the unknown woman, defined by "[a] certain choice of solitude (figured in a refusal of marriage)" (1996: 12). Marriage here epitomizes "the fate of the democratic social bond" in a world where contract "replaces the divine right of kings" (Cavell 1981: 193). While this, again, reads as a succinct portrayal of Catherine Sloper as an American Antigone, *Washington Square* invites in turn a critical reading of Cavell. For instance, Cavell finds Freud crucial to his understanding of the (American) unknown woman, and brings Henry James ever closer to Freud, in order to forge a philosophical conduit to melodrama, especially melodrama in classical Hollywood, which to Cavell is the hub of American political modernity. At one point, he argues that James in his later fiction captures the unknown woman better than Stefan Zweig, whose Freudian *The Letter from an Unknown Woman* was adapted by Max Ophüls, in 1948, into the eponymous Hollywood melodrama that Cavell finds exemplary to his analytic position (1996: 113). Curiously, in his book about the Hollywood melodrama Cavell omits even a cursory reference to Wyler's *The Heiress*, adapted from *Washington Square* at about the same time, even though Wyler captures both the structure of Cavell's argument and the narrative predicament of Henry James. Yet, it was Olivia de Havilland as Catherine Sloper—not her sister Joan Fontaine as Lisa in *The Letter from an Unknown Woman*—who won the Academy Award.

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F. O. Matthiessen, C. L. R. James and a Sense of the Past of American Studies

Introduction¹

It became clear during one of the sessions at the 2015 ACLA conference in Seattle, Washington, that a revival was under way of some aspects of Cold War American Studies. The three-day session, entitled “Americanist Criticism, Back and Forward,” featured presentations on, among others, the luminaries of American Studies of all time, so to speak, offering a reassessment of F. O. [Francis Otto] Matthiessen and Sacvan Bercovitch (twice), and considering in a separate but related presentation the impact of institutional and government-backed programs of academic exchange during and after the Cold War.² While the trend itself—that of occasionally folding back upon itself and self-consciously assessing its own methods and their scope and impact—has from the beginning informed the discipline of American Studies, it still struck me as an uncanny occasion to witness how the discipline had retrieved, and in the process revised and rewrote, its own past.³ The session, in its choice of themes framed by a singular historical event, auspicious for the emergence of the discipline, if not quite for the world—the Cold War itself—as well as by its choice of featured scholars, offered contested readings and challenging interpretations of the period.

According to Phillip Wegner’s term, 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall ushered in “the long nineties” (8-9) while it tasked literary historians and Americanists with revising the discipline’s investment in its own ideological foundations, a task that continues to this day. Alan Wald’s study of the period that concerns me here, the beginning of the Cold War, provides a stalwart example of what attends the literary historian’s task when he claims: “To be alive in the early twenty-first century is to live in the residue of mixed inheritances of the postwar era; we do not have an option to be unentangled in this lost time” (xiii).⁴ Insofar as the New Americanists (the

¹ The writing of the essay was supported by the Croatian Scientific Foundation grant (HRZZ-1543), which I gratefully acknowledge. I would like to thank also the J.F. Kennedy Center library at the Free University in Berlin for a library grant which facilitated my research.

² Information on the full session is available in the conference program “ACLA 2015,” University of Washington, Seattle, March 26-29, 2015.

³ The trend is testified to, for instance, by browsing the archive of the official journal of the ASA, *The American Quarterly*. Ever since its earliest issues, the journal has registered major methodological innovations and offered periodical assessments of the state of the discipline.

⁴ In the context of European and Croatian American Studies in particular, recent contributions by Stipe Grgas evince the same tendency of stock-taking in the discipline and extrapolating future trends therefrom.

term was initially redolent of censure and irony) were among the first and most eager critical coterie to take up the assignment, it was their turn to invent or delineate what one of their most outstanding members, Donald Pease, has termed a new “field imaginary” (Pease 1990). Having now witnessed several waves of the said revision business, we might want to consider some of the ways in which each new generation of American Studies scholars approaches and assesses, as if holding a mirror to itself, the key, originating moment of the founding of a full-fledged study of national literature, culture, civilization, and nation-state (all major topics in American Studies). Simultaneously, it means going down the time lane towards the early phase of the Cold War.⁵

While no Americanist would be justified in discounting the contributions of either Matthiessen or, later, Bercovitch, this unequivocal recognition of their respective commendable services rendered to the discipline further obligates us to inquire as to what attitude these two outstanding scholars of American Studies in their respective periods held in relation to the Cold War context, which in the case of Matthiessen was only beginning to engross his work, whereas in the case of Bercovitch was followed on its final course and seen to its historical end. And consequently, what lessons might their insights bequeath to us in the present time and for the current state of American Studies? I will only briefly suggest the closing perspective that was cast on the Cold War by Bercovitch, whose work made an elegant, informed and canny transition from the Cold-War to the post-Cold-War state, even if some recent readers of his work still fault him for participating in and reinforcing the so-called “liberal consensus” paradigm (Pease 1990: 19-23). However, even an overview of Bercovitch’s critical concerns ought to allow us to consider the term “liberal” in its positive and potent articulation, and not simply as a stale political option maligned by the New Americanists eager to break a new path in the wake of the major re-alignment of the discipline in 1989, as the Cold War ended (Fuller 122-46).

Grgas’s informed reflections are further solidified by his more recent sorties outside of the strict literary and cultural boundaries of the section of American Studies overlapping with the humanities and branching out into adjacent fields of social sciences leading him into veritable interdisciplinarity. To this one must add his displaced position as a non-U.S. Americanist. As Matthiessen will point out in his text considered here, it took his voyage to Europe for him to fully understand the implication of being American at the time (*FHE*, 3). Also, as he came to realize at the end of the journey, the civilization that bred him and his humanistic profession, including his auspicious “invention” of American Renaissance, faced a death threat (*FHE*, 194). So much about the benefits (and risks) of a displaced vision. Cf. Grgas 2013; Grgas 2014; Grgas 2015a; Grgas 2015b.

⁵ This is done, for instance, by one of the old guard, Leo Marx, who reminds us of the discipline’s relative youth allowing one to discern the “laying on of hands” in the profession since it is the case that Marx, himself occupying a middle ground between the prevailing liberal consensus paradigm (up until its fracturing in the 1970s), the emergence of the New Left in the 1960s, and the tide of new approaches hailed by the theoretical revolution of the 1970s and 1980s, was Matthiessen’s student at Harvard, as were several other key representatives of early- to mid-Cold War studies: for instance, Henry Nash Smith and R.W.B. Lewis (Marx; Pfister 8.)

My focus will rather be on the kind of errant labor that humanistic inquiry was required to perform at the very outset of the Cold War, at the time when Matthiessen reached his full maturity as a scholar and critic of American literature and culture, but also a period fraught with political anxiety and animosity that would soon divide the world into two separate ideological camps, East and West, or totalitarian/communist and democratic/capitalist (cf. President Truman's 1951 State of the Union Address [Truman]). Matthiessen was hardly the only scholar and critic to have faced what might have seemed an impossible choice requiring of him to succumb to the debilitating and, ultimately, humiliating absolutist logic of the Cold War; the other conspicuous instance of an intense and courageous intellectual engagement that on one hand transmuted into a personal ethical stance while, on the other, provided a penetrating scrutiny of the very logic and meaning of the discipline in a changing world, is presented by C. L. R. [Cyril Lionel Robert] James, particularly in his capacity as the author of a full-scale study of Herman Melville, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*. I will first outline the dilemmas attending Matthiessen's position and will then move on to consider James's perspective in the same period, all the while claiming that their highly idiosyncratic books might be illustrative of the entire stretch of American Studies development so far.

In his study of the continuity and vitality of Emersonian criticism, Randall Fuller makes a general statement as to the greater purpose of American Studies in particular and the humanities in general in the United States, which are to confront "the challenges of modernity manifested in history" (4). If we stay with this thought, then it proceeds that "particular acts of cultural and literary criticism might feel *urgent* at a given time" (Fuller 4). We shall see how Matthiessen was immersed in the sense of a particular mission that, as an American academic, a literature professor, he might have had for his both wistful and downbeat student audiences in Europe. In the case of his contemporary C. L. R. James, the sense of urgency not only moves him to write the text discussed here, but at some point towers over all the other themes.

The European Other in the Founding of American Studies

The dilemma that Matthiessen faced, together with a host of his intellectual companions in the United States, was contingent on his already canonical status in the fledgling field of American Studies that he earned with his 1941 text *American Renaissance*. The book in that particular historical moment not only summarized in a forceful way what his predecessors were already expressing about antebellum America (roughly from the 1830s to the 1850s), but also effectively created one of the key terms for understanding the literature of post-revolutionary and antebellum American society, and in the process appraised all the previous and subsequent developments by the measuring rod established by Matthiessen for the said period. Still, as Eric Cheyfitz points out from his revisionist perspective, at that point in time the canonization of Matthiessen's work was not an obvious development but the result of "a complex cultural machinery" operating in American literary history, which is to say, Cheyfitz intones, that rather than the

beginning, the book marked the end of the process of establishing a new literary canon (349)—a canon, one might add, fit for the American century that reached its zenith.

In a book written as the United States was entering the war against fascism and nazism on a global scale, Matthiessen could develop his political inclinations with a progressive, socialist, and leftist bent and weave them into a greater narrative of his country as a nation standing for those same qualities, a contention that would hardly be an overstatement in the context of the American 1930s and 1940s. Immediately after the war's end, there was still a period of a couple of years (at least until early 1947) in which a certain wavering in politics was tolerated, since it was by no means clear that the new world order would come about in a relentless competition between the two emergent superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

It is therefore exciting, as well as instructive, to consider precisely that period of vacillation which marked the later phase of Matthiessen's critical, academic, and political work addressed in his underappreciated memoir/travelogue *From the Heart of Europe* (1948). However, given the discipline's current vicissitudes, it is no surprise that the text is being recovered and re-incorporated into the Matthiessen canon. Following upon my initial question, one needs to address a sense of the past that infused this personal account of Matthiessen's public engagements when the world was still "ripe for a new beginning." The lesson obviously intended by Matthiessen for his English-speaking audience was soon lost upon them, since the book had been rendered obsolete and almost utopian even by the time it was published. In 1948, the Cold War had already descended upon the world, so that the message that might have resonated for Matthiessen's students in the seminars and lectures that he held in Europe would no longer reach the ears of those left "behind the iron curtain" (as in Churchill's famous and provocative speech [Churchill]), while for others it will be branded for its wavering over settled points of American domestic and foreign policies in their pursuit of the Cold War (an instance of scathing criticism of Matthiessen's position is provided by Fuller 176 n 63). So even before the book could have gained a life of its own, it was made a victim of a new ideological conflict. However, that it deserves to be rediscovered, having come towards the end of Matthiessen's long career thus serving as his testament in symbolic and, sadly, real terms, is testified by Art Redding's apposite assessment: "At the heart of Matthiessen's lifelong critical project was an overwhelming sense of the need for each generation to critically 'repossess' the past, coupled with an obsessive concentration on love and politics" (39). This is further glossed in Fuller's remark on Emerson that equally well applies to Matthiessen's work and impact: "As a practitioner of the literary, he aspired to provoke aesthetic transformation by summoning public feeling and mobilizing affect as well as thought" (7). In the remainder of the discussion in this section it is my aim to register some ways that spurred Matthiessen's repossession of the discipline's past, which is rightly considered symbiotic with his own personal destiny.⁶

⁶ This was one of Matthiessen's last published works during his life, which ended in suicide in 1950. Subsequently, additional material authored by him was made available. For an elaboration of the way Matthiessen interwove the public and the private cf. Arac; Grossman; Redding.

My contention will be that the retrieval of any (forgotten, suppressed, or repressed) document necessarily reshapes the past(s) contained in a historical archive, the case being that this precarious yet imperious role of the archive cannot obviate the incessant inclusion, exclusion, or rearrangement of the items in its fold.⁷ Therefore, the long neglected (or understudied) texts by Matthiessen and James should be seen as an occasion to return to the near beginnings of the discipline of American Studies, and thus to recast not only Matthiessen's academic fate, but also that of the entire intellectual endeavor to which he had contributed. In other words, the past of American Studies is significantly and instructively revised if we attend to Matthiessen's 1948 account of an American Studies seminar in a Europe devastated by the massive armed conflict and on the verge of entering another period of consequential tension. Matthiessen's text is thus an intellectual record, an account which spells for us the personal and professional sacrifice that the Cold War would soon be exacting from its unwitting participants. Simultaneously, Matthiessen is correct in assessing that his personal, even intimate ruminations must be made public and placed in the context of his entire life and career. In his travelogue/memoir he strategically blends and intertwines the public and the private (so unlike his critical studies proper) in order to make a case for a free, democratic, and popular American Studies practice. Let us see how he proposed to carry the discipline to its new stage, to which it could not ascend at the time.

From the Heart of Europe is a first-person account of F. O. Matthiessen's participation in the first in a long series of Salzburg seminars on American Studies extending to this day. In addition to providing a sort of intellectual diary of his academic engagement, Matthiessen spiced the book with plentiful comments on his itineraries in Central Europe before and after the seminar itself took place (Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary). The period encompassed in his multifaceted book extends from July to December of 1947, while the book (not insignificant for our discussion) came out in 1948, just after the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, marking just one step along the way to Cold War entrenchment. This is to say that the book literally stands at the juncture of two eras signaling the full installment of the post-war geopolitics. What was in the balance for Matthiessen in writing this book is no less the fate of the discipline that simultaneously mirrored the fate of Europe at the time.

For Matthiessen, an American coming to a Europe devastated by war, the fact of "spiritual depression" is salient and so unlike the American brash self-confidence (4).⁸ Even France must allow itself to become overshadowed by America in the field of culture, a fact that attests to the cultural ascension of America, its shedding of its post-colonial status. In a distinct but related context, Harry Levin complacently noted that the hegemonic role of American culture in Europe was inevitable since it was backed

⁷ For a recent specific illustration of the role of archive in American Studies, cf. Lazo.

⁸ All subsequent references from the text of *From the Heart of Europe* will be provided parenthetically in the text.

up by the then unfolding Marshall Plan (264-65).⁹ Certainly, the fact that the war had just been won by two non-European powers, the USA and the USSR, sent a clear message that Europe had been removed from center stage. Matthiessen himself enacts a counter-missionary move, now coming to “proselytize” in Europe, which apparently must be re-taught its own cultural legacy. An enthusiastic group of Harvard students, some of them tracing their recent European roots, had come up with an idea to bring together a number of European students and young professionals, hopefully from both Eastern and Western Europe, guided by the notion that American Studies could be a rallying point for the divided and scarred Europeans, since it was, in Henry Nash Smith’s understated phrase, “a relatively neutral field of study” (31).

That this was the right tack was obvious to Matthiessen when he observed the scope of destruction as he made his way to Salzburg through Germany, making Frankfurt one of his first stops. Not incidentally, the object of his interest was the Goethe house, laid to waste by the allied air-raids (Matthiessen would go on to note that some of it might have been excessive) to a degree that left him shocked. Certainly, the building stood as a gauge for the state of affairs across Germany and the rest of the countries where he travelled. The U.S. personnel in Germany were, in another telling reversal, “the civil servants of the new American empire” (8). In an important sense, Matthiessen as traveler re-enacts Emerson’s grand tour of Europe at the age of 29; except that now it is the American that carries cultural distinction to bestow it on the old continent (23). To propose another fitting literary parallel, Matthiessen might have felt not a little like Henry James—himself a subject of the critic’s interest—or Jamesian characters who came to Europe to gain a new taste of life. “Might” is a key word here since in “The Responsibilities of the Critic” Matthiessen plays upon this eternal theme, “the wide gap which still exists between America and Europe,” which was then distilled by Henry James into “his leading theme in the contrast between American innocence and European experience” (109). However, the experience offers a poignant lesson indeed. Further travel through the country, leading him to Munich and thence to Salzburg, makes evident the extent of destruction, while the surreal effects are compounded by the adjacency of Schloss Leopoldskron, where the seminar is to take place, to a D.P. camp. (During his later visit to Munich, Matthiessen comments on the loss and destruction as a “waste land produced only by our time” [37].)

In the new dispensation, it is the Harvard graduates of European/ Jewish descent that transfer by way of the pedagogy of American Studies the notion of American civilization to the scarred continent (10). The complex of American values, compressed into “culture and humanism,” is now seen as a buffer against the barbarism to which

⁹ Noting the landmark status of Matthiessen’s travelogue, Gross offers a quote that clinches the argument condensed in the Salzburg Seminar and in American Studies as a whole at the time, which Matthiessen critically re-examined through his “dissident internationalism” (75). The quote reads: “Europe is no longer regarded as a sanctuary; it no longer assures that rich experience of culture which inspired and justified a criticism of American life. The wheel has come full circle, and now America has become the protector of western civilization, at least in a military and economic sense” (qtd. in Gross 73).

Europe sank in the war (13). This is already a program for American Studies in the making, an agenda, thus, that burgeoned away from the halls of academe (hardly the case with the classical and aloof American Renaissance model) and amidst the practical and immediate concerns in the field, so much so that Matthiessen is excited by the “historic occasion” offered him (13). This section already contains ingredients for a wholesale American Studies project: besides the self-congratulatory flair, there is a conviction that America should serve as a role-model for Europe, Matthiessen suggests, in that it is already a multiethnic nation (14, 192).

The other distinction that Matthiessen’s version of American Studies contained and disseminated will only considerably later become a key fault line in the discipline, as documented by Pfister in his outline of American cultural studies (Pfister). The concept of American civilization with which Matthiessen and other instructors operated in the seminar sessions, however, is removed from the more visible and accessible appurtenances of the pop and commodity culture already overflowing the occupied Europe (the Coke logo, ice-cream), so that already there is a contention between different concepts of culture that should be incorporated into a program of cultural recovery. Unlike his successors, Matthiessen was clear on this point: the hierarchy of cultural products was crystalized in a moment of critical inspiration that he had previously elevated and turned into the canon; what remained was to flank the pantheon put forth in his groundbreaking study with an assortment of more contemporary authors (James, Dreiser, Dos Passos, Steinbeck, Hemingway, Elliot and Cummings [28-29]). According to Gross, he espouses “a transformational aesthetic that places art at the center of politics” (84), even though it is specifically the high art requirement that in retrospect would prove the least compelling for his intellectual heirs.

Depressed and disheartened, deprived and hungry, the students in the seminar are a diverse lot, sharing a sense of being “debilitated” by war (59). The archives of the 1947 seminar offer a glimpse of the participant list, which included mostly Westerners, with only Czechs and Hungarians in attendance from Eastern Europe (it is to be understood that this absence was not due to the organizers’ partiality but because of already evinced political tensions [“Salzburg,” p. 3]). While the keen and energetic Harvard student organizers set down to implement their idea, a more cautious report warns that “the intellectual and social challenge” of the seminar might be “underestimated by the Americans” (“Salzburg,” p. 24) thus reflecting the varying levels of idealism (or political realism).

Matthiessen briefly stated his interest and provided an outline of the literary section of the curriculum, which he shared that year with Alfred Kazin (American literature) and Vida Ginsberg (American drama) (“Salzburg,” p. 2). In this roster of writers, we shall focus for the moment on Herman Melville in order to tease out the implication that his work had for Matthiessen’s sense of his critical and social mis-

¹⁰ Since my interest is not primarily in *American Renaissance*, except as a solid background against which Matthiessen’s 1947 seminar would proceed, here I will further reference only Grossman’s remark, which proposes that, in his classic study, Matthiessen overlays his literary criticism with autobiography (49).

sion. Matthiessen's abiding interest in Melville, as Grossman points out, allows us to utilize Melville's work to understand Matthiessen, as well as his critical procedure.¹⁰ In his brief excursus, Matthiessen notes how his perspective on *Moby-Dick* has changed somewhat in the intervening period (since his *American Renaissance*) allowing him to rescue the scenes from the novel that eluded him back home and evacuating Melville from Emerson's embrace, thus straining towards a new reading of the novel, precisely the one that would be taken up and accomplished by C. L. R. James: "I found a new clue to his [Melville's] own creative intention"; "Such reflections on the lack of superiority owing to race's whiteness occur more often in *Moby-Dick* than I had remembered"; "No more challenging counterstatement to Emerson's self-reliance has yet been written" (35, 36, 37).

His special vantage point, which Gross handily dubs "dissident internationalism ... compatible with situational approach" (75), allows for more synthetic remarks on a number of issues, from the state of American higher education, the notion of an ideal university, to the complex set of relations between a mass democratic society and its technologized, mass produced and consumed art, from the disquisitions on the Soviet and American revolutions, to a section detailing his political education that proceeds hand in hand with his academic path (75). Matthiessen is clearly torn between the realities of the two available political alternatives (American and Soviet), and, internally, he is at pains as to where to place himself in the moving picture: he is a socialist, but pointedly not a communist (even if he made the distinction, the public in late 1940s United States would no longer care to do so). The blurring political affiliations that Matthiessen describes here were essentially part of the New Deal coalition that emerged in the 1930s and 1940s but were becoming dysfunctional or reconfigured in the new period, which Matthiessen found hard to brook. Part of his reluctance to join the communists might have been caused by his deep Christian convictions (82). Another speculation is provided by Fuller, who notes Matthiessen's ominous silence about his 1930s visit to the Soviet Union, of which there is almost no record in his otherwise comprehensive and meticulous correspondence (91).

In October and November of 1947, upon the completion of the Salzburg seminar session, Matthiessen proceeded to Prague for the inaugural lecture in American Studies at Charles University. This section, and its follow-up in Hungary, are interesting also from a purely historical perspective, since they allow for a short-lived glimpse, an embodiment of, what Matthiessen hoped would be the third way. At the time, Czechoslovakia was a country poised between East and West (105): it had a multi-party government, in which communists shared power with other parties. In ethnographic terms, Matthiessen figures in this part of the text more as a "participant observer," a position of relative authority which, however, must rely to some extent on "native informants" that mediate the context for the narrator (for these terms cf. Clifford). The hovering question about the viability of the third way underscored by the apprehension of Russian interference (128) are all filtered through his guides from different social and political circumstances (mostly, it is Jan, a seminar participant and a young Czech communist who provides the context). The text uncannily registers, al-

most in real time, the creeping effect of the onset of the Cold War. Not even a pastoral scene in the Czech countryside can break the spell of gloom and anxious anticipation spreading over the country.¹¹

History caught up with the text, since by the time of the publication Matthiessen was obliged to gloss it with the developments in the wake of the Soviet coup in February 1948 (143). The gloss, which hardly does justice to the gravity of the situation, did not do service to Matthiessen's political acuity either, nor did it endear him to his academic and political adversaries while it intensified the criticism of the previously exalted founding father (Fuller 98; Pease 1996: 32-33). The text tried to maintain a balance to the very end, even when politically it became impossible to steer a neutral course between the countries that in a short while would embrace the Marshall Plan and those that refused or were made to refuse the United States' offer (144). What is to some extent astounding is Matthiessen's lack of critical appreciation of the Soviet tactics in its professed sphere of influence in the early days of the Cold War—and this underappreciation will be especially felt in the final stage of his itinerary.

Another country whose status wavered was Hungary, where Matthiessen proceeded from Czechoslovakia (this was still in the period before the coup). In Hungary, the communists were one of the minority parties but were bolstered by the excessive Russian military presence (157). More so than Prague, the atmosphere in Budapest exuded a fear of Russians. That the party could show appreciation of the local context was evident in a complimentary and rather positive review of the seminar session that had previously been published in *New Hungary*, a leading communist weekly in Hungary. The piece, dated 20 September 1947, begrudgingly admitted the humanitarian and scholarly values of the American endeavor, principally since it shied away from American ideology, was enthusiastically received, and widely circulated in the post-seminar evaluations and reports ("Salzburg," pp. 31-32). It looked like the next year might bring more Eastern Europeans, but only for a short while. Even here Matthiessen comes off as well-meaning, engaged, and perceptive but constrained by his outsider status. The Hungarian story, too, has its installment as Joe, his Hungarian guide, was forced into exile to the States in a short while.

The final reduction in perspective shown in the narrator's loss of authority that serves as an ironic interlude to the reception of the text is quite the opposite of the ebullient opening of the travelogue, where Matthiessen saw his return to Europe as a way to displace himself and so allow for a clearer image of himself as an American (3). The vision that emerged in sharper perspective is that of American civilization, which towers over the drab and tattered European scene, providing an American scholar with an appropriate stage for his own critical and humanistic performance. If only by coming to Europe Matthiessen was able to "think about" what "it means to be an American today" (3), then it follows that *From the Heart of Europe* is a necessary appendix, a coda for the diptych whose first section is *American Renaissance*. Fantasmati-

¹¹ For more on the Czechoslovak situation at the time, cf. Myant.

cally, the Matthiessen of the first, classical study comes into his own only by acting out the role that he first envisioned as an American Renaissance scholar now mounting the truly international scene. *From the Heart of Europe* thus provided a point of emergence for the exemplary American scholar in the twentieth century, a role begun by Matthiessen and followed up by a long list of his successors both in Salzburg and other American Studies programs. The ultimately auspicious conjunction marked for the next several decades (until 1989) both the limits and the possibilities of doing American Studies. Matthiessen's Central and Eastern European episode thus proved germinal and sustaining for American Studies overall.

Certainly, this is a more optimistic reading. The less cheery would be that, for Matthiessen at least, this book marked the end point of his journey as a critic and a scholar who held "responsibilities" for the world he lived in, after which he could only plunge into nothingness (193). However, his individual tragic fate was, paradoxically, an indication of the viability and appeal of his model of doing American Studies scholarship for decades to come: like Moses, he led his followers to the boundary of the promised land that he was forbidden to enter himself. Such a reading that posits a truly generative potential of his critical performance is sustained, among others, by the example of the second generation of American Studies scholars, Matthiessen's disciples who carried on the torch. The concluding pall of despair descending on Matthiessen's vision could easily be depoliticized and ascribed to his personal plight, or it could be displaced by a collective act of disavowal by the American Studies community until a fairly recent rediscovery of *From the Heart of Europe* floated in on a revisionist surf.

Transnational American Studies Before Its Time

In the second part of my essay, I will propose several assumptions concerning C. L. R. James's text *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, which, like Matthiessen's, was written at a time (1953) when intellectual pursuit was tethered to a single-minded political purpose, but with a slightly different spin. It is this decentering move that makes James's ruminations (ostensibly on Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*, but more viscerally on his own situation at the time) an apt, occasionally indirectly subversive commentary on Matthiessen's thoughts and observations. Additionally, I would like to argue that James's ironic footnoting of Matthiessen (in a general sense of the attitude that his text projects), becomes possible because James was already off-center, in ways that Matthiessen could not be—James was imagining a space for himself, and in extension for his version of American Studies, that was refracted through his position as a non-native, alien (in the sense of lacking citizenship), black, and engaged leftist intellectual. The Melville envisaged by Matthiessen in *American Renaissance* already showed the split from the image of the writer in Matthiessen's Salzburg and Central European lectures which then further intensified in James's study of him, for reasons that I will try to point out further on. At this point I will simply state that this floating vision of Melville as presented by the two scholars stands for an alterna-

tive vision of America and American Studies that did not take root at the time and is only recently being restored.¹²

Let me add that placing James in the context of an American Studies debate is by no means an endorsed critical method; rather, it is more of an exception. Indeed, most studies of the critic so far rightly place him within the context of the international left around the World War; alternatively, he is considered in the context of anticolonial struggles and postcolonial issues in the latter half of the twentieth century.¹³ It was only fairly recently that Donald Pease made a cogent claim for situating James, and this text in particular, as an important link in the emergence of “a transnational America(s) study” (2002: 153). Yet, as the editors of his unfinished manuscript now available as a book, *American Civilization*, point out, even if James was an emigrant in Europe (England) from his native Trinidad for a number of years before coming to the United States, it was his experience there that profoundly shaped the thought and political philosophy that he would espouse in his writings. James’s intense observation of American society and its ways, indeed his impulse to call it “civilization,” testified to an intense intellectual stimulation that he got from the American scene (Grimshaw and Hart 13, 14). It is with these facts in mind that a more comprehensive view of James’s contribution to American Studies becomes possible, such that is only beginning to be articulated (cf. Jelly-Shapiro).

Locations marking the birthing pains of American Studies are indeed surprising, if we consider not only the waystations of Matthiessen’s Central European voyage in 1947, but also as we turn our attention to the scene of emergence of James’s legendary appraisal of Melville—the book was mostly written during 1952 at the Ellis Island detention center where James, interned for months, awaited hearing in his deportation case.¹⁴ During that time, Pease suggests, James effectively existed in “the state of

¹² Since my interest is primarily in considering an aspect of James’s participating in and generating a version of American Studies (even if only hypothetically), in this section I am indebted to several of Pease’s recent textual engagements with James’s newly recovered legacy for American Studies; cf. Pease 2001; Pease 2002. Another important source for this aspect of James’s work is the critical edition of his *American Civilization*, an unpublished and incomplete manuscript prepared for publication in 1993 by Anna Grimshaw and Keith Hart.

¹³ Exemplary in this respect is Grant Farred’s study devoting a chapter to James and placing him squarely in the Caribbean, pan-African, and anti- and post-colonial contexts. As such, Farred attests to “James’s proclivities for the margins of the political left” and further alludes to his work “at a remove and an odd angle from dominant left political thinking” boosting his “prescient and deft ... reading of anticolonial resistance” (100).

¹⁴ At this point it is worth reconstructing in brief James’s movements at the time. In 1938 he arrived in the States from England on a visitor’s visa with the purpose of lecturing throughout the country. This brief visit, however, extended to the next ten years. As Grimshaw and Hart point out, “Never having acquired a resident immigrant visa, James was served with a deportation order by the . . . INS in 1948. After two years of legal hearings before the INS, the order for his deportation was upheld” (15). Further information on James’s legal status can be gleaned from Pease’s informative introduction to *Mariners*, where Pease claims that James did pass citizenship eligibility requirements and was waiting for the government’s decision in

exception” and, as an “illegal alien,” was disabled from giving testimony on his own behalf (2001: xxv). He did, however, have the right to an attorney. Given the mythic role of Ellis Island as a port of entry for millions of transatlantic emigrants, it is with irony that we note James’s predicament as a “subversive” intellectual targeted by McCarthy’s red-baiting on the strength of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952.

Much like Matthiessen’s idiosyncratic, urgent, and irrepressibly “private” intellectual testament, James’s work is also occluded in the archive of the discipline. According to Donald Pease, even in 2000 it was the case that James’s study was at best marginal in the Melville canon, if referenced at all (2002: 1). Pease quotes further a scholar who faults James’s approach to Melville’s classic *Moby-Dick* as “his vivid re-imagination of it [the novel]” rather than a straightforward critical engagement (Cain, qtd. in Pease 2002: 2). The paradigmatic import accorded to *Moby-Dick* is another shared feature by the two authors thus reiterating Matthiessen’s inaugural gesture of establishing a national literary canon. Still, it is also the case that both our authors then make the novel signify their pressing private and public concerns at the time as they turn it into a potent cipher in the long line of its interpreters. Being established as one of the key texts in the national canon, *Moby-Dick* presents an interpretative challenge for each new generation of critics, which is compelled, in Pease’s words, “to designate . . . the terms in which a text *must be read* in order to maintain cultural power” (1985: 113). In retrospect, James’s study of *Moby-Dick* “announced his intellectual independence,” in the words of his literary executor (Hill 321).

However, there is additionally a political ground from which James’s book was considered unorthodox, in particular for international leftist critics, as Pease makes clear in his informative introduction to the recent critical edition of the Melville study. The problem for most left-leaning critics occurs in chapter VII of the text—James’s extraordinary but justified breach of academic decorum—where he fractures the critical illusion of objectivity and aloofness, and dramatically reaches out to the reader in order to appeal his own case. His autobiographical story completely overshadows—but strangely enough, also bolsters—the critical claims he has put forth previously about Melville’s novel, its crew, mission and particularly its captain, Ahab. In the final part of his study—that even before was recalcitrant to the mores of disinterested critical discourse—the divide between the public and the private breaks down as James protests his placement “in the cell reserved for Communist detainees” (Pease 2001: xx; James 126).¹⁵ Arguably, he does this for several reasons, the practical one being that, should he be classified as a communist (which he was not), this would further reduce his chances of obtaining a hearing, let alone citizenship. A more com-

his case when, at the height of the Red Scare, the McCarran-Walter Act was passed. Pease further argues that, retroactively applied to James, the provisions of this act made James’s position in the hearings untenable. In the last stage of his case, James was arrested in 1952 and detained for four months before being deported in 1953.

¹⁵ All subsequent references to the text of *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways* will be provided parenthetically in the text.

plicated reason, however, is James's own displeasure with the false designation placing him in the same camp with the then dominant Stalinist vein of communism, to which James was vigorously opposed (Pease 2002: xx, viii; James 154). I insist on these hair-splitting distinctions because they preordained every aspect of the production, circulation, and reception of both texts at the time, not to mention the fates of their respective authors (fatally for Matthiessen, less so for James). James's political disaffiliation from extant categories rendered him not only subversive for the U.S. government, but also unassimilable even for the later leftist criticism which silently passed over his denunciation of communism in chapter VII (or boycotted the book in its entirety). Given the book's liminal status until fairly recently, however, we see that James's position at the time did not quite authorize him, as it did Matthiessen (in Arac's apt term [Arac]), to create a "scene of cultural persuasion" that would set up a new context in which to understand the novel within a new geopolitical setting (Pease 1985: 113).

Some readers objected to James's personalized and slanted reading as he suggestively connected the two layers: the actual scene on the deck of the whaler *Pequod* and his agonistic stance to both "the national security state" (Pease 2002) and the absolutist logic of communism. Based on Melville's characters, James draws an incisive psychological portrait of a revolutionary communist, who in his zeal to precipitate an upheaval exhibits single-mindedness, devotion, and obsession even while initially masking his real object akin to Ahab's fatal and irrevocable resolve (and his initial dissimulation) (132). The most dismissive argument pointed at James's narrow political scope in his unequivocal denunciation of communist totalitarianism, since by articulating it and then circulating the book among the members of Congress, he evidently tried to bolster his case (Jelly-Shapiro 54), even as it conveniently disregarded the early textual evidence underlying James's logic. In the early chapters, James laid the ground for his argument that industrial civilization (fueled by capitalism and then simply taken over by socialist state bureaucracies) bred the totalitarian type, like Ahab, willing to submit both nature and his fellow men to his single-minded and destructive purpose (45).

The scene of writing for James predetermines the kind of displaced, autobiographical and political reading that he is to create in *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*. As he was contemplating this book, he "was arrested by the United States government and sent to Ellis Island to be deported" (125), so that his tenuous civic status becomes the tenor of the book, which, according to critics, rightly causes him to shift his attention from the usual suspects, either the sailor Ishmael or the captain Ahab, to the crew itself: "It seems now as if destiny had taken a hand to give me a unique opportunity to test my ideas of this great American writer" (126). The complex identifications that Matthiessen managed to keep at bay (only to have them articulated in his non-critical, occasional writing) become for James a generative principle of his reading of Melville ready to erupt at the end of his text. Life breaks into the book as "my experience" becomes James's way—the only possible under the circumstances—to interpret Melville's vision for the nation in the present time (125). Earlier, I provided a cogent explanation for the centrality of *Moby-Dick* in the American canon, a

process long in the making since, as Pease contends, it took precisely the conditions ushered in by WW II and then the Cold War to establish the novel as a diagnostic text (2001: xxix). Consequently, the Ellis Island detention center is the Pequod; the detainees, including James, are the ship's crew: "The Island, like Melville's Pequod, is a miniature of all the nations of the world and all the sections of society"; "a thousand men, sailors, 'isolatoes,' renegades and castaways from all parts of the world" (3, 126). The context of the text's production provides "the most realistic commentary" on Melville and his vision (125).

That James would begin with Melville, and *Moby-Dick* at that, goes without saying, since it was a choice that lent itself to him as he researched American popular culture, which Melville was very much a part of (3). This is certainly not all the result of a "shock of recognition" between the long dead author and contemporary Americans, but the outcome of several happy coincidences. One of them was the Melville revival going on for some time among the critics, who used him in order to bolster the case of American literature as a subject in its own right; it was this critical campaign that would feed, among others, Matthiessen's canon construction. Secondly, this belated recognition suggested that Melville was in advance of his time and that it took twentieth-century consciousness to rescue his texts from oblivion as a document relevant for the contemporary moment. James's engagement thus reflects the last stage of Melville's rising critical fortunes (124).

Had he remained with the insight inspiring his praise of Melville and his immense curiosity about the American civilization (160), this would still be a valuable but just one in a long line of high appraisals of Melville and *Moby-Dick*. But notwithstanding the previous political enframing of the study, or the deep and poignant personal inspiration causing James to virtually identify with Melville's mariners, the book still offered a peculiar Jamesian perspective that was hard to pin down to categories, political or otherwise. More than that, however, James made an urgent critical choice of disassociating the novel from the Cold War narrative to which it had been made to comply (Pease 2002: 137), and instead reoriented the text towards a hemispheric, if not even, in current parlance, transnational context on one hand and on the other "a juridical appeal" on his and the detainees' behalf (Pease 2002: 138).

James's reading of the novel interweaves different time planes, the past refracted through Melville's vision, the present of James's detention, and the global present coalesced into the competition of the two super-powers occasionally inching towards the threat of nuclear annihilation. For James at the time, it took no great leap of imagination to see the unravelling of *Moby-Dick's* plot as an uncanny comment on the then current global situation (115). Ahab, the unlikely Quaker and captain of the whaler Pequod, bound to sea presumably in pursuit of the lucrative sperm oil, in fact harbors a different purpose—that of hunting down and killing his arch adversary, who had once maimed and almost killed him—the legendary white whale by the name of Moby Dick. (On Melville's sources for *Moby-Dick*, cf. Philbrick.) James aligns with most extant readings that assign to Ahab a preternatural will, a tyrannical sway over the crew that exceeds simply his prerogatives as a captain but has to do with

his Manichean disposition. Where he departs from them, however, is that he places the characters squarely in the present, so that Ahab becomes a “totalitarian type” (9), a worshipper of fire, which signals technology, progress, and mastery over arts and sciences (10). Ahab, along the lines of Hitler and Stalin, then uses science and politics in order to keep his absolute control over the ship and his crew (15). Furthermore, as “a dictatorial personality” (15) he evinces his loathing of the men under his command, citing their sordidness and their being “manufactured men” (16). This is an insightful and straightforward denunciation of a character who had usually been vindicated by the critics for his inveterate individualism, his mythic qualities, and the nobility of his purpose (so unlike the paltry or profit-minded interests of the crew and the owners of the ship).

Ishmael's character undergoes the similar twist of interpretation. According to James, Ishmael, one of the crew members and technically a narrator of the story, “wavers constantly between totalitarianism and the crew” (40). The blankness which envelops Ahab is reciprocated by the spleen that haunts Ishmael, who therefore follows Ahab together with the rest of the crew, i.e., as if spellbound or against their rational will. James is especially concerned with showing how a totalitarian mind exerts its influence even on seemingly critical and restrained people, as is Ishmael at the beginning. A disaffected young man, sensitive and melancholic (an intellectual type, one might add), he befriended the harpooner Queequeg, but once on the ship together with the rest, he succumbs to Ahab's monomania (43). James further insists that Ishmael's breakdown, the surrender of his will to that of Ahab's mad and destructive purpose, happens in one of the so-called industrial sections of the novel, the try-works chapter that presents the process of extracting the precious sperm oil from the sperm whale's blubber, thus turning the ship into a veritable factory (for a historical context of whaling, cf. Philbrick 1-27; cf. ch. 96 of *Moby-Dick*). This is an interesting extension of Melville's vision that James takes to new heights. It is here that James locates what he deemed “the question . . . at the heart of the civilization process itself—the relationship between individual freedom and social life” (Grimshaw and Hart 14). Oftentimes this question was posed as the issue of labor in an industrial and mechanized context, as was the case with the whaling industry in the early nineteenth century. The relentless logic of the extraction of labor sucks in not only the ship's crew, but also the reluctant Ishmael, who succumbs to “the industrial tyranny of American capitalism” (Grimshaw and Hart 12). According to Hill, “Fearful or fanatical, the intellectual becomes in James's perspective a necessary partner of the totalitarian bureaucracies of the twentieth-century” (363). Such a reading clearly took the novel away from its earlier myth-and-symbol concerns into the direction of pressing contemporary issues that Melville had presciently articulated. It also for the first time signaled Ishmael as a negative center of gravity, alongside Ahab, a reading that would become possible only in the revisionist stage of the criticism of the novel (and as such articulated anew by Pease in his 1985 contribution).

Midway into his argument about Melville's novel, James further opens his cards by posing as key questions the following: why didn't the men revolt? Why were the

officers on the ship unable to stand up to Ahab? Why does the first mate Starbuck, even at the turning point in the plot, pass up a chance to kill Ahab? The crew is immobilized and incapable of acting at the diegetic level, but what Melville certainly wanted to set it into relief is evidenced by an upheaval that happened at the meta-diegetic level, as a story-within-the-story (principally the Town-Ho mutiny, which exists only as a framed story in ch. 54 of *Moby-Dick*). It is at this point, where he is still ostensibly reading Melville but is already casting about for ways to interpose his present-day concerns, that James articulates Melville's principal theme: "how the society of free individualism would give birth to totalitarianism and be unable to defend itself against it" (54). James had ample evidence around him suggesting that one of the springs of totalitarianism lay in the phenomenal rise of a new industrial civilization, the mechanical age, and the event of the global war.

It is from this moment on that the splitting, a key structural impulse of James's reading, occurs, as Pease contends, and continues to inform the text to its end (2002: 157). The splitting was also Matthiessen's strategic way of negotiating the impossible contrarities that a Cold War field imaginary of American Studies had precluded for the time being and that simultaneously subordinated all his critical efforts. Matthiessen, however, for the most part managed to keep the process of splitting away from and outside his critical texts; this comes to the fore in his autobiographical and marginal *From the Heart of Europe*. James, however, places the splitting demanded for his own inclusion in the American polity, and his work into the Cold War American Studies field imaginary, at the center of his work. If we follow the aforementioned analogy proposed by James—that Ellis Island is the Pequod, and the detainees (including James) are the crew (126)—than we should observe why the detainees don't mutiny against their oppressive conditions. The most obvious reading would indicate that, since it is the state that detains the subversives (the "mariners, renegades and castaways" from James's title), it then proceeds that the American state apparatus exercises the Ahabian totalitarian will. At this point we should go back to James's early and trenchant denunciation of the McCarran Immigration Bill of 1952, which, retroactively applied in his case, trampled on his rights and, moreover, according to James, smacked of "racial superiority" (13). This would seem a logical and disturbing application of Melville's vision to early Cold War America, where James had enough evidence to illustrate the intimidating and excessive actions by the F.B.I. and the Department of Immigration.

However, the story in the internment center goes on. It seems that there are some people there looking for ways to fight the detainment, namely, the communists. The way James treats them is inextricably linked to his previously laid out scene of reading the novel. The terms he uses to describe the communist detainees are indicative: "Communists were men of purpose" (127); they were an Ahab-like force (*ibid.*). There is especially an anonymous communist detainee that engrosses James's attention and, by his strong and interfering personality, becomes a fixture on the island. James is therefore observing him and gathering evidence of his Ahabism (132). It seems that for James the novel seeps into life, not only by referencing his own situa-

tion but by offering a cast of characters in a drama involving the entire world as shown by the international cast of the detainees (151). The insider knowledge (James reiterated that he “knew all about” communists [126]) is not only based on the analogies from *Moby-Dick* but is corroborated by James’s years of activism and campaigning on the left, both in Britain and the United States. His literary metaphor is extended in the afterword added in the 1978 edition that roundly condemns the excesses of world communism coming to light especially after the open denunciation of Stalin in 1956 and the revelation of the Gulag camp system (172-73). His critique of both the Ahabism of the “national security state” and of the equally menacing Ahabism of its ideological opponent (communism/ Stalinism) made C. L. R. James a *persona non grata* in the United States soon afterwards, while it for decades prevented and precluded his unequivocal inclusion into the critical archive of American Studies. That some of the most recent revisionary moves have rescued the text from neglect and offered a new take on the well-known past testifies to the vitality and resilience of the disciplinary practice.

Conclusion

If “the arena for cultural discussion provided by the Cold War,” as Pease suggests, was “crucial” for the self-recognition of American Studies (1985: 113), then it also proceeds that it rather predetermined and curtailed the parameters of discussion thus causing some of the most striking participants—such as F.O. Matthiessen and C.L.R. James—to find themselves barred from or sidelined in the exchange. It is with each retrieval of the “scene of cultural persuasion” in which a literary and a critical text equally participate that we as critics and scholars should endeavor to make legible and visible the current and past logic of “cultural persuasion” that permeates and enlivens the discipline.

I would like to recapitulate this dazzling (or vertiginous, as the case may be) journey of American Studies into its past by evoking Thomas Kuhn’s influential model of the change of scientific paradigms, in which he postulates a dynamics of change—this does not happen by accretion, Kuhn asserts, but rather by a full displacement of the previous model by a more recent and apposite one (1-9). While this indeed holds true for the hard sciences, it is inadequate, as I hope my discussion has shown, to account for the vicissitudes of humanistic inquiry, which for better or worse always folds back on itself, committed to endlessly converting its own past into history and retrieving the seemingly lost or forgotten pieces only to make them reappear again. This episode from the early Cold War moment of American Studies, all the more pregnant since it marked the birth and institutionalization of the critical practice, is no exception to this endless drive.

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CAPITAL IN CONTEXTS

Marx's Meontology

I

Marx understood what he was doing as conjuring and participating in the emergence of a new historical event.¹ In that event, philosophy itself would have to change. This is already evident in the famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, in which he negates *theoria* as the classical and traditional *proprium* of philosophy: "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" ("Theses on Feuerbach" / 3, 7).² Speculation prompted by wonderment concerning first principles and causes, the contemplative observation of the whole of being and of the world, tasks that have always been the essence of philosophical thought, now has to "realize" or "abolish" itself and become an outright activity of transforming the world, which, being a real activity, has its concrete historical and social subject: "Philosophy cannot realize itself without the transcendence (*Aufhebung*) of the proletariat, and the proletariat cannot transcend itself without the realization (*Verwirklichung*) of philosophy" ("A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" / 1, 291).³ The realization of philosophy is to be understood as a revolution, while the naming of the proletariat as the agent of this new historical event permits us to intuit its full dimensions: for Marx, the proletariat is "the positive possibility . . . of emancipation" ("A Contribution" / 1, 390), of a "radical revolution" as a limitless "all human emancipation" ("A Contribution" / 1, 388). Taking as the departure point for his critique of capitalism the empirical evidence of the difficult social, economic, and political position of the working people in the countries of the

¹ Substantial portions of this essay were previously published in Croatian as "Karl Marx," in: Ozren Žunec, *pripr., Suvremena filozofija I. Hrestomatija filozofije*, sv. 7. Ur. Damir Barbarić. Zagreb, Školska knjiga, 1996, 263-92.

² In parenthesis I will give the internet source of my quotations in English. In many instances, however, the English translation does not relay the full weight of Marx's original formulation so that I not only refer the reader to the original but will quote from the original when I think it is necessary. Throughout the text, the numbers after the slash give the number of the volume and the page number from the German original as found in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke und Briefe (MEW)*, 39 volumes, 2 additional volumes and 1 volume of indices, Berlin, Dietz, 1956ss. The additional volumes (numbered separately) are cited as Ergbd. (*Ergänzungsband*) 1 and 2.

³ The English translation of the word *Aufhebung* does not preserve all the connotations of the German original, which has several seemingly contradictory meanings, including "to lift up," "to abolish," "to cancel or suspend," and "to sublimate." The term has also been translated as "abolish," "preserve," and "transcend." Hegel used the word to explain what happens when a thesis and its antithesis interact. This sense of the term is customarily translated as "sublate."

West during the heyday of capitalism in the first part of the nineteenth century, and believing that the basis of this position is the existence of capitalist private ownership of the means of production, which alienates work and the worker in a fourfold manner (the alienation of the worker from the products of his work, from work as his own activity, from the worker himself, and from other workers, that is, people in their interpersonal relations), Marx hypostatizes the sociological facts of the poverty and the lack of rights of the proletariat and turns them into an all-encompassing anthropological, essential, and utterly decisive world historical truth. The new historical event in which the proletariat has to radically emancipate itself from capitalism is no mere political and social event but rather the active overturning of a system of a world that finds itself in “times of decadence (*Verfallzeit*)” (G, 106/ G, 26)⁴: “By heralding the *dissolution of the hereto existing world order*, the proletariat merely proclaims the *secret of its own existence*, for it is the factual dissolution of that world order” (“A Contribution”/ 1, 391).

The aim of the proletarian revolution transcends every political frame; it is not partial, not merely a political revolution because the proletariat is not a political or a social entity—it is a “class of bourgeois society that is not a class of bourgeois society” (“A Contribution”/ 1, 390) because its situation is no longer specific and based on class but an all human situation. We are not here dealing with political emancipation (just as the proletariat itself is not a political entity) but rather the emancipation of man is in reality an emancipation *from* the political because the political in itself is something restricted and finite: “The limits of political emancipation are evident at once from the fact that the state can free itself from a restriction without man being *really* free from this restriction, that the state can be a *free state* without man being a *free man*” (“On the Jewish Question”/ 1, 353). A detailed description of the political and thus of the restricted nature of political emancipation shows that “political emancipation is the reduction of man, on the one hand to a member of civil society, an independent and *egoistic* individual, and on the other hand, to a *citizen*, to a moral person” (“On the Jewish Question”/ 1, 370). Contrary to this, Marx demands unlimited emancipation, which, being without limits, cannot be political: “The only liberation of Germany which is *practically* possible is liberation from the point of view of *that* theory which declares man to be the supreme being (*Wesen*) for man” (“A Contribution”/ 1, 391) because “every emancipation is a *restoration* of the human world and of human relationships to *man himself*” (“On the Jewish Question”/ 1, 370). Thusly, the political disappears in the face of the existence of a “human world” and of man “reduced” to “man himself” as the “supreme being.” Man himself as an absolute, as the first principle and the first cause of his existence, will also, in his unbounded

⁴ English text of *Grundrisse*: Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, New York, Penguin, 1973. All subsequent quotations from *Grundrisse* will use the capital letter G. Numbers before the slash give the page number of the English edition, and numbers after the slash give the page number of the German edition: Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*. First edition. Moscow, 1939–1940; later editions Berlin and Frankfurt am Main, 1953ss.

self-emancipation, in his becoming a “free man,” who in his liberation annihilates the political as the traditional environs of freedom, has to demolish all the institutions of his life up to that point: in addition to private property, as Marx writes in the fourth thesis on Feuerbach, “the earthly family . . . must be destroyed in theory and in practice (3, 6); “all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations,” even “personal worth” (4, 465) disappear and are destroyed as we read in *The Communist Manifesto*. Emancipation means the annihilation of individuality and of the self and signifies the end of every identity, that is, the identity of both the individual and of the nation (“the working men have no country”; *The Communist Manifesto*/ 4, 479). Man self-created through emancipation is a “species-being” and total man who “produces man—himself and the other man” (“Private Property and Communism”/ Ergbd. 1, 537). This emancipation and “total man” cannot be understood by way of traditional conceptualization and thinking. Furthermore, “total man” comes into being and is only through revolution and emancipation, which presuppose the disappearance and the demolition of the entire up-to-that-point “order of the world”; Marx names this final turn of emancipation “communism” which, since it is conceived as the realization of “total man,” is simultaneously also “fully developed humanism” (“Private Property and Communism”/ Ergbd. 1, 536).

Since the task of philosophy and of the proletariat, according to the aforementioned dialectic of “realization-negation,” amount to the same thing, that is, to the enormous project of the radical effective transformation of the world, it is clear that Marx’s teaching can retain neither the content nor the form of philosophy in the classical and traditional meaning of speculative-theoretical theory. However, Marx retains from philosophy both generality and comprehensiveness just as the proletariat is not only a class within society but the general human condition.

II

In full accord with the blueprint for transforming the world, Marx’s fundamental methodological position for exploring and thinking the world and history rests on principles that are also contrary to classical philosophy. Aristotle saw philosophy as “a science that investigates the first principles and causes” (*Metaphysica*, 982b8s⁵) and as a desire for knowledge for the sake of knowledge and not for gain, therefore as “the only free science” (b27), which is thusly, according to the time of its inception, according to its object, and according to the fundamental thrust of its desire, posterior to and beyond all accruing of “the necessities of life and the things that make comfort and recreation” (b23–24). Hegel, probably the last scion of classic philosophizing, taking as his point of departure the idea that “to comprehend *what is* is the task of philosophy, because *what is* is reason” (*Elements of the Philosophy of*

⁵ Within parentheses, I employ the customary system for quoting from classic works of philosophy. For the English translation, see *The Works of Aristotle*, translated into English under the editorship of W. D. Ross, vol. VIII, *Metaphysica*, Oxford, 1972.

Right, Preface, 21⁶) and that “what is rational is actual; that which is actual is rational” (20), held the object of philosophy to be the realization of the spirit in the real world. For Hegel, the state was “the *rational* in and for itself” (§ 258, 275) and “the spirit *which is present in the world*” (§ 270, 291); in this manner, it is precisely the spirit that is the presupposition, the beginning, the first element, and the source of reality: “The State is the divine will as present spirit *unfolding* as the actual shape and *organization of a world*” (§ 270, 292). In other words, traditionally, philosophy was not interested in thinking about what was immediately present, such as life’s necessities or the politics of a particular state. Philosophy’s interest was a theoretical, primarily contemplative search for more primordial principles than immediate causes, principles that determine the form of the present condition of the world.

Marx took the opposite path:

We must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that man must be in a position to live in order to be able to “make history”. But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history . . . (*The German Ideology* / 3, 28)

This position does not exhaust itself in its interest for a “precondition” as such, that is, that the “production of material life” is deemed the necessary condition for making history, and that it, except being a precondition, has no other meaning or sense. Marx’s teaching could not have achieved its world-historical relevance and weight if it had restricted itself to the rethinking of the “life” and “material” conditions and “presuppositions” of the spirit. This restriction would annul the intended universality of Marx’s doctrine; therefore, by expanding the reach of “the conditions” to what is recognized as conditioned by the condition itself, it will place “material production” as a general principle.

While economy would be the limited observation and exploration of “the condition” and “presupposition” itself, Marx will assign to his teaching, in which the “economic,” “the production of material life,” shows itself as the unconditional that conditions everything else, different names: “a single science, the science of history” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 18) or the “critique of political (national) economy” and “historical materialism” (“the materialistic view of history”). In the framework of this “science of history,” everything that is, including all forms of the spirit, will be deduced from production:

⁶ Ibid. For the English translation, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, edited by Allen W. Wood, translated by H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge, 1991.

This conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the material production of life itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production (i.e. civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history; and to show it in its action as State, to explain all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc., etc. and trace their origins and growth from that basis . . . (*The German Ideology* / 3, 37–38)

“The critique of the economy” is therefore not merely a new economic doctrine that seeks to replace old ones—as a matter of fact, Marx will directly take over many “classic” economic theories such as, for example, Adam Smith’s conception of capital as accumulated labour—but rather its first task is a critique of the narrow-mindedness of economics and its expansion into a “science of history,” to a science of everything that exists. It proceeds to do so by viewing everything that is as being and becoming in the “real process of the production of immediate life.” In this sense, the “critique of the economy” becomes a new “ontology” whose first statement consists in the determination of the manner of man’s being and his nature: “the existence of men is their actual life-process (*das Sein der Menschen ist ihr wirklicher Lebensprozess*)” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 26). Everything that might bear the appearance of independence disappears and dissolves in this “ontological” substratum of the “production of life” as Being. This is contained in Marx’s famous pronouncement on “the base” and “the superstructure”:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. (“Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*” / (13, 8–9)

Marx was not concerned here with a kind of average sociologism or with establishing cause-effect relations between large spheres of human activity which, truth be told, lose some aspects of their autonomy but not their inner ensemble and their definiteness and delimitation. Rather, he was concerned with abolishing the political as such and all “forms of consciousness,” as can be seen in the aforementioned project of the emancipatory demand for the “realization of philosophy” and the “abolition of the proletariat.” Just as freedom for Marx means a liberation from politics, it also means

a liberation from the economy in the narrow sense of the word, from that which prevents “the critique of the economy” from becoming universal and a “positive science.” The project of emancipation stems from the “ontological” examination of the “social Being,” conceived as the sum of the relations of production and of production itself. Both of these elements make up the unique nature of Marx’s teaching.

III

In deciding whether some teaching is a philosophy or not, one can apply the criterion of whether that philosophizing asks the basic and common question: “*ti tò ón*—what is being (or what does being mean)?” Nowhere does Marx ask this question, traditionally subsumed under the rubric of “ontology,” nor does he give an answer. However, although, as it relates to philosophy, Marx’s teaching is destructive and through its destructive thrust finds its grandiose philosophical mission, his doctrine builds and derives many of its insights from traditional philosophical concepts, ideas, and categories. Marx’s relationship to philosophy is the same as his relationship to economics—in Marx’s thought, the two are in any case the same, so that he will say that “Hegel’s standpoint is that of modern political economy” (“Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy in General”/ Ergbd. 1, 574). In both cases, Marx gives us a “critique” which in reality is both a critique of economics and of philosophy, a critique that wants to retain the insights of extant economics and philosophy and abolish their narrow-mindedness and, first of all, their “theoretical nature.” Within the framework of this “critique,” Marx develops his insight into what “is” and offers a relatively integral, although unsystematic “meontology” (*mè ón*, “not-being”).

According to both his own self-assessment and those of his commentators, with his doctrine Marx introduced a decisive “ontological” and “anthropological” novelty: sensuousness is here viewed as praxis, praxis as sensuousness and both conjoin as “sensuous human activity.” Marx’s own understanding of the historico-philosophical suppositions of the central place of praxis and its identity with sense rests, as we read in the first thesis on Feuerbach, on the one hand, on “hitherto existing materialism” wherein “the thing (*der Gegenstand*), reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in “the form of the object or of contemplation but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively (*die Wirklichkeit; Sinnlichkeit nur unter der Form des [Object] oder der Anschauung gefasst wird, nicht aber als sinnlich menschliche Tätigkeit, Praxis; nicht subjektiv*)” (*MEW* 3, 5). The second source for the identity of praxis is “idealism,” which, as we also read in the first thesis on Feuerbach, “developed” “the active side” but of course not “real, sensuous activity as such” (*ibid.*). “Idealistically” comprehended activity, as “the will” that “consists in cancelling (*aufzuheben*) the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity” (Hegel, *Elements*, § 28, 57) or “dialectic” as the “development of the Idea as the activity of its own rationality” (§ 31, 60), ended up in *representations* (*Vor-stellung*, that which is brought before). Marx now wants a “materialistically” conceived activity which objectifies itself in the object (*Gegen-stand*, that which stands opposite to something): “human activity” is “activity concerned with

things" (*MEW* 3, 5; English translation altered). Here, praxis is not one of the ways the human stands before or relates to reality, as was the case with Aristotle's "threefold" of the theoretical, the practical, and the poetical life; here, praxis is reality. Furthermore, praxis is reality not only as the sum of the empirically existing, sensuousness understood in "the form of object or of contemplation" but is simultaneously also the reality of thought. Encompassing, therefore, both the "perceptively objective" and "thought," praxis is the sum of everything that exists. Praxis as activity, movement, and happening is not that something which is mere being ("ontic") but is its coming into being, its becoming, its happening, and its movement: what has come into being through praxis, the object (*Gegen-stand*), is being in the proper sense. It seems that praxis assumes the traditional place of "the Being of being." Here is the second thesis on Feuerbach: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question" (*ibid.*) or, put differently, the manner in which being is and how it shows itself to be true is praxis as "sensuous human activity." The exclusion of theory does not merely argue for the "primacy of praxis" as the highest and best mode of human life and habitus but stems from the "ontological" decision concerning what being as such "is." Furthermore, praxis is not the manner of man's standing before and relating to reality but is reality itself, its coming into being, and its movement and the identity of that becoming and movement.

The concept of praxis was introduced and elaborated after Marx's early works were published and "discovered" in the 1930s. It became a habit to see in these works a philosophical, "humanistic," and revolutionary phase of Marx's thought with powerful utopian elements. His later works, devoted to "economic" analyses of the economy and the society of capitalism were held to be, if not "dogmatic," then at least "objective" and "scientific" studies. The way the two phases interconnected remained unclear. It was even argued that a sharp "epistemological break" (Louis Althusser) divided the two phases and what they focused upon. However, Marx's "critique of the economy" as a unique "critical" assemblage of philosophy and economics shows a unity already by the fact that it provides exceptionally influential teaching on praxis, as an emancipatory desideratum. Praxis is a constituent part of the insights of the "scientific" studies of capitalism.

Through praxis, individual beings present themselves as objects; this includes man. For Marx, to be an "objective being" means "to have an object outside oneself" and "to be an object for a third being"; the objectness of being most decisively determines its ontological status because "its Being (*Sein*) is objective," whereas "a non-objective being is a not-being (*Unwesen*)" ("Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in General"/ *Ergbd.* 1, 578). Objectness is therefore that determination which expresses the manner in which everything that is as such is; that mode is in its essence relational because objectness presupposes that the being exists only in an interrelated relational multitude and as an interrelated relational multitude. A non-objective being, a being outside the interrelatedness in the multitude, would be absolute, absolved of everything and separate, identical to itself and therefore not determined by any difference and essentially an unindividuated being: "For as soon as there are objects outside me,

as soon as I am not *alone*, I am *another*—*another reality* than the object outside me” (ibid.). Thus, being presupposes two conditions: that it is part of the many and that it is reciprocally interrelated—in an “object” relation—with other parts of the many.

The objectness of being signifies that being does not exist for itself but that it relates to others, which yields to us the system of the “objective multitude”; however, this system is not only a mere arrangement and placing of beings. Marx writes, “The sun is the *object* of the plant—an indispensable object to it, confirming its life—just as the plant is an object of the sun, being an *expression* of the life-awakening power of the sun, of the sun’s *objective essential power*” (ibid.). Beings are in relations in such a way that they work on one another in a sensuous manner as “objects of sense” and “sensuous objects” in which process they both suffer and act: “Man as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a *suffering* being—and because he feels that he suffers, a *passionate* being. Passion is the essential power of man energetically bent on its object” (Ergbd. 1, 579). Objective being externalizes itself as the power of being so that the interrelation of the many represents a network of acting and suffering one’s own and other beings’ power; however, beings are not only thought and observed within these relations but they achieve their survival, their reality, their “life” precisely through the externalization and the activity of the power of their being. Marx illustrates this relationship using hunger as his example: “*Hunger* is a natural *need*; it therefore needs a *nature* outside itself, an *object* outside itself, in order to satisfy itself, to be stilled. Hunger is an acknowledged need of my body for an *object* existing outside it, indispensable to its integration and to the expression of its essential being” (“Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy in General”/ Ergbd. 1, 578).

The system of the relation between all beings, that is the arrangement of everything that is or, put otherwise, “the world” establishes itself as a system of needs: everything that is, every being, is in such a manner that it externalizes itself by its power as object and sense and thusly integrates into itself this other being and in such a manner survives, endures, and exists. To be sensually and as an object means to externalize oneself in another being out of need and to make that other being one’s own integrated life, to satisfy one’s life need by negating other beings and making them one’s own suffering object. The system of needs is the externalization of being through power and appropriation, and the “world,” a system of relations of all beings and their needs to be, is a system of constant and incessant movement of becoming and passing away or destruction, a system of reciprocal appropriation, expenditure, and object-sensuous destruction.

Objectness and sensuousness are universal and continuous; not only are they inclusive of all beings, including inorganic and organic nature as well as man himself, but the “world,” as a system of the movement of becoming and destruction, is in this movement eternal and without limits. Man, however, differs from other beings because of the mode of his objectness and sensuousness, which includes an object relation to itself, and it is because of this that the man is a “species-being (*Gattungswesen*)” (“Estranged Labour”/ Ergbd. 1, 517) and a “free being” (Ergbd. 1, 515). This means that man integrates himself into his life and thusly spends and negates; man is there-

fore a being who is in such a way that he negates himself, a being who self-creates, who maintains and confirms himself through negation.

“Freedom” here does not mean unboundedness to, separatedness or independence from the other but object-freedom. For Marx, freedom means that man “owes his existence to himself” (“Private Property and Communism”/ Ergbd. 1, 544); that “free objectness” is “labour, *life activity, productive life*,” that is, “free activity” (“Estranged Labour”/ Ergbd. 1, 516). Therefore, “it is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life” (Ergbd. 1, 517). “Estranged Labour” is not a free activity. In such labour, activity takes place only as a means for the satisfaction of physical existence, while in free activity and production, “man proves himself as a conscious species-being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as his own essential being, or that treats itself as a species-being” (Ergbd. 1, 516–517). In other words, the object of human production is not the product towards which it is essentially indifferent but production for the sake of production. Human production does not produce a product for the satisfaction of this or that need but for the highest need: that man relates to himself as to his species, therefore productive being. The purpose of this production is the production and the satisfaction of its needs (the needs of production itself).

IV

These observations are characteristic of the young, “philosophizing” and “humanistic” Marx. In the later, “economistic” works, especially in *Capital*, Marx does not start with the determination of the essence of man but with an analysis of the product, that is, the commodity, and with production, but reaches similar conclusions concerning production as the subject of the process of becoming.

Marx commences by saying that, within the circle of consumption and production, production is merely “the inner moment of productive activity”: in true human production, in production for the sake of production, consumption, or the satisfaction of some specific need, is only a derived or unessential moment, while production is the “predominant moment” (G, 94/ G, 15) from which “the process always returns . . . to begin anew” (G, 99/ G, 20). The objects of this production for its own sake are commodities; they serve to satisfy human needs and have “use value and usefulness” (C I, 126 / 23, 49)⁷ wherein “value” signifies the possibility of them being transformed from a thing into various processes of human life. In production for the sake of production the satisfaction of human needs is not primary; that is why the commodity, as the product of human production, alongside its secondary use-value also has an “exchange-value” which is a “quantitative relation” (C I, 126 / 23, 50). The division of society commands that the products of concrete useful labour, which

⁷ In subsequent quotations from Marx’s *Capital*, the sign C I will be used for references from the first volume, and the signature C III for references from the third volume. The numbers after the slash give the volume and page number in *MEW*.

produces objects with a use value, be exchanged; this exchange of commodities is characterized “precisely by its abstraction from their use-values” (C I, 127 / 23, 51-52). The commodity can be used in one or several ways, but it can be exchanged in countless ways. This is why its use value is annulled in exchange. Exchange-value is the expression of the nullity of forms and characteristics of the object in production for the sake of production. Use-value is the expression of the possibility of transforming objects from one form to another. For example, we have the transformation of light and warmth into the growth of a plant. On the contrary, exchange-value is the expression of the general fluidity of an object which does not change its form because it is already assumed to be null. The totality of production for the sake of production, in which objects appear as commodities, encompasses what is moving, in transformation, in transition (usage), and what is in principle without form (exchange).

For the commodity to be exchanged, its fluid identity has to be “reduced to a common element, of which they represent a greater or a lesser quantity” but “this common element cannot be a geometrical, physical, chemical or other natural property of commodities” (C I, 127 / 23, 51). The commodity is produced by some concrete labour; by abstracting from use-value and form one abstracts from the concreteness of labour so that “also the different concrete forms of these labours disappear” and labour is “altogether reduced to equal human labour, human labour in the abstract” becoming a “ghostlike material” (C I, 128 / 23, 52) The expression “abstract human labour” signifies true human production, the production of a “species-being” that abstracts from physical or any other concrete need and thusly from the determinate nature of the product. What is common to all labour, its abstraction, is pure “quantity,” “duration,” “the labour time which is necessary on the average” (C I, 129 / 23, 53). The measure of value is the measure of the time of labour, thusly the measure of flow in general. Therefore, production, by way of the measure of the time of labour that gives value to the commodity, is the “measure” of itself.

In such a manner, the world of labour and of the commodity is in principle without form. Its “substance” is levelled out “human labour-power in its fluid state” (C I, 142 / 23, 65) because “labour itself is the living, form-giving fire: it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, as their formation by living time” (G, 361/ G, 266). Negating and reducing all labour which is still somewhat differentiated by the social division of labour to a sameness, the society that is familiar with the commodity, “our capitalist society” (C I, 134/ 23, 58), appears as a kind of “ghostlike object.” Enabled by the levelling out of all labour, this society transforms everything into everything else. It finds its final achievement and expression in the classical insight of “historical materialism” concerning the annulment of the self-independence of all spheres of society and the “measure”-giving of production for the sake of production. A society that knows the commodity and that 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 “ghostlike object,” a “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.

Marx's thought which sees flux and permanent movement in praxis, objectness (*Gegenständlichkeit*) in labour and in the commodity, ought not to be understood as a "philosophy of the economy," as an investigation of what is being in the aspects and the spheres of the economy. The essential argument of this thought is that everything that exists, even man himself, comes into being, "is," and becomes only through production as the "predominant," as the supra-power; all beings survive through praxis and objectness, all come into being through labour, and all are commodities. No distinct human activity or limited happening or sphere is posited by production but rather a general, basic, and all-permeating "ontological event." The society that comes into being and as a whole functions according to the mode of production of "civil (bourgeois) society" is the foundation of the entire history of the world: "This conception of history," Marx remarks in *The German Ideology*, "historical materialism," ". . . depends on our ability to comprehend . . . civil society . . . as the basis (*Grundlage*) of all history" (3, 37).

V

In production, in labour, and in the commodity, one sees the equality of everything in constant motion and the disappearance of all forms. One sees not only "being" (objects, the commodity) but also all-transforming Being (praxis, production) as motion and Nothing; "differences" in all that is, are here understood exclusively through quantity and the measure of the motion itself. The dissolution of the makeup of society as an ensemble of differences ensues from this, the reduction of the differences of labour and of all men to abstract workers whose mode of being, that is, what they are, is determined by the measurement of linear and empty time. The commodity, like "useful labour," in its "use-value" had a temporary form which is the substratum of change itself and which has always constantly been negated but is not pure change itself. However, in the social process, there is a commodity which is only change: money. Time—undifferentiated, average, abstract—set forth in sequences of countable and measureable "nows," is the general equivalent but in exchange has to appear as a commodity. Money, therefore, is "time in commodity form." Money has no "use-value," nor does it have a form; rather, money is the "common value-form which contrasts in the most striking manner with the motley natural forms of their use-values" (C I, 139/ 23, 62). Since it expresses in a pure manner the essential formlessness of commodities, money is the "*nexus rerum*" (C I, 228/ 23, 145), the "*real spirit* of all things" ("The Power of Money"/ Ergbd. 1, 564), the "*object* of eminent possession" (1, 563), the "spirit of commodities (*Warensseele*)" (C I, 177/ 23, 97), and "the universal commodity (*absolute Ware*)" (C I, 235/ 23, 152) and signifies the erasure of every temporary form of the commodity and of labour: "Since money does not reveal what has been transformed into it, everything, commodity or not, is convertible into money," and its "circulation becomes the great social retort into which everything is thrown" (C I, 229/ 23, 145). Money negates every form and therefore represents the "general distortion of *individualities*"; money, which "confounds and

confuses all things,” is “the general confounding and confusing of all things—the world upside-down—the confounding and confusing of all natural and human qualities” (“The Power of Money”/ Ergbd. 1, 566) that has “*divine power (die göttliche Kraft)*” (“The Power of Money”/ Ergbd. 1, 565) to undo all forms. Marx calls that power, in analogy with production, which is essentially the production of negation and demolition, a “*truly creative power*” (ibid.).

Just as the levelled-out time of a series of equivalent “nows” can only be infinitely extended into the past and the future, so is money by its nature infinite. This derives from its main characteristic by which it annuls and disintegrates everything, “confounds and confuses all things,” being “the general *confounding and confusing* of all things.” The urge to endlessly hoard money does not have a basis in some psychological, biological, or anthropological desire to be rich but in the fact that, “qualitatively or formally considered, money is independent of all limits,” and yet “every actual sum of money is limited in amount”; therefore, “the contradiction between the quantitative limitation and the qualitative lack of limitation of money keeps driving the hoarder back to his Sisyphean task: accumulation” (C I, 230-31/ 23, 147). The hoarding of money is always a quantitative imposing of restrictions because, by taking money out of circulation, it “necessarily crystallizes out of the process of exchange (*Geldkristal*)” (C I, 181/ 23, 101). To overcome this limitation, it has to “melt” and commence with the production of itself.

Social exchange and the circulation of values take place in two ways. In the first, “simple form,” the commodity is exchanged for money and then money for the commodity; “ontologically,” Marx describes this as “commodity-form, stripping off of this form, and return to it” (C I, 207/ 23, 126). Here the flow, the movement, the change, the “meltability” of the commodity and money is bounded on both ends by beings (things) which still in a certain sense exist (commodities). This state of things corresponds to the classic ontological postulate according to which “everything that changes is something and is changed by something and into something” (Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1069b35). There is another form of circulation according to the formula “money–commodity–money”; the difference between the “initial” and “terminal” money is quantitative and represents an “increment,” a “surplus-value” (C I, 251/ 23, 165). The whole transformation is money becoming capital. Capital is a self-valorizing value that, “while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, . . . changes its own magnitude” (C I, 255/ 23, 169). According to its intention, the self-valorizing movement of capital is in its intention the *constant continuity* of the process, the unobstructed and fluid transition of value from one form into the other” (G, 535/ G, 433). Since the beginning and the end of this process are identical, namely money, “this very fact makes the movement an endless one” (C I, 252/ 23, 166), and since the circulation of money as capital is “an end in itself,” then “the valorization of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The movement of capital is limitless (*maßlos*)” (C I, 253/ 23, 167). Capital opens a vista on a process whose infinity consists not in the enormous number or the numberless host of beings or forms that it encompasses, sets moving, or produces, but in the

infinity, boundlessness, and measurelessness that exists in the lack of any boundary or measure of the process of movement itself, which, as movement, infinitely augments itself. The process of capital is not merely one of the processes of the world but the world process itself, so that Marx sees all historical happenings as, literally speaking, “acquisitions” of capital: “This progression, this progress belongs to and is exploited by capital” because “capital has subjugated historical progress to the service of wealth” so that “historical development, political development, art, science” (G, 589-90/ G, 484) are all acquisitions of the movement of capital, which is itself the “general intellect” (G, 706/ G, 594).

As time unfolds, praxis, objectness, production, the commodity, and money negate forms and beings, and capital will annul both space and time as the most general measures of everything that is and, as such, the very foundations of order. The circulation of capital “proceeds in space and time” (G, 533/ G, 432), but capital as the measureless self-augmenting movement seeks to annul and destroy them. For capital, space is nonexistent; thus capital seeks to be cosmopolitan, that is, to bestride the one and unique, infinite world market, which arises with the erasure of all spatial markers, whether they be national, geographical or climatic. As Marx succinctly put it in *The Communist Manifesto*, “In place of the local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations”/ 4, 466). Space that comes into being through boundary demarcations and points which determine a place and through interrelations is annulled and reduced to the sameness of all space because “it is in the world market that money first functions to its full extent as the commodity whose natural form is also the direct social form of realization of human labour in the abstract” (C I, 240-1/ 23, 156). However, this tendency has its other side: “Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another” (G, 539/ G, 438).

Synchronicity is therefore identical with annulled space. The destruction of space represents the absolute acceleration of the circulation of capital. The process of the annihilation of space grows with the historical development of capital: “The more developed the capital . . . the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space” (G, 539/ G, 438).

After the annihilation of space, the circulation of capital occurs exclusively in time. The time of circulation is the time capital needs to valorize and self-augment. If the speed of this process is accelerated, the starting point and the result of the circulation conjoin more and more into a “flowing unity; if the speed is slowed down, the starting point and the result diverge and grow independent—a space opens up between these points— and “the change of form” and “the change of things” fall into “stagnation” (C I, 216/ 23, 134), which is “pure loss” (G, 535/ G, 433). Stagnation, the temporary coming into being of things puts a stop to valorization and is the „time of devaluation” (G, 538/ G, 437). Capital seeks to “artificially abbreviate” (G, 543/ G, 441) the time of stagnation and the time of circulation with the purpose of fulfilling

its nature, to augment itself as a process. Since its goal is boundless and measureless augmentation, it will seek the “absolute velocity of circulation” (G, 544/ G, 442) and the annihilation of time. As Marx writes,

Thus if circulation caused no delay at all, if its velocity were absolute and its duration = 0, i.e. if it were accomplished in no time, then this would only be the same as if *capital* had been able to begin its production process anew directly it was finished; i.e. circulation would not have existed as a limiting barrier for production, and the repetition of the production process in a given period of time would be dependent on, identical with, the duration of the production process. (G, 545/ G, 443)

The annihilation of space and time as the most general forms and measures is the end point of disintegration and negation. In that final achievement of production, Marx gives us a sketch of completed modern nihilism. This new historical event occurs as capital, as the boundless and limitless becoming of becoming itself, the augmentation of augmentation, the movement of movement. “The total realization of capital” (G, 544/ G, 442) signifies the total disintegration of the world as an assemblage of everything that is, of forms, of space and time, of being, and of becoming. Production and work are inverted into their opposite: being is transformed into a flow and a becoming, Being into Nothing. In production where capital is the “subject,” the identification of Being with Not-being takes place, labour “posits itself objectively, but it posits this, its objectivity, as its own not-being or as the being of its not-being—of capital” (G, 454/ G, 358). From a historico-philosophical perspective, Marx’s analyses show a teaching that is most radically opposed to the whole tradition of philosophy and ontology. Since time immemorial, philosophy has been determined by the fact that its point of view and its interest passes from what is becoming to what is, from becoming to Being, from the relative to the absolute; Plato designated the “true philosophy” as one “that would draw the soul away from the world of becoming to the world of being” (*Respublica* 521D3-4⁸). Marx’s teaching is opposed to this, his point of view and its queries are focused on becoming, on movement, on the relative as such. If the classical postulate of philosophy held that the “process of formation takes its lead from the being, and is for the sake of that; the being does not take its lead from process” (Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 778b6-7⁹), in the new historical event and according to Marx’s teaching, capital inverts this traditional relation into its opposite by putting the origin and the end into the movement of its own becoming, which is again movement, so that being is for the sake of becoming and succumbs to it.

⁸ Within parentheses, I employ the customary system for quoting from classic works of philosophy. For the English translation, see *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Princeton, 2005.

⁹ Ibid. For the English translation, see Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, with an English translation by A. L. Peck, Cambridge, Massachusetts—London, 1963.

VI

Everything that Marx wants and strives for is a future society and society as the future. Marx did not come to this project of “radical revolution, *all human emancipation*” (“A Contribution”/ 1, 388) and to the achievement of what he calls “communism” or “the realm of freedom” (C III, 959/ 25, 828) on this path by freely construing utopias but by way of “scientific socialism” (as Engels formulated it). In a letter to Arnold Ruge dated September 1843, the young Marx wrote, “we do not dogmatically anticipate the world” and announced that the fundamental thrust of his program “wants to find the new world through criticism of the old one” and “develops new principles for the world out of the world’s own principles” (“Letters from the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher”/ 1, 344–45); within that framework; “the critique of the economy” shows that “the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism” (“Preface to the Critique of Political Economy”/ 13, 9). Communism is therefore historically necessary and scientifically founded.

That the result of the “critique of economy” is a project for a future society has its foundation in the fact that Marx thought of society as the entirety of production. In his contribution to *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* dated April 7, 1849, Marx stated, “*The relations of production in their totality constitute what is called the social relations, society*” (6, 408). As is already visible in the essential loss of form of the product in the commodity that exists only in its protean social exchange and amidst the loss of determination of specific labour, production is not something to do with the individual, nor is its product singular. Production is an activity of the whole society which is then conceived as a “social power, i.e. the multiplied productive force” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 34) or as a “social power” (C I, 230/ 23, 146). Social relations and relations in production, as we read in the *Zeitung* article, are “conditions” in which producers “work together” and share the “total act of production” (6, 407). These conditions are malleable to historical change and “are altered, transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, of the forces of production” (6, 408). “What is society?”, asks Marx in an 1846 letter to Pawel Wassiljewitch Annenkow, and answers, “If you assume given stages of development in production, commerce or consumption, you will have a corresponding form of social constitution, a corresponding organisation, whether of the family, of the estates or of the classes—in a word, a corresponding civil society” (27, 453). Roughly divided, as Marx wrote in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on April 7, 1849, these societies are “ancient society, feudal society, bourgeois (or capitalist) society” (6, 408), or, put otherwise, “the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production” (“Preface to the Critique of Political Economy”/ 13, 9), “bourgeois” being here synonymous with capitalism.

As a late historical event, bourgeois society is “the most developed and the most complex historical organization of production” (G, 105/ G, 25). Capital presupposes the constant process of limitless change that negates all forms so that bourgeois society is perceived as “the universal uncurbed movement of the elementary forces of life freed

from the fetters of privilege” (*The Holy Family*/ 2, 123). For the sake of production, capitalism has destroyed all “closed forms” and has created the singular quantified continuity of homogeneous space of the “world market”; all “local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency” “have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed” (*The Communist Manifesto* 4, 466), which gives man “a world-historical rather than a locally based actual empirical existence” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 34; English translation altered). Capitalist production is characterized by the dilution of every restraint and determination. In this production, everything appears as an abstraction: “Indifference towards specific labours corresponds to a form of society in which individuals can with ease transform from one labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence of indifference” (G, 104/ G, 25). Therefore, bourgeois society is not a possible stable social order but primarily social change; in its metamorphosis from form into flux, it most closely approximates the endless movement of capital because its “social organization evolves directly out of production and commerce” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 36).

Speaking truthfully, in reality, communism is merely the further development of bourgeois society and its principles, in other words, of production, beyond its not-yet-transcended boundaries. Thusly, although capitalism “transcends the State and the nation, “on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality, and inwardly must organize itself as a State” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 36). Capital differs from all earlier “modes of production” because of its “universal significance” in that

it strives towards the universal development of the forces of production, and thus becomes the presupposition of a new mode of production, which is founded not on the development of the forces of production for the purpose of reproducing or at most expanding a given condition, but where the free, unobstructed, progressive and universal development of the forces of production is itself the presupposition of society and hence of its reproduction; where advance beyond the point of departure is the only presupposition. (G, 540/ G, 438)

Nevertheless, capital, unobstructed and unbounded production, and the destruction of all forms in their real dissolution is “by its very nature limited”; the “universalizing tendency” is limited, “since capital is a limited form of production, contradicts it, and hence drives it toward dissolution” (*ibid.*). Communism annuls the contradiction between the “universalizing tendency” and capital.

Since capital in capitalism still allows certain forms and society as a form, communism will be “the overthrow[ing] of the existing state of society” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 34) or the abolition of the form of society as such because communism “is not the goal of human development—the form of human society” (“Private Property and Communism”/ *Ergbd.* 1, 546); it “is not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an ideal to which reality (will) have to adjust itself” but a “*real* movement (*wirkliche* Bewegung)” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 35).

As pure movement, communism neither has a plan nor a leading idea (form): “The theoretical conclusions of the communists are in no way based on ideas or principles,” but they “merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes” (*The Communist Manifesto* / 4, 475). The communist revolution is not “the partial, the *merely* political revolution which leaves the pillars of the house standing” (“A Contribution” / 1, 388), but a “radical revolution” and “emancipation from . . . real limitations.” Alongside institutions that subsist in bourgeois society such as the family, the nation, and the state, communism will abolish private property and the division of labour: “*Positive transcendence of private property as human self-estrangement*” (“Private Property and Communism” / Ergbd. 1, 536) does not mean that property passes into the hands of the state because the state, as a social form, will not persist; “private property” is such a determination of production in which it is administered by “private man” who presupposes a political community so that production under private ownership is thereby curtailed. Since communism is the “*real appropriation of the human essence*” (ibid.), and that essence is praxis and production, the abolition of private property is therefore the liberation of production for its own sake, movement which is not limited by individual wills or by the political community; it is the setting free of production for self-management and for the self-administering of production itself, which, with the abolition of private property becomes its own “owner.” The division of labour must also be abolished because that division creates concrete, useful labour which produces use values, distinguishes between spiritual and manual labour, structures the family and enables the constitution and makeup of society and of the state; everything that was based on the division of labour, namely the totality of social forms and the social order, has to disappear in communism, whose main goal is the “annihilation of strangeness (*Vernichtung der Fremdheit*)” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 35). What exists, the being independent of pure praxis, has to dissolve: “In communist society . . . society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow . . .” (*The German Ideology* / 3, 33). This annuls and makes worthless not only society as an ensemble of specificities, the state, and the family but the “singular individual” as well, who can exist only as a moment of the total “general production” as the activity of the total “society” which is activity itself. That communist social activity is no longer some kind of being; it “strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming (*absolute Bewegung des Werdens*)” (G, 488/ G, 387).

Having nothing outside of themselves, communism or “total man” is the identity of “objectification and self-affirmation.” He is activity itself, boundless, measureless, unconstrained production for production’s sake. His absolute freedom is a necessity because he is the identity of “freedom and necessity”; as absolute free movement, he is absolutely necessary, and that is why “total man” is the identity of “existence and essence,” and his absolute essence incorporates existence. “Total man” no longer stands on the position of the “being in the past (*vergangenes Sein*)” (“Private Property and Communism” / Ergbd. 1, 536) and that is why, this being a position different from the

entire tradition of ontology, i.e. the negating Nothing, communism does stand for the real and complete “negation of philosophy” (“A Contribution”/ 1, 384). Within that horizon of thought, Marx’s work, espousing from beginning to the end the idea of the “realization of philosophy,” is a “meontology” and an absolute nihilism foreign to and in opposition to the whole philosophical tradition.

VII

Thusly, in Marx’s conception, communism turns out to be the continuing development of capitalism as it existed in the West during the nineteenth century. It signifies the freeing of capitalist production from all restrictions, in the first place from political restrictions such as the existence of local communities (nation and state) and their customs and legal norms. It is a freeing from the physical frameworks of the process of production (time and space) and, finally, from ontological restrictions, so that being itself is annulled and becoming understood as continuous coming into being and limitless movement takes its place. The “overcoming” of capitalism in socialism as a pre-form of communism did not succeed because the newly-established order established the absolute authority of politics over the economy, not to mention other methods of containment and control. Principles which originally were meant to be crucial in freeing capitalism from constraints, such as the abolition of private property, established the domination of the political over the economic rather than freeing the latter from political influence. In general, it can be said that, to the extent that communism as a classless, stateless, moneyless, etc. society was realized, at the same time, it signified a return of the political and its dictatorship over production and over the economy. It retained at the same time the primacy of being over becoming. Communism as it is thought in Marx’s conception and the real, world-historical communism that was installed in the countries of the “socialist world” were not identical or comparable but wholly opposite phenomena.

The entirety of Marx’s thought is turned to the new historical event, to capitalism and its future, so that his “communism” can be said to be the future of capitalism. But what is described in Marx’s conception of “communism”? The answer is simple, easy to see, almost banal: what is described is capitalism as it developed during the more than one hundred years after Marx formulated the theory of “historical materialism,” one of whose main methodological presuppositions was to derive the principles of the future from the principles of the present. “Communism” is the description of present-day capitalism. We can say that Marx’s conception of “communism” goes hand in hand with some of the most penetrating insights into the contemporary moment, such as (to mention one example in closing) the diagnosis of “liquid modernity” in the work of Zygmunt Bauman.

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Contours of Capital in the Novel¹

The recent economic crisis has reinforced the need for studying the economic realm across disciplinary divides. In this context, a poignant question for literary scholars has re-emerged with new urgency—the question of how literary texts may be said to contribute to a general understanding of the economic realm. Needless to say, before the recent crisis it was not uncommon in contemporary literary criticism to attribute special insightfulness to the literary (especially novelistic) imagination in matters related to our knowledge of the world. And while such assumptions may run into problems of legitimation (why a particular text deserves to be treated as representative or as possessing privileged insight against the vast multitudes of other texts), they cannot be avoided: if literature did not resonate with a cognitive potential in its relationship with our societies and our histories, it would be practically unintelligible. Of course, scholars do not readily agree on how a literary text performs cognitive work. For the sake of brevity, I will assume (rather than explain in detail), along the lines of the theory of the novel proposed more than half a century ago by Ian Watt, that *the novel*, a literary genre whose emergence and development coincides with the advent of epistemological and social modernity, features a cognitive function because of its inherent historicity.

What form novelistic cognition takes is a question that we can only cautiously address, and this necessarily varies depending on period and location.² It is great that we hear now, in the course of what many see as a great perturbation of the current economic order, from economists such as Thomas Piketty that much can be learned about economic issues from certain kinds of literature, and that literature provides a form of discourse about society that should complement the scholarly analysis of the social sciences and the humanities. It is not my ambition in this essay to tackle such propositions systematically, with an eye to a well-crafted argument. The tentative objects of

¹ The essay is a result of research conducted within the project “A Cultural History of Capitalism: Britain, America, Croatia,” funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ-1543).

² And here one should register another question: what social significance can novelistic insight have? Stipe Grgas comments on this question in his recent book on American studies (*Američki studiji danas: identitet, kapital, specijalnost*). While Grgas suggests in the book that novels by Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo present valuable insights into the operations of capitalism in American society, he also believes that these novels have (and are aware of having) only “tangential relevance” (324; translation mine) in the society in which they are written. We could add that there is a difference in the immediate social impact of a Dickens novel in the 1850s and a Pynchon novel in the contemporary period, but the ambition of novels to contribute to the understanding of the economic realm is important in its own right. One of the accomplishments of Grgas’s book (and his recent work in general) is that it has reaffirmed the need for studying the place of the economic in literary texts.

analysis here—capital on the one hand and the novel on the other—are intertwined in histories that are far too complex to delineate briefly. For one thing, it is not feasible to briefly address the many complex questions associated with the concept of capital and the historical rise of capitalist economy. What is capital, when does capitalist economy begin, what are the chief developments in its onset (in the case of England, for instance, economists and historians have often focused on the rise of agrarian capitalism in the early modern period; various innovations in the financial sector at the turn of the eighteenth century; the industrial revolution gaining momentum in the second half of the eighteenth century; the importance of imperial configurations; shifts in the broader, global context of economic relations in the early modern period, etc.), and how to periodize the history of capitalist economy—these are some of the central questions about capitalism that cannot be extensively handled here. Likewise, the many influential analyses of historical capitalism have furnished issues of perspective, terminology, and definition that can be said to have far-reaching analytical consequences (and often practical ones): for instance, Fernand Braudel’s differentiation between market economy and capitalism provides a very different historical and philosophical perspective than the Marxist analytical focus on the capital/labor relation. The very recent times have in turn foregrounded the issues of capital as money and capital as rent-seeking in an increasingly globalized economy, and many commentators see these developments as an occasion for a shift in analytical perspectives and paradigms. Rather than engaging these vastly important issues, I will limit my analysis to the assumption that novels do interact with historical capitalism, that is, with the various concrete, specific versions of capitalist economy. The conditions in which the novel “rose” in England, to use Ian Watt’s term, coincide historically with massive change in European civilization, in which the rise of capitalist economy was only one of several factors, albeit a very important one. This is indeed how Watt framed his analysis of the “rise of the novel”: speaking of individualism that he associated with the advent of modern society (and novelistic narrative), he did not offer a monocausal reading of modernity, but rather evoked a multiplicity of simultaneous historical processes, calling special attention (not unlike Max Weber) to economic individualism and the Protestant Reformation, but also to the philosophical reorientation towards individualism brought about by René Descartes and John Locke; and in that context, he did not see the rise of the novel simply as a result of such processes, but as one of the “parallel manifestations” (31) of the onset of the modern period.³ Also, I shall assume that the rise of the English capitalist economy, albeit a historically pioneering form of capitalism in many respects (agriculture, finance, industry), has to be approached as the emergence of a historically contingent and specific form of capitalism, whose peculiar formation was the result of many complex dynamics, local as well as global.⁴ Upon this perspective, the novel will

³ See Ian Watt. *The Rise of the Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957. Watt writes of the rise of the novel in England; of course, the question of the rise of the novel in Europe requires a much broader perspective, but one which must be equally considerate of the plurality of historical processes.

⁴ Instead of assuming some logic of determinism that gave birth to *capitalism in England* as it emerged into modernity, I think it more productive to address the issue in the context of the specificities of historical

be understood here as a conceptual problem that requires constant re-historicizing of the kind that pays due attention to the manifold processes that affected the rise and buoying up of this historically new genre.

All this means that only brief and fragmentary glimpses into this complicated relationship between the novel and the economic realm can be attempted here. But the overarching idea is relatively simple: yes, Piketty is right when claiming that much is to be learned from novels about capitalist economy. It is important, therefore, to remember at this point that there must be other sides to this issue, which would suggest either that novels have little to say as cognitive devices, or, more importantly, that a true knowledge of capital(ism) is the cognitive privilege of a particular kind of analysis (such privilege is often claimed by Marxism and neoclassical economics, albeit in very different ways); it will have to suffice here to observe that such monopolization of knowledge is problematic for a number of reasons, and that it requires a separate analysis, in which the very issue of what it means to claim knowledge of the economic would be featured centrally. The present article will concern itself with a much more limited agenda: first, I will emphasize that novels (taken here as emblematic literary products of modernity) are always inherently engaged in dialoguing with historical realities. Secondly, I will seek to disentangle, in a cursory reading of narratives by two nineteenth century novelists, Jane Austen and Elizabeth Gaskell, the contours of complex ways in which their novels engage the economic and historical domain. In doing so, I will especially pay attention to the procedures of referentiality and re-cognition. Austen's novels are sometimes understood, as in a recent reading by Mary Poovey, as being deliberately elliptical in their relationship with historical reality; on the other hand, Gaskell's industrial novels are equally commonly read as examples of strategically intense referentiality. In reading such texts side by side this article will not seek to reconstruct a central historical narrative connecting the two time periods (much as that is a possible topic in its own right), nor will it seek to establish a firm generic connection between such ostensibly dissimilar novels as *Mansfield Park* and *North and South* (which is also possible). The point, rather, is to examine the employment of the theme of re-cognition as a particular device of social knowledge proposed by both novels.

Piketty and literature

Speaking of periodic economic crises, one of which erupted in 2007, David Harvey writes, "So why does capitalism periodically generate such crises? To answer this we need a far better understanding of how capitalism works than we currently possess" (38). Explaining periodic shifts that plunge national and international economic or-

situations, in the manner of Fernand Braudel (much as some of those specificities may appear structural upon the long run perspective). For instance, he interpreted England's economic power in the 18th century, before the industrial revolution, as the "result of a series of happy chances which placed England, without her always realizing it, on the road towards modern solutions" (375). It is the basic predicament of historiography to think contingency and particularity along with systemic trends.

ders into recessions and depressions has long been a theoretical problem for writers on economic history, including Marxists such as Harvey. In Harvey's rendition, as in the Marxist tradition of economic discourse in general, this particular question is underwritten by the assumption that the knowledge of how capitalism works is an elusive but ultimate form of social knowledge, with the implicit or explicit claim that Marxist thought is the only way to achieving the right kind of understanding of the operations of capitalism. And yet Harvey also suggests that the current state of our knowledge of capitalism is insufficient, which in turn leaves some doubt, regardless of Harvey's declarative adoption of the Marxist theoretical narrative, about his confidence in the ability of all and any accounts of capitalism so far to provide a sufficient understanding of it. The question of "understanding" capitalism has intensified recently, precisely in the wake of the crisis that erupted in 2007; the amount of different accounts of the crisis is quite overwhelming in its own right, and hopefully the crisis will have given a new impetus to the historical investigation of capitalism. However, we should remember that today the business of explaining capitalism takes place within a specific (global) academic marketplace of ideas, which produces the imperative of instant response to the present situation and the imperative of a distinctive claim to prediction about its resolution, the future of capitalism and of the present global civilization in general. To appreciate the scope and distinctiveness of this current topical fervor in the academic marketplace, we should go back to the 1980s and 1990s, when scholarly dealing with the economic coordinates of social life was not as widely felt to be a particularly acute need in the academic world. In that kind of retrospection, the current production of crisis clarification discourse may sometimes appear to be a rash academic fashion forming dramatically in the wake of social upheaval, in counter-distinction to the perspective of the kinds of analytical approach framed by the notion of *longue durée*.

A tremendous critical archive has emerged on the subjects of debt, financialization, and capitalism in general in recent years, sometimes as a call for a return to earlier discourses on similar subjects (notably Marxism), but more importantly, as an effort that seeks to refocus general academic debates across a range of disciplines around issues that are economic in character (such as globalization, contemporary capitalism, etc.). There is a great deal of variety in scholarly talk about capitalism today; perhaps a dominant intellectual perception of the recent crisis is one that insists on its severity and unmanageability (and sometimes, especially in reinvigorated Marxist discourse, on its finality); this perception is certainly fed by the actual economic context itself, but it cannot be fully understood outside the context of the current marketplace of ideas which sometimes favors instantaneous academic positioning on current affairs. In this regard, the title of Piketty's book may appear overly ambitious in its bid to address "capital in the twenty-first century" (he expresses in the book some reservations about its title⁵). Nevertheless, there is certainly much methodological appeal in

⁵ Acknowledging his "total inability to predict what form capital will take in 2063 or 2113," he adds that "the history of income and wealth is always deeply political, chaotic, and unpredictable. How this history plays out depends on how societies view inequalities and what kinds of policies and institutions they adopt

Piketty's work, and it lies in the very premise that capitalism should be studied from a longer perspective, and that its present forms can be known, and known better, and in a more comprehensive way than mainstream economics sees it. Piketty's analyses of long-term trends in wealth distribution raise greatly important theoretical and practical questions. However, I will primarily deal in this article with his proposition that literature offers an understanding of the economic that is as intellectually relevant as some other types of discourse.

A scholar trained primarily in economics, Piketty is quick to point to insufficiencies of mainstream disciplinary economics, especially in "its childish passion for mathematics and for purely theoretical and often highly ideological speculation" (32). He maintains that his main focus of study, which is the question of the distribution of wealth, cannot be analyzed or explained solely in economic terms, since the very forms of inequality in the distribution of wealth are generated in the political sphere. Advising against "economic determinism in regard to inequalities of wealth and income," Piketty writes that "[t]he history of the distribution of wealth has always been deeply political, and it cannot be reduced to purely economic mechanisms" (20). For such reasons, "[i]f we are to progress in our understanding of the historical dynamics of the wealth distribution and the structure of social classes, we must obviously take a pragmatic approach and avail ourselves of the methods of historians, sociologists, and political scientists as well as economists" (33). Economics "should never have sought to separate itself from the other social sciences" (32).

In addition to this call for cross-disciplinarity, Piketty claims that much can be learned from a discourse not usually presented as a form of knowledge, and that is literature. Novels by Austen or Balzac contain important insight about inequalities of wealth distribution in their time periods and social contexts: "Film and literature, nineteenth-century novels especially, are full of detailed information about the relative wealth and living standards of different social groups, and especially about the deep structure of inequality, the way it is justified, and its impact on individual lives." While he does not speak in much detail about the representational logic of narrative texts in their depiction of social reality, the implication of his views on literature as a source of economic knowledge is twofold. On the one hand, nineteenth-century novels possessed an exploratory aspect, as they "grasped the hidden contours of wealth" (2), which proposition really means that the novels provided a heuristic perspective on economic issues, but it also raises the awkward question of explaining why and from what perspective the contours of wealth should appear hidden in the first place. On the other hand, Piketty seems to suggest that novelistic representation of the repercussions of wealth distribution on the lived experience of individual people may be said

to measure and transform them. No one can foresee how these things will change in the decades to come." While stressing the importance of the study of the past "to help us to see a little more clearly what kinds of choices we will face in the coming century," he also suggests that the book "logically speaking should have been entitled 'Capital at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century'" (35).

to be particularly vivid and persuasive.⁶ To literary scholars this may be nothing new: many practitioners of literary criticism (excluding various formalist approaches) routinely assume that literature is a valuable resource of information on social realities; take for instance the special place that literary texts have had in postcolonial studies. Piketty's claim contains a highly important proposition, one that is sometimes forgotten in exclusive and solitary preoccupation with internal disciplinary matters: different academic discourses (such as economics, history, sociology, political science, philosophy) deal with the common human experience, the knowledge of the totality of which clearly cannot be a matter of disciplinary specialization. In his view, it is the mutual dialogue of many disciplines that brings us closer to a better understanding of social and economic realities, with literature ascribed an important part in piecing together the big picture.⁷

The novel as historical thought

Certainly, not all literature offers insights into the kinds of questions that interest Piketty (such as distribution of wealth). Nor does literature that is more economically minded offer the same kinds of insight. Nor do critics necessarily agree on what kind of insight a literary text may offer. Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* may serve as an illustration here. In the novel, as in other Austen novels, there is very little representation of the productive processes in society, and of the economic processes as such; rather, the focus is on the domestic life of the gentry. Of course, the wealth of the gentry had an economic basis, but this economic realm is seldom directly represented in Austen novels, partly because these narratives are focalized through female protagonists from the ranks of the gentry, whose domestic lives are kept apart from the conventionally male spheres of work and money. On the other hand, the mechanisms of social hierarchy and the functioning of social capital (status), especially on the borders between adjacent social ranks, is the kind of social topic these texts sought to dramatize intensely. Yet, *Mansfield Park* also features an interesting element of self-reflexivity about its own social optics: Fanny Price oversteps the conventionalities of gender by asking Sir Thomas Bertram about the slave trade, the kind of conversation his daughters do

⁶ He writes that nineteenth-century novelists (such as Austen, Balzac and others) "depicted the effects of inequality with a verisimilitude and evocative power that no statistical or theoretical analysis can match" (2).

⁷ Also, Piketty stresses that matters such as distribution of wealth are necessarily always subject to political differences. "Indeed," he writes, "the distribution of wealth is too important an issue to be left to economists, sociologists, historians, and philosophers. It is of interest to everyone, and that is a good thing ... Democracy will never be supplanted by a republic of experts— and that is a very good thing." But it is important to study the distribution of wealth "in a systematic and methodical fashion" (2). He states that "[s]ocial scientific research is and always will be tentative and imperfect. It does not claim to transform economics, sociology, and history into exact sciences. But by patiently searching for facts and patterns and calmly analyzing the economic, social, and political mechanisms that might explain them, it can inform democratic debate and focus attention on the right questions" (3).

not wish to participate in (aware of that, Fanny says: “I love to hear my uncle talk about West Indies . . . but then I am unlike other people, I dare say,” 165). For Edward Said, the episode of the Antigua trip testifies to the imperialist basis of the wealth of the novel’s protagonists: “The Bertrams could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class” (94), and Said places their story in the context of the historical decline of the absentee planter class, occasioned by a number of factors, including changing economic conditions and abolition of the slave trade. Franco Moretti suggested in response to Said that Sir Thomas’s trip is simply required by the narrative logic which calls for his absence from Mansfield Park, and that the status and wealth of the English gentry was not generally a result of colonialism: “I have been convinced by those historians for whom the colonies played certainly a significant, but not an *indispensable* role in British economic life” (24–25). There is, of course, the problem of what the novel actually says about the Bertrams, since it appears to say very little: was the Antigua plantation a source or a corollary of their belonging to the English landed elite? Is their baronetcy a recently acquired status? Are they representative of a historical class (say, colonial planters) and a historical process (for instance, Said reads the Bertrams’ story in the context of a decline of the absentee colonial planter class, p.94)? What does the novel suggest about the connection between domestic wealth and the empire in general? While a careful reading of the text trying to engage such questions could reveal much more than can be attempted here, suffice it to say that Said may have a point in connecting national and imperial affairs, just as Moretti may have a point in suggesting that the wealth of the gentry as a social class may not be directly or exclusively attributable to the Empire. Yet, even in its vagueness on this issue, *Mansfield Park* displays a *historical imagination* at work, at the very least by forcing its readers to ask such questions—questions whose complexity is such that they remain points of contention in critical and historiographic discourses.

The novel is an eminently modern historical form, as major theorists of the novel, from Georg Lukács to Ian Watt to Michael McKeon, have frequently maintained. Its historicity has to do not only with its point of origin at the beginning of the modern era, but also with its representational logic. As for the latter, Bakhtin’s writings provide a useful theoretical mediation here, inasmuch as his theory of the novel was greatly influenced by formalist thought that sought to explain how literature works chiefly at the level of the functioning of language. Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia, however, represents a step beyond formalist abstraction into the historicity of language itself: as such, it is a momentous contribution to the understanding of both language and literary text. If language is the stuff of the novel, Bakhtin points out that this stuff is always a multiplicity of genres and idioms of speech and writing, which also means that this heteroglot resource of literature is always social and historical. The corollary implication is that literary texts are always inhabited by history in a concrete way. Another concept that Bakhtin introduced to describe the historicity of literature is chronotope. The concept of literary chronotope is part of Bakhtin’s project of “historical poetics” (85), and it means several things, most commonly a concrete literary image that unites temporal and spatial elements, or an “intrinsic connectedness of temporal

or spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84); a particular literary chronotope could be described as the specific way in which a literary text organizes (imagines) its relationship with historical reality. While Bakhtin analyzed examples of several literary images as chronotopes (those of the road, of the threshold, etc.), he also clearly stated that “any and every literary image is chronotopic,” and so is language as such (251). Chronotope on this view is the constitutive condition of language and literature, which can also be described as the concreteness and inseparability of historical space and time expressed in the medium of language (literature included). The point here is not that Bakhtin’s concept needs to be taken for granted in its specific analytical articulations, or that any such concept needs to be given special consideration because it was advanced by a literary theorist; rather, the point is that without such an insistence on historical concreteness the literary text is necessarily unintelligible to anyone, theorist or otherwise. Such a concept offers the advantage of avoiding the many awkward theoretical snags of various binarisms (reality/representation; world/text; base/superstructure). It could be remarked, and with good reason, that Bakhtin’s analyses of chronotopes greatly involve texts from the premodern period (from Greek romances to Rabelais), which raises the question of whether the history of narrative literature in his account involves an epistemological break as Lukács or Watt theorized in their different ways. A more detailed reading would demonstrate that Bakhtin, too, in his various works, discussed such a break; however, the usefulness of the concept of the chronotope lies primarily in its emphasis on the historical concreteness of literature as such.

But how is this historical concreteness of the literary text to be unpacked from the text as its representational narrative strategy? Texts of course construct very different strategies of their engagement with or evocation of historical realities: *Robinson Crusoe*, for instance, which was published at the dawn of the English novel, is famously radical in its claim to historicity: at the time when the novel as a genre does not even have a name or a cultural legitimacy that would be furnished by the subsequent centuries, in the Preface the “editor” presents the story as “a just history of fact” (7), a narrative convention that claims for this particular fiction an intensely historical character. One could unerringly state that the chief chronotopic image of the novel is the Atlantic world, inasmuch as the novel is illegible without an understanding of shifts in global trade, European colonialism, Atlantic trade routes, and the slave trade, but also the financial revolution in England at the turn of the eighteenth century, as well as a number of other historical events and phenomena that it draws into its own fabric. Such evocation of the concrete is not in this novel (and indeed cannot be) a matter of simple mimetic reconstruction; rather, it is a way of putting historical realities into a specific perspective, which forms the narrative work of introspection whose point is to allegorically narrativize, as Michael McKeon states, the internalization by Crusoe of a capitalist work ethic (Crusoe’s time on the island provides him with “the psychological equipment for possessive individualism,” 334). The autobiographical narrative format functions in the novel as the medium for a coherent articulation of a social ideology. On the other hand, there is a novel such as Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,

which is just as densely informed by historical realities (of European imperialism in another era) and just as extensive in its geographic imagination, but it is also, as Patrick Brantlinger noted, informed by a modernist cultivation of ambiguity,⁸ and this makes it difficult to readily ascertain what the novel “thinks” about imperialism. The narrative delivered by Marlow is going to be “one of Marlow’s inconclusive experiences” (10), as the frame narrator and one of his listeners anticipates: in this way, the text itself advertises its own work of skepticism and irony (the likes of which can hardly be found in *Crusoe*). Even so, a careful reading of Conrad’s text and its ambiguous narrative devices can certainly help us along in unraveling the question of what this text thinks—as a text—about the historical realities it engages.

Novels cannot be disengaged from historical reality: it is in fact this feature of the genre that Ian Watt called “formal realism,” the chief characteristic of the novel as a “full and authentic report of human experience” (32)—what Watt meant is not some measure of the mimetic achievement of a novel’s content, but the novel form itself, which—and here lies the gist of Watt’s theory—has to do with individuality of characters, particulars of time and place (or what could be called history and social geography), and referentiality of novelistic language. This armature of the modern imagination involves individuals acting in a historically imagined world, which is rendered through a language of social concreteness.

Economic knowledge in *North and South*

To examine some of the ways in which literature might contribute to a (fuller) understanding of a specific historical version of capitalism, I propose to revisit an industrial novel from the 1850s, *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell.⁹ My intention is to illustrate how this novel functions as a narrative in which the characters develop an improved grasp of the economic and social problems that they contend with; they do so not through a study of specialized discourse but through experience and dialogue, a process of learning or re-cognition featured as a quotidian part of their life in the world.¹⁰ This novel was not always regarded by critics as important as *Mary Barton*, Gaskell’s 1848 novel, in which the Manchester working class has a more central place, and its condition is painted in dire terms. The later novel gave more prominence to

⁸ Brantlinger states that “[t]he politics of Conrad’s story is complicated by the story’s ambiguous style” (256), which he attributes to Conrad’s modernist aesthetics.

⁹ The analysis of Gaskell’s novel presented in this section may be read as a companion piece to an earlier article of mine, “The Novel as Cultural Geography: Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*,” which analyzed the spatial imagination in the novel (as regards the domestic space, the regional space, the national space and the global space). Here, the emphasis is more directly placed on the novel’s discourse on economic matters, but the two perspectives are necessarily complementary.

¹⁰ There are several mentions in the novel of the discourse of political economy (without references to actual authors), but the general stance of the novel is that political economy must be seen as just one in a series of public discourses about economic issues; and, in a sense, the novel claims for itself the role of orchestrator of social dialogue among socially opposed views.

an industrialist character, John Thornton, and his opinions on industrial relations, delivered mostly in conversations with the former Anglican clergyman Hale and his daughter Margaret. Their conversations occasionally read as miniature essays on political economy, probably more explicit and articulate as analytical disquisitions than anything else of the kind in mid-Victorian fiction, but still rendered as spirited dialogue of an everyday, non-specialized kind. The large middle section of the story deals with a workers' strike over wages, with the intractable Thornton refusing to consider their demands. Margaret and her father, who come from the south of the country and who are initially unfamiliar with class relations in the northern industrial city, very quickly develop a sense of social solidarity as they seek to intercede with Thornton in the name of promoting better inter-class understanding. Through their acquaintance and conversations with Thornton and the working-class Higgins family, the Hales (and Margaret in particular) also come to refine their understanding of the cotton industry in the north. On the other hand, towards the end of the novel, Thornton establishes dialogue with his workers, and implements a number of changes in his factory (although not as extensive as Robert Owen's at New Lanark), and an understanding—and accommodation—is reached among the two class positions clearly presented as antagonistic at the outset of the story.¹¹ What Thornton, originally an advocate of the self-regulating market, has to learn is that, to borrow the phraseology devised by Karl Polanyi, the market cannot be disembedded from society, meaning that the “economic system” should not be allowed to overwhelm the “social system.”¹² What the workers have to accept, according to the novel, is that they are in the same boat with the employers and need to work with them to weather inevitable economic storms.

To motivate Thornton's early refusal to negotiate with his workers, Gaskell's novel faced a number of ideological choices as it painted its vision of the complex world of mid-Victorian industrial relations. It could have attributed Thornton's intransigence to his personal traits or to his personal ideologies, which indeed it does to a point, since he is depicted as a man of a stern temper and strong Protestant views on work

¹¹ Thornton gradually builds up a relationship with Higgins, emblematic of an “intercourse, which though it might not have the effect of preventing all future clash of opinion and action, when the occasion arose, would, at any rate, enable both master and man to look upon each other with far more charity and sympathy, and bear with each other more patiently and kindly” (512-13). In a later comment, Thornton also emphasizes a cognitive effect of the new relationship: “we were both unconsciously and consciously teaching each other” (524).

¹² Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* suggests that the “political and economic origins of our time” (the subtitle of the book) were characterized by a transformation from the mercantilist order in which “markets were merely an accessory feature of an institutional setting controlled and regulated more than ever by social authority” (70) to the modern predicament of the 19th century with its “double movement” of market liberalism and the social responses seeking to assert the control of society over the market. Thornton's evolution in his relations with the workers can be said to illustrate this double movement; especially since Thornton seems to develop some views not unlike those of Robert Owen, whom Polanyi credits with a “discovery of society” (133), a view on the primacy of the social over the economic which classical political economists failed to articulate.

and self-making (he is a northern dissenter). On the other hand, Gaskell does much more than couch the social problems in terms of personality or social ideology: she evokes the kinds of concrete problems that emanate from the actual historical developments at the time and that play a part in the practical versions of the social ideologies. For instance, Thornton has to face a transformation in the cotton market: “the Americans are getting their yarns so into the general market, that our only chance is producing them at a lower rate . . . if we don’t get a fair share of the profits to compensate us for our wear and tear here in England, we can move off to some other country” (*North and South* 195).

Margaret asks Thornton at some point why he does not explain to his workers his reasons for “expecting a bad trade,” which Thornton refuses, saying that “[w]e, the owners of capital, have the right to choose what we will do with it” (164). His unwillingness to communicate with his workers changes over the course of the story. However, the point I wish to emphasize has to do (not with Thornton’s self-apology but rather) with the poignancy of the above-quoted description: international competition is driving the prices of cotton products down, and diminishing profits may force industrial capitalists like Thornton to “move off” or relocate their businesses in search of cheaper labor. The possibility of moving off may be interpreted here as anticipating what today would be called outsourcing of production, but it is more likely that Thornton is referring to the removal of the entire business to a different location; a flight of capital and capitalists, too. The method that Thornton actually uses to handle the problems of “bad trade” is to insist on employing cheap labor to replace the striking workers; in this case, his solution is the importation of workers from Ireland. Later in the novel, the narrator picks up the theme of the contemporary cotton economy the novel as the condition of “bad trade” for Thornton and the cotton manufacturers of Milton-Northern worsens; the terse account, which is a reconstruction of Thornton’s thoughts on the subject, dramatizes the problems that come with periodic upswings and downturns of business cycles:

But now had come one of those periods of bad trade, when the market falling brought down the value of all large stocks; Mr. Thornton’s fell to nearly half. No orders were coming in; so he lost the interest of the capital he had locked up in machinery; indeed, it was difficult to get payment for the orders completed; yet there was the constant drain of expenses for working the business. Then the bills became due for the cotton he had purchased; and money being scarce, he could only borrow at exorbitant interest, and yet he could not realise any of his property. (512)

There is much in this description that we encounter in economic downturns in the present-day world: a crisis in the stock market, falling demand, companies experiencing problems with liquidity caused by difficulties in collecting “payment for the orders completed” and rising interest rates on borrowing money—one important difference being that the story takes place before the introduction of limited liability in company

law in Britain; all of Thornton's possessions would be liable in the case of the failure of his mill.¹³ The purpose of the above explanation in the novel is to underscore the specific situation of the mid-century cotton industry in England (which can easily be construed as one of the main focuses of the ideological work of the novel). Intertwined with this kind of perspective is another narrative focus, which is the novel's advocacy of the idea of mutual understanding and cooperation between the workers and the capitalists. Even in the hardest of economic times, the novel seems to say, or especially in the hardest of times, there should exist an appreciation of economic conditions, as a basis for mutual accommodation of labor and capital. That is the political argument of the novel. While the content of that argument could make for an interesting analysis, my point here is that the narrative of the novel makes no sense without the concreteness of its imagination of the economic field. And, as we turn to acknowledge the concreteness of this relationship, we also need to acknowledge the wider constellation of social discourse of which the Gaskell novel is a part. Catherine Gallagher discussed this constellation that is often referred to as the condition of England debate.¹⁴ Gallagher's main focus was on industrial novels, but she placed them in the context of a miscellaneous array of texts in mid-nineteenth century Britain, including social and cultural criticism, political economy, religious writing, and a variety of other discourses, all of which had in common an attempt to make sense of tremendous social changes brought about by the advent of industrial capitalism. In this wider constellation, it makes sense to speak of the novel as a rather special form of purveying knowledge of the social. Let me briefly explain this claim: on the one hand, specialized academic knowledge of contemporary society did not exist at the time (just as the modern university as we know it today did not exist then), and the discourse of political economy, a rare example of scholastic discourse that dealt with the contemporary, even if it enjoyed some circulation among literate audiences, seemed more concerned with defining the central terms of its analysis (value, rent, etc.) than with the massive social effects of industrial capitalism in all of society. The novel, on the other hand, was under these circumstances better placed to construct imaginative worlds with the ambition of encompassing the totality of contemporary social experiences, and the novel as a genre could take upon itself this kind of mission, since it was beginning to speak of and for the nation at large to an ever-growing audience (albeit from a middle-class perspective).¹⁵

¹³ Legislation such as the Limited Liability Act of 1855 and the Joint-Stock Companies Act of 1856 introduced limited liability in Britain, and brought about a great change in the operations of joint-stock companies and capitalist economy in general. *North and South* was published in weekly parts between September 1854 and January 1855, and its story is set in the time before limited liability. Also, Thornton is the sole owner of his cotton mill, which means that he does not share the liability for a potential business failure with others.

¹⁴ See Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction. Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832-1867*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1985.

¹⁵ For a discussion of changes in the literary field that led to an increase in the social authority of professional middle-class novelists around mid-century, see the Introduction in my book *Figures of Finance Capitalism. Writing, Class, and Capital in the Age of Dickens*.

The concreteness of social vision in *North and South* can also be examined in terms of its historical imagination. “Seventy years ago, what was it? And now what is it not?” (124), muses Thornton about the relatively short history of industrial capitalism. This question expressly evokes the image of the enormous transformative power of industrial capitalism. And it is not a stretch to suggest that the novel in this way poses the question of where the Manchester cotton business will be seventy years thence, and later. It is interesting to remark in this regard that the novel is chronologically situated at the point of what we now know to have been the start of the long decline of British cotton manufacturing, or rather the decline of the near-monopoly position which it enjoyed globally in the first half of the nineteenth century. There is some prefiguration of that decline in the novel—the effects of international (American) competition, the intimation of the falling rates of profit in the English cotton business, the “realizing” of the capital of the Milton-Northern (that is, Manchester) millocracy at the end of the narrative. The novel’s historical imagination is significant precisely for its suggestion that the heyday of the English cotton industry with its almost unrivaled domination of the world market cannot be maintained as it was. Thus, the perception of the vast social transformation brought about by the cotton industry seems to be coupled in the novel with the emerging inkling that the cotton industry in England might be losing steam. Equally intriguing is the novel’s insistence on the dependence of British industrial capitalism on an economy of rentiership—namely, late in the story Margaret inherits from her godfather, Mr. Bell, the land on which Thornton’s factory stands, and becomes his landlord,¹⁶ before the story ends with a scene suggesting the two characters are going to marry. And finally, the prospect of a transformation of British capitalism away from industry and towards a more speculative form of capital accumulation looms large over the end of the story, as Thornton appears rather a holdout in comparison with some of the industrialists who turn to speculation (like his brother-in-law). Again, the point is that the novel was able to deeply appreciate the complexities and tendencies of historical shifts, especially the fact that trends in British industrial capitalism could not be fully understood outside the quite concrete context of global economic relations, the quite concrete place of land-ownership in the industrial economy, and the quite concrete temptation of speculative money, all of which are quite concretely part of the novel’s fabric.

Raymond Williams thought *North and South* less interesting than *Mary Barton*, inasmuch as Gaskell’s first industrial novel strove to depict the living and working conditions and culture of the working class, while the second focused more on the attitudes of other classes toward the working class. On the other hand, wrote Wil-

¹⁶ The fact that Thornton does not own the land on which his mill is located suggests that Gaskell did not view the contemporary class system in binary terms; her views may be said to coincide with David Ricardo’s identification of three classes in the economic sphere: “The produce of the earth—all that is derived from its surface by the united application of labor, machinery, and capital, is divided among three classes of the community, namely, the proprietor of the land, the owner of the stock or capital necessary for its cultivation, and the laborers by whose industry it is cultivated” (13).

liams, “Margaret’s arguments with the mill-owner Thornton are interesting and honest, within the political and economic conceptions of the period” (91). This somewhat cryptic remark is not accompanied by an explanation of what Williams would have considered as thinking outside “the political and economic conceptions of the period”—unless we chalk this up to the conventional Marxist idea of some revolutionary vision. Interestingly enough, Williams observed that both novels sought their resolutions outside the realm of labor and capital: *Mary Barton* by shipping some of its protagonists to Canada, and *North and South* through the mediation of the southern genteel habitus represented by Margaret Hale. At the most elementary level, it is misleading to construct such an inside/outside dynamic, since neither can the national stage be severed from the imperial stage, nor is it possible to ignore the fact that other social groups, ideologies, and tensions made up British society at that time, and not just industrial capital and labor. In fact, it could be argued that the most interesting thing about *North and South* is precisely its thematization of the forces that do not lie outside the national yet can be said to lie outside the purely economic.

Let us take another look here at Thornton’s habitus as an industrialist. In the early stages of his conversations with the Hales, he advocates a stark form of market liberalism: at the beginning of the process of industrialization, he states, everyone involved had the same opportunities, but due to differences in natural disposition (“mother-wit”, 124) and application, there arose differentiation into “masters” and “hands.” Those among the “hands” who exert themselves can join the ranks of those who own or manage or help in the management of business. In other words, the suggestion is not far that the poor and the industrial workers have only themselves to blame for their social and economic position. Another contemporary industrial novel, Dickens’s *Hard Times*, satirized this kind of ideology poignantly: “This, again, was among the fictions of Coketown. Any capitalist there, who had made sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, always professed to wonder why the sixty thousand nearest Hands didn’t each make sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, and more or less reproached them every one for not accomplishing the little feat” (90).

Thornton does not remain married to such an ideology, as Gaskell has him strive to change his views “beyond the mere ‘cash nexus’” (525), and he abandons the fictions of laissez faire in the name of improving the relations between owners and workers. In fact, from the start the novel goes to great lengths to construct a motivation for Thornton outside the logic of mere capital accumulation, so that for him capitalist industrial production (the production of an industrial commodity) does not appear to be simply a pretext for making money. It was certainly possible then as it is now to regard capital purely as a vehicle for its own reproduction, and the actual technique of accumulation as a mere technicality dependent on historically available avenues of the most effective accumulation. So is it like that for Thornton? The novel insists that it is not, and it does so by equipping Thornton with an ethic of work (“I would rather be a man toiling, suffering . . . here, than lead a dull prosperous life in the old worn grooves . . . down in the South” 122). Thornton in fact rejects two models of wealth

accumulation and/or possession — inherited landed wealth as well as wealth acquired by speculation (the novel contains a cautionary tale about his father's failed speculations, as well as the story of Thornton's rejection of the temptation of speculation as the cotton industry begins to decline). In effect, Gaskell is constructing a view of capitalist economy which stresses that capital operates in conjunction with the social cultures which manage it and which are external to it. The novel's rejection of the cash nexus as the exclusive social regulator—i.e., the repudiation of the liberal project of disembedding the economic from the social—is coupled with a critique of the ethics of patrician rent collection and financial speculation. Indeed, what Williams saw as a limitation of Gaskell's vision in the novel can be interpreted as historical astuteness, since Gaskell refused to accept the view of the social totality in which an economic logic is the ultimately determining instance. At the same time she called for an ethics of social cooperation. Imagining the social realm in the narrative is presented through a series of possibilities (market liberalism vs. class cooperation, industry vs. speculation, dialogue vs. antagonism, etc.), and not as a simple unfolding of an iron logic of economic determinism. And finally, Gaskell posits the idea of economic knowledge not as a secret that needs to be illuminated by special intellectual expertise, but a discourse that falls within the competence and prerogative of everyday conversation and ordinary people.

Inscriptions of money and the novel

In a masterly and compelling book on the “genres of the credit economy” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Mary Poovey has suggested that these genres “initially performed a single function—they helped Britons understand and learn how to negotiate the market model of value” (25). The genres of the credit economy included imaginative writing (fiction), financial writing (analytical writing such as political economy), and monetary genres (or actual monetary instruments, such as bills of exchange, bank paper, checks). In other words, the credit economy was sustained by and expressed through a variety of different forms of written discourse, ranging from the actual representation of monetary value by various forms of inscribed paper through attempts at explaining the functioning of such an economy to different modes of narrativizing it as literature—the latter receiving its own discursive authority from the very assumption/claim that this kind of fiction is resonant with lived experience. Thus, Poovey's book can be described as an interdisciplinary (and almost ethnographic) analysis of inscriptions of the credit economy, which inventories various generic conventions that expressed the social mechanisms of what she calls “mediating value” in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The book's analysis is underwritten by the claim that, as forms of inscription, the representations of value in inscribed paper and in imaginative writing formed a single cultural fact/fiction continuum. Other literary scholars before Poovey pointed to a close relationship between money and writing; for instance, Mark Shell observed that “[c]oins were the first widely circulating publications or impressions in history” (1978: 64), and there

is certainly much to be said about the history of this relationship.¹⁷ However, Poovey's analysis is not informed by such a sweepingly long perspective; she primarily focuses on what she calls "normalization" of paper money, that is, "its increased invisibility *as* writing" (59), in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the foundations of the modern system of finance were laid. This process, which can also be understood as the process of standardization of (different forms of) money, cannot be properly analyzed without reference to important technological developments that facilitated the technical feasibility of paper money (such as its durability and resistance to counterfeiting), which Poovey's book also acknowledges while discussing the function of the other genres of the "credit economy" (political economy and literature) that helped shore up the normalization of (inscribed) paper as money.

As an interdisciplinary account of this complex historical process, Poovey's book provides a powerful analysis of the interplay between economy and culture, and in doing so it relies on an analytical perspective that comes with an advantage but also a potential weakness. The advantage is that it can help emphasize the conventional (or socially constructed) character of money as an economic instrument of mediating value sustained by a complex set of social conventions and arrangements that arose in a specific time period. This in turn may help reexamine the role that money (and, more broadly speaking, credit) as a form of value has had as a linchpin of capitalist economy over the last few centuries. The weaker point of her account lies in its openness to the temptation of overvaluing the significance of the literary end of the fact/fiction continuum. One of the social effects of literature may indeed have been to help "naturalize" the social functioning of money, but would it not be fair to say that such naturalization is endemic to the totality of practices of everyday life, and perhaps irrecoverable from (or irreducible to) just literary inscription? In addition, there are historical developments without which it is not possible to fully comprehend what Poovey calls the naturalization of money, and here I mean the broader economic arena that involves both nineteenth-century industrialization and the evolution of finance capitalism in general, as well as the rise of the modern state with a stake in the routinization of economic life (the very notion of legal tender is a concept hardly thinkable outside the standardization of state functions as well), imperial and global relations, exchanges and economies, evolution of the notion of citizenship, changing legislative environments, etc.

In her discussion of the functioning of literary texts in the context of the "credit economy,"¹⁸ Poovey gives a special place to an analysis of what she calls Jane Austen's "gestural aesthetic" in *Pride and Prejudice*, by which she means a specific Austenian nar-

¹⁷ Shell claims that "money talks in and through discourse in general"; his analysis of "the monetary information of discourse" (1982: 180) involves the assumption that language and thought must be studied historically in their relationship to money as a form of inscription.

¹⁸ While Poovey's book does not offer a systematic discussion of the phrase "credit economy," what she has in mind is not so much a particular stage in the development of the British economy spanning most of the 18th and 19th centuries, but a specific aspect of the British economy in that time period, one involving money and credit.

rative strategy that manages the relationship between the text and historical reality. This gestural aesthetic takes shape as a strategy of reductive referentiality: “it gestures towards extratextual events but so carefully manages these allusions that the reader is invited back into the text instead of encouraged to go outside its pages” (363). One type of the gestural strategy in the novel, “foreclosure of reference” (363), is used in dealing with military characters in such a way that the real historical events (such as the war with France) are left largely unreferenced. The handling of the money plot (concerning the financial situation of the Bennets and some other characters) is an example of the second gestural strategy that Poovey identifies; there is studied indirection in the novel about the theme of money: “In the first three quarters of *Pride and Prejudice* money is mentioned only twice” (363), writes Poovey.¹⁹ Of course, the money plot is central to the lives of the Bennet daughters, whose status and prospects in the marriage plot are severely limited by the circumstance of their family’s entailed estate. It is only in the final part of the novel, Poovey claims, that issues of money and debt are given a more prominent representation, as Wickham’s amorous exploits turn out to have been actuated for financial reasons. Thus, the gestural management of the topic of money for Poovey means the withholding of a more elaborate representation of the financial events (which are nevertheless alluded to), as well as “narrative direction of the reader’s attention,” or “controlling access to various plots and the information they contain” (363). In addition, Poovey attributes to the text yet another form of gestural strategy: “The best way I can describe this is a kind of translation, for, by a series of substitutions, Austen gradually replaces the money plot’s primary terms with a different set of terms that promise comfort instead of posing a threat. Thus, she transforms the fiscal jeopardy the Bennet girls face into a romantic threat, which, while potentially emotionally painful, can be solved within the domestic plot” (364). This narrative translation involves Wickham (whose pursuit of Elizabeth and then elopement with Lydia is motivated by heavy personal debt), as well as Darcy (whose ultimate act of paying off Wickham’s debts is readable as his acknowledgment of Elizabeth’s influence in the transformation of his own actions).²⁰

¹⁹ This is not exactly accurate; the word *money* is mentioned a few more times than that in the first three quarters of the book. But more importantly, amounts of money are mentioned quite often. For example, “Mr. Bennet’s property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his daughters, was entailed, in default of heirs male, on a distant relation; and their mother’s fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but ill supply the deficiency of his. Her father had been an attorney in Meryton, and had left her four thousand pounds” (27). Before that we find out that Bingley inherited property worth nearly 100,000 pounds, etc.

²⁰ A very specific historical event that Poovey summons as an “occasion” for the novel is the passage of the Bank Restriction Act in 1797, which temporarily suspended the obligation of the Bank of England to redeem paper money with gold (it remained in effect for more than two decades). Since the paper money issued by the Bank was based on the Bank’s promise of conversion to gold, Poovey attributed to the Act a “fiscal, political and epistemological uncertainty” (371), the repercussions of which seem to be analogous to the novel’s themes, while there is no evidence that the text itself directly refers to it. Poovey’s discussion of the similarity between money as promise and the theme of promises in interpersonal relationships in the novel is a little stretched, but it does raise the important issue of the political drama of the Act as one in the many pieces of history that surround the novel.

As is clear from the previous remarks, Poovey maintained that Austen's "gestural aesthetic" was, at least in part, a strategy of providing ideological comfort in the face of historical pressures, a way to provide her readership (presumably similarly placed in the world as her novels' protagonists) with symbolic narrative resolutions to (or escapes from) actual historical problems, while giving "the Literary experience the value that seemed exempt from market price" (372). On the other hand, such claims become somewhat problematic if we shift the analytical perspective a little: if we assume that the effect of Austen's narrative management is not so much to veil historical processes and exclude them from the text as it is to reinforce their presence in the text, albeit by reference that might appear elliptical or reductive. The opening sentence of the novel ("It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife," 5) can hardly be said to downplay the money plot; if anything, it constructs, slightly ironically, a vantage point from which the money plot and the domestic plot are conflated. In contrast to the somewhat exclusionary connotation of Poovey's actual reading of the "gestural aesthetic" in the Austen novel, I find the problematic summoned by this phrase to be indicative of an inexorable constitutive relationship between the literary text and historical reality. That is, even when narrative texts abound in references to the actual world outside them, the nature of the reference is of necessity gestural or elliptical inasmuch as the text is not *the representation* but *a representation* of an irreducibly complex and specific historical reality. The character of this relationship, therefore, has to be gestural inasmuch as the text engages the complexities of historical reality in ways that cannot be fully represented or narratively managed by the text itself. The constitutive effect of gestural involvement of the text with the world is that the text makes no sense without our recognition of its gesturing to the world. The referentiality of literary texts is always necessarily reductive, but it is nevertheless referential; while some form of managed, limited referentiality is to be found in every novel, organizing different strategies of representation and different aesthetic styles, each novel is in its overall intelligibility nevertheless predicated on referentiality as a condition of its meaning-making. Understood in this way, gesturing could be regarded as a general characteristic of novels, since even in their selective referentiality, novels refuse, as it were, to be disembedded from the world. This embeddedness is a quality of literary texts that I characterized earlier as historical concreteness. Of course, this kind of observation does not remove the question of the actual manner in which Austen's novel engages the world it gestures at. Poovey's view is that "Austen's novels rendered their relationship to actual events less important than their ability to conjure up a self-contained, self-referential world" (372).

One way in which Poovey's concern with gestural representation in Austen could be profitably complemented (or revised) is by emphasis on the kind of understanding

²¹ As a sociologist of culture, Bourdieu focused primarily on the functioning of the field of cultural production, using in his analysis the terminology of economic relations (capital), but also suggesting that capital appears in many forms (economic, cultural, social), and that different forms of capital can be converted into other forms under certain conditions. His simultaneous attribution of explanatory primacy

of value or capital that we find in the cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu,²¹ which is an understanding analogous to the one articulated in the novels by Jane Austen. Poovey's insight, which is effectively informed by the disciplinary frame of her historical-ethnographic approach as well as by her insistence on issues of representation, is that representing value in or as literature is not merely an economic affair. But what Poovey sees as the substitution of the money plot by the domestic plot in *Pride and Prejudice*, as an example of the novel's elliptical referentiality, is in fact the chief thematic concern in Austen's novels on the whole. The point of both Austen's narrative sociology and Bourdieu's sociology of culture is that their concept of value is not reductively economic. Neither Austen's nor Bourdieu's perspective reduce capital to economic capital, and both project a view of social totality which is never simply economically defined, while simultaneously acknowledging the very processes of economic life as having central importance. Value, capital, and especially the conversion of one form of capital into another form of capital—these are the central themes of both Austenian and Bourdieuan social analysis. In this regard, it could be said that Piketty's use of Austen's texts, interesting and perceptive as it is, does not fully engage the structure of her social vision: her novels do not only illustrate processes of wealth distribution expressed in monetary terms, but at least equally importantly they dramatize the distribution and flows of different forms of capital (especially social capital), and in this way present a rather complex view of social and historical processes in England in that time period.

Let me briefly illustrate here different ways in which Austen's texts gesture both subtly and broadly. An example of the former is found in the already mentioned Antigua episode in *Mansfield Park*, the ambiguity of which has led to Moretti's polemic with Said. The other example of gesturing, one of broad social mapping, is the theme of convertibility of capital (a central narrative concern in Austen's novels). The Antigua episode, which takes Sir Thomas Bertram away from Mansfield Park, raises the question of whether Sir Thomas's absence is motivated purely by narrative reasons (of moving the plot in a certain direction, as Moretti claimed), or whether it was a way for the novel to relate the wealth of the British gentry to British imperialism (as Said claimed).²² Speaking of *Pride and Prejudice*, Tony Tanner offered an interesting formulation of the somewhat contradictory functioning of the historical imagination in that novel: "although history is discernible out of the corner of the eye . . . the overall impression given by the book is of a small section of society locked in an almost—

to economic capital and assumption of the relative autonomy of the social operations of other forms of capital is a matter that requires a much broader discussion than can be attempted here. For Bourdieu's discussion of different types of capital, see "The Forms of Capital."

²² Here is Piketty's view: "Foreign possessions first became important in the period 1750–1800, as we know, for instance, from Sir Thomas's investments in the West Indies in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. But the share of foreign assets remained modest: when Austen wrote her novel in 1812, they represented, as far as we can tell from the available sources, barely 10 percent of Britain's national income, or one-thirtieth of the value of agricultural land (which amounted to more than three years of national income). Hence it comes as no surprise to discover that most of Austen's characters lived on the rents from their rural properties" (120).

almost—timeless, ahistorical present in which very little will or can, or even should, change” (104). The same dynamic is at work in *Mansfield Park*: since the narrative is mostly associated with Fanny’s (that is, domestic) perspective, (public) history can only be glimpsed peripherally, which in turn reinforces the impression of the stability of the small social order of the provincial gentry depicted in the novel. Yet, even this peripheral glimpse, as Tanner emphasized, precludes the assumption of a thoroughly ahistorical optics, as the social order is presented as almost stable,²³ but really not quite. This form of Austenian gestural representation, which proceeds consistently from the sociological motivation of the novel’s narrative method, urges us to read the novel relative not only to the kinds of questions framed by Moretti’s polemic with Said, but—because of its very broadness—to a whole array of other questions about the circulation of capital and power in the national and global contexts from which Austen’s England cannot be disengaged.

The second example of Austenian gesturing is not limited to a plausible but telling reticence of the first example; in fact, it is the very opposite of that. It is the very matter of the plot, in the form of the marriage market narrative and its evocation of a specific system of class and capital. This gestural strategy is direct and not subtle at all; it involves an unrestrained depiction of circuits and conventions of the exchange of social and economic power. That is the story in *Pride and Prejudice* of Bingley, who affiliates his northern economic capital with the prestige of the southern gentry class; or the story in *Mansfield Park* of Maria Ward, who marries above her social status in spite of the circumstance that her dowry falls short by £3000 (which she makes up by her personal charm, or having “the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram,” 5). Like Pierre Bourdieu in a different period and context, Austen was interested in mapping out the mechanisms of convertibility of different forms of capital, and she understood that economic capital at the turn of the nineteenth century was only one form of capital in a complex constellation of social distinction. Even though her narratives focus on a tiny social group—the lowest echelons of the aristocracy, the gentry and the provincial classes in their orbit, this focus is not only pointedly ethnographic but also pointedly representative, inasmuch as it identifies the dominant logic of the contemporary British class system. This is a logic of both hierarchy and co-optation, of maintaining a rigid routine of social stratification while allowing for traffic in social and economic capital on the borders separating neighboring strata, and thus allowing a limited measure of class mobility. Bingley does get his genteel connections in marrying Jane Bennet, and Sir Thomas Bertram does get a fair amount of money by marrying Maria Ward. However, what has made Austen’s narratives so interesting over the years is the fact that they are not merely reproductions of the market logic of convertibility of different kinds of capital, but that they always involve what in their own terms must appear as a departure from that logic. Bingley and Jane (major but not central characters) in fact marry for love, regardless of the fact that in some ways there

²³ There is some economic context for this perception of stability: Piketty mentions that the average income in England at the time when Austen wrote her novels “could have been observed in 1720 or 1770” (105).

are also benefits to come from the association of his money and her genteel pedigree. Similarly, there is an element of affection in the making of the marriage between Sir Thomas Bertram and Maria Ward. For the protagonists, the departure from the dominant logic is always slightly more dramatic: Darcy marries Elizabeth Bennet without gaining much in terms of social or economic capital, and the same goes for Edmund's marrying Fanny Price. In both cases the matches are presented as marriages of affection (with much of the narrative working as the gradual realization by the characters of both the affection and their defiance of the norm). In *Mansfield Park*, the woman protagonist gains distinction as the emerging moral arbiter of her social environment, despite her humble origins—this is an even more dramatic departure from the dominant class and gender conventions than Elizabeth's assertion of her moral authority in *Pride and Prejudice*. The work of Austen's narrative thus consists both in mapping and in suggesting; it is a class ethnography as well as a politics of imagining changes to a patriarchal and stratified society.

Austen's ability to map out the circulations of social and economic capital, and to describe a sort of political economy of this circulation (albeit focusing on only a limited segment of the social world) points forward to the sociological imagination of Pierre Bourdieu. On a hopefully humorous note, one thinks of the uncompromisingly tedious style of Bourdieu's sociological analysis as a distant relative of Austen's equally uncompromisingly repetitive narrative situations. The slight variations in Austen's narratives ineluctably lead to painting the same social world, always more clearly depicted with each new version. But this is not a static world bound by an iron logic. Austen constructs a world that sees itself as fixed in its ways (of the political economy of different forms of capital), while at the same time it stands besieged by constant change, which is precisely why the loci of change—the northern industrial areas, the overseas empire, the world at large, and finally London as the conduit of all these forces—remain gesturally present even as their continual pressure on the internal structure of the world of the gentry is left largely unrepresented.

It is also in this sense that the mid-Victorian novel is, in the main, the offspring to Austen's narrative vision. The Dickensian world, for instance, is drawn in different strokes of humor and pathos, his topical and reformist zeal is a novelty, his social focus is on the lower-middle class, but the basic contours of his understanding of economic and social capital are the same as in Austen. In the Gaskell novel, there is a way of acknowledging and re-working Austen's narrative procedure. Tanner claimed the cognitive theme for *Pride and Prejudice*: he read the novel as "a drama of re-cognition" (105), of re-view; in other words, as a story of gaining knowledge, as a method, a story of learning. It is in those terms that we can describe Gaskell's indebtedness to Austen, beyond the superficial similarities of the marriage plot between Austen's novels and *North and South*. The process of re-cognition, or of overcoming prejudice, is in Tanner's reading situated in the individual consciousness of the character, and certainly there is an analogy between Elizabeth and Margaret in that sense. And then there is also the work of the narrative itself, which is organized as production of a complex map of the social world. In this regard, the passage from Austen to Gaskell

is a passage in the assessment of historical change in the social world; Austen's *almost* but not quite timeless ahistorical present becomes Gaskell's dramatic *yet* accommodating historical process. And there is also a shift in the respective vantage points of the imagined communities addressed by the novels: the stability of "truth universally acknowledged" gives way to cultural conflict (of region, class, gender), which can never be fully reconciled.²⁴ Austen's re-cognition is a method of cultivating and shaping individual consciousness within the conventional parameters of a stable community; with Gaskell, individual cultivation is still an objective, but now it has to accommodate the much larger scope of a world that seems to change in a manner that goes beyond old conventions. The equation of universality and the polite society of provincial England, entertained only half-ironically in Austen, is replaced in Gaskell's novel by the entirely seriously entertained imperative of the understanding of social totality, which turns out to be a knowledge of social tensions. In *North and South*, the Bildungsroman narrative no longer pertains to just one character, and the narrative of re-cognition is no longer a matter of just one individual consciousness. Strictly speaking, the narrative focus is not even on the binary cultural relationship proposed by the title, and embodied by Thornton and Margaret; the story can no longer function as merely a narrative of overcoming (class) pride and prejudice, inasmuch as their relationship is shaped not only by their respective class positions but also by the totality of the social world and their evolving attitudes towards the industrial working class. The centrality of Higgins, the working-class character, and his independent construction of a rapport with Margaret on the one hand and Thornton on the other, represents the novel's dramatization of what it sees as the imperative of social re-cognition, that is, taking cognizance of the new situation of social complexity created by industrialization. Gaskell's novel is thus structured as a narrative of re-cognition, unfolding on the one hand as the narrative of learning about the changing condition of the English cotton industry, and on the other hand, as the narrative of learning about the benefits of social dialogue that encompasses the entirety of the social world.

²⁴ Gallagher is right to emphasize that Gaskell's novel "strains against its own narrative mode" (183–4); in her reading, the novel both dramatizes a metonymic connection between the private and public spheres (through the exertion of Margaret's influence streaming from the domestic into the economic and political spheres), as well as a skepticism about the effectiveness of such influence. It is my sense that the novel both acknowledges and overrides this kind of skepticism through the very proposition of social accommodation as a method of social reform.

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CASE STUDIES: NATURE AND SCIENCE

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(Pre-)Romantic Constructions of Nature

This essay was fostered by my reading of Stipe Grgas's book chapter "The Use of Nature: An 18th Century Case Study" in *The Constructions of Nature* (1994).¹ In that chapter, Grgas claims that "nature" acts as a kind of empty signifier, a mere "prop within a context of argumentation" (202). This essay aims to explore the ways in which "nature" could act as a construct in Romanticism taking into account Raymond Williams's contention that "nature" is "perhaps the most complex word in the language" (221). Two authors are taken as representatives of supposedly new ways of perceiving nature in the Romantic age: Rousseau, as a pre-romantic writer, important for the ideas of "inner nature" and "the state of nature," both closely connected to the idea of "a natural man," and Wordsworth, who aligns himself with Rousseau when pointing out in the famous 2nd Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* that "Poetry is the image of Man and Nature" (Stillinger 454), thus putting man and nature on an equal footing and advocating a kind of psycho-natural parallelism that would be one of the Romantic *topoi* in his best poetry.

Nature as the self

In the history of Western thought, St. Augustine takes up a prominent place not only because he was the one to write the text which served as a model for Western confessional narratives (*Confessions*), but also because he was the first one to inaugurate something that Charles Taylor calls "the pivotal turn within" (129). It is true that Augustine perceives God as the final arbiter of truth and that he wants to belittle himself before him, but with Augustine the most important dichotomy in the Christian way of perceiving the world becomes that of inner and outer—our "inner nature" is distinguished from "the outer material world." On the way to Romanticism, René Descartes stands as the first philosopher who situates the moral sources within us and John Locke as the one who proposes that thought could be a property of matter instead of being of divine origin. Although the teachings of Descartes and Locke seem to leave no place for subjectivity as we know it today, they were still a vital step in redirecting the human gaze from the heavens to the man's world down here.

It was a long journey from Augustine's seeing the sources of moral good as residing in God to Rousseau's pivotal turn within, without recourse to God. This turn also meant that man's virtue resided in his own heart. As Charles Taylor explains,

¹ The research for the essay was supported by the Croatian Science Foundation project (HRZZ-1543), "A Cultural History of Capitalism: Britain, America, Croatia."

Rousseau's notion of the voice of nature within seems to be saying something much stronger. Not just that I have, thanks to God, sentiments which accord with what I see through other means to be the universal good, but that the inner voice of my true sentiments *defines* what *is* the good: since the élan of nature in me *is* the good, it is this which has to be consulted to discover it. (362; original emphasis)

In Rousseau's own words, he was alone "the portrayer of nature and the historian of the human heart," seeking the truth "with rectitude and simplicity of heart" (*Dialogues* 52) in an age when philosophy did nothing but dissimulate and destroy. The ethical component, the importance of doing universal good, becomes one of the central issues for Rousseau, as it will later permeate the writings of Wordsworth. Our inner voice, or the impulses of our own being, now tells us what nature marks as good. The Romantics believed that we find what is valuable and truthful within us—it only has to be recovered by way of reason and feelings. Rousseau's famous sentence from the beginning of *The Confessions*, "I felt before I thought" (19), sums up his insistence on the importance of feelings that would prove vital for the new kind of sensibility in Wordsworth's work.

The idea of feelings being a part of our "inner nature" is best summarized in a single sentence of Wordsworth's from the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800): "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (454). It is through our feelings that we get to the deepest moral truths. God in this new system of thought has not entirely dropped out; he is to be viewed in terms of what we see striving in nature and finding voice within ourselves. With the Wordsworthian claim that poetry is the overflow, utterance, or projection of the thoughts and feelings of the poet, poetry becomes defined in terms of the imaginative process which modifies and synthesizes these thoughts and feelings (Abrams, *The Mirror* 21). In other words, stress is shifted to the poet's genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity at the expense of the opposing qualities of judgment, imitation of the Ancients, and artful restraint. Wordsworth's Preface is a significant document, published at the turn of the nineteenth century, which signals the displacement of mimetic and pragmatic theories of art by the expressive view of art in English criticism. By this shift, poetry becomes the expression of the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The artist becomes a creator God, his expression being that of creative imagination. If Neoclassical poetics sees a work of art as a mirror that illuminates nature transparently, then Romantic poetics sees a work of art as a lamp² illuminating the world or parts of the world chosen by a poet and already bathed in an emotional light he has himself projected. A Neoclassical poet's excel-

² The lamp is Hazlitt's metaphor for Romantic poetry; M. H. Abrams uses it in juxtaposition with the mirror to describe the difference between Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics in his well-known work accordingly entitled *The Mirror and the Lamp*.

lence is justified by the fact that he holds up the mirror to general nature,³ while a Romantic poet's excellence resides in his individual nature, his innate powers and genius. The product of the first poet is a poem resembling a painting in its mirror-like quality, while the product of the second poet is close to the music of the Aeolian lyre.⁴ Indeed, classical art has often been compared to a finite and closed plastic art such as sculpture, while romantic art has been compared to music, which was seen as infinite and open.⁵

This was one of the dichotomies found in German literary theory which, in many respects, proved vital for English critics, most notably Coleridge. The Jena group of critics, including A. W. Schlegel, Friedrich Schiller, and Friedrich Schlegel, all spoke about the peculiar spirit of modern art in which a view of nature became complicated by various phases of subjectivity. The culminating point of this lively intellectual debate was Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790), in which he develops his own view of the productive genius by stating that artistic creation is a process of nature within the realm of mind. Thus, in perception, the mind is active rather than inertly receptive, and as such, it contributes to the world in the very process of perceiving the world. Likewise, Kant gives a new base to the internalization of moral sources which Rousseau inaugurates. Yet the Copernican Revolution in epistemology, as M. H. Abrams observed, should not be restricted only to Kant and German transcendental philosophy. The concept that the mind fashions its own experience was effected in England by poets and critics before it manifested itself in academic philosophy, thus giving vent to a "revolution by reaction" (Abrams, *The Mirror* 58). The concept of "inner nature" was known to and cherished by all major European Romantic writers. Furthermore, this concept served as a prop to validate the emergent authority of the self. In other words, when Rousseau counts on the inexorable value of nature within the self, he uses nature as an alibi to aggrandize his unique self. The first paragraph in his *Confessions* serves as an illustrative example of this point:

I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself.

³ In Neoclassical poetics, "nature" is used to represent a generic human type; it corresponds to those uniform aspects of the inner world—the mental surrogates of the requirements of a cultivated audience, such as wit, judgement, learning, artful restraint, etc.

⁴ The Aeolian lyre is one of the most common metaphors of the perceiving mind in Romanticism. The instrument itself consisted of a set of strings stretched across a rectangular sounding box from which the wind evoked varying tones and harmonies; it was a fashionable toy in the late eighteenth century. Wordsworth and Coleridge often used it in their poetry.

⁵ It is worth noting that Rousseau had a musical career: he wrote a very successful opera—*Le devin du village* [The village soothsayer]—and for some time earned money as a music teacher and a copier of notes. King Louis XV loved this opera so much that he offered Rousseau the great honour of a life pension, but Rousseau refused the offer. The opera was also performed at the wedding of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. In Book V of *The Confessions*, Rousseau speaks about music being his mania.

Simply myself. I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different. (17)

In the quoted paragraph, the “outside nature” serves as a way to foreground his unique selfhood. Though he claimed that he was no better than his readers, he continuously insisted on his difference and uniqueness, as he alone managed to preserve a pure, uncorrupted heart, while others had soiled theirs through their allegiance to society.

The same goes for Wordsworth, who writes an epic poem about “the growth of the poet’s mind” (subtitle to *The Prelude*) and, in the end, manages to write but a prelude and an excursion from it. More importantly, Wordsworth felt himself to be a chosen son, and as he explained in Book III of *The Prelude*, “I was not for that hour / Nor for that place” (80–81). He believed himself to be a successor of Milton and wanted to write an epic poem larger in proportion than Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Just as Milton specifies his subject and his theme, measures it against the traditional epic subjects, and justifies his fitness for his task by invoking divine inspiration,⁶ Wordsworth adapts Milton’s argument to his own poetic endeavour (Abrams, *Natural* 23). He announces the genesis of *The Recluse*⁷ with the words “On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life, Musing in solitude . . .” (Preface to *The Excursion*, 3), hoping for a poem of outstanding epic proportions and in that sense aimed at surpassing his notable predecessor. He does not explicitly set forth his version of a fall and a loss of Eden but instead wants to create an earthly paradise, transferred from a supernatural to a natural frame of reference. Thus, the mind of man becomes a central locus of poetic exploration, its heights and depths embodying heaven and hell – the battle of Milton’s religious epic is transposed into the poet’s inner self in order to achieve what Keats would brilliantly call “Wordsworthian egotistical sublime.”⁸ Wordsworth’s belief in the harmony of Man and Nature, “the fitting and the fitted” (Preface to *The Excursion*, 4), calls attention primarily to his growing self and his belief in the infallibility of his “inner nature”—the highest arbiter of truth and morality. In other words, the “psycho-natural” parallelism (M.H. Abrams’s term) which he seeks to explore in his poetry is an attempt at reconciling the “inner” and the “outer,” the world within with the world outside, where the “outer nature” serves as a prop to validate the poet’s aspiration to the truth and morality of his “inner nature.”

One could take as an example Wordsworth’s well-known poem from *Lyrical Ballads*, “Tintern Abbey,” a miniature of *The Recluse*, a long autobiographical poem he would never write. As he says in this poem, he was:

⁶ In the first, third, seventh, and ninth books of *Paradise Lost*.

⁷ *The Recluse* consists of *The Prelude*, Book I of Part I (*Home at Grasmere*), Part II (*The Excursion*), and none of Part III. All we are left with is the prelude to the main theme and an excursion from it.

⁸ See Keats’s Letter from John Keats to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818.

. . . well pleased to recognize
 In nature and the language of the sense
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
 Of all my moral being.
 (110–14)

Both the outer nature and his inner nature speak the same language, and the outer nature is there to effectuate the process of his growing up: from the moment “when like a roe, [he] bounded over the mountains” (68–69), which preceded any awareness of nature, to moments of simultaneity with the outside world when nature to him was “all in all” (Bloom and Trilling 77), to the third mature phase, when he realizes that his “inner nature” and the “outer nature” are no longer one and the same. In the overall process of maturing, Wordsworth insists on the strength of memory (five years have passed) and imagination (what the eyes and ears half create and half perceive), both of which are qualities of his “inner nature,” as the most important prerequisites for growing up. Thus, the “outer nature” remains a sort of prop for confirming the qualities of the poet’s inner self: his epistemological and ethical ventures. If the concept of “inner nature” foregrounds the ways in which romantic subjectivity is necessarily linked to the meaning of “nature,” thus showing that “nature” is by no means an empty signifier but rather a signifier with multiple signifieds (never to be exhausted), the rest of this article aims to explore the two basic signifieds subsumed under the signifier “nature,” i.e., politics and economy – the two focal points in the building up of a bourgeois subjectivity.

Nature as politics

The Romantic concept of nature does not only embrace private events because in many ways it embraces social others. Thus, the personal also becomes social and political. In “Romanticism and Its Ideologies,” Jerome McGann argued that, “in the case of Romantic poems, we shall find that the works tend to develop different sorts of artistic means with which to occlude and disguise their own involvement in a certain nexus of historical relations” (108). In that sense, “nature” can be seen as an ideal illusion to obfuscate the social reality. The notable example of “Tintern Abbey” is worth taking into account. New historicist readings of the poem have tried to show that Wordsworth strategically suppresses awareness of salient parts of the scene on the Wye—the beggars lurking in the Abbey ruins, the furnaces of the iron forges nearby that burned night and day, the busy river traffic that passed the Abbey, etc. How could Wordsworth talk about the “pastoral farms” and “the vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,” knowing that the ruined abbey had been in the 1790s a favourite haunt of displaced persons? On the following pages, I aim to question his “democratic principle” supposedly issuing from his depiction of solitary rural figures and their “natural language.”

Wordsworth's fascination with solitary figures or "figures of deprivation" (as Paul de Man would call them) has long been connected to his humanitarian principles. Thus, David Bromwich wants to show that the Blind Beggar episode in *The Prelude* is a confirmation of Wordsworth's being of a Rousseauist politics, that he believed property, status, function—the whole train of social and moral relations—do not define human identity. In other words, a beggar is not a prompter of charity, nor is he a pointless moral entity – he belongs to general humanity, regardless of his social status, because his feelings are as intense as anyone's (Bromwich 30). When Wordsworth encounters a solitary leech gatherer ("Resolution and Independence"), he becomes an emblem of perseverance and teaches Wordsworth about the right course to take in the future (Trilling's interpretation). Here Wordsworth introduces us to the world of what Harold Bloom called the "natural man" (*The Visionary* 156). The leech gatherer, just like an array of similar characters including the old Cumberland beggar or the shepherd Michael, is a man reduced to naked desolation but still natural. Wordsworth himself owes strength and hope in what the future would bring to these natural men. The natural man lives according to the dictates of Rousseau's "state of nature," as he described it in his *Second Discourse*. In firm opposition to Thomas Hobbes and his idea that the state of nature is nothing but the state of vicious individualism, Rousseau affirms "that the greater part of our ills are of our own making, and that we might have avoided them nearly all by adhering to that simple, uniform and solitary manner of life which nature prescribed" (*Second Discourse* 50). Rousseau continues by posing the central question about whether natural life is inferior to social life, or vice versa:

I would also ask, whether a social or a natural life is most likely to become insupportable to those who enjoy it. We see around us hardly a creature in civil society, who does not lament his existence: we even see many deprive themselves of as much of it as they can, and laws human and divine together can hardly put a stop to the disorder. ... Let us therefore judge, with less vanity, on which side the real misery is found. (*A Dissertation* 64)

In the state of nature, the savage man is left solely to the direction of instinct, and he lives a uniform and simple life, eating the same kind of food as everybody else, living in exactly the same manner and doing exactly the same things. Natural inequality arising from difference in age, health, and bodily strength is nothing compared to the inequalities created by social institutions. At the core of such an assumption lies Rousseau's belief that human beings are innately and naturally drawn to virtue; the question of ethics is the main impulse throughout his oeuvre.

This trait makes him similar to Wordsworth's own writing, and having read Rousseau's early work, Wordsworth espoused the savage man ideal. In *The Prelude*, he compares his own young self with the noble savage who "had been born on Indian plains, and from (his) mother's hut / Had run abroad in wantonness to sport / A naked savage, in the thunder-shower" (Book I, l. 302–304). Furthermore, in "Salisbury Plain,"

Wordsworth clearly echoes Rousseau in arguing against the Hobbesian position that any state of civil society is preferable to the state of savage nature (Chandler 131):

Hard is the life when naked and unhoused
 And wasted by the long day's fruitless pains,
 The hungry savage, 'mid deep forests, roused
 By storms, lies down at night on unknown plains
 And lifts his head in fear, while famished trains
 Of boars along the crashing forests prow, l
 And heard in darkness, as the rushing rains
 Put out his watch-fire, bears contending growl
 And round his fenceless bed gaunt wolves in armies howl.

Yet is he strong to suffer, and his mind
 Encounters all his evils unsubdued;
 For happier days since at the breast he pined
 He never knew . . . (1–13)

Rousseau's *le bon sauvage* is not only tied to the past ideal; it persists in his idea of the "natural man." Rousseau's contention that a natural man can still exist within our corrupted society (being a supreme example of such a natural man himself) involves the actual return to nature (natural surroundings) but also the return to the healthiest impulses within the human mind. His nostalgia for the lost natural state manifests itself in the constant longing for a unified life in which man is in complete harmony with himself and with other men. However, Rousseau's thought is not primitivist: he does not preach a return to the state of nature (Todorov 16). This notion is largely a construct, a fiction designed to facilitate the understanding of our present state. In a passage in the *Second Discourse* (*Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*), Rousseau himself suggests that the state of nature perhaps did not exist (11). In that sense, he suggests that the time of innocence and transparency might have been our own invention, a "hypothetical history" (Starobinski 14).

The important issue of morality in Rousseau's writing is again readily linked to his line of thought in the *Confessions*: "My ideas had been broadened by the study of the history of morals. I had come to believe that everything is rooted in politics" (362). In the sense of politics Rousseau thought that the remedy to where we stand now is not to be found in the past: once we have passed through the state of culture we cannot renounce civilization, but, with the understanding of our original state, we could make it better. Yet it would be wrong to assume that this was his protest against the existing class system. As Marshall Berman explained, "indeed, he was reinforcing that system by insisting on its inherent equity and fairness for all" (93). It is only through reciprocal esteem that all classes could be brought together, as friendship ignores all class distinctions. The acts of generosity on the part of those of higher rank would be out of the question in Rousseau's case: the crippled boy incident from

the sixth walk in the *Reveries* is indicative of this point. As Rousseau keeps picking up the same way on his walks he realizes the reason for it: a woman set up a stall in summer to sell fruit, rolls, and tisane. She had a little boy who hobbled about on his crutches, begging passers-by for money. Every time Rousseau would pass by, the boy would pay him a little compliment and would be given some money, but as soon as Rousseau's benevolence turned into habit, he no longer felt the same way about the boy:

This pleasure gradually became a habit, and thus was somehow transformed into a sort of duty which I soon began to find irksome, particularly on account of the preamble I was obliged to listen to, in which he never failed to address me as Monsieur Rousseau so as to show that he knew me well, thus making it quite clear to me on the contrary that he knew no more of me than those who had taught him. (93)

In the end, Rousseau starts avoiding this boulevard. Whenever obligation concurs with his desires, this is enough to transform them into reluctance and aversion. He regards the habit of virtue as a trap to lure him into something bad (according to Rousseau, when virtue becomes duty, it brings enslavement upon people).

When one thinks of the best of Wordsworth's poems, the poet always remains a detached observer, and the scene observed is as important as it acts as an epiphany upon his own mind. It is true that he called himself "a democrat," willing to spend 12 hours of thinking about politics for each hour of thinking about poetry, to paraphrase Wordsworth himself, but his own involvement in "the nexus of historical relations" (McGann's term) largely remains a sort of blind spot that has puzzled critics for several decades. Though he was one of the members of the London Corresponding Society and he travelled to France four times in the aftermath of the French Revolution, registering his experiences in the famous Books IX, X, and XI of *The Prelude*, we still know very little about his active involvement in the revolution.

In addition, in March 1793, Wordsworth returned from France and wrote a pamphlet against Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff as a response to Watson's published protest deploring the execution of Louis XVI. In this important, unfinished letter,⁹ Wordsworth reveals himself as a fervent republican, finding sympathy and excuses for the outburst of violence:

⁹ This letter is in fact Wordsworth's first full-fledged exposition of his intellectual, moral, and political views and his most explicit statement about public affairs until *The Convention of Cintra* (1809). It is important because it shows that Wordsworth's political views changed. However, it was written too late to have any significant influence on the political debate of his contemporaries. Thus, it remains nothing but a late reaction to the events taking place in France and England (Chandler 12). Wordsworth chose not to publish the letter, which turned out to be fortunate, since another man who wrote his own *Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff*, Gilbert Wakefield, went to prison for two years for seditious libel after having published it (Gravil 63).

You say, "I fly with terror and abhorrence even from the altar of liberty when I see it stained with the blood of the aged, of the innocent, of the defenceless sex, of the ministers of religion, and of the faithful adherents of a fallen monarch." What! Have you so little knowledge of the nature of man as to be ignorant, that a time of revolution is not the season of true Liberty? Alas! The obstinacy and perversion of men is such that she is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of despotism to overthrow him, and in order to reign in peace must establish herself by violence. She deploras such stern necessity, but the safety of the people, her supreme law, is her consolation. (Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, 142)

It is clear that Wordsworth puts the revolution in the Franco-British context and treats it as an extension of the French conflict. He attacks both Richard Watson and his political father, Edmund Burke, for the status quo they want to preserve in England. They both wanted to deprive people of the ability to act and react, and this "discussion of the relation of the free intellectual inquiry and social progress lies at the ideological centre of the Letter to Llandaff" (Chandler 23). Yet, Wordsworth is never explicit about his revolutionary allegiances and this letter, which remained unpublished, questions rather than asserts Wordsworth's involvement in the French Revolution. Furthermore, we know that he was finally disillusioned with its outcome. His radical youthful enthusiasm soon turned into a conservative nationalism.¹⁰ The "politics" of Wordsworth was supported by the most brilliant critic of the age, William Hazlitt, who writes in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825):

It is one of the innovations of the time. It partakes of, and is carried along with, the revolutionary movement of our age: the political changes of the day were the model on which he formed and conducted his poetical experiments. His muse (it cannot be denied and without this we cannot explain its character at all) is a levelling one. It proceeds on a principle of equality, and strives to reduce all things to the same standard. (249)¹¹

However, my contention is that Wordsworth's "principle of equality" was largely based on the espousal of the idea of "natural man" and "the state of nature," both embodiments of romantic illusions that McGann addressed in his pivotally important *Romantic Ideology* (1984). To go back to Grgas's concept of "constructions of nature," this means that Wordsworth's idea of nature was again used as a construct to reinforce the existing class system rather than to question it. There was no active involvement

¹⁰ See, for instance, his poem "View from the Top of Black Comb," in which he glorifies England and the ground that the British crown commands. In the final lines, his native landscape is "A revelation infinite it seems;/ Display august of man's inheritance,/ Of Britain's calm felicity and power!" (ll. 32–34).

¹¹ In "My First Acquaintance with Poets," Hazlitt speaks of Wordsworth and Coleridge after having visited them in 1798.

on the part of Rousseau and Wordsworth to change the existing condition, and their processes of “democratization” through embracing the concepts of “the natural man” and “the state of nature” were simply not enough to reverse the course of history—the progress of industrialization and the advent of a new economic force embodied in the bourgeoisie.

Furthermore, Wordsworth’s democratic potential supposedly lay in his celebration of the language of the common people. Wordsworth thought that the healthiest impulses of our nature were best preserved in their language (*Preface* 1800). Indeed, the question of language remains a significant issue in Wordsworth’s poetry. In the 1800 Preface, he already says that he would avoid using “poetic diction,” and later on, in the Appendix he added to the 1802 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, he launches a severe attack on such adornment of language and falsehood of description. In the Appendix, Wordsworth distinguishes between the language of the earliest Poets, who “wrote from passion excited by real events,” and later Poets who, in wanting to emulate their predecessors, “set themselves to a mechanical adoption of those figures of speech, and made use of them, sometimes with propriety, but much more frequently applied them to feelings and thoughts with which they had no natural connection whatsoever” (465). The first Poets spoke the natural language of men, while the later Poets spoke a perverted version of that language, gradually acquired from books (for Wordsworth, only Shakespeare and Milton stand apart). Furthermore, the readers, themselves perverted by books, could no longer distinguish true language from false language.

In the *Dialogues*, Rousseau also extols the language of the earliest poets because they knew how to evoke and describe true passions:

True passions, which are rarer than one might think among men, become even more so day by day. Interest erodes them, diminishes them, swallows them all up, and vanity, which is only a folly of amour-propre, helps to stifle them more. The motto of Baron de Feneste can be read in big letters in all the actions of the men of today: *it is for appearances*. These habitual dispositions are hardly suited to allowing the true movement of the heart to act. . . . Plutarch’s famous men were his first reading at an age when children rarely know how to read. The outline of these men of antiquity made impressions on him that have never been effaced. (*Dialogues*, Second Dialogue 122)

Both Rousseau and Wordsworth are worried about the corruption of human minds and hearts. Language plays an important role in the process of corruption: for Rousseau, the corrupting influence of human institutions is best visible in the books that foster the language of appearances not proceeding from the human heart, while for Wordsworth the corruption of literary tastes is a vital prerequisite for the general corruption of society. The poets who indulge in arbitrary habits of expression which are not based on human passions are detrimental to people’s minds. They furnish

food for “fickle tastes, and fickle appetites” (Preface to the Second Edition to *Lyrical Ballads*, 447). Gradually, the readers’ taste for poetry becomes the same as a “taste for rope-dancing, or Frontinac or Sherry” (447).

In many of his poems, Wordsworth speaks about the necessity of preserving the oral culture as the most authentic one. Here Wordsworth echoes Rousseau’s position in the *Discourse on the Origins of Language* and the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, where he laments:

O man, of whatever country you are, and whatever your opinions may be, behold your history, such as I have thought to read it, not in books written by your fellow-creatures, who are liars, but in nature, which never lies. . . . There is, I feel, an age at which the individual man would wish to stop: you are about to inquire about the age at which you would have liked your whole species to stand still. (46)

The desire to stop and think about the human condition is closely connected to the desire to look towards the past and seek models in the lives of our ancestors—here “nature” becomes a trope for “the works of the ancient poets,” a well-known neo-classical *topos*.¹² A simple, uniform, and solitary manner of life does not involve an abundance of words. It is detrimental to the human mind to have more words than ideas, and one should say no more things than he can think (Rousseau, *Emile* 74).

In “The Ruined Cottage,” for instance, the Pedlar is said to have little need for books, “for many a tale / Traditionary . . . / Nourished Imagination in her growth” (164–67). There is a similar passage in “Michael”: “this Tale, while I was yet a boy / Careless of books . . . / . . . Led me on to feel/ for passions that were not my own” (27–31). More famously, in “The Tables Turned,” William assumes that hearing the voices of nature is more important and valuable than the exercise of reason through the reading of books:

Quit your books, . . .
Books! ‘tis a dull and endless strife,
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music; on my life
There’s more of wisdom in it.
(9–12)

William assumes that the power of natural sweetness will impress the mind “of itself,” the pleasure of the scene is more important than its educational value. As James K. Chandler claims, these two poems present a literary debate of the epoch (the strife of the “meddling intellect” is identified with books; books were to be equated with “endless strife”; 154). The speakers of all three poems indicate that decisive moral de-

¹² See, for instance, Alexander Pope’s “Essay on Criticism”: “to copy Nature is to copy them” (140).

velopment occurs in the absence of book learning.¹³ There has always been in Wordsworth a natural alliance between oral record and the silent heart—together they build up and preserve the human spirit (Chandler 141).

That said, it seems to me that the idea of “natural language”—in the sense of “language that aspires to the condition of speech” (Rousseau) and in the sense of the “common language for common people” (Wordsworth)—partakes of ideology in its office of masking socio-historical reality with a linguistic one (Grgas 205). In other words, it is an attempt at preserving things as they used to be in the fast-progressing industrial age. Thus, the concept of “natural language” also hides the fear of change and of the rising capitalist economy.

As Franco Moretti explains in his *The Bourgeois*, it was in the late eighteenth century that the bourgeois emerged as a new rank in society which then “consisted mostly of ‘the self-employed small businesspeople (artisans, retail merchants, innkeepers, and small proprietors)’ of early urban Europe, but a hundred years later it consisted of a completely different population made of ‘middle- and lower-ranking white-collar employees and civil servants’” (3). In other words, both Rousseau and Wordsworth aspire to educated audiences (those who could read), and the “natural language” could only find fertile ground in such audiences. When Rousseau reads his *Confessions* out loud in a circle of educated friends or leaves his *Dialogues* on a Church altar for future generations, he believes that only “elevated minds” would understand him. Business people are not really what he had in mind when thinking about “elevated minds,” but by praising landscape beauties and by showing respect for the traditions and history of Switzerland, this severe critic of the newly emerging consumerist society would unknowingly attract those he detested.

As far as Wordsworth is concerned, the intended audience and the novelty of ideas as expressed in the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* is also worth taking into account. As this volume of poetry was printed in no more than 500 copies, it is clear that it was not destined for the poor who were illiterate but for the middle- and upper-classes and also the in-between category of the bourgeois, who, having the means to travel and free time to spend, would want to go to the Lake District to see and experience the simplicity of life Wordsworth extolled. Paradoxically, by trying to influence and to elevate the tastes of this newly emerging class, Wordsworth would equally attract hordes of tourists with “fickle appetites” into the very heart of the English countryside. Furthermore, from the middle of the eighteenth century there appeared a dearth of names such as Goldsmith, Cowper, and

¹³ Oral and written language are also compared in “The Brothers” (1800), a poem composed in the period between “The Ruined Cottage” and “Michael.” A country priest responds to the charge that the absence of written records from his graveyard shows him to be “heedless of the past”: We have no need of names and epitaphs, / We talk about the dead by our fire-sides. / And then for our immortal part, we want / No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale: The thought of death sits easy on the man / Who has been born and dies among the mountains. (ll. 178–84) See also *The Excursion*, where the speaker pays a similar compliment to the unlettered people of his neighbourhood (see book 6, lines 610–14).

later, Crabbe, who were already beginning to show a shift in the focus of their subject matter that to some extent prefigures the line Wordsworth was to take. Wordsworth also owed much to Robert Burns, who taught him how to use a style of perfect plainness, an influence Wordsworth recognized and acknowledged. Robert Burns could be considered the first champion of the poetry that Wordsworth would praise in his 1800 Preface. In fact, it was Burns, and not Wordsworth, who used the “natural language” of the common people: deploying an energetic folk stanza brimming with unfamiliar usages drawn from idiomatic lowland Scots and writing down poems about working people in taverns, observations made at the plough, things as trivial as daisies, mice, or lice (“To A Mouse,” “To a Louse, On Seeing one on a Lady’s Bonnet at Church,” etc.)

Nature as economy

Wordsworth’s programme for poetry, with his attack on “poetic diction” and the changing tastes of the reading public, pinpoints to another important issue of his age. He wanted to protect the rural men against the oppressive commercial urban society, where the bourgeois is seen as a newly emerging anomaly.

In Rousseauian terms, the bourgeois is not only a middle-class man but a non-citizen who is very dependent upon society but does not live for it. The best description Rousseau gives of a bourgeois features prominently at the beginning of *Emile*: “Always in contradiction with himself, always floating between his inclinations and his duties, he will never be either man or citizen” (Book I, 40). The bourgeois is accused of having extensive and tormenting desires which make him into a disunified individual—one who has lost his dignity of soul in cherishing nature as a kind of commodity.

When Wordsworth speaks in the 1800 Preface about the hegemony of trivial plays, he recognizes the same problem Rousseau identified in his *Letter to D’Alembert* (a famous case against the introduction of theatres in Geneva): the theatre removes people from authentic experience, and as such, it is related to the urban division of labour. In the condition of undivided labour and open-air sociability, typical of the ancients whom Rousseau admires, pleasure and labour were not separated. Wordsworth does not seek the general condemnation of theatres as Rousseau does, but he is acutely aware that the established repertoires foster artificial pleasure for the sake of pleasure itself and not for the sake of social bonding and authentic experience.

Lacking the unity of soul based on the non-existence of such desires, the bourgeois cannot be happy. The bourgeois is an inhabitant of the city, while the inhabitant of rural areas leads a different life entirely dedicated to his land. By building up a social network, he has no tormenting desires—he is unified in his lack of restless desires, his devotion to his family and neighbours, his hunger for life as it is. Both Rousseau and Wordsworth recognize this ultimate good in existing, and they both seek to indulge in authentic pleasure—the primary bonding agent in any healthy society. It is constituted by strenuous effort, rather than by passive leisure, and thus belongs within a community governed by undivided labour in a pre-commercial phase (Simpson

64). Self-love, as Rousseau identifies it, guarantees such fullness of existence because it is nothing but a desire to exist. Rousseau's "savage" and Wordsworth's "peasant" are therefore ideals that need preservation at whatever cost.

Therefore, Rousseau's and Wordsworth's renunciation of capitalist society is linked to the appraisal of small, primitive, isolated communities such as Swiss communities in the Alps or Corsica (in Rousseau's case), and the Vale of Grasmere in the Lake District area (in Wordsworth's case).

Rousseau establishes such an ideal society in another self-enclosed paradise, that of Clarens in the *New Heloise*. The centre of this community is Julie, whose soul is open to all around her. Each individual member must conform to the general will, the unanimous consent, as in the *Social Contract*. Money¹⁴ is not necessary in the society at Clarens: people consume immediately what they produce and feed on the products of their labour. It is clear, however, that this community cannot live entirely on its own resources. This community seems to be an organism, all of whose parts complement one another, but Julie remains its central pillar. Rousseau himself admits that Julie is a very peculiar character, exerting her benevolent influence and moral principles on everyone around her. She is a dominant individual, an expansive soul capable of influencing others in a positive way (he also speaks about it in his Ninth Reverie, he is the centre and originator of a feast, his goodness is mirrored in the joy of others: at La Muette he offers wafers to a group of girls, and later he buys apples for little boys). Thus, morality depends on the virtue of a demiurge who must set the standard by his own example, and Julie renounces passion for the sake of community. Yet virtue can never regress in order to become innocence because virtue presupposes a knowledge of good and evil that innocence does not. Thus, the virtuous people of Clarens can always easily relapse into sin; they are constantly on the verge of opacity while trying to maintain their transparency, as Jean Starobinski would say.

The country feast in *La Nouvelle Heloise* simulates the return to an original state of innocence. The whole spectacle is reminiscent of another scene from *Reveries*, where Rousseau evokes the same idyllic innocence of popular rejoicings:

. . . for I have always been very attracted by the pleasure of seeing cheerful faces in popular rejoicings. This expectation has often been thwarted in France, for this nation which claims to be so cheerful shows little of this cheerfulness in its recreations. . . . but in Geneva and Switzerland, where

¹⁴ Rousseau's attitude towards money is very peculiar: in the scene where he gives apples to little boys and pays some money for them, he is so happy because he finds a disproportion between the small cost of his action and the intensity of the pleasure it gives him. The true feast is one that costs nothing. Money is some sort of impure means of achieving pleasure, while country feasts are great because they cost nothing. In the *Confessions*, he would say that money poisons everything. A pleasure that money can buy loses the purity of immediacy and becomes poisoned. One must remember that Rousseau committed many petty thefts in his life. He explains that he hated the idea of an intermediary between oneself and the thing one wants to enjoy, and that money plays the part of an intermediary.

laughter is not continually dissipated in malicious fooling, holidays have an air of contentment and cheerfulness, poverty does not show its hideous face, nor does pomp flaunt its insolence; well-being, fraternity, and concord open all hearts to one another and often in the transports of innocent joy strangers accost one another, embrace and invite one another to join together in enjoying the day's pleasures. (Book IX, 147)

However, the community at Clarens is far from the democratic ideal Rousseau praised in the *Social Contract*. Inequality is in fact dissimulated in the rapture of the festival and Rousseau is willing to accept pseudo-equality based on feelings. Illusory equality achieved during festivals will always remain nothing but consolation to one group of people but they will cherish it for the sake of feelings, the ability to feel equal though knowing that the feeling is illusory. The enemy of masks and veils¹⁵ is willing to overlook the master's methods of establishing domestic order and harmony (Starobinski 101). The servants think they want what they have been forced to do (Emile is also treated like that by his teacher). In fact, he advocates the illusion of free will. His own self-sufficient ego spreads into a myth of the self-sufficient community (Starobinski 109).

In the same manner, Wordsworth praised an enclosed community life in his poems "Home at Grasmere" and *The Excursion*. Furthermore, he wrote two letters to the editor of the *Morning Post* on the subject of the Kendal and Windermere Railway. These two letters were crucial in stopping the project of extending the railway from Kendal to Low Wood, near the head of Windermere in the Lake District. Fearing that the railway would run through the vales of Ambleside and Grasmere, he praised the beauty and seclusion of the district, assuring the editor of the *Morning Post* that the lakes were already within easy reach for everybody (as one of the chief arguments in carrying the line forward to Keswick through the aforementioned vales had been that the beauties of the Lake District must be brought within easier reach of those who

¹⁵ I am referring here to Rousseau's condemnation of theatrical performance in his *Letter to d'Alembert*, in which he speaks about an ideal form of spectacle that he witnessed in his early childhood (that of Genevan soldiers feasting in universal joy during a grape harvest) and draws a contrast between "false" prestige enjoyed by comedy and tragedy and the genuine, communal joy where there are no masked actors and everyone is both actor and spectator). *Letter to d'Alembert*: "I remember being struck in my childhood by a rather simple spectacle, an impression of which has stayed with me despite the passage of time and the variety of things seen since. The regiment of Saint-Gervais had completed its manoeuvres and, as was customary, broke into companies for supper. . . . Yet the unity of five or six hundred men in uniform, holding one another by the hand and forming a long band that snaked about in rhythm and without confusion, with a thousand twists and turns . . . all of this combined to create a very vivid sensation, so that one could not remain unmoved. . . . The result of all this was a general emotion that I cannot describe, the same feeling of universal joy that we feel fairly naturally whenever we are surrounded by what we hold dear. My father hugged me, as he did tremble in a way that I can still feel and share. 'Jean-Jacques', he said, 'love your country. Do you see these good Genevans? They are all friends, all brothers. Joy and harmony prevail among them.'" (Qtd. in Starobinski 93)

cannot afford to pay for ordinary conveyances.) Assuming that the railway would bring a crowd of all but appreciative tourists, Wordsworth offered alternative pleasures:

Go to a pantomime, a farce, or a puppet-show, if you want noisy pleasure—the crowd of spectators who partake your enjoyment will, by their presence and acclamations, enhance it; but may those who have given proof that they prefer other gratifications continue to be safe from the molestation of cheap trains pouring out their hundreds at a time along the margin of Windermere. (*Guide to the Lakes*, 140)

Wordsworth contends that “a vivid perception of romantic scenery is neither inherent in mankind, nor a necessary consequence of even a comprehensive education” (138). It is a taste depending on “processes of culture or opportunities of observation” that must be gradually developed in nations and individuals until it becomes habitual. One such “process of culture” is the ability to appreciate poetry, and the above quotation is reminiscent of Wordsworth’s lament from *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface* (1815) about the majority of mankind who neglect the reading of poetry in order to devote themselves to domestic cares or business:

Poetry then becomes only an occasional recreation; while to those whose existence passes away in a course of a fashionable pleasure, it is a species of luxurious amusement. In middle and declining age, a scattered number of serious persons resort to poetry, as to religion, for a protection against the pressure of trivial employments, and as a consolation for the afflictions of life. (471)

Likewise, Wordsworth believes that a large majority of mankind does not know how to appreciate natural beauty.¹⁶ The manufacturers of Yorkshire and Lancashire who want to send large groups of their workmen, by railway, to the banks of Windermere are heralds of the new capitalist, consumer society. People are sent off like children for holiday entertainment at the will of their master, and must return at the same, or they will be dealt with as transgressors, Wordsworth observes. Natural beauties are sold to them as if they were household commodities.¹⁷ Curiously enough,

¹⁶ He tells an anecdote of a Manchester tradesman who spotted a small piece of pleasure-ground with a detached rock rising in the middle of it just below Wordsworth’s house. The tradesman said that it would be a nice place “if that ugly lump (rock) were out of the way”. He never thought of the beauty of the rock’s form, the ancient oaks growing out of it, the flowers and shrubs adorning it. Wordsworth is surprised at his reaction and therefore comments, “Men as little advanced in the pleasure which such objects give to others are so far from being rare, that they may be said to represent a large majority of mankind” (See Letter I – Kendal and Windermere Railway, To the Editor of the Morning Post, Appendix II to *Guide to the Lakes*, 138-9)

¹⁷ Here he anticipates neo-Marxist denunciation of twentieth-century bourgeois society shaping the tastes of the majority. According to Roland Barthes, an average traveller does not seek pleasure in the contemplation

Wordsworth's Lake District today receives 12 million visitors each year and abounds in gift-shops, restaurants, and hotels bearing Wordsworth's name or the names of his famous poems and images from the poems that have become emblematic of this part of England. In other words, by denouncing the "fickle tastes" of the newly emerging bourgeoisie, he attracted the very people he wanted to keep away from the secluded natural beauties of England. Rousseau's enthusiasm for nature in the presence of Mme de Warens and his passion for botany and rowing on the island of St. Pierre also managed to create a place of pilgrimage for future generations—not to mention Vevey and Lac Léman (Lake Geneva), where *La Nouvelle Heloise* had been conceived. True, among the visitors were such "delicate minds" as P. B. Shelley, Mary Shelley and Lord Byron,¹⁸ but the majority of people coming to see Genevan surroundings were the urban bourgeoisie, for whom nature was nothing but a commodity.

This fact obviously complicates the "democratic" potential both writers expressed in their writings. The idea of "nature as politics and economy" in the concepts of "the natural man" and "the state of nature" is obscured by the fact that Wordsworth's observation of isolated figures in a dreary landscape never leads to a gesture of generosity (the poetic "I" always remains a detached observer), the celebration of common people and their natural language of passion is nothing new in the history of British Romanticism (as it was earlier propounded and used in practice with greater success by Robert Burns) and Wordsworth's only radical pamphlet in which he openly supports the French Revolution (*Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*, 1793) remains unpublished. Furthermore, Rousseau's "state of nature" and "natural man" remain ideals which are hardly achievable in the quickly advancing industrial world. Thus, the celebration of isolated rural communities, governed by undivided labour in a pre-commercial phase (i.e., their nostalgia for past times) seems to be a conservative illusion rather than a radical trait in their works.

Thus, to go back to Grgas's book chapter "The Use of Nature: An 18th Century Case Study," nature in the pre-Romantic and Romantic eras functions as a kind of construct, a prop to validate romantic illusions such as inner nature, natural man, natural language, and the state of nature against the rising capitalist society.

of beautiful landscapes but follows blindly those sights recommended by travel books written in order to popularize what should be contemplated in utter privacy. The *Blue Guide* thus prescribes the admiration of the picturesque and the massive sightseeing of churches. He critiques the fact that monuments in a country become an essential thing to see, while people, usually depicted as types, are given far less importance. He is also annoyed by the fact that *The Blue Guide* promotes the seeing and climbing of mountains as civic virtue that regenerates through clean air. "This old Alpine myth" is nothing but a manufactured creation of those who control the forces of production, Barthes concludes (*Mythologies*, chapter "The Blue Guide").

¹⁸ Their goal was to experience what Shelley called "the divine beauty" of Rousseau's imagination. Byron wrote Canto III of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" with Rousseau in mind, and Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "The Triumph of Life" were both acts of homage to Rousseau.

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“Knotting into” *Gravity’s Rainbow*: Scientific Paradigms and Literature

No, this is not a disentanglement from, but a progressive *knotting into*—they go in under archways, secret entrances of rotten concrete that only looked like loops of an underpass . . . certain trestles of blackened wood have moved slowly by overhead, and the smells begun of coal from days far to the past, smells of naphtha winters, of Sundays when no traffic came through, of the coral-like and mysteriously vital growth, around the blind curves and out of the lonely spurs, a sour smell of rolling-stock absence, of maturing rust, developing through those emptying days brilliant and deep, especially at dawn, with blue shadows to seal its passage, to try to bring events to Absolute Zero. (*GR* 3)

Scientific inquiry is considered as the basic authority of knowledge in most of the civilized societies. Consequently, the idea of scientific objectivity frequently makes people believe that science is above the culture within which it arose. This privileging view has been debated upon and challenged (since the eighties) by various cultural currents, among them social constructivists (Latour 1987) and feminist critiques (Harding 1986), demonstrating that cultural background is as important and that scientific theories are socially constructed and thus can be employed as temporary expedients.

Addressing the long-standing primacy that the natural sciences enjoy in public life, acting as stimuli to analogous theories in other fields of study (Adam 48), this essay demonstrates that, although science is used as a “repository of tropes” which enlightens literary texts (Hayles, “Introduction” 20), literary expression goes hand in hand with science as a progressive force that frames cultural values and the way we experience reality. It traces the connections between literary discourse and scientific paradigms in Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973), which go beyond metaphor to assert deeper correspondence. Embraced by a larger revolution in contemporary thought, science and literature share common ground in coping with and giving meaning to our complex space-time, where contingency, randomness, irreversibility, and self-organization rule. The term ‘space-time’ is used in this essay to accommodate both physical reality and the realm of literature, denoting a relative, dynamic event-space that is process-dependent and treats space and time not as segregated, but as entwined entities.

The 1960s, when *Gravity’s Rainbow* was in gestation, were times of progressive transformations in science, technology, aesthetics, and socio-economic structures,

which links literary texts and their advanced narrative unfoldings (innovative in both form and content) to physical changes, generating a postmodern space-time that unravels as accelerated, nonlinear, fragmented, accidental, probabilistic, consumption-oriented, and disposable, delineating in McHale's words "the pluralistic and anarchistic ontological landscape of advanced industrial cultures" (38). The major scientific turnover took place during the first decades of the twentieth century, theorized by Einstein, Planck, Bohr, and Heisenberg, and it removed the limits imposed by Aristotle's philosophy of categorical thinking and Newton's physics of absolute space, time, and matter (the monoliths of traditional Western thinking). The premises of science continued to develop in accordance with the revelations of the external world (micro and macro), made possible by advancements in technology, where experts in mathematics, physics, and chemistry such as Mandelbrot, Lorenz, and Prigogine (in the sixties and seventies) disclosed and scrutinized a highly intricate, contingent, and nonlinear world of interconnected structures, teeming with unpredictable evolutions.

However, these changes encompass a broad spectrum of scientific fields, transcending beyond the natural sciences and contextualizing within a wider socio-cultural framework. Foucault and other philosophers altered absolutist views to relativistic notions, while in psychology, Lacan and others converted "the emphasis from material causes of disorder to energetic processes of relation in language" (Strehle 13-14), whereas in literary criticism, Kristeva and Derrida highlighted the undecidability of textual meanings, and in history, White and his contemporaries emphasized historiography's compositional strategies, grasping it as "a work of construction rather than of discovery" (White 487). The encounter with this complex, fluid, indeterminate, and process-dependent reality discloses our world as a realm of emergent potentialities, where apparently random systems uncover patterned motion, which is investigated by both sciences and arts. Moreover, these developments in science concur with the ideas explored and presented by many postmodern novelists, including Pynchon for revolutions in all aspects of life emerged almost contemporaneously, and literature both pursues its epistemological investigation of fundamental scientific arguments and creates these assumptions, denying any claim of absoluteness in critical discourse.

From the very beginning of *Gravity's Rainbow*, the author lures the reader to *disentangle* epistemological confusion, operative throughout Pynchon's opus, while granting it will only result in additional *knotting into*, offering "a maze of possible interpretative strategies that each leads to a dead end, where seemingly valid explanations herald new complexities and dilemmas" (Grgas, "Thomas" 215). So thick is this text with recursivity and self-reflexivity that scientific metaphors additionally energize the context, being involved in feedback loops with culture and literary discourse. These developments do not render the multiplicity of patterns into a coherent unity (in a classical sense), but rather display the text as a flow of circulating information, an intricate and infinite tangle of connective tissues that make *Gravity's Rainbow* the masterpiece it is.

However, like many Pynchonesque enthusiasts, I will try to detangle certain aspects of this fluid, vibrant, and pluralized world in process, taking the novel as a liv-

ing organism with transformative potentials that continues to produce new meanings upon each reading. Precisely because it deals with a continuous flow of events, characters, and images that ooze and surge into one another, revealing unpredictable evolutions, perplexing networks, and emergent potentialities, *Gravity's Rainbow* emanates complex dynamics that are analogous to the world of natural sciences. Following Pynchon's utilization of scientific paradigms that render more intelligible the fluidity and shapelessness of reality, this essay deals with modern physics and chaos theory, which are detected in this particular novel, demonstrating that "where the furthest-flung sciences are showing us the essential limitation on the sweet, complex, turbulent slip between mind and universe, literary discourses are well placed to serve as avatars for a new science, a new way of knowing" (Porush 80). Pynchon connoisseurs in particular stand witness to the ingenuity with which this author explains the web of life. Indeed, his 'errant labor' into encyclopedic knowledge masterfully engrained into both global and local tapestries gives birth to a new way of knowing, an embodiment of the complexity of "eigenorganizations," as Hanjo Berressem calls animated, autopoietic systems (356) "that locally contradict the second law of thermodynamics" (Porush 57).

Essays focusing on Pynchon and scientific paradigms, particularly relativity theory and quantum physics, are substantial in number (Berressem, Friedman, Hayles, Porush, Strehle, etc.) due to the author's elaborate use of the natural sciences in his fiction and his sound undergraduate education in physics. In his works, Pynchon undermines the traditional constructions of classical physics, challenging the causality principle, demonstrating indeterminacy in predicting the outcomes of possible measurements, subverting deterministic laws, and sustaining nonlinearity, discontinuity, and self-organization. His entire oeuvre can be understood as a representative diagram of scientific changes. *Gravity's Rainbow* is itself a miniature history of scientific paradigms, in which the author demonstrates (among other scientific touchstones) how relativity theory disqualified the Newtonian illusion of absolute time frame, how quantum mechanics eradicated infinite precision, invalidating determinism on the microscopic level, and how "chaos [theory] puts a definite stop to the idea that the course of the universe is both determined and predictable" (Morris 211).

As the narrative of *Gravity's Rainbow* speculates on modern scientific theories, it also exposes the nature of reality and phenomena that are not yet formally theorized, specifically when deliberating about the complexity of chaos theory and nonlinear dynamics, for "literature has a longer history of dealing with it and is more suited to describe its complexities than science" (Hayles, "Introduction" 21). In other words, the new paradigm (chaos theory) was not formalized until well into the second half of the twentieth century, and while the mathematicians Li and Yorke were the first to use the concept of 'chaos' in relation to nonlinear systems in 1975, *Gravity's Rainbow* was published in 1973. Gleick's bestseller *Chaos: Making a New Science* validates this dependence of any new theory on cultural contexts (enveloping transformations in both scientific and social domains of life), for it relates quotations of canonical literary authors (such as Herman Melville, Wallace Stevens, and Christopher Marlowe) to the scientific framework of the new paradigms. But it must also be noted that any

meaning-making method demonstrates certain limitations and therefore conceptual insufficiency of construed theories. Even natural sciences re-think and question established meanings and procedures, which turns out to be specifically challenging when dealing with subatomic phenomena because of “the absence of mathematical tools with which to analyze a vital realm that lies beyond experimental accessibility” (Greene 15), so that scientists occasionally have to rely on their imagination.

Displaying a world which is in constant flux, Pynchon’s narrative discloses a vibrant interplay of pluralized rhythms of both human cognition and information-intensive environments, moving unpredictably from subject to subject, teeming with (dis)connected events that uncover an array of dynamic and interwoven structures in an open exchange with their surroundings. The reader is challenged to piece together coincidental, digressive, and seemingly unimportant data and is left with missing segments not followed by the author’s retrospective reasoning. Characters, locations, and actions move in multiple and discontinuous directions. The narrative itself refuses to be captured into causal oneness, circling endlessly with information and/or “mysteriously vital growth” (*GR* 3), reflecting the subatomic ‘underworld’ that has become our own reality, substantiated by chaos theory, which brought unpredictability onto the macroscopic level.

The highly disconnected pattern is visible when following protagonists and their stories. The narrative first spotlights Pirate Prentice, his dreams and work; then it moves to lieutenant Tyrone Slothrop’s map, desk, genealogy, and erections, suddenly shifting to Roger Mexico and his views of scientific probability, yet repeatedly returning to Slothrop, the ‘main’ character around whom the reader is mocked to construct a meaningful storyline. The fundamental instability of his self-hood augments as the narrative proceeds for Slothrop transforms physically and psychologically, changing costumes, roles, and opinions, (finally disappearing from sight), reflecting the intrinsic fluctuations of life and postmodern textuality.

The readers also have a peek into the fragmentary stories about Enzian, Blicero, Katje, Gottfried, Jessica, and many other characters, revealing their own transgressions, the narrative jumping from one subject to another just like quanta do in a “discontinuous movement” (Pearce 226), refuting the ‘tyranny’ of sense-making, Enlightenment, and closure. At the same time, the locations are being erratically altered: from London to Holland and France, back to England, then to Switzerland, and to the German Zone and California. Among these sites, the author intertwines a few analeptic space-times: South-West Africa and Mauritius, introducing “supposedly preterite races and species by a self-appointed elect,” who are burdened with colonial genocide and extinction, storylines which additionally weigh down the understanding of the 1944-45 diegetic present of the novel (Saint-Amour 308). Analepsis and proleptic jumps follow the same nonlinear structure, unleashing deep intertexts that connect monopolies of violence, shaping a dazzling, yet recursive nature of reality in its refusal to privilege any one subject or plotline. The readers are decoyed to the fragmented pasts of hundreds of protagonists, switching frequently and presented with anachrony, lured into multiplying accounts and associations of various

historical and cultural references. The frequent alterations of tone, the plethora of styles and their shifts without apparent pattern or reason, from technical to slang, songs to historiography, realism to comedy and fantasy, substantiate nonlinearity and discontinuity. As Pearce notes, *Gravity's Rainbow* "is about speed and energy" and forces us "to discard those categories of thought which have mentally secured us, and accept a world where there are no links, no directions, but only continual transformation" (226).

In the opening pages, Pynchon introduces perhaps the most alarming discovery made during the first decades of the twentieth century. It concerns causality, for at that time, physicists began talking about nonlinearity and probability, the likelihood that one phenomenon would cause another, rather than insisting that one thing (the cause) would always give rise to another (the effect). Pynchon depicts an anomaly that challenges causality, revealing the curious reversal that Prentice anticipates while a missile is approaching: "He won't hear the thing come in. It travels faster than the speed of sound. The first news you get of it is the blast. Then, if you're still around, you hear the sound of it coming in" (*GR* 7). Since the V-2 travels faster than the speed of sound, the source is ahead of the sound waves that it produces so that the explosion is perceived first and then, after detonation, the survivors hear the noisy engine of the aircraft, denying logic and common sense.

Although nature itself seems to prefer causality, there are some physical theories that support backward causation, such as the mathematical possibility of the existence of "tachyons"—superluminal particles (Nicholls 70), Richard Feynman's theory of positrons, and quantum mechanical entanglement, keeping in mind that although individual particle processes can move forward or backward in time, "the universe as a whole is skewed in the forward direction" (Musser). Kurt Gödel whose "Theorem" of incompleteness is discussed in the novel through "inevitable repetitions" (*GR* 320) so that the system can never be theoretically complete, presented retrocausality in 1949 by using general relativity. Gödel clarifies that, in a curved global structure of space-time, a traveler oriented toward the future travels along a spiral path rather than in a straight line, and could arrive home to precede his departure, assimilating, but not involving, backward causation (qtd. in Davies, *About* 243).

Apart from Pirate's ominous presentiment and Pointman's and Spectro's imagery of "a missile one hears approaching only *after* it explodes. The reversal!," reversed temporal order can also be associated with Pavlov's stimulus substitution theory, which in Slothrop's case triggers "response before stimulus" (*GR* 48; 49). Slothrop was allegedly conditioned in childhood, but reaches "one of the transmarginal phases" (*GR* 48) "due to excessive behavioral training," which stimulates "him to respond like a machine to stimuli repeated until he begins to reverse the stimulus and response, and finally to blur the distinction completely. He has become a causation machine" (Brownlie 101). Since Tyrone's love affairs precede the bombings (sometimes in days) and his love-making hideouts geographically coincide with the rocket blasts, this mysterious reversal "subverts cause and effect" (Schaub 93). Slothrop's conditioning apparently operates in reverse.

Backward causation is also administered towards the end of the novel when von Göll runs his last movie in reverse, featuring: “guns which are like vacuum cleaners operating in the direction of life [. . .] and bullets are sucked back out of the recently dead into the barrel, and the Great Irreversible is actually reversed as the corpse comes to life to the accompaniment of a backwards gunshot” (*GR* 745). According to Katherine Hayles, von Göll’s act is in tune with a particularly bizarre singularity related to the black hole, whose conversion into a white hole would demand a similar scenario, for “if the substance of the cosmos is being sucked into black holes,” there is a possibility that “it is being spewed out again from white holes” into a circular motion (*Cosmic* 196). This view sustains the universal cycle of life and death, which is in agreement with the gravitational force’s double role: pulling the universe together and yet not allowing anything to come out of black holes.

Pynchon’s title—*Gravity’s Rainbow*—as well as Slothrop’s code name—Schwarzknabe” (*GR* 286) (Jamf allegedly named the infant Tyrone ‘Blackchild’)—are both in concord with these scientific (or pseudoscientific) ideas; for Slothrop can be revived only if he is annihilated completely, and the universe can be reborn only by going through absolute gravitational collapse. Neither of these two possibilities occur by the end of the novel. As Dewey notes, “The cataclysm is forever countered, because, in Gödel’s universe, ending implies completeness” (175). Although scattered and invisible (like a black hole), Tyrone still exists as a cognitive force, and the rocket is still there, haunting, just about to hit a movie theatre, and yet “[t]here is time” (*GR* 760). Pynchon “open[s] up the moment, that slice of time forever approaching but never reaching the zero” (Dewey 175), “because a gravitational field is associated with a warping of time” (Davies, *About* 107). A time warp is a hypothetical deformity occurring in the flow of time that would move events from one time period to another or suspend the passage of time. Even Pöckler experiences this suspension: “the time base has lengthened, and slowed: the Perfect Rocket is still up there, still descending” (*GR* 426). In Safer’s words: “As the rocket descends, there is a sense of anesthetized time, different by far from the eternal glory of God” (164).

The novel opens with the rocket approaching London and ends with a missile suspended above Los Angeles, maneuvering from the historical capital of imperialism to the present hallmark of consumerism, illustrating “ Δt approaching zero, eternally approaching, the slices of time growing thinner and thinner, a succession of rooms each with walls more silver, transparent, as the pure light of the zero comes nearer” (*GR* 159). The paradox of Δt , indicating the rate of random change is that it thwarts causal construction. Weisenburger compares Δt —“temporal bandwidth” (*GR* 509) with the novel, claiming that its open form never keeps “the different channels discrete, for all of them (literary, historical, scientific, pop-cultural) partake in a gargantuan whole that is fearfully inclusive” (149). Indeed, the novel assimilates a shuffled puzzle that the readers need to put together, and yet the pieces are either lost or seem to mismatch awkwardly with sudden shifts of scenes and four hundred plus characters.

In the analysis of Slothrop’s code name “Schwarzknabe,” Hayles notes that it could be linked with the “Schwarzchild radius named after Karl Schwarzchild, who

noticed, in 1917, anomalies in Einstein's gravitational equations that later were recognized to describe black holes" (*Cosmic* 194). A short digression to Schwarzschild radius will be made to explain how Pynchon mystified Slothrop's status, his apparent disappearance from the text or, rather, his evolution into pure empty cognizance. At the gravitational radius, time is infinitely dilated, which physicist Paul Davies explains through the "twin paradox," sending one of the imaginary twins—Betty—to the vicinity of the imploded star (human beings could not withstand the tremendous gravitational forces this would entail); while the other sister, Ann, stays on Earth (*About* 114-120). Betty does not notice that her time is warped until she compares her temporality with Ann's, realizing her sister's time runs with greater velocity, while her own processes are at half speed, including ageing, so that Betty stays much younger. Ann barely sees Betty as Betty approaches the radius "because of the spiraling red shift [. . .], [t]he intensity of the light correspondingly diminishes toward zero. Betty and her ship fade from sight completely" (Davies, *About* 116). All Ann can see is blackness, which is why the compression of the star is called a black hole.

In a similar manner, and just as "[e]ach alternative Zone speeds away from all the others, in fated acceleration," so is Slothrop "red-shifting, fleeing the Center," and his "mythical return [. . .] seems less possible" (*GR* 519). When he finally disappears from the novel, it closely assimilates a star implosion described by the twin paradox, for his space-time appears to be that of gravitational time dilation. An often cited passage from *Gravity's Rainbow* metaphorically assimilates this phenomenon: "he became a crossroad, after a heavy rain he doesn't recall, Slothrop sees a very thick rainbow here, a stout rainbow cock driven down out of public clouds into Earth, green wet valleyed Earth, and his chest fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural (*GR* 626). Likewise, a few pages before, the narrator is quoting Rilke's prophecy: "And though Earthliness forget you, / To the stilled Earth say: I flow. / To the rushing water speak: I am" (*GR* 622). Explicit in these and previous lines are Pynchon's genius and literature's ability to reveal complex dynamics of life that hard sciences have difficulty transferring. Unfolded in them are also traces of Buddhist philosophy, which inspires individuals to become aware of and embody pure empty cognizance, a formless presence, and timeless awareness through which life continues to unfold, grounded and yet stripped of anything solid, flowing freely through life, "just feeling natural" (*GR* 626).

Stripped from "Earthliness," Slothrop assimilates a black hole, invisible to the narrator and the readers, but somehow still present. He could be compared to Christ and his sacrifice, more so because Jesus died as a man and was resurrected, and Slothrop "becomes a cross himself, a crossroads, a living intersection" (*GR* 625), 'felt,' although not seen or palpable. Some critics suggest that Slothrop achieved "Dionysian charisma" (Plater 214), or became a humbler form of life, which entailed the "dismantling of [his] ego" (Hume 215).

The time warp Slothrop is in appears natural to him, for, unlike Betty, he does not compare his time with the rest of the people; he is not interested any longer: "he was changing inside [. . .] what he might've been hearing in the water, flowing like himself

forever, in lost silence, behind him, already behind him" (*GR* 572). He succumbed to nature, and the "rainbow cock" passage confirms this because, for the first time, Slothrop's sexuality is not tied to machinery but to nature. Devoid of rationality, he forgot the times when "he could *make it all fit*, seeing clearly in each an entry in a record, a history: his own, his winter's, his country's" (*GR* 626); he does not even recall a recent "heavy rain." The discontinuity of his temporality is only natural to him; he does not notice it, while the readers and the characters experience it as a distortion, scattering, and possible suspension of time.

Slothrop's story is in a way presented as a chronology of changes in scientific paradigms (and our understanding of reality) from Newton's causality to insecure quantum leaps, black hole time dilation, nonlinearity, and 'strange attractors' of chaos theory (a regenerative possibility). As Friedman and Puetz put it, "Equations of calculus decorate the pages, and from the quantum mechanical behavior of elementary particles to the Friedmann geometry of the curved universe, we are teased with facts about chemistry, physics, mathematics, and cosmology" (69). Slothrop's expanding and contracting temporalities, his psycho-physical transformation can be associated with Friedmann's "infinitely dense point from which the present Universe expanded" (*GR* 396)—the Big Bang theory. For unlike "Einstein's static solution," Friedmann claimed there was a possibility of the universe "expanding and contracting" (Davies, *About* 138)—which might have happened to Slothrop.

But to start from the beginning in pursuit of Slothrop's transformations, his story commences with expectations of teleological continuity. Pynchon ironically introduces his main character through realistic narrative conventions where Slothrop's material goods appear before the character himself, implying in a realistic representation manner what he is like: "His map of London constitutes a realist's effort to fix, sort out, and memorize his experience; his desk, in contrast, displays a surrealist's capitulation to disorder, flux, and unconnectedness. On the map, Slothrop plots events; on the desk, he allows them to scatter and disperse" (Strehle 39). In part I of the novel, the reader observes his analytical side as he attaches paper stars labeled with the names of various women he has met or imagined encounters with onto a map of London. The mapping discloses his wish to "save a moment here or there" (*GR* 23), to keep track of his conquests and endow them with meaning. Slothrop nourishes a vision that all phenomena combine in a single unified pattern, encouraging "paranoia [. . .] that *everything is connected*" (*GR* 703), voicing his commitment to Newtonian causality.

Yet the initial desk scene gives hints that, underlying Slothrop's meticulous updates on the map, his striving for coherence is his life's utmost fragmentation. His desk is muddled with forgotten debris and "godawful mess," including layers of pencil shavings, unanswered letters, abandoned memoranda, a ukulele string, missing pieces of various jigsaw puzzles, etc. (*GR* 18). The messy desk setting is a perfect miniaturization of a larger reality, displaying the complexity of life and its indeterminacy that Slothrop becomes aware of later on and abandons Newtonian expectations. Still, his initial urge is to connect diverse, often contrasting phenomena into a whole, which

is also transparent through his passion for jigsaw puzzles. Yet the narrator makes sure to announce that Slothrop possesses "lost pieces to different jigsaw puzzles showing parts of the amber left eye of a Weimaraner, the green velvet folds of a gown, slate-blue veining in a distant cloud, the orange nimbus of an explosion" (ibid.), revealing discordant fragments and an inability to assemble a complete picture. The same metaphor runs throughout the novel, underlying the reader's inability to connect all the detailed, ambiguous, and disparate information (or randomness).

Most of the characters accept Newtonian heritage, assuming that, with enough information, any physical occurrence could be predicted. Thus, behaviorist philosophers and Pointsman are convinced that Slothrop attracts bombs falling on London. As already said, the map of his sexual innuendos coincides with the raids on London: rockets hit the spots Slothrop has marked on the map as his love-making terrain. Pointsman believes that these patterns are not random, but that something mechanical or biological within Tyrone makes him an attractor to the rockets (Slethaug 154), advocating "the most traditional view of causality: the reduction of all processes to the sequence of stimulus and response" (Heise 185).

Other interpretations of this phenomenon include Mexico's "statistical oddity" (GR 85), claiming that this has nothing to do with cause and effect. Some characters insist that this strange occurrence is "precognition," while others view it as "psycho-kinesis" (GR 85-87), or maybe Slothrop is "in love, in sexual love, with his, and his race's death" (GR 738). The creative assumptions that protagonists come up with and Pynchon's masterful allusions and subplots tied with their hypotheses, connecting apparently disconnected entries, corroborate the idea that in our complex space-time of unpredictable, nonlinear systems, "literary discourse must be understood as a superior form of describing" reality (Porush 77), keeping in mind that both literature and science illuminate our culture's underlying paradigm.

Although Pointsman tries to interpret Slothrop's erections in accordance with Pavlovian determinism—"No effect without cause, and a clear train of linkages" (GR 89)—the phenomenon introduces nonlinearity, chaos theory, and 'strange attractors.' An attractor is "any point in an orbit that seems to pull the system toward it"—which could be a fixed-point or a limit-cycle, such as a motor-driven pendulum and heart rhythm, or an unusual combination of "orderly disorder" called a "strange attractor" (Morris 213). Slothrop's love-making topography that corresponds with V-2 detonations, together with the dates of his engagements that precede the strikes, form a strange synergy which cannot be explained. Repeating the pattern strangely—for each of Slothrop's stars soon has its 'twin' on Mexico's map of rocket strikes though never exactly repeating the same orbits of motion—introduces another scientific category: Lorenz's attractor model (Hayles, *Chaos Bund* 149).

Edward Lorenz, a researcher associated with chaos theory, first published his paper "Deterministic Nonperiodic Flow" in 1963, but it was not noticed for at least a decade. Lorenz studied weather formations through nonlinear differential equations, and his observation turned out to be revolutionary for it demonstrated that "[the attractor's] loops and spirals were infinitely deep, never quite joining, never intersecting.

Yet they stayed in a finite space” (Gleick 140), exposing a groundbreaking discovery that the system never reproduced the same movement, although it repeated cyclic motion recurrently (Lorenz 137). Recursion and iteration are thus integrally related to attractors. Analogous patterns can be found in literature and art, whose acts are almost by definition recursive and iterative, for they self-consciously evoke and explore the patterns of their precursors, mirroring traditional forms, and yet they are never identical to their antecedents (Slethaug 124).

Another feature that chaotic systems share is nonlinearity, where a small initial discrepancy, a microscopic random fluctuation results in patterns quite different from the original, bringing about macroscopic transformation, which means that causality is challenged for there is no predictability. Within linear systems, minor causes produce minor effects, but when nonlinear systems are in question, minor stimuli can cause major consequences. In this particular aspect, quantum mechanics is in accord with chaos theory because it recognizes the existence of at least “some minimal level of fluctuation,” and even a slight “fluctuation can send a system off in a new direction” (Hayles, *Chaos Bound* 14). In this respect, chaos theory renders quantum fluctuations relevant to global experience. If we consider truthful the possibility that Jamf conditioned Slothrop, then he was de-conditioned, and with the appearance of the V2, by which his conditioning was hypothetically activated again (only in reverse), there is an obvious link with nonlinearity. The ‘suddenly’ failed de-conditioning insinuates that a discrepancy occurred, a fluctuation was amplified, making all the difference in Slothrop’s system and sending him into a new direction from this bifurcation point.

Unfortunately for the Pavlovians, who are desperately seeking causal clarifications, there is no “true mechanical explanation” (*GR* 89), although Ivan Petrovich wonders if “a conditioned reflex [could] survive in a man, dormant, over 20 or 30 years” (*GR* 85). But, as Kathryn Hume points out, conditioning is only a speculation, since Imipolex G was developed in 1939, and Tyrone was supposedly conditioned with the same substance around 1920, leading to a causal loop (7). Also, Imipolex was just part of the rocket that Gottfried was in; the narrative does not specify that the substance was used in other V2s, and “[i]f there is a causal link between phallic character and phallic rocket, the rocket should be responding to Slothrop, rather than vice versa” (Hite 116). Even if we suppose that Jamf conditioned Slothrop and then later on revoked the procedure, this does not allow for the causality principle inherent in Pavlovian philosophy to break its laws and grant Imipolex to cause an erection in Tyrone; what is more, “there is no way of aligning the temporality of *Gravity’s Rainbow* with Pointsman’s model of causality” (Heise 193).

The recursion of Slothrop’s erections before the rocket strikes suggests tinges of dynamic activity that can only be traced within nonlinear systems, emerging from relatively independent cells that appear disordered and closely related to fractals. Benoit Mandelbrot, the inventor of fractal geometry, who worked on highly irregular forms in the sixties and seventies, published *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* in 1982. Contemporary literature and art assimilate the basic concepts of Mandelbrot’s study, breaking with the Euclidean heritage of ideal forms, demonstrating complexity and

turbulent flow, and mirroring the images of fractals and their dynamic nonlinear structure, as is the case with Slothrop's erectile tissue. Each fractal pattern reiterates the others, building elaborate pattern within pattern, repetition across scales (from larger to smaller structures), involving unpredictability, irregularity, and fragmentation (Mandelbrot 2). The entire postmodern narrative encompasses some form of fracture, discontinuity, self-similarity, and fragmentation, assimilating chaotic patterns, as is the case with Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and *The Crying of Lot 49*. They incorporate repetition across scales and infinite nesting of pattern within pattern, mocking the idea of completeness and yet paradoxically revealing a whole, dismissing the causality principle as it was grounded in classical physics (although there is causality intermixed with unpredictability and randomness), and pointing to the complexities and juxtapositions the system acquires with time.

Contradicting mechanistic causal links, characters such as Leni, Bodine, Geli, Tchitcherine, Enzian, Mexico, and Bianca see reality "as a freak deviation from the probable, representing the truly random state of nature" (Friedman 74). They despise the Western world's "illusion of control. That A could do B. [...] Things only happen, A and B are unreal, are names for parts that ought to be inseparable" (GR 30). However, the Newtonian logic and determinism rule the military, so that the "PISCES" (GR 34) people and engineers employed at the rocket building engage in linear, positivistic doctrine. Pökler is identified as "the cause-and-effect man," and Leni tries to teach him: "Not produce [...] not cause. It all goes along together. Parallel, not series." (GR 159). Likewise, the Pavlovian assumption that a mechanical explanation must be underneath Slothrop's love affairs and bombings implies "the stone determinacy of everything" (GR 86). That is why Pointsman pursues Tyrone—to be the first to understand the functioning of the mechanism that causes the occurrence, so that he can utilize it as an operational tool. But Slothrop is also being chased by American, English, and Russian intelligence, and by other individuals and groups interested in the 'conditioning apparatus.' In his life, Slothrop has been exploited in various ways, from the alleged conditioning in his infancy, to the Berlin underground, to the Argentine anarchists, and finally, to Dr. Rózsavölgyi, who claims, "We, are in control. He, cannot *help*, himself" (GR 81-82). Even Katje uses him, initiating an affair only for the purposes of observation.

It is not surprising that, after being an object of manipulation throughout his life, Slothrop strives to get some control, clinging to causality. In part II of the novel he exaggerates even more, interpreting every minute detail that he comes across, where even "raindrops" can be read as "footnotes" (GR 204), connecting all the data into one continuous whole: "all in his life of what has looked free or random, is discovered to've been under some Control, all the time, the same as a fixed roulette wheel" (GR 209). Although these disparate phenomena that in Slothrop's view cohere can be understood as Newton's linear continuities, the last quotation can also be observed from the chaos theory perspective because even chaotic systems share certain universal characteristics, exposing a hidden order in which both symmetry and asymmetry appear. That is why we can connect Slothrop's view of 'controlled randomness' to a roulette

wheel, which mathematicians claim has an “expected return of at least 18%” (Small and Tse 1), and this randomness could also be linked to Prigogine’s “nonequilibrium dissipative structures,” where “new bifurcations typical of chaotic behavior may arise” (Prigogine 73; 68).

Although Tyrone tries to organize his life, connecting events and tracing them as linear and causal, reality strikes him with its unpredictable and random nature. After Tantivy’s disappearance and some other mishaps, Slothrop leaves Newtonian heritage. In part III we can see how he abandons the quest for coherence:

If there is something comforting—religious, if you want—about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long. Well right now Slothrop feels himself sliding onto the anti-paranoid part of his cycle, feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is. [...] Either They have put him here for a reason, or he’s just here. (*GR* 434)

Even characters that he meets behave in a random manner, nurturing mindless pleasures and hastening his oblivion. Geli Tripping, the ‘witch,’ provides the perspective of a less rational, more intuitive existence: “Forget frontiers now. Forget subdivisions. There aren’t any” (*GR* 294). Maureen Quilligan describes their adventures as “the gaiety of her tripping with Slothrop,” alluding to her name and behavior, as if there was no tomorrow (194). Bummer and his world of drugs and idealism detach Slothrop even more from reality for he strips Slothrop of his own identity by projecting superhuman powers onto him.

Throughout the novel, Slothrop adopts a whole series of disguises and fraudulent identities that do nothing to balance his fluctuating self. He becomes: British journalist Ian Scufflig, German actor Max Schlepzig, a Russian secret agent, Rocketman, and Pig-Hero Plechazunga. Slothrop is as unstable as quanta. If “quantum physics is a mirror-image of schizoid postmodern consciousness” (Kroker 159), Tyrone is a perfect specimen. Quanta oscillate in space-time, alternating between waves and particles, generating indeterminacy in nature, where randomness is the prevalent ontology, and order and disorder emerge spontaneously. Quantum indeterminism indicates that for “a particular quantum state there are many (possibly infinite) alternative futures or potential realities” (Davies, “That Mysterious” 47). This subatomic world reflects Slothrop’s personality. He promptly acquires the lifestyle of the people he meets but soon abandons them, which proves his instability.

As the novel proceeds, he shrinks from contact and isolates himself, even physically he “has begun to thin, to scatter” (*GR* 509). Pynchon associates Slothrop’s life with larger movements of time:

‘Temporal bandwidth’ is the width of your present, your *now*. It is the familiar ‘ Δt ’ considered as a dependent variable. The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth, the more solid your persona.

But the narrower your sense of Now, the more tenuous you are. It may get to where you're having trouble remembering what you were doing five minutes ago, or even—as Slothrop now—what you're doing *here*, at the base of this colossal curved embankment. (GR 509)

Like quanta, he keeps moving and changing; thus, he is hard to detect. Depriving himself of human attire, even symbolically while wearing the Pig-Hero costume, others fail to recognize him, even the narrator. By the end of part III, he has lost any recognizable identity and memory, deprived of the will to connect, he “won't interpret, not any more” (GR 567).

In part IV, Slothrop appears as a “plucked albatross [. . .] *stripped*. Scattered all over the Zone. It's doubtful if he can ever be ‘found’ again, in the conventional sense of ‘positively identified and detained.’ Only feathers [. . .] redundant or regenerable organs [. . .] Hydra-Phänomen. [. . .] ‘Regions of Indeterminacy in Albatross Anatomy.’” (GR 712) This quote corroborates Pynchon's brilliance, his ability to transfer his knowledge of natural sciences and the way he perceives reality, masterfully packaged with ambiguity in a poetic stance, so that Slothrop's identity radiates fluidity, displacement, scattering (which also means: diffusing or deflecting of wave phenomena), and yet it projects the universe in ecstatic motion, organogenesis, and evolution of life forms, unfolding its/his own myth (as the Hydra grew two heads for each head that was cut off). Pynchon first envisions Slothrop as a stripped albatross who “likes to spend whole days naked” and who kept “plucking the albatross of self,” getting rid of “ghost-feather[s]” (past, ideology, America, etc.) (GR 623), which is why they manifest as redundant. Then, his unstable core became more like feathers: light and fluttering, assimilating subatomic particles in their fluctuation, and demonstrating regenerative abilities, which agrees with the regenerative cycle of the black-and-white hole idea discussed previously.

The author's final hint at “indeterminacy,” or Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, crowns the whole story of Slothrop's scattering through the Zone. The uncertainty principle (1927) proves that to measure simultaneously and exactly two complementary variables is impossible, because “a particle physicist” cannot “specify position without suffering an uncertainty as to the particle's velocity” (GR 348), for when determining one s/he alters the other. This fundamental uncertainty undermines the notion of an objective observer and brings the whole notion of existence into question. As Heisenberg states, “What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning” (58). The fact that every elementary particle exhibits wave-particle duality, behaving “as a particle or as a wave according to the manner in which we measure it,” raises questions if “the object we are measuring is in fact there: that is, if it is an object at all” and whether the observer “perhaps even created the ‘objects’ under consideration” (Brownlie 136-37).

Slothrop has disintegrated, (de)evolved into another, simpler or more complex form of life, depending on how we understand the micro world or worlds that exist

beyond our reach (black hole analogy). Since he now vibrates at a particularly low frequency, his persona is undetectable by most of the characters. Only Bodine can still point at him and say 'that:' "He's looking straight at Slothrop (being one of the few who can still see Slothrop as any sort of integral creature any more [...])" (*GR* 740). Just like an imploded star, where the intensity of the circumference within the gravitational field is so strong that not even light can escape to convey information about it, so is Slothrop's existence unknown hereafter to the characters and the readers. He dwells in his own dilated time, unrecognizable by those that have earthly perspective.

Employing Prigogine's bifurcation point, where the dissipative structure originates, Porush gives an instrumental explanation of what can happen within nonlinear systems of any kind, and which can be used to describe Slothrop's status: "a system-shattering moment [occurs] when the previous, simpler organization can no longer support the intensity or frequency of its own fluctuations, and either disintegrates or jumps to a new level of order and integration" (68). Slothrop's frequency has reduced or redshifted (increased in wavelength) and now approaches 'signal zero.' As Mondaugen's (one of the characters) electro-mysticism teaches: "Only at moments of great serenity is it possible to find the pure, the informationless state of signal zero" (*GR* 404), and indeed, with "not a thing in his head," Slothrop is "just feeling natural" (*GR* 626), manifesting "a desire to become pure process," as Berressem views the German Zone (356).

One of the last scenes where Slothrop is detectable but already a 'stranger' that "is hearing, for the first time, the mighty river of his blood, the Titan's drum of his heart" suggests, together with Pynchon's vocabulary from the same page associated with "incredible electronic waveforms" (*GR* 697) that Slothrop is pumping, oscillating, and fluctuating; he is a life form, but as dispersed as quanta. Only gravity can keep this rainbow of particles earthbound, only gravity prevents his complete disappearance from the novel (although he strives to fly like feathers). He seems to be everywhere and nowhere, sabotaging deterministic laws, challenging causality, as "waveforms constantly changing with time, now positive, now negative" (*GR* 404), and finally turning into the singularity of a black hole, as it appears to be time for that part of the cycle to prevail in order to become a 'child'—reborn again. Hugo Caviola notices "the allegorical alignment of Tyrone and Byron the Bulb," which suggests Slothrop's re-emergence in a new subliminal incarnation, and might mean that our hero is still "here" (121) and 'shining.' Since a bulb connotes light, it might be that, after the darkness of a black hole, he is becoming a child again, reborn in a white hole.

Although so much more could be said about scientific paradigms and *Gravity's Rainbow*—and this essay is just an introduction, for each idea and question opens up layers of highly intricate and interconnected hypotheses (which trigger the need for further argumentation)—I would like to finish on a positive note with Slothrop, imagining his transformation as favorable: a rebirth, assuming that "[t]here is time" (*GR* 760). It should also be emphasized that Slothrop progressed in agreement with scientific advancements, changing according to human understanding of natural processes, which paradoxically makes his transformation natural and legitimate. But, as

Moly Hite observes, "all such attempts to enclose Slothrop in an explanatory structure (which tacitly affirm Pointsman's working premises by making Slothrop an object of study) fail to comprehend him, 'even as a concept.' Slothrop's conceptual fragmentation becomes an emblem for the impossibility of explaining him" (119-20). In the same manner, this essay, although engaged with analytical tools and explanatory techniques, reflects on *Gravity's Rainbow* and Slothrop as open, unpredictable, and nonlinear systems of emergent potentialities that no textual commentary can grasp in their entirety, mirroring our reality as contingent, discontinuous, and irreversible, yet recursive and iterative; random, yet with potentials of self-organization. In Derrida's words, while "trying to reinvent invention [...] through the economy of the same, indeed, while miming or repeating it [...] the initiative or deconstructive inventiveness can consist only in opening, in uncloseting, destabilizing foreclosure structures so as to allow for the passage toward the other" (45). While "[d]econstruction dreams of the 'absolute surprise'" (Caputo 76), *Gravity's Rainbow* arrives to presence as an absolute surprise.

Just as Pynchon's characters in the quotation at the beginning of this essay move through man-made constructions, "*knotting into*" the archways and underpasses that at the same time project as extensions of their and the author's minds (Nadeau 138), so the readers of *Gravity's Rainbow* try to disentangle it, and yet are only "*knotting into*," deeper and deeper. Stipe Grgas points out that this novel "jealously continues to be retentively silent, engaging the reader's curiosity and need for significance, submitting to foreplay yet evading consummation" ("Gravity's" 302). As readers happen upon "secret entrances" that could help out with the analysis, "the blind curves" crop up, looping and drawing attention to the "absence" of anything concrete, except for the "shadows" of meaning as "brilliant and deep" as only a literary pen can bestow. As we—characters, readers, humans—move through the intricate network of winding passages (labyrinths), texts, and life, trying to cope with or understand our present, past, or at least affect our future, the only past we can deliver is either re-produced or hidden under the layers of "maturing rust" which is discontinuously releasing itself through the smells of 'present absence' (as smells are "haunting" Slothrop [*GR* 286]). The past feeds our present with "a poisoning, an uneasiness" (*GR* 3)—the everlasting suspension—a time-warp that approaches but never reaches "Absolute Zero." The future brings nothing even close to what we have hoped to harvest, shuffling the seeds of time and revealing "mysteriously vital growth." Whether this growth be positive or negative, it is "vital," for it sustains life, disclosing the unknown and irreversible in natural processes and testifying to the unpredictable and discontinuous force of temporality—the eternal becoming of the universe that does not allow time to "seal its passage."

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