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Editors' Preface

It is with a sense of joy and pride that we offer to the reading public a new collection of occasional essays, which have one thing in common—they represent work from within the field of American Studies or at the intersections where it cross-fertilizes with other disciplines and orientations in the humanities and social sciences.

As we announced at the launching of the e-publication *Working Papers in American Studies*, our primary concern is to provide a widely and freely accessible platform for presenting the work of Croatian and international American Studies scholars. We are happy to continue with that commitment in our second volume. The essays collected here grew out of the presentations in the third annual American Studies Workshop held in Zagreb on October 3, 2015, entitled “Quarter of a Century after the Fall of the Berlin Wall: Perspectives and Directions in Croatian and Regional American Studies.” Therefore, all but the last text in this collection engage with the complex and wide problematic of postsocialism by taking into account its American(ist) aspects. The last text is an exception: starting from this volume, we will also offer a slot in *WPAS* for the pre-doctoral work of our younger colleagues.

We would like to express our gratitude to the contributors who joined in the debate, as well as to all the participants in the event.

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Changing American Priorities: A View from the Ruins of Its “Communist Ally”

The author begins his paper by drawing attention to the absence of postsocialism in American Studies. This is peculiar considering that the establishment of the discipline was partly determined by the Cold War context, by the presence of socialism as its enabling other. Arguing for the need to differentiate both the former state of affairs and what has ensued after the demise of the socialist world, the author chooses to tackle the issue from the perspective of former Yugoslavia which had an “anomalous” position in relation to the United States. The crux of his argument hinges on the contention that both that position and what befell Yugoslavia have to be viewed within the unfolding of different times of capital. In his analysis the author puts an emphasis on the consequences of the so-called Nixon shock and the introduction of the incontrovertible dollar. In his conclusion the author puts forward a number of proposals how an engagement with these issues has consequences for the very definition of American Studies as a scholarly discipline.

Key words: Key words: postsocialism, Yugoslavia, geopolitics, American aid, finance, the Nixon shock

It is precisely because the money form of value is its independent and palpable form of appearance that the circulation form $M \dots M'$, which starts and finishes with actual money, expresses money-making, the driving motive of capitalist production, most palpably. The production process appears simply as an unavoidable middle term, a necessary evil for the purpose of money-making. (This explains why all nations characterized by the capitalist mode of production are periodically seized by fits of giddiness in which they try to accomplish the money-making without the mediation of the production process.)

Karl Marx, *Capital* (II: 137)

1

In an earlier paper, I drew attention to the fact that American studies are never merely an archival practice, but that they always engage in the actuality of their object of study.¹ Drawing upon my earlier formulation, the object of American studies is not an ethereal thing, but rather a socio-economic entity whose transformations have intermittently intervened into the discursive field of the discipline (Grgas 2014a). More than other scholarly endeavors, American studies attunes both its content of inquiry and its methodology to the exigencies of the present moment. This can be seen when practitioners refer to a contemporary event or phenomenon in arguing for the relevance of their reading of America. As far as the early practitioners of the discipline are concerned, I am referring to those deictic marks which indicated the time of their writing.² The same gesture can be more subtle and complex. Thusly the new Americanists registered the racial, ethnic, and gender fragmentation of the United States that was contemporaneous with their scholarly efforts. The same can be said for one of the latest transformations in the discipline, the so-called transnational turn, which emerged when it became more than obvious that to speak of the United States and to set it apart from the hemispheric and the global context was untenable.

Since this latest development provides the immediate context from which my deliberations proceed, I quote Winfried Fluck, who questions

1 The essay is part of research conducted in the project “A Cultural History of Capitalism: Britain, America, Croatia” funded by the Croatian Scientific Foundation (HRZZ-1543).

2 A cursory glance at some of the pioneering texts of American studies illustrates this practice. I have in mind, for example, Miller’s locating and dating his “sudden epiphany” ... “of the pressing necessity for expounding” America to the twentieth century “at Matadi on the banks of the Congo” during WWII (vii). In *The American Adam*, Lewis remarks, “We can hardly expect to be persuaded any longer by the historic dream of the new Adam” (10). Henry Nash Smith does the same thing in the second Preface to *Virgin Land*, when he writes that, in 1969, Congress “is still markedly influenced by the now archaic myth of the Garden” (x). Finally, I note that Leo Marx, in the epilogue to *The Machine in the Garden*, states that “our inherited symbols of order and beauty have been divested of meaning” (364).

some of the conclusions that scholars working within the transnational turn reach. Fluck concedes that the American national identity “may be temporarily in crisis,” acquiescing in this manner to the supposed demise of the nation state in the latest phase of globalization, but then goes on to state that “the United States are a paradigmatic, agenda-setting modern society, and no talk about the crisis of the nation-state can distract from the fact that there is enough nation-state left to affect all of us decisively” (73). I will return to the question of whether “there is enough nation-state left” in the United States and address the implications this question has for the discipline of American studies, but before doing so, I will position my reading and map it onto a space which has been eclipsed and sidetracked even by those who profess a transnational perspective. I am referring to the absence of the post-socialist world and to the, in my opinion, insufficient attention which has been given to the event of 1989 and the demise of the socialist world in American studies and elsewhere.

That inattention is paradoxical, considering that the trajectory of American Studies was from its very beginnings powerfully determined by the bipolarity of the Cold War. From the archives which show how American studies emerged within that historical conjecture and how it was constituted as an antipode to the ideology of the socialist world, I draw upon Michael Denning’s study *The Cultural Front*. Succinctly put, Denning argues that American studies were conceived as “the quintessential alternative to Marxism itself, which was understood simply as Soviet ideology” (446). If the constitution of the discipline owed so much to this antipodal logic, it is puzzling that the demise of the socialist world and the debacle of its ideology has not elicited a greater response. If the collapse of the Soviet Union and, as Ann McClintock puts it, “the enemy deficit” (92) has prompted disciplinary self-questionings³, these have largely been turned inward and have paid little

3 One must mention Donald Pease in this context and his “rethinking” of some of the tenets of American studies after the end of the Cold War. I cite an article in which the gerund in quotation marks above refers to one of these fundamental tenets, namely to the notion of exceptionalism: “The standpoint from which I had conducted this analysis correlated the

heed to post-socialist realities, what preceded them and what role the United States played both in bringing about these realities and in structuring the earlier formation.

One reason for this inattention is that the event of 1989 has not been assigned the significance that it historically deserves. Without repeating past discussions of what constitutes an event, I refer to Phillip E. Wegner, who, in his study of the “long nineties” compares the “toppling of the World Trade Center” with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and judges that the latter fall – and not 9/11 – was a true event. He adds: “unexpected and unplanned for, an encounter with a traumatic Real, it instigated a sequence of actions that would culminate two years later in the dramatic collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War” (24).⁴ Primarily addressing an American readership, Wegner dethrones 9/11 as the inaugurating event of the present and antedates its genealogy to the dismantlement of the bipolar world. Inhabitants of the post-socialist world ought to give due weight to this reconfiguration of historical priorities. They will recognize the globalization of the local event of 9/11 as the imposition of an American reading of recent history that has only a tangential bearing on their condition. To fathom this condition they ought to search for different antecedents and ask why they have all too frequently brushed aside these antecedents when accounting for the emergence of the contemporary moment. Identifying the position of my writing as a site within the post-socialist world, I argue for the

US disavowal of its imperial history with the Cold War state’s need to represent the US as uniquely positioned to oppose the imperialist ambitions of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, the discourse of American exceptionalism had legitimated America’s dominance within a dichotomized world order by supplying the rationale for America’s moral superiority to Russian communism” (19).

4 Wegner theorizes the concept of the event by calling upon Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. He quotes Badiou’s description of the event as something that happens “that cannot be reduced to its ordinary inscription in ‘what is there,’ something that is the “void of the situation, that aspect of the situation that has absolutely no interest in preserving the status quo as such” (23). All of these qualifications are, I think, applicable to the fall of the socialist order.

epochal significance of the collapse of the socialist world – or, put otherwise, the restoration of capitalism – when confronting the reality in which I put forward these observations.⁵

Shu-mei Shih's explanation for why the post-socialist experience and what triggered it did not receive serious attention is pertinent to American studies and hints at the parochialism of the discipline as practiced in the States. In the article "Is the Post- in Postsocialism the Post- in Posthumanism?" we read:

The apparent inapplicability of the postsocialist framework to the West ... is the major reason for the general lack of interest in the topic in American academia, where the discussions of postsocialism are largely confined within the now nominally debunked but actually existing area studies, the assumption being that it lacks universal significance. (28)

I add that not only has the project of socialism itself been delimited to an area but to a history whose relevance has been systematically downplayed in the latest conjuncture. These amnesia-inducing displacements were part of a strategic move in a totalizing setup that now promotes itself as being without an alternative. Therefore, the passing away of a world that purported to be paving the road to a system antipodal to capitalism – to be forthright about

5 Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher provide an interesting reading of what was at stake in this historical transformation. They work with the notion of "radical universalism" – under which they subsume Marxism – and contend that it was "one of the most significant and most influential visions in the period of high modernism, that is, between the end of the nineteenth century and 1968 ... The symbolic year of 1968 was a watershed in an already unfolding process. Post-modern attitudes replaced the high modernist ones in arts, literature, as well as in the vision of the world" (5). The pertinence of these remarks to my argument is evident on the next page: "Radical universalism became history altogether in the glorious year of 1989. In this respect, although in no other, 1989 is Eastern Europe's 1968" (6). The breakup of Yugoslavia could easily be put forward as evidence that their "pessimistic scenario" of the resurrection of "radical particularism" after the default of "radical universalism" was not confined to theory but played itself out in a catastrophic "praxis" (Heller & Feher 3).

it – was relegated to a mere blip in the inevitable unfolding and ending of history. Shu-mei Shih provides another take on the matter which adumbrates a number of issues that I deal with below:

postsocialism ought to be considered as a condition affecting the entire world. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold war reconfigured the world in specific ways. For instance, the Cold War divided the world around a particular kind of dichotomy of East and West – socialism and capitalism – not the East and West of Orientalism and Occidentalism. The collapse of this dichotomy has given rise to a new dichotomy with a different geographical pivot – the North and the South – as a way to understand the economic inequality in today's world. The end of the Cold War, furthermore, greatly hastened the onward march of the neoliberalization of the entire world in economy and politics. (28–29)

If recent developments – demographic movements, terrorism, rising inequality – indicate a tectonic change, then the demise of the socialist world must, in my opinion, be indicated as one of the historical determinants. Parenthetically, I add that I am not implying direct causality but rather an enablement of processes by default.

In what follows I focus upon a site that was and was not a part of the socialist world. In doing so, I hope to illustrate the need for a nuanced approach to both the socialist world and to its breakdown. The fact that this site – Yugoslavia – had a different relationship to the United States than did other socialist countries is the departure point of my paper. In what follows I will outline the nature of this relationship during three different periods. Furthermore, I will show that the positioning of the United States towards Yugoslavia reflected mutations in the U.S. polity itself. I will contend that those mutations have more to do with the economic sphere than with any other facet of the United States. Put otherwise, the history of United States' presence in Yugoslavia and in the region after the breakup of the federation reflects the changing nature of the American economy. In my conclusion I will field some thoughts about what the future holds for the discipline of American studies and how the discipline ought to respond if issues of the economy are prioritized.

The syntagm “American Communist ally” was coined by the Croatian historian Tvrtko Jakovina for the title of his study of U.S.–Yugoslav relations during the period 1945–1955. Jakovina documents the substantial aid the United States provided to Yugoslavia as part of its policy of containing Soviet expansion (Jakovina). The status that Yugoslavia enjoyed as a by-product of this policy – a commitment to Marxist ideology⁶ coupled with ties to the West – made it an anomaly in the bipolar world and therefore perhaps hard to subsume under the dichotomy that we saw contributed to the rise of American studies but nevertheless an anomaly that exemplifies a law of American involvement abroad. Simply put, if we do not abdicate in relation to economics,⁷ we will see that Yugoslavia’s anomalous condition was sustained by powerful, American-sponsored material-financial circuits and flows. I intend to show that these circuits and flows were not static but reflect both quantitative and qualitative mutations both in the ally and in the United States itself. For simplicity’s sake I summarily divide American relations to Yugoslavia into three periods: (a) the period before the breakup of the former federation, (b) the period of the breakup itself, and (c) the period of dismantlement. I do so not because I intend to give an exhaustive description of each period but,

6 Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher provide an interesting reading of what was at stake in this historical transformation. They work with the notion of “radical universalism” – under which they subsume Marxism – and contend that it was “one of the most significant and most influential visions in the period of high modernism, that is, between the end of the nineteenth century and 1968 ... The symbolic year of 1968 was a watershed in an already unfolding process. Post-modern attitudes replaced the high modernist ones in arts, literature, as well as in the vision of the world” (5). The pertinence of these remarks to my argument is evident on the next page: “Radical universalism became history altogether in the glorious year of 1989. In this respect, although in no other, 1989 is Eastern Europe’s 1968” (6). The breakup of Yugoslavia could easily be put forward as evidence that their “pessimistic scenario” of the resurrection of “radical particularism” after the default of “radical universalism” was not confined to theory but played itself out in a catastrophic “praxis” (Heller & Feher 3).

7 I am rephrasing Bernard Stiegler’s diagnosis that “the philosophy of our time has abandoned the project of political economy”. I fully agree with his pronouncement that, “because it is true that economism has led to horrific outcomes, nevertheless the absence of a critique of today’s economy prepares other horrors” (18). The later section of my paper takes up “current economics” which I think played a part in the horrors that attended the breakup of Yugoslavia and the travails of its post-socialist reality.

keeping the American Studies perspective in view, to propose that the differences between the three periods reflect a mutation of economics that affected both the United States and the historical trajectory of its ally.

2

Tvrtko Jakovina's study of the aid the United States gave to Yugoslavia after Tito broke with the Soviet camp can be supplemented by other authors. One can, for example, go to David A. Dyker, who writes: "The \$650m worth of US food aid given to Yugoslavia 1950–9 not only helped Yugoslavia to survive the dark days of the early 1950s, but also enabled it to run a deficit on agricultural Balance of Trade 1953–9 averaging \$40m annually" (45). For the purposes of my argument, it has to be said that this sort of aid was discontinued in 1961, but as Dyker makes clear, this did not mean that the United States had lost interest or disengaged itself from its "ally." As Dyker reveals, the opposite was the case: "there can be no doubt that the dominant American position within the IMF, and particularly within the World Bank, helped to insure that the flow of capital import would not be seriously interrupted" (157). That position of dominance, to paraphrase Dyker, will be the main issue when I turn to the question of United States' agency and power in the present conjuncture, but for now it suffices to say that America's presence in Yugoslavia was mediated, after the initial aid packages, through institutions that one does not immediately identify with the United States.

Due to its "anomalous" position, Yugoslavia was the favorite country for receiving IMF funds in Eastern Europe. One of the charter members of the IMF, Yugoslavia only went three years without taking out IMF loans in the period from 1949 to 1989. The World Bank extended 2.7 billion dollars in loans from 1950 to 1980 (Asseto 46). Dyker updates that chronology: "In 1981 the IMF approved a three-year credit of \$2.2m for Yugoslavia. At that time it was the biggest IMF loan ever, and it represented a milestone in Yugoslavia's relations with the international financial community" (122). According to Dyker, the point of crisis arrived in July 1987 "when Yugoslavia found herself unable to meet debt repayments totaling \$240m" (158). In

1988 “with Yugoslavia entering into new commitments to the IMF to liberalize and rationalize her economic system, things seemed to get worse rather than better” (153). With hindsight we know that Dyker understated the gravity of the matter.

Needless to say, this stark chronology is more than reductive. But it will do to introduce an explanation of the breakup of the former federation that implicates American complicity. Writers who espouse such an explanation routinely point to changes in IMF and U.S. policy under the Reagan Doctrine and the shifting priorities of the U.S. after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In his article “How the IMF Dismantled Yugoslavia,” Michel Chossudovsky goes so far as to say that “through their domination of the global financial system, the Western powers, in pursuit of national and collective strategic interests, helped bring the Yugoslav economy to its knees and stirred simmering ethnic and social conflicts” (Chossudovsky). In *Balkan Tragedy*, Susan Woodward provides a more analytic explanation of the Yugoslav story:

The problem was shortage of foreign currency, although experts blamed distortions in the economic system. The immediate solution was to seek short-term coverage (through IMF credits) ... Terms negotiated with the IMF [were] railroaded through a tumultuous federal parliament ... This project was completed by 1985, when the second stage of the debt crisis program began. The second stage was to legislate economics reforms on the basis of a “long-term program for economic stabilization” created by external creditors and an ad hoc commission of economists and politicians ... (1995: 50–51, 57)

From Woodward’s works on Yugoslavia, I quote an observation about the pivotal point of those reforms which indicates how the initial privileged geopolitics of Yugoslavia disappeared after the fall of the Berlin Wall:

Despite the clear success of Prime Minister Marković’s economic reform and his personal popularity in the country, neither the US nor the European Community states were willing to loan the instalment necessary in the spring

of 1991 to pay the interest on the Yugoslav foreign debt and keep economic reform on track. The contrast at the same time with Western aid to central Europe – Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic – is striking. (2003: 85–86)

Although it is disputable whether in the spring of 1991 Yugoslavia was still a viable polity, I find no other source that has highlighted the contrast Woodward makes, nor do I recall that it surfaced during the death throes of Yugoslavia. For much too long its peoples had been persuaded about the strategic importance of the country, and that discourse continued in modified forms during the breakup of the federation and afterwards. 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.

Gesturing to these imaginaries, I indicate that I do not wholeheartedly embrace economic explanations of the breakup of Yugoslavia. However, I add that any explanation which does not take the economy into account is short-sighted.⁸ It is true that the politicians responsible for the breakup downplayed economic issues and legitimated their policies on other grounds. As a

8 A part of that economic explanation would have to take into account the fact that the time when Yugoslavia took out loans was a time of easy money. I cite Massimo Amato and Luca Fantacci's book *The End of Finance*: "From the end of the 1970s on, the volume of capital movements, in particular towards developing countries, has increased exponentially. This, too, is a phenomenon that can be described in terms of increasing credit accessibility for agents who belong, in this case, to whole countries, geographical areas or economic sectors previously excluded from the international financial system: we might call them the 'planetary subprime borrowers'" (78–79). That "accessibility" returned at the turn of the century and accounted for the upbeat economic indicators before the outbreak of the crisis in 2008. In his study of international finance, Eswar S. Prasad speaks of "go-go years" when "taking on debt and then rolling it over into new debt seemed like a cinch, so policymakers in developing countries were not too concerned about rising debt levels" (53). Explicitly referring to the post-socialist world, Prasad notes that "emerging markets in Eastern Europe had become more reliant on foreign bank loans before the crisis. Western European banks established a dominant presence in many of these countries and financed the region's domestic demand boom before the global financial crisis" (58).

consequence, the cost and benefits of nationhood – of war, to be more specific – were muted amidst the euphoria of identity politics.⁹ But with hindsight one easily recognizes that the economic determinant was always there. For example, if due weight is given to the dynamics of loan and debt and how the distribution and the collection of these always has a price, Yugoslavia was not an anomaly but can serve as a lesson.¹⁰ David N. Gibbs holds that programs of structural adjustment imposed on Yugoslavia were motivated by Western forces to get back their loans without paying heed to the social and political consequences. He calculates that the cancellation of the Yugoslav debt would have been less costly than the expenditures for the later military intervention in the 1990s (Gibbs).¹¹ Needless to say, even bringing up the possibility of the cancellation of debt in today's world is a heresy. That orthodoxy with its leitmotif that “there is no alternative” continues to hold.¹² The United States,

9 David A. Dyker recognized Slobodan Milošević as “a populist, even a rabble-rouser” but noted that “the most striking characteristic of the Milošević phenomenon was its lack of a serious economic policy dimension” (182). The paradoxical absence of the word “capitalism” or of economic issues in general during the turbulent 1990s in the Yugoslav region shows how the ideology of identity hid the looting that was taking place behind the scenes.

10 Vladimir Gligorov, an economist who is doubtlessly fully informed of what transpired in ex-Yugoslavia, has noted how Yugoslavia's experience with debt can help one understand the plight of Greece (Gligorov).

11 Writing this amidst the immigrant crisis and watching the border troubles of the incoming people, I cannot help but think how their path would have been much easier if the former polity had not been fractured. In a less ironic tone, in these trying times when the disruptions in the Middle East and in Africa are tragically impacting the world, I cannot but think of the position Yugoslavia held in the non-aligned world and how that movement provided a forum for articulating the interests of the Third World. That forum today does not exist, and its absence has brought onto the geopolitical stage dangerous players who pose the gravest threat to the world. With historical hindsight it is justifiable to say that the demise of the non-alignment movement was not the godsend certain strategists thought it to be.

12 It is interesting that the fiercest upholders of that orthodoxy come from Germany, which itself greatly benefitted from its own cancellations of debt. Albrecht Ritschl has shown that cancellations of Germany's debt in the 1950s “was worth as much as four times the country's entire economic output in 1950 and laid the foundation for Germany's fast post-war recovery”. In a telling comparison he showed that the debts of today's struggling Eurozone economies “were equal in size to Germany's current gross domestic product. In

or rather, its politicians and economists, played and continue to play an important role in the implementation of this orthodoxy, although, as will become clear, they waive its dictates when the American polity is in question.

3

The ruins of socialism, of an order seemingly proven unviable and defunct by the very logic of social development, were visited by experts from the West who fielded proposals and implemented them to supposedly set right the aberrations of the socialist states. These proposals were codified in the so-called “Washington Consensus,”¹³ whose very name testifies to its place of origin and empowerment. David Ellerman offers a critique of the actions of these experts that is pertinent to the American studies problematic:

in this context, “Western” seems to mean “American” (or Anglo-American). German or Japanese economists seem to have felt uncomfortable as intellectual evangelists (or “imperialists”) preaching to the post-socialist countries

other words, debt cancellation for the Eurozone would be equivalent to the debts that were cancelled by the Allies after World War II” (Ritchl). Of greater relevance to my argument is the fact that in 1991 Western governments agreed to forgive about half of the \$33 billion piled up by Poland’s Communist-era governments. They did not do this out of charity. Peter Gowan gives an explanation which supplements Susan Woodward’s puzzlement at how the West treated Yugoslavia at about the same time the Polish cancellation took place: “The Bush administration’s scheme would make NATO necessary to consolidate the absorption of East Central Europe and thus assure US leadership. The likelihood of EU resistance to the US assault on its CAP and trade regime would make the US the champion of the economic interests of the belt of states between Germany and Russia. In this context, Poland was the geopolitical key and it also had a new elite strongly orientated towards US neo-liberal values and able to draw on a long-standing fund of Polish sentiment sympathetic to America. The cancellation of Polish debt, amongst other things, becomes explicable only in this political context” (241). Just as this passage points to issues pertinent to American studies, it is even more relevant to understanding the deprioritized position of Yugoslavia after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

13 John Williamson gives a list of its main tenets: fiscal discipline, public expenditure priorities, tax reform, financial liberalisation, exchange rates, trade liberalisation, foreign direct investment, privatisation of state-owned enterprises, deregulation of economic activity, and property rights (26–28).

even though they may actually have more relevant experience to offer than their Anglo-American counterparts. Only the mixture of American triumphalism and the academic arrogance of neo-classical economics could produce such a lethal dose of gall. If the economics of Pinochet's Chile was attributed to the "Chicago Boys", then the economics of Yeltsin's Russia might be attributed to the "Harvard *Wunderkinder*." (Ellerman 32)

Although the problem these advisers set out to solve was something that had never before happened in history – the transition from socialism to capitalism – they were not fazed by the enormity of the task. On the contrary, they held steadfast to their ideas and rejected all opinions which pled for caution or gradual changes. As Ellerman writes: all reformers who pled for "incrementalism were undercut by the shock therapy advice of the Western professors" (33). One of the foremost spokesmen for shock therapy was Jeffrey Sachs, who played an important role in developments in Russia and in Poland.¹⁴ It is less known that he advised Ante Marković before the breakup of Yugoslavia, helping the government prepare the IMF/ World Bank "shock therapy" package which was then introduced in 1990 just at the time when parliamentary elections were being held in various republics.¹⁵ The results of

14 A vignette provided by Branko Milanović, a Yugoslav economist at the World Bank, reveals how Jeffrey Sachs saw himself during the period of transition. Milanović recalls how he met Sachs in a bookstore and how Sachs asked Milanović to sign a copy of Milanović's new book: "I thought for a second and wrote: 'To Jeff Sachs, who is trying to save socialism! Jeff was kind of shocked, and he said, 'I do not want to save socialism; I want to bury it'. I was surprised then but realized later: I was still behind the curve regarding what was happening. I saw the early reforms in Poland as a way to introduce market elements into socialism, the same way that Keynesian economics introduced some state into capitalism. Pushing the parallel further, I saw the socialist crisis of the 1980s as a way toward the creation of a reformed and sustainable socialism. But Jeff (rightly) saw it as the end of socialism and the beginning of the transition to capitalism" (quoted in Bockman 158).

15 It is rarely recorded that Marković had another home-grown option for reform. In his book on Yugoslavia, Viktor Meier felt the need to mention it in his account: "Professor Alexander Bajt in Ljubljana had been active at the time as adviser to Marković, together with two other economic experts, Dragomir Vojnić and Kiro Gligorov. This trio had, in summer 1989, more or less completed work on a concept of economic reform: it would

those elections are well known. I will add that he was later an advisor to the government of Slovenia.¹⁶

The question that needs addressing is whether the policies that were proposed and implemented in the post-Cold War period were different from earlier policies that, we saw, enabled Yugoslavia's "anomalous" position. To answer that question I think it is justifiable to see the United States' aid packages to Yugoslavia as something that, although not a part of the Marshall Plan, took place under its policy of containment. The difference that I want to emphasize between the two periods of United States involvement is summarized by Paul Starobin: according to Starobin, the Marshall Plan people were "men of practical, worldly experience" whereas "post-Cold war planners were pre-eminently men of theory." Starobin elaborates on this distinction:

The post-Cold war planners were principally interested in social engineering, in building an edifice of pluralism – a way of life that incorporates democracy, freedom of expression, and market-oriented economies – in lands that had mostly lacked such structures. The Marshall planners had the more modest aim of helping Western Europe rebuild its physical core – its roads, bridges, and factories. (Starobin)

Whereas earlier American policy-makers "operated in a domestic po-

have been less radical, but nonetheless comprehensive. As early as September or October it had become clear, however, that Marković had decided for a 'shock therapy' along the lines of Sachs's ideas. As a result, Bajt resigned at the end of November 1989, as Marković pushed forward with his own plans. The reliance on Sachs contributed to the fact that Marković would later be treated as a hero by Western diplomats" (105). My colleague Sven Cvek drew my attention to the existence of this source.

16 Jeffrey Sachs has evolved in his economic thought and has retracted from the orthodoxy of shock therapy. One of the surprising stages of these transformations can be deduced from Yanis Varoufakis' recent comment about an alternative plan for Greece: "We had such a plan. In March, I undertook the task of compiling an alternative program for Greece's recovery, with advice from the economist Jeffrey Sachs and input from a host of experts, including the former American Treasury Secretary Larry Summers." One can only say: strange bedfellows.

litical culture, shaped by the great depression and the New Deal,” that had concluded that unbridled capitalism was a recipe for economic catastrophe, the “Big Bangery” of the new economic evangelists “fit the prevailing conventional wisdom of post-Reagan America – the idea that markets and not governments are the surest guarantors of not only prosperity but political freedom and stability as well” (Starobin). Thusly we see that two different Americas projected their policies abroad during two historical points in both of which the United States played a decisive role.

I am tempted to use two archetypes from American literature and say that in the earlier period the policies were Starbuckian, while in the post-Cold War period, Ahab commands the helm. The point that I want to stress is that the difference was dictated not only by changed geopolitical circumstances but by transformations within the United States itself. Summarily stated, the earlier productivist ethos was displaced, and in its stead there now reigned and still reigns the command of money. The nature of that command will be outlined in the next section, but what cannot be doubted is its global reach and its intention to eradicate everything that stands in its way. Marie Lavigne comments on “Big Bangery” in a manner that anyone who has lived through the transition period in post-socialist countries easily recognizes: “‘Big bang’ or ‘cold turkey’ programmes express an intellectual and political commitment to a monetarist, neo-classical vision, along with a willingness to radically break away from the past. The big bang is a kind of insurance against any temptation to look for a ‘third way’ (any version of ‘market socialism’)” (119). 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.¹⁷ An American studies that is willing to address these is-

17 Some readers might contend that in Croatia capitalism was never fully restored and that to speak of the power of capital here misses the point. Such views do not recognize the fact that the power of capital/money works not only when it is present but when it chooses not to invest in a certain site. Croatia’s present is swamped by talk of investment and capital and what many diagnose as the basic problem of its economy can be described as an “investment strike” (Panitch and Gindin 61). Peter Gowan helps us understand what

sues must go to its object of study and ask about the position of the United States in this constellation. It will ask, to formulate the question in terms of my Melvillean archetypes, whether the *Pequod*, indebted and with so many of its hands idle or not manufacturing things that were its long-time forte, is on a course to meet its whale. However, as the next section will show, analogies with other debt-ridden polities do not hold, and what proved destructive of, for instance, its one-time ally has turned out otherwise with the United States.

4

In order to explain this difference, I will add to my opening description of disciplinary practice – the deictic marks of the time of the writing – another methodological ploy. That is, just as American studies are always attuned to the present moment of their object, the disciplinary archive shows that, in order to explain that moment, its practitioners select this or that historical period as the formative, originative moment of the present of the American project. In my last book (2014b) I argued that, in order to understand the United States today, it is necessary to recognize the decisive impact of the 1980s on subsequent developments both in the United States and elsewhere. Both my description of Yugoslavia and the American interventions in the post-socialist world seem to justify assigning to the 1980s this significance. If the new mutation of the economy can be summarized as a period witnessing the ascendancy of finance – a contention I take here for granted – I am merely rehearsing extant explanations and periodizations. To take but one example, Giovanni Arrighi assigns a formative role to that decade:

With the advent of the Reagan era, the “financialization” of capital, which had been one of several features of the world economic crisis of the 1970s,

is at stake when he distinguishes between the productive sector and the financial sector and holds that the latter is dominant because “it decides *where it will* channel the savings from the past and the new fictitious money – who will get the streams of finance and who will not” (13).

became the absolutely predominant feature of the crisis. As had happened eighty years earlier in the closure of the demise of the British system, observers and scholars began once more hailing “finance capital” as the latest and highest stage of world capitalism. (ix)

Let me here ask the reader to return to my epitaph. In Marx’s terms, financialization would mean a constellation where the circuit of capital dispenses with the middle turn – commodity production – and the process of valorization is embedded in money-making itself. In the Penguin edition of *Capital, Volume II*, we read that the sentence in parentheses was introduced by Engels. If that is so, we can say that Engels has extrapolated from Marx’s argument a possibility opened to capitalist polities but in his phrasing (“fits of giddiness”) implies that this possibility is an unsustainable anomaly. I revisit the issue of financialization here not only because the parallel between these anomalous states – their “fits” – and their foredoomed plight (as Arrighi states for the British system) and the present condition of the United States seems not to hold but also to return to an event to which, although I do mention it (2014b: 45), I am not alone in not having assigned proper significance. It will be seen that, if the momentous nature of this event is recognized, we must assign to the United States a powerful agency in bringing about the present mutation of money.

Joseph Vogl maintains that there are three preconditions for today’s economy. The second is liberalism, while the third precondition is technical innovation. However, the first precondition, one to which I now assign much greater significance than I did previously, particularly in light of my opinion that it is foolhardy to speak of American “declinism,” has to do with finance. I quote Vogl:

A first precondition for our economic present surely lies at the beginning of the 1970s. I refer to the end of the Bretton Woods arrangement, that postwar order which responded to the great Depression by equipping the world economic system with a security mechanism: when all important currencies are

bound to a fixed relation to the dollar, while the dollar is in turn bound to a fixed exchange to gold, the international trade of commodities and capital should remain crisis-free. For whatever reasons, this system failed (an essential reason being the United States' gigantic foreign debts), in 1971 President Nixon brought the so-called gold window to a close, and, in 1973, the Bretton Woods agreement was formerly laid to rest. Then arose so-called floating currencies and currency exchange rates, and in turn began what still bears on us today: the trade of foreign currency derivatives and financial derivatives, or the so-called practice of hedging. In order to protect against the faltering exchange rates in international trade, it seemed reasonable to insure the present with bets on future business cycles, that is, to force futures trading into currency markets. In other words, faltering currency exchange rates are insured (hedged) by currency futures contracts, and possible price differentials are hedged by bets on possible price differentials. The trade of financial derivatives is rapidly becoming the largest market overall; at the turn of the century it amounted to \$100 billion, triple the worldwide value sales on consumer goods. (136)

The importance of the closing of the gold-window is underlined by Michael Hudson: "The Nixon administration was playing one of the most ambitious games in the economic history of mankind, but it was beyond the comprehension of the liberal senators of the United States, and it did not appear in the world's economic textbooks" (410). Massimo Amato and Luca Fantassi also describe the Nixon decision as an epochal event: "In the performance of the very act with which Nixon, somewhat unwittingly, put an end to 2,500 years of history, a new era was ushered in, and a new currency: from now on the currency, the legal means to pay debts, would no longer be gold but another debt" (89).

If the inauguration of incontrovertible money was beyond the comprehension of American policy makers, we can surmise that its effect passed under the screen of the majority of people both in the United States and abroad. Calling upon discourses only tangentially associated with the economy, George C. Caffentzis, in his article "Marxism and the Death of Gold," recalls

how Nixon “taunted his Republican cronies by calling himself a ‘Keynesian’” and adds:

if he had had the vocabulary, he might have also enjoyed taunting them even more by describing himself as the first “postmodern” President. For if post-modernism has the rejection of representation as the defining element of symbol-systems, then he debunked the last monetary myth of reference: the dollar–gold convertibility enshrined in the Bretton Woods accords of 1944. 15 August 1971 was apparently the last act in the long, slow and intermittent saga of the elimination of referentiality from the monetary world. (in van der Linden 408)

If, as Heller and Feher maintain, 1989 was Eastern Europe’s 1968 and its entry into postmodernism, we can say that it was unprepared for that entry. It was unprepared to realize, to quote Christian Marazzi, that “money has become the ultimate and most sophisticated instrument for world capitalist structuring today” (Marazzi). The question to ask is, Was America prepared for it? According to some, it was not only prepared, but the event which inaugurated the present, according to Joseph Vogel, was merely one of a long line of policy decisions that had created its state of preeminence.

From the perspective of American studies, the question that insinuates itself is: to what extent was the conjuncture brought about by the agency of the American polity? That is, to return to Fluck: was there enough state left in the emergence of this conjuncture? There are two possible answers. One is that the American state was very active in bringing about this conjuncture. In their preface to *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin state that “the spread of capitalist markets, values and social relationships around the world ... far from being an inevitable outcome of inherently expansionist economic tendencies, has depended on the agency of states – and of one state in particular: America” (vii). They summarize their argument in the following manner: “The American state has played an exceptional role in the creation of a fully global

capitalism and in coordinating its management, as well as restructuring other states to these ends” (1).¹⁸

In his book *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance*, Peter Gowan returns to the 1970s and the collapse of the Bretton Woods regime and disparages those who saw Nixon's decision as stemming from a “weakened American capitalism.” He shows that the reality was different: “The Nixon administration was determined to break out of a set of institutionalized arrangements which limited U.S. dominance in international monetary politics in order to establish a new regime which would give it monocratic power over international monetary affairs” (19). Designating this regime “the dollar-Wall-Street regime,” Gowan explores its consequences. At one point, he reminds his reader that, in the context of international money, “a state has to acquire funds of internationally acceptable money in order to be able to pay for goods and services abroad,” so that a country has to earn (or borrow) an international currency, say the dollar, before it can buy anything from abroad. However, for the United States this rule does not apply; because the international currency is the dollar, it does not need to borrow dollars abroad: “it prints them at home!” (25).¹⁹

18 Concerning the former Yugoslav polity, we find in Panitch and Gindin the following observation: they write about “the grand opening to capital accumulation that ‘1989’ represented in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The ‘pioneering’ lending strategies of Western banks had already combined with the sclerosis of ‘actually existing socialism’ to turn Poland, Yugoslavia, and Hungary, among other Communist states, into sizable debtor states during the 1970s, thereby initiating ‘the renewal of East-West economic integration’ through a new relationship between ‘global capital markets and command economies. The Eastern European states were mostly cut off from new bank loans along with the Third World states that were so severely impacted by the debt crisis in the 1980s” (218).

19 Eswar S. Prasad calls this the “dollar trap.” He points out that, although the 2008 financial crisis originated in the United States, it did not weaken the dollar or stop money inflows into the country. In brief, his explanation is the following: “The reason the U.S. appears so special in global finance is not just the size of its economy but also the fact that it has fostered a set of institutions – democratic government, public institutions, financial markets, a legal framework – that, for all their flaws, are still the ones that set the standard for the world” (13-14). I am not convinced by this benign explanation but offer it as a supplement to the more critical readings given by my other references.

“Dollar seigniorage,” as Gowan designates this setup, relates to Panitch and Gindin’s designation of American Treasury bonds as the “safe haven” in today’s world and their injunction that “the appreciation of which is inseparable from the role of the American state as the ultimate guarantor of global capitalist interests” (333). Michael Hudson gives us a similar take on the central role played by the United States in today’s global order:

the United States paved the way by demanding that it be given veto power in any multilateral institution it might join. This power enabled it to block other countries from taking any collective measures to assert their own interests as they might be distinct from U.S. economic drives and objectives. I believe that at first the use of the U.S. payments deficit to get a free ride was a case of making a virtue out of necessity. But since 1972 it has been wielded as an increasingly conscious and deliberately exploitative financial lever. (36)

Elsewhere in Hudson, we read how American debt functions as a lever of power:

the United States is able to rule not through its position as world creditor, but as world debtor. Rather than being the world banker, it makes all other countries the lenders to itself. Thus, rather than its debtor position being an element of weakness, America’s seeming weakness has become the foundation of the world’s monetary financial system. To change this system in a way adverse to the United States would bring down the system’s creditors to America. Widespread European and Asian fear of such a breakdown has enabled the United States to dominate the world economy through just the reverse process from that by which Britain ruled in the 19th century. (331)

Martijn Konings summarizes what this amounts to: “America’s pivotal position in global finance and the dollar’s role as the fulcrum of this system meant that America’s debt to the world was in fact a significant power resource” (120). But having come to this point, I could have remained within disciplinary confines and simply turned to Donald Pease, for example, who

from within the transnational turn writes:

The global economic order is not run by blind market forces; it is regulated by complex interventionist stratagems devised by the transnational institutions that the U.S. put into place during the Cold War. The Bretton Woods conference established a postwar international financial system that paved the way for the determinative role that U.S.-controlled institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) played in global economy. Despite its ostensible support of free-market ideology and opposition to state intervention, the U.S. government's integration of global management networks gave U.S. multinational corporations a competitive advantage in national markets. (25)

The reason that I resorted to economists was not only to ground these generalizations in concrete policies and date them to an epochal mutation of money but also to delineate the present, where “finance is now this collective image, surpassing nation-states with its capacity for the apprehension, objectification and creation of productive activity” (Holmes). It is obvious that this “surpassing” of nation states challenges those who, like the authors quoted above, assign a pivotal role to American agency.

If Pease provides an Americanist summary of the mechanisms of United States power, Brian Holmes's statement opens a propaedeutic which questions the agency of the object of American Studies that, if addressed, I think has implications for the discipline as such. That propaedeutic returns to the question of American agency and asks, Does the United States really oversee the dynamics of capital? Is it not possible to see its Faustian bid, for example, as “merely a cog,” to use Marx's trope (1976: 739), in capital's “endless and limitless drive to go beyond its limiting barrier,” to quote Marx again (1973: 334). Does not capital disable not only those who are victimized by its drive but also those who believe that they can make it subservient to their plans? Is that latter possibility not greater today than it was in the past, when volatile finance has achieved and daily achieves an unprecedented ascendancy? To merely hint at what I think is at stake, I quote from Suhail Malik's “The On-

tology of Finance”:

Constituted *qua* finance-power, capitalism is realised only in more or less local, more or less large power conflicts. It has no necessary operational, social, cultural, institutional identity nor (*qua* differential pricing) any constitutive identity in its logic... Constituting the identityless increase in aggregate capital-power, enfutureing the present in the autosabotage of pricing, the misfortune of the archderivative is the historicity of capital-power. (797–98)

If capitalism has no identity, and if derivatives, that monstrosity that has been so much empowered by money markets, are an “identityless increase,” what can an American studies focused on the economy do? Before answering, I quote Wai Chee Dimock’s comment on how Hurricane Katrina posed a challenge to American studies:

At this critical moment, it is especially important for the humanities to rethink its space and time coordinates, to take up questions that might once have seemed far removed – coming not only from hitherto extraneous fields such as earth and planetary sciences but also from hitherto extraneous populations, not traditionally included in the discipline. (154)

Facing a different hurricane, the one that has subsumed us under the command of volatile money, which, albeit not as visible as Katrina, is as devastating as natural disasters, I fully agree that our disciplinary practice has to rethink its premises and take up issues and questions which traditionally were not on the agenda. Perhaps there is no better position than from within American studies to do this. If to do this and to think the command of money necessitates the abandoning of the discipline and venturing forth into post-disciplinarity, I think the bargain is worth making.²⁰

20 Although Peter Gowan does not use the term I go back to him in order to hint at what it might mean. In the Preface to his book, Gowan writes, “Many of the real dynamics seem to work in zones which fall between the territories covered by professional academic social science disciplines, whether economics or political science” (x). Straying into that “be-

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tween," one lets unfold problematics that cannot be understood by disciplinary parameters. Concerning money and derivatives, I recommend to the reader schooled in the humanities Malik's "The Ontology of Finance," particularly those explanations where the author calls upon Derrida to explain the workings of this financial instrument. I truly wonder how many economists are equipped to appreciate Derrida just as I wonder how many readers of Derrida seriously engage economics. That non-meeting is the place I believe we should be headed towards if we seek to address the complexity that emerges after the disavowal of disciplinary dictates.

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“Shedding Surplus Labor”: Fordism, Socialism, and the End of a Workers’ State

Based on the reading of a 1991 World Bank report on the industrial restructuring of Yugoslavia and the archival study of one of Yugoslav biggest industrial systems, Borovo, this article reflects on the position of labor during the critical period of our transition to capitalism. The Yugoslav socialist project is here viewed as an instance of “socialist Fordism.” The beginning of its demise in the 1980s is described in the light of the global advance of a U.S.-dominated, financialized capitalism. Particular stress is put on the class aspect of “post-socialist” transition, as well as the lived experience of crisis.

Key words: Yugoslavia, socialism, capitalism, post-socialism, deindustrialization, Borovo

In the 1991 World Bank report on the “industrial restructuring” of Yugoslavia, we read that one of the characteristics of the Yugoslav economy is “increasing industrial maturity” (10).¹ In other words, in 1991, one of country’s main creditors estimates that the moment in the cycle of economic life has come when Yugoslavia is ready to deindustrialize. I will return to the organic metaphor at the heart of this normative claim, as well as its political-economic underpinning, later on in the text. For now, let me note one of its obvious implications, namely, that Yugoslavia was an industrial country (although an industrial country with idiosyncratic features, as the same report emphasizes). This claim becomes more palpable if—keeping in mind the notorious and regularly emphasized problem of the country’s

1 The essay is part of research conducted in the project “A Cultural History of Capitalism: Britain, America, Croatia” funded by the Croatian Scientific Foundation (HRZZ-1543).

uneven development and its strategic reliance on the countryside for “labor rationalization” (Woodward 2003: 77)—we consider the fact that, in 1983, the participation of industry in Yugoslav GDP was 41% (Feletar 85). As I will illustrate in the latter part of this text, although Yugoslav industry was 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 a historical conjuncture defined by the advance of a U.S.-dominated, financialized capitalism. For my purpose here, it is relevant that twentieth-century industrialization was also based on an American (Fordist) model, and that Yugoslavia, along with other socialist countries that needed to move quickly from an economy based on agriculture to one based on industry, was in this respect no exception. Indeed, at least one commentator used the phrase “socialist Fordism” to describe Yugoslavia in the period between 1945 and 1970 (cf. Suvin 110). The strategies involved in the process of industrialization, as well as the local conditions and political articulations, certainly differed, but this should not prevent us from discerning structural tendencies as these emerge in one place of the globe, only to be disseminated elsewhere.² Such a move from the core to the periphery should thus not be taken to imply some unmediated imposition of “foreign” social forms, but rather their local and necessarily “impure” grafting.

Since this text should be understood as a series of preliminary propositions in an ongoing study of socialist appropriation of Fordism (and its

2 For two micro-histories of the Soviet case, see Melnikova-Raich. For a good overview of the problems involved in studying “the experimental, accidental development of the dominant Fordist paradigm,” see Jessop. Jessop also gives a useful minimal definition, arguing that Fordism can be best understood as “a core mode of regulation whose minimum features comprise: a wage relation in which wages are indexed to productivity growth and inflation, the state has a key role in managing demand, and state policies help to generalize mass consumption norms.” While taking into account the contributions of the regulation school, I would like to stress that the view I take of Fordism here is a historical one, and that my interest lies primarily in Fordism as an organization of social life, which includes its cultural articulations.

limits), I would like to refrain from engaging in a “taxonomic discussion” (Jessop). Instead, as a working hypothesis, I would like to propose that the socialist attraction to Fordism came, apart from the obvious interest in industrialization, from the central position Fordism ascribes to work in the organization of social life, wherein the basic unit of social organization, the enterprise, encompasses not only the sphere of work, but expands to embrace and support other social practices.³ In that sense, Ford’s principle of the functional integration of work and life finds a peculiar counterpart in the notion of “associated labor,” the name that would be given to the basic social unit in the Yugoslav system of socialist self-management. But, if we agree that what characterizes a “Fordist socialism” is a fundamentally productivist ethos, we should also note that the position of labor and its productivity differs under capitalism and socialism, inasmuch as the latter puts labor in the service of class, or human emancipation, and not production of value for private profit.⁴ Things are bound to get more complicated when we move from analytical models to the historical reality of class as the lived “productive relations” experienced “in cultural ways,” to summarize E.P. Thompson’s important formulation (150). My first move in that direction will be to look at the moment of demise of Yugoslavia’s productivist political-economic model and its ideological dominant. To do this, I will combine sources that will allow us to observe the class process on the world scale, as well as on the level of a socialist enterprise. The matter of the arrival of Tomaš Bata’s Fordist system and the introduction of Fordism/Americanism in the Yugoslavia of the 1930s I will leave for another occasion.

In my framing of this problematic, I rely on Stipe Grgas’s recent work, in which he argues for “the epochal significance of the collapse of the socialist world—or, put otherwise, the restoration of capitalism”—for “the emer-

3 In a related context, Archer and Musić speak of “the [Yugoslav socialist] factory as the centre of one’s social universe.”

4 For an elaboration of the argument about the political and ideological centrality of labor in Yugoslav socialism, see Woodward 1995 and, related to Borovo more specifically, Cvek et al.

gence of the contemporary moment.” This collapse, Grgas maintains, took place within a historical conjuncture defined by the “command of money,” or, under the pressures of a financialized capitalism. Following Panitch and Gindin, Grgas maintains that the United States today is uniquely positioned to “oversee” and benefit from the global movement of finance capital. If the appropriation of Fordism also meant domesticating a kind of Americanism, the arrival of “post-socialism,” as the restoration of capitalism in the former socialist world is euphemistically termed, testifies both to changing “American priorities” and the actual limits of the kind of productivism that appeared as *the* socialist model of development. What follows is based to a large extent on an archival study of the Borovo (originally Bata-Borovo) industrial system, one of Yugoslavia’s “socialist mastodons,” to reuse a popular phrase. My primary source is the weekly newspaper published by the Borovo company from 1932 to 1991. The paper makes for immensely interesting reading, as it covers a vast range of topics, from business and technology issues to the everyday life of Borovo employees (primarily in Vukovar, but also elsewhere). When dealing with the situation in Borovo in 1990 and 1991—a turbulent time of economic and social transformation and crisis—I also consulted the report on the industrial restructuring of Yugoslavia published by the World Bank in 1991 quoted above. These two sources are strikingly complementary: one is a technical, somewhat abstract account of global flows of capital with recommendations for ongoing economic reform in Yugoslavia; the other, a host of detailed accounts of the lived experience of the reform and the related crisis, as documented in the weekly of a socialist company that has to accept the inevitable. This clash testifies to an actual encounter: Borovo is one of the Yugoslav enterprises analyzed in the report, as it was destined for restructuring according to 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. This complementarity allows us to trace the workings of the real abstraction of capital, as these played out in this particular time and place.

As already mentioned, I intend to give a more detailed account of the

founding of the Fordist shoe factory near Vukovar, and the arrival of Fordism to Yugoslavia, elsewhere. For now, let it suffice to say that the factory and its industrial village were founded in 1931, and subsequently developed according to the Ford-inspired principles of the Czech businessman Tomaš Bata (1876-1932). Bata's arrival, with his "brutal business aggressiveness of the modern American kind" (Hrelja and Kaminski 9) testifies to the U.S. presence—or "Americanism" in Gramsci's sense—in Europe in a moment defined by an earlier mutation of capital, one which would set the direction for socialist Yugoslavia's industrial development. The reference to Gramsci's *Americanism and Fordism* (1934) should also remind us that the arrival of Fordism in Europe was viewed by European socialists with an ambivalence that ascribed to Americanism a socially progressive modernizing potential. A brief passage from a 1935 issue of *Saradnik* (*The Associate*), the journal of "Bata's organized workers," can serve as a brief illustration of this point:

We are aware of the consequences of industrialization: from the destruction of crafts, proletarianization, to the incorporation of the raw workforce from the countryside; we also know that the expansion of industry in a rudimentary agrarian country (such as ours) always has the character of colonial exploitation. ... We must not join those who exhort a Bata, foreign capital, and foreigners, those who advocate feudal, guild-like production, and fantasize about the good old days. Our path is different. ... We do not want quixotic fights against machinery and industry. We want the accumulation of forces through our union organizations. We want to act as a single force: for a shorter work day, higher wages, social security, and civil rights, for better working and living conditions. ("Mi i Bata" 3)

The fact that these words were published in a paper run by a Bata factory worker and union activist, Josip Cazi, who would later become a minister in the communist Yugoslav government, points to the existence of historical continuities between the capitalist Fordist enterprise and the socialist development that followed after 1945.

The integrated industrial-residential complex of Bata-Borovo rep-

resents one of the most complete instances of Fordist planning of work and life in our country. Throughout its existence, Borovo was one of the backbones of the regional economy, as well as the engine of its modernization and industrialization (at the end of the 1980s, the factory employed over 20,000 people). The factory was often, and for good reasons, called “little Yugoslavia” (“Jugoslavija u malom”), a fitting description not only because of its multiethnic 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 the process of rapid industrialization and urbanization after the Second World War.

The phrase “socialist mastodon” deserves a moment of reflection. This zoological metaphor is a topos of late-socialist discourse on economic reform and was quite common at the end of the 1980s, when Yugoslav industry was being systematically devalued. The Borovo weekly often quotes it critically. Indeed, the reference to “an extinct elephant-like mammal” seems like a perfect choice for a time when the restoration of capitalism appeared as natural as the process of evolution. A different, yet similar metaphor was at the same time used by the institution that was closely watching, as well as participating in the extinction of socialism. Here I have in mind the phrase “industrial maturity,” which the World Bank uses in 1991 to describe Yugoslavia’s contemporary development. Unsurprisingly, when considering Yugoslavia’s other major creditor, we find a similar biologism at work. In an IMF working paper on deindustrialization, we read the following: “Deindustrialization is not a negative phenomenon, but a natural consequence of further growth in advanced economies” (Rowthorn and Ramaswamy). The organic imagery and the economic teleology of these pronouncements suggest a historical (or, perhaps, ahistorical) inevitability akin to the cycle of life. At the same time, ironically, it is precisely life that loses in such framing of social relations, as it is relegated to the status of dead organic matter. Another organic metaphor that the World Bank report insistently uses adds to this impression: “shedding of surplus labor” (shedding, as in the shedding of dead skin or hair). In the rest of this paper, I would like to focus on the position of Yugoslav labor during

this critical period of our transition to capitalism.⁵

But first, a brief reminder: Throughout the 1980s, Yugoslavia was servicing its debt to the IMF and the World Bank and implementing a series of reforms in order to meet the requirements of its creditors. These reforms were variously known as “stabilization program,” “restructuring measures,” etc. They were not implemented evenly nor without resistance and many internal negotiations. However, their overall direction and outcome was quite clear: in a nutshell, the country’s economy was progressively being transformed from a socialist to a capitalist one. This process intensified during the years of austerity measures and, later, shock therapy, from 1988 and ’89 onwards. In 1990, the strict policy of monetary restriction (meaning no credit at all for enterprises), was combined with new regulations meant to “deregulate” the economy, resulting in a wave of bankruptcies and liquidations and in mass unemployment.

In its 1991 report, the World Bank recognized the fact that the shock therapy was affecting the economy indiscriminately: “Many potentially viable enterprises are currently in a crisis situation due to losses and illiquidity.” It also recognized that this was due, among other factors, to “slumping domestic demand for consumer goods and particularly capital goods [goods used in production of goods and services] as a result of the stabilization program.” In other words, the reforms (“stabilization,” “restructuring”) had devastating consequences even for the “viable” parts of the Yugoslav industry. In 1990, industrial production declined by 11% due to these measures. In the summer of that year, the Slovenian economist 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 was actually quite close to the World Bank estimates, which found that the “loss-making enterprises” employed, and consequently needed to “shed”

5 Before continuing, let me say here that I do not subscribe to those explanations of the disintegration of Yugoslavia that put exclusive blame on “the West,” primarily the IMF and the World Bank. However, it is on this aspect that I want to focus here, bracketing for the moment the internal dynamics of the country’s break up.

“1.2 million workers,” or “about 20% of the total work force” (12). The World Bank also recognizes that one way of saving the viable enterprises would be through government bail-outs. This was discouraged, however, since it would “compromise the financial sector reform as well as the stabilization program.” In order for the financial sector reform to remain uncompromised, 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 the Government. (World Bank xi)

So the priorities were clear: they were in the “financial sector”; the projected collateral damage was also explicitly named: it was dubbed “surplus labor.”⁶ Given such priorities, it is interesting that the report dedicates a disproportionate amount of space to the problem of labor. In short, this is because the existing position of labor (together with its repercussions for the expected transformation of property relations) is understood here as an obstacle to a successful transition to capitalism.

The real-life consequences of the reform measures are readily observed even in a superficial look at contemporary sources. In Borovo, the credit restrictions led to an acute lack of work and the inability of the company to provide regular pay for its workers. Nevertheless, since “the reform has no alternative,” as the Yugoslav president announced in 1989, restructuring con-

⁶ In the context of this description of consolidation of capitalist relations, 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” (cf. Patnaik).

tinued. After difficult negotiations, in early 1991 an official estimate of workforce redundancy was finally reached: 5,600 people. 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, the Borovo management hired experts from Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte, a multinational firm offering “professional services,” to help with restructuring. The weekly reported that the restructuring program for Borovo “especially emphasizes” “the need for an increase in labor productivity and eliminating surplus labor,” as well as “better organization, including authority, responsibility, and incentive.”⁷

The tragic events in Vukovar in the spring and summer of 1991 cut short much more than the company’s plans. Still, the situation in which we find the workers of Vukovar on the eve of war is well worth sketching out, since it serves as a reminder that, in the midst of contemporary official celebrations of the market, the reality of the new capitalist rules of the game was acutely felt in the sphere of work. Since austerity measures made access to raw materials and credit impossible and Yugoslavia was declared a high risk country for investment, Borovo had problems finding any business. About 15,000 people were 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 or 4 months late, about 10,000 people in Borovo Naselje (one of Bata’s original “industrial villages”) were late on their rents, kindergartens were taking company-issued coupons instead of cash, and so on: the halt of production in Borovo was also becoming visible in the decaying public spaces and services—in short, the social infrastructure of the Fordist 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 smaller part of the workers returned to their jobs in factories

7 “Prestrukturiranje Borova”, *Borovo* 3170, April 12, 1991, 2.

under receivership (those undergoing bankruptcy proceedings). There, they were now 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,” adding that “the workers have had enough of self-management, their rights, sick leave, and fake solidarity. They want work, someone to give them orders, and their pay.”⁸ For a short while, one of the factories under receivership (Borovo’s machine factory) increased its productivity eight times. This increase was based solely on an intensified—or “Western,” as the factory newspaper called it—work rhythm. However, those lucky enough to be back to work were still receiving minimum wage. Under those conditions, the agony of the factory and its workers dragged on, now complicated and aggravated by the outbreak of armed conflicts in the Vukovar area.

Looking at the consequences of the reform measures, it is difficult not to conclude that one of its main functions was the disciplining of Yugoslav labor, its adaptation to new work rhythms and 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 that time still the nominal subject of self-management—that represented the main obstacle to the reforms that were underway. In conclusion, I would like to add that the purpose of looking at this critical juncture in the history of our present moment is not some nostalgia for Fordism or industrial labor. Rather, it is an attempt at discerning continuities where we are used to seeing exclusively catastrophic breaks with the past. Even when taking into account the difficulties in which the workerist Yugoslavia found itself in the 1980s, we see that its deindustrialization cannot be thought of as merely a playing out of quasi-natural, ahistorical mechanics of economic evolution, but that these were bound up with social struggles.

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

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A Diasporic American Mirror for Late Socialist and Early Democratic Croatia

Taking as a starting point the eventfulness of 1989—the fall of the Berlin Wall—as a historical break, the author contends that by virtue of historicist inscription, but also careful textual analysis, it could be argued that late-socialist literature in Croatia, especially in the genre of the travel narrative (real or imaginary), has been able to register, accumulate and project some of the preceding and successive shifts and breaks. It is in the travel narrative, as recently revived in postmodernist literary theory and conceived of as a para-ethnographic writing, that the discourses of self, other, identity, heteroglossia, translation, and representation find their full articulation. In particular, the article discusses these and related issues on the tentatively constituted corpus of mid-to-late 1980s travel narratives of Croats in the United States by Božica Jelušić, Neda Miranda Blažević, and Josip Novakovich. By conjoining these writers the article offers a new interpretative framework that aims to both transnationalize the reception of these writers and their work, and point to indicative array of hetero-images of America that at the time spawned specific auto-images of late socialist Croatian and Yugoslav societies thus producing an emergent vocabulary of historical change.

Key words: travel narrative, 1980s Croatia, late socialism, Božica Jelušić, Neda Miranda Blažević, Josip Novakovich, hetero-image, auto-image

In the studies of the communist bloc before 1989, the case of Yugoslavia enjoyed what was in some ways a specific status since the system obviously was neither a replica of the Soviet model of management nor a functioning Western-style democracy.¹ The specificities observable in the Yugoslav sys-

1 The essay is part of research conducted in the project “A Cultural History of Capitalism: Britain, America, Croatia” funded by the Croatian Scientific Foundation (HRZZ-1543).

tem of economic and political management were, justifiably or not, touted as singularly apposite to the state's peculiar constitution (being a federated republic) and were often ascribed to the inner-directed need of its multi-ethnic population, rather than the result of the single (communist) party's system of bureaucratic decision-making. I will put aside the debates pertaining to the nature of the League of Communists' rule in the second (i.e., communist and socialist) Yugoslavia in its 45-year long history, but will simply note that certain inner-directed and outside factors (principally, post-WW II alignments and Cold War exigencies) played a key role in what Vesna Drapac has recently termed the process of "constructing Yugoslavia" in her eponymous study (Drapac). In this presentation, my aim is rather to outline how the dense and continuing links between the United States and Croatia/ Yugoslavia were presented by the several representative Croatian and Croatian American writers in the period targeted by this year's workshop, the nineteen-eighties topped by the watershed event of 1989.

That the revolution of 1989 deserves such a moniker is evident from its sweep, popular appeal, mass participation, and, not least important, the change that it propelled into motion by occasioning the swift (and unanticipated) collapse of the communist regimes and the attendant socialist economic systems in Europe.² Such a scope calls for a perspective based on the transnational view, precisely insofar as it may help register one of the key threads in the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation—the end of the Cold War arrangements reflected in the changing stakes that were put on the fate of Yugoslavia, all other things being equal (that is, bypassing for now the discussion of the intersection and impact of a host of domestic Yugoslav developments brewing for some time and coming to boil at the time of major global

2 As pointed out by Timothy Garton Ash, 1989 is the year that ended the short 20th century, especially if one considers the fall of the Berlin Wall in conjunction with the unification of Germany and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But his statement about the need for a comprehensive, synthetic history of 1989 that yet remains to be written is both a testament to the slow motion of history as well as to historians' laggardness.

and European realignments).³ (A note on usage: Although for the sake of economy I will occasionally use the terms “socialist” and “communist” intermittently, in other contexts their usage and implications ought to be differentiated. Suffice it to say that in most discussions, where the distinction is made, the socialist stands for the economic system and its derivations, while the [less popular and certainly less protean] communist stands to mark the political, statist, and power-based elements of the system: thus Yugoslavia was a communist regime run by a single party, whereas it operated a socialist economy.)⁴

These observations of a political nature will in the remainder of this presentation be supplemented by the main interest of my analysis, which is largely cultural and literary. Specifically, I will be asking if the Yugoslav/ Croatian encounter with America during the 1980s indicated a shift that could be termed “historical,” and specifically linked to the end of the Cold War, the demise of communism, and, consequently, the end of Yugoslavia. In asking such a question, I am implying the particular epistemological acuteness of literary discourse, since, ideally, it contains multiple, varied and contradictory renderings of the context that gives rise to it. As such, my discussion will concern the works of three authors, in chronological order: Božica Jelušić’s *Okrhak kontinenta* (A Sliver of the Continent, 1988), Neda Miranda Blažević’s *Američka predigra* (American Interlude, 1989), and Josip Novakovich’s *Apricots from Chernobyl* (1995), *Plum Brandy* (2003), and *Shopping for a Better Country* (2012). I have deliberately chosen these works since they share a generic identity (the texts being travelogues, real or fictional or some variation thereof, as in Novakovich), while the situations that occasioned the creation of these texts derived from their authors’ act of travelling from Croatia/ Yugo-

3 For this I refer the reader to a competent and informative overview in Sabrina Ramet’s study *Balkan Babel*, which conveniently covers both domestic and external factors.

4 For more on the nature of European and world communism, cf. Koenen; for a comprehensive study of the concept and practice of socialism, cf. Verdery. Ideally, these two historical phenomena should be studied in conjunction, as indeed they historically arose together, rather than in isolation.

slavia to the USA and back. In the case of Blažević's account, however, the approach has to be further attuned to the fact that hers is a case of a fictional travelogue (autobiographical novel, intellectual diary, etc.) rather closely based on the author's experience as a Fulbright scholar spending a year in the United States. Blažević's and Novakovich's biographies further suggest a diasporic node of emergence. Let me also note that Blažević's and Jelušić's texts are written in Croatian, while Novakovich's are available in English (with the proviso that some of these texts have been translated into Croatian). It seems, however, that the texts share a similar repertoire both of auto-images of the late communist society and hetero-images spawned by America to the extent that would encourage their reading alongside one another. Furthermore, as a general backdrop for reading and understanding these texts, it could be argued, in line with the contributors of the collection of essays on the 1980s in socialist Croatia, that the end of the decade witnessed the acceleration of history, in a way that much of it could not be anticipated or managed by the members of the socialist cultural elite to the extent that they, wittingly or not, contributed to the course of events. Moreover, the picture of Croatian culture in the 1980s must be placed in the context of the "decadence," only partly attributable to the not-very-uplifting political context (cf. Jakovina 13–34) and partly a result of the steady adoption of late-capitalist and postmodernist aesthetic notions finding their way into all channels of cultural expression from literature to architecture, from fashion to sports (cf. Kostelnik and Vukić).

That the texts singled out for the discussion are travelogues is not mere happenstance but reflects the long-standing status of the travel narrative as a source of auto-images by way of focusing on hetero-images, to use the vocabulary of imagology (cf. Dukić 5–22). In other words, I contend that, by looking into the production of images generated by the Croatian authors' experience of the United States in the 1980s, we can simultaneously glean their attitude toward their home country, refracted through a diasporic or migrant's glass. The genre of travel narrative has served to highlight the issues in postmodernity pertaining to multiple theories of identities, nationhood, self, and other, while recently, Debbie Lisle has understandably emphasized the genre's con-

tinuing political and social valence—the statements about another country are illustrative of one’s own society, its make-up and its priorities (1–23). A similar intention is to be argued about the three travelogues produced by the Croats engulfed by America in the 1980s. The cultural potency ascribed to the travelogue genre gives rise to the assumption that the writers’ encounter with America transposed into text will carry the marks of the aforementioned process of translation from the other to the self, meaning that the visions of America should be read also as views of late socialist Croatian and Yugoslav societies.

Furthermore, in cultural theory there has recently been a renewed interest for what James Clifford calls para-ethnographic genres, among which he includes travel literature (alongside oral history, the non-fiction novel, new journalism, and the documentary film) (24 n. 3). Being part of an innovative field of knowledge production in a globally intersecting world, genres such as the travel narrative partake of different models of authority: realist mode, experiential, interpretive, dialogical, and polyphonic (Clifford 53), crisscrossing in a single text. Not surprisingly, in his elaboration of recent developments in ethnography, Clifford seizes upon Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of “heteroglossia,” the meaning of which is taken here to encompass not only the relationships between different languages, registers, and discourses, but also different cultures and subcultures (Clifford 23). What is further interesting to note about the specific implications of heteroglossia in this context is how “crucial [it is] for different peoples to form complex concrete images of one another, as well as of the relationships of knowledge and power that connect them” (*ibid.*). Taken in this manner, Bakhtin’s concept becomes not only a harbinger of global cultural communication and interconnectedness but a feature of an interaction (between peoples, cultures, etc.) marked by the circulation of knowledge and the effects of power. This added complexity of (already complex) heteroglossia is even more in evidence in Pratt’s (2008) unequivocal reading of the travel narrative as textualization of, in turn, the politics of colonialism and, later, of anti- and post-colonial imaginaries. Pratt’s equivalent of Bakhtin’s somewhat elusive, since immaterial and discursive,

spaces of dialogue, heteroglossia, and polyphony is a spatial metaphor of the “contact zone” (Pratt 7), a construct attuned to the worldly questions of power, knowledge, and representation. These approaches together with their attendant concepts might be fruitfully used to account for these heteroglossic texts arising in a contact zone between Croatia, Yugoslavia, and the United States and spanning Cold War and post-Cold War imaginaries.

My next hypothesis does not arise self-intuitively from the texts at hand but is a result of retroactive inscription which looks in this array of texts for signs of what Raymond Williams calls “a structure of feeling,” such that demonstrates an interface of “residual” and “emergent” values, a position of historicist ascription of meaning. As Stephen Shapiro notes in a somewhat different context, “structure of feeling” refers to “the mediated representation of experience within moments of historical transition” (27). In other words, I will be looking for hints and indications of extant “semantic figurations” (corresponding to the residual culture) that struggle to enunciate an incipient sense of change and transformation for which subjects as yet lack vocabulary and “communicative forms” (corresponding to the emergent culture).⁵ It is obvious that this kind of hindsight becomes possible precisely by assigning to the fall of communism in 1989 an eventful and historic significance.⁶

It goes without a saying that these writers—Jelušić, Blažević, and Novakovich—do not invent wholesale an America that bears no relation to the extant images of the country circulated in Yugoslavia, whether in the sphere of popular culture (especially in cinema and music, but also on TV, later on) or in the domain of the official political discourse that, at least from the early

5 A longer quote from Shapiro, using Williams, reads as follows: “...Williams used structures of feeling to describe the ‘articulation of an area of experience which lies beyond’ currently available semantic figurations. As groups experience the whirlwind of change that is difficult to describe, they often resort to and reside within ‘certain [dominant] modes, conventions of expression’ that are only ‘approximations or substitutions for their own structure of feeling’” (28).

6 This is precisely the position of the aforementioned Garton Ash and Koenen. This view is nicely illustrated also in this collection by Stipe Grgas’s contribution.

1950s and the strengthening of relations between the regime in Yugoslavia and the United States, would be obliged to find a way of mediating capitalist (and imperialist) America to its citizens.⁷ As an early example of a cultural portrait of America spiced with political hints, let us look at traveler's sketches by Vladimir Dedijer, who visited the United States in the capacity of a Yugoslav envoy to the United Nations conference in San Francisco from April to July 1945 and whose observations might just as well be one of the earliest reports on the United States for the Yugoslav audience (his booklet came out in October 1945). In his *Beleške iz Amerike* (Notes from America), Dedijer is mostly concerned with the American cultural industry: the press, radio, and Hollywood, which he correctly perceives as pillars of mass culture. Since my presentation is focused on imagery, I would like to point to the chapters where Dedijer's attention is captured by a certain type of Hollywood production pertaining to the Popular/Cultural Front (Denning 2010). As an illustration of Dedijer's critical thrust, let us consider his take on the movie *The Little Foxes*, starring Bette Davis and based on Lillian Hellman's play (playwright was allegedly a CP card-carrying member). There, as Dedijer contends, on an example of a planter's family the film illustrates the intrusion of capitalism into the backward feudal parts of the U.S. South at the century's end (175; all translations mine).⁸ Given Dedijer's political predilections, it is not surprising that the other movie featured in his account tackles another problem of the U.S. South—this time it is the “Negro” question partly as it stood presented in the war film *Negro Soldier* (175). This Hollywood

7 I cannot refrain from enlisting an example from Nedjeljko Fabrio's postmodernist neo-historical novel *Vježbanje života* (Exercising Life, 1985), in which the narrator, assuming the point of view of his adolescent characters in Rijeka, barely won over from Italy after Yugoslavia's victory in World War II, registers the youth's exasperation at the unending flood of Soviet war and propaganda films, which, however, abruptly ended in 1948 and was soon replaced by Esther Williams's feature films (366). The Williams phenomenon is mentioned also by Crnković (158). It goes without saying that other forms of U.S. assistance to Yugoslavia followed a similar course.

8 Davis was nominated for an Academy Award for the leading role in the film but, as may be presumed, not for the reasons stated by Dedijer.

interlude then gives rise to Dedijer's elaborate comments on the social and economic position of American blacks, accompanied by illustrations, graphs, and data from learned books on the problem (e.g., the then current Myrdal study) which paints a not-too-flattering image of the state of civil rights in America (the reader was invited to savor the fact that Yugoslavia certainly had no such problems at the time).

Dedijer tops the sociologically imbued view of the American cinema by recounting his encounter with Charlie Chaplin. His admiration for the popular and "progressive" artist (210) who embodies a little man (203) is second only to his lionizing of Chaplin as an independent artist able to set up his own production company and start producing independent films. Chaplin is at times a fighter for social justice and a self-identified "socialist," as he asserts in his conversation with Dedijer (209), and on occasion a businessman with enough capital not to bow to Hollywood and big banks (204). The principal thrust of Dedijer's take on America offers a mix of admiration for the "progressive" aspects of America that he encounters across the country (from Yugoslav emigrants to well-disposed U.S. citizens admiring Yugoslavia and its recent victory in the war) and his implications that the democratic standards of the country are in some ways lacking concerning the freedom of the press, of speech, and of artistic creation (certainly a peculiar observation to make in historical perspective).⁹

At the next stage, back to my designated period of study, my analysis will attempt to show how these three accounts placed on a timeline of the late 1980s and early 1990s indicate the impending and uncontrollable historical changes overtaking Europe, rather than the United States as such. Our Croatian (academic) travelers in America (Jelušić and Blažević's fictional coun-

9 It should be pointed out that Dedijer's views are used here as an early illustration of relations between communist Yugoslavia and the United States. Other travelers from this period, to mention Bogdan Raditsa or Ivan Meštrović—both of whom took a one-way ticket to the States—would produce quite a different account. The point is that their hetero-images of America and resultant auto-images of Yugoslavia, unlike Dedijer's, would be prevented from being circulated in Yugoslavia.

terpart), have already been seasoned in American ways given the manifold ties between the two countries—in particular due to the considerable body of emigrants from Croatia in particular, but other parts of Yugoslavia as well, in the States.¹⁰

The other factor is the mostly uninterrupted travelling between the two countries (this fact did not hold for the countries in the Eastern bloc), here cast in the form of a scholarship residence or an academic journey, and thus additionally imbued with life-changing importance that can easily be translated into a travelogue form as a variant of the quest narrative, which is always in part self-discovery. In other words, the Croatian academic travelers are affected and changed by their sojourn in the States, as they make clear in their accounts.¹¹ The cases of Božica Jelušić and Neda Miranda Blažević (the latter a rising star of women's writing in late socialist Yugoslavia) point to a constant interest in and occasionally fascination with the United States and its various aspects—some of them tied to liberal capitalism, others only fractionally related to it—and testify to the continuing need to represent the country and translate its less comprehensible aspects to the domestic audience, as pointed out by Gordana Crnković (159). If above I have issued a warning against singling out the case of Yugoslavia and the ties with the U.S.A. proceeding from its diaspora, here I have to qualify that statement by suggesting that the 1989 event did not portend such a dramatic *cultural* break

10 I hasten to add, given my transnational focus, that this connectivity is not to be seen in exclusive, not to say exceptionalist, terms since other countries in the Eastern bloc also boasted of considerable U.S. diasporas (witness Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary) and to the extent possible kept up either sanctioned or underground ties with them. This is the subject of a two-volume study of parallel experiences of exile in Eastern and Central Europe during the Cold War, which also includes the case of Croatia (Mazurkiewicz).

11 I have room here only to hint at the possible cultural and political importance of a continuing Fulbright and other exchange programs in existence between the former Yugoslavia (later on Croatia) and the United States; the consideration of these programs' long-term effects and their manifold impact makes for an interesting segment of the cultural history of the Cold War and its aftermath and would add to the fuller consideration of American cultural diplomacy. Let me just add that the Fulbright Program was initiated in Yugoslavia in 1964; in Croatia in 1992. Cf. Belair.

for Yugoslavia as it did for other countries of the socialist bloc, for which the reception of American popular culture could hence proceed unimpeded, free of the taint of regional or cultural “polarization” (Ramet and Crnković 6).

It is certainly correct to note that the reception of some aspects of U.S. culture in the Croatian/ Yugoslav context was constant, largely unobstructed and very comprehensive, just as we have to contend with Stjepan Meštrović’s succinct remark suggesting that the consumption of American artefacts or products did not imply at the same time the adoption of the country’s political ways, let alone of its governing system (160). Jelušić and Blažević show how a socialist subject coming from Croatia experiences several parts of the huge country, virtually a continent, in terms of this inherent dualism: affinity and closeness to some aspects of American culture (indicators of American high and pop culture) on one hand and distance and obliviousness on the other. This skillful varying of distance and closeness, of the familiar and the strange, underlie a travel narrative and simultaneously highlight the nature of the genre based on national imagology, to paraphrase Crnković (159). The situation that gives rise to both Jelušić’s and Blažević’s text is a specific case of intercultural communication; in the words of Crnković, it is a politicized situation of a “cultural exchange program” (159), particularly the long-standing Fulbright Program. It bears repeating, the phenomenal success and impact of the program aside, that it began as a Cold War initiative intending to weave the cultural and the political strands in a sophisticated attempt of the various U.S. state agencies to make their appeal to hearts and minds on a global scale. Needless to say, the cultural strategy works in manifold ways and can hardly be contained by one direction only (cf. Rugh).

Geography-wise, the two texts cover a wide swath indeed: Jelušić takes us to the Emerald City (Seattle) and Canada in the last stage of her stay, with an episode in San Francisco exuding a somewhat nebulous quality. In Blažević’s case, the Fulbrighter and her partner, a sculptor, begin their sojourn in the Mid-West during the winter semester of 1984, while in the summer semester of 1985 we follow them to New York City. Jelušić’s initial impressions of America during her one-semester stay in 1986/1987 as a Fulbright

fellow at the University of Washington, Department of Slavic Languages and Literature will only deepen in her subsequent notes. Originally, America portends spirituality, offers a sense of immense space, and abounds in natural features and social phenomena. This glamorous perspective is later undercut in her other sketches by images of indescribable poverty and desolation witnessed in downtown Seattle and on a tourist visit to an Indian reservation in Washington State. Her conflicting emotions at America's contradictions are worked through by a strong symbolic presence of Indians in her text: it is their spirituality, as well as those of several Eastern traditions—Tibetan and Buddhist—that sustain her presence in and accommodation to America, as she claims that her travel replicates “Black Elk’s spiritual journey” (11; all translations mine). This Indian presence can hardly afford to remain stuck in mythological, symbolic and poetic frames since it is used subsequently by Jelušić to articulate a most strenuous and trenchant criticism of American society, consisting mostly in registering the gap between reality and “mimicry” (20), between the authentic and the fake. For instance, she will note the state’s obsession with ecology that simultaneously fails to include the Indian inhabitants and is predicated on their containment in reservations, the most un-ecological of places.

America, however, is not reducible to a single referent, especially since its otherness is often best conveyed when encapsulated in an emigrant’s—the everlasting other’s—experience. An inserted story of a family of political exiles from Tibet that fascinates Jelušić serves to render an image of America that might reconcile the contrasting images of heaven and hell, marking Jelušić’s impression of a continent that masquerades as a country. The fact that the Tibetan displacement is caused by political factors is not dwelt upon by Jelušić, but continues to linger in the reader’s mind as she considers the previous case of disenfranchised Indians, the polar opposite of the empowered Tibetan family that thrives culturally, economically, and familially upon reaching America.

Other hetero-images are contained in Jelušić’s encounters with “our” people in the States, where she reiterates the story of mobility by underwrit-

ing the immigrants' experience and so perpetuates, albeit in a subdued form, the narrative of economic opportunity and success. Another parallel, however, is more conspicuous in the text, especially in the context of the impending dissolution of the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia: the academic spaces and locations visited by Jelušić seem to exude an aura of interethnic harmony and co-operation that obviate every mention of ethnic origin and roots and are simply rendered obsolete by the vastness and variety of the American context (32–33). The acculturating engine of the U.S. liberal sphere and the society of abundance, affordable work, and consumption (for all but the Indians and the homeless paupers in downtown Seattle) renders all identitarian markers superfluous. From an intervening historical distance, this shows why and how it was possible that, due to the absence of these factors, the ethnic elements in Yugoslavia were gaining pre-eminence precisely in this period.

Other indicative observations follow from cultural differences that are embedded in different political systems. At one point, Jelušić registers the American mania for privacy: “The rule here is to mind your own business. Privacy, Holy Privacy is absolutely respected” (36). This is not simply a sociological quirk but carries also certain political connotations, since a communist society in comparison was not likely to put such a premium on the bourgeois concept of privacy. The ubiquity of technology and the commodity culture inform the daily life and a host of cultural practices in the States, such as the rampant use of (portable) telephones: “Telephone equalizes people, erases classes, differences and complexes,” Jelušić suggestively proposes in her ambivalent take on the benefits of a consumer society (37).

Having already identified the historical burden accruing to the genre of travel, I deem it necessary to broaden my claim by pointing to Jelušić's clear admission to the genre's colonial and imperialist past. In the final section of the travelogue, Jelušić trots off to Canada for another guest visit. Perhaps not surprisingly, her experience of Canada is enframed by an extended quotation (101–5) from none other than James Cook's (the discoverer's) log, which goes to illustrate the embeddedness of the travel narrative in the age of discovery, colonization and imperial projects, as shown by Pratt (15–36). Howev-

er, this realization further poses the question of the implications of Jelušić's textual authority and begs the question of whether her rendering of America is a distant cousin to the discoverers' grand narratives of the beginning. To answer this question in the negative, we ought to go to an earlier moment in the text when Jelušić demurs at the pretentious and grandiose statue of one of the earliest Franciscan Spanish missionaries in California, Junipero Serra (77). Certainly, her visit—riddled with incomprehension, cultural misgivings and open-ended conclusions—make Jelušić's story join ranks of textual accounts of the conquest of America by travel but does so in a way that both contributes to and deviates from the extant tradition of travelogues featuring America.

Another way Jelušić manages to evade the inexorable logic inscribed in the genre is that, throughout the text, she holds on to her outsider position, earned also by her different social and cultural credentials accrued by living in a socialist society, while largely avoiding, however, any political reference or insinuation and using this distanced perspective to produce a complex, ambivalent and engrossing vision of the United States. The final product is far from being an exhaustive report either on the United States or, even less so, on Yugoslavia but forms a patchwork, a sampling of images, narratives, individuals, locations, and impressions. Moreover, in her concluding remarks Jelušić reflects somewhat ironically on the metaphors that undergirded her travel; now it is not just the spiritual experiment in line with Black Elk's journey but also its opposite, California Gold Rush. Both strands intersect in Jelušić's multilayered experience of America. Also, Jelušić's writing is not a simple and direct rendering of her travelling experiences but a postmodernist artefact that ingests other cultural texts in the process of meaning-making. Thus, when she doubts that the transcontinental journey has indeed made her more enlightened (120), the reader hears the echo of Henry David Thoreau's dismissal of the travel fashion overtaking his compatriots as he facetiously calls for travelling widely in Concord, as he himself has done (Thoreau, "Economy"). In the same vein, at the very end of her journey, Jelušić offers the same deflating comment. Laced with seemingly frivolous, apolitical, and feminine concerns,

her travelogue evinces the postmodern quality that situates it more specifically within feminist and, more innocuously, women's prose (itself an interesting development in late socialism); therefore, Jelušić's unpretentious and almost self-deprecating but also facetious title of a travelogue is "a patchwork to remember her by." Given that the period was heading towards the late 1980s, the decadent years that supervised the dissolution of the political, economic, and social base of Yugoslavia, it is worth observing how Jelušić's spunky text reflected those dynamic and uncontainable years.

Jelušić's intimate yet ironic and multifaceted perspective of America carries over into Blažević's text, also marked by a host of postmodernist techniques, in addition to being inserted into the current women's writing of the period (cf. Pogačnik 98). Blažević's text, *Američka predigra*, is more layered and more ambitious in its conception than Jelušić's, attempting to combine an array of generic molds: novel, travel narrative, diary, and essay. Also, the device of framing stories is an important narrative strategy in Blažević's semi-fictional and semi-autobiographical travel narrative of her one-year Fulbright scholarship in the States, before she moved there in the early 1990s. Her experiences during the first semester, out of the two spanned by her Fulbright grant, are quite effectively contained in the book's many intertextual references, its allusions to American pop-culture artefacts, and its largely deft handling of potentially awkward cultural situations—there is a feeling of cultural competence, only here and there riddled with faint nostalgia or marred by comparisons that exude a slight political feel. As I have suggested elsewhere in my reading of some aspects of Blažević's hybrid text (Šesnić, forthcoming), the machinery of Cold War identifications has no way to distinguish among various socialist subjects that have washed up on the American shore; consequently, they are all swallowed up by the designation "Eastern European," with all the attendant significations that this category entails. This conflation, however, is not seen as an erasure of identity (at least not primarily so) on the part of the narrator, since the process happens against the backdrop of the layered, incessant, and unstoppable machinery of Americanization that is at work everywhere around her. Her colleagues, her students, and the native

Indians have all been caught up in the process of becoming American and relinquishing something in return (Crnković discusses a similar process of conflation on the example of Dubravka Ugrešić's text about her U.S. experiences; cf. 161–64).

The culturally homogeneous space of the Midwest is deceptively simple for the narrator's initial embrace of America, but the stakes escalate once the stability and uniformity of the region is replaced by the fleetingness of New York City, the scene of the narrator's major psychological crisis bearing complex roots. Even if in the Midwest she was able to retain hold on her life—as shown by her externalization of her thoughts, emotions, and reactions to her surroundings, which often took the form of interesting intercultural exchanges—in the second part of her stay, the external world no longer plays any role; it has vanished almost completely, supplanted by the coordinates of the fantastic, made-up world conjured up in the novel that she is composing in the city. The theme and structure of this novel-within-a-novel, recalling the trope of *myse-en-abyme*, should give us some indications of the reason for her flight inward.

Blažević's primary intention is certainly not to launch a critique of the communist regime in Yugoslavia once she gets to the United States; she allows, however, a polyphony of voices to place the events in mid-eighties Yugoslavia in a critical perspective. On one hand, she makes clear that geographic and temporal distance skews the perception, since nostalgia is wont to play with our memories. An affectively laden perspective ranges from an invidious stance (considering Yugoslavia in terms of politics) to an affirmative one carrying personal and familial overtones. However, in an interesting displacement, the voices from home, the letters written to the Fulbrighters by their parents and family, paint an image of the Yugoslav plight in the 1980s: the crumbling economy, the inflation, the ubiquitous electricity shortages, the price hikes for "luxuries" such as tram tickets, meat, and coffee (65; translations mine), and, amidst all those measures of the economic stabilization program, the signs of further liberalization (for those that can afford them at the time): "the deposit for travelling abroad has been waved, as well as tokens

for gas" (127).

As already mentioned, the narrator's wavering position is reflected in the confusion that her identity causes for her hosts: she is placed in the same bag as other East European dissidents, as when she is hosted at a literary event together with her illustrious counterparts from Poland and Czechoslovakia (such as Milosz and Skvorecky). The narrator plays along with this identity mix-up that is barely registered on the vast American canvass. When she gets to Columbia University at the beginning of her semester in New York in order to meet with her academic advisor, he is polite but vaguely lost in the variety of distinctions (political, linguistic, national, historical) that in the American academic context are simply dysfunctional, as the narrator wryly notes (122).

Blažević is fully aware of the ironic potential of the multiple identities that her alter-ego is made to embody in America, turning this identity confusion into an occasion for her art. In the last section of the novel, the embedded story presents yet another identity switch. The last part of the text is a fictionalization of the narrator's "real" memory (107–8)—that of the Czechoslovak residents temporarily grounded in Yugoslavia at the time of the Prague upheaval of 1968. Getting to know one of the young Czechs stranded in Zagreb awaiting the denouement in his country, the narrator belatedly (i.e., traumatically, by deferral) uses this memory to construct a fictional account of his family and their fate in the turmoil of the foiled liberalization movement. It is certainly intriguing to think what this yet another displacement—held in check by additional narrative framing—is likely to suggest about the political implication of Blažević's layered text. I would like to suggest two readings of this deferred (and fictionalized) memory. One is that Blažević was not able to carry out this exercise in memory back in Yugoslavia. Consequently, and this is my second contention, it is her arrival in America—the space that both liberates and misrecognizes her—that offers a backdrop against which to set this sharply accentuated event. As in Jelušić's case, the stream of hetero-images pouring on the narrator as she collides with the American world sets in motion a train of auto-images leading to a crisis—of memory and the self, and by implication, of the idea of the society that the traveler came from.

Over the years, Josip Novakovich has faithfully and uncannily traced the now residual elements of socialist/ communist system made all the more plastic against the ambivalent screen provided by his experiences as an immigrant in America, where he arrived in 1976. In order to briefly illustrate my points, I will examine his works in a longer temporal arc extending from his 1995 collection *Apricots from Chernobyl* to the essay collection *Plum Brandy* (2002) to his latest book of creative non-fiction *Shopping for a Better Country* (2012). Throughout my reading I will focus on the specific generic structures pertaining to the travel narrative and its derivations (tourism, emigration, exile), as well as showcase Novakovich's concern with the historical implications and reverberations of the interface of socialism and capitalism, East and West, autocracy and democracy.

Documentarism, oral history, memoirs, (auto)biographies, and similar genres have contributed to the burgeoning memory culture and, soon enough, memory industry as a result of the confluence of factors in the 1980s and 1990s (cf. Erll 7 — 9). That being the case, we ought to pose the question of the content of Novakovich's memory exercise, each time jogged by the experience of travel and mobility be it by his family members in different generations or by himself. Travel is indeed for Novakovich an existential itch, such that enables and sustains the memory process riddled with postmodern irony: "Whether travel made any epistemological sense, though, didn't matter; we were in the middle of it" (*PB*, 105), he says about a journalist assignment in Croatia in 1997. Similar apprehension haunts the following exchange: "a Hungarian woman of letters, Sára Karig, who had spent six years in a Siberian camp, answered my question as to why she didn't write travelogues with, 'I don't even understand Budapest, where I've lived for fifty years. Why should I pretend that I understand Istanbul?'" (*PB*, 105). The subjective and intensely personal perspective is apparently all there is and yet is the backbone of one's historical experience, as Novakovich shows. Let us inquire about what kind of history of late socialism Novakovich offers in his pieces.

Novakovich's travels are of an ambivalent nature, as they are driven by academic, existentialist, or political reasons. The author indulges in a reflex-

ive move to attach his creative impulse to the urge for mobility, travel, and internal exile. The motif of spiritual exile is sounded early on in the memoirist section of his hybrid text *Plum Brandy*. In communist Yugoslavia, the young Novakovich feels oppressed by several intersecting systems: that of the dictatorship of the proletariat and labor, that of the ardent Baptist minority (itself molested by communist revolutionary atheism), and that of his patriarchal family—his father, a hard-working and entrepreneurial Baptist and owner of a private business, is an anomaly in the socialist country.

This narrative position Novakovich retains and varies in all his works, fictional and non-fictional. In *Apricots from Chernobyl*, his early collection of creative non-fiction, his time frame is more expansive than is the case for either Jelušić or Blažević, extending from the 1970s (and his first encounters with America as a new arrival) to the early 1990s—the collapse of Yugoslavia and the beginning of the war in Croatia. This extended temporality certainly provides a solid view of the cultural dynamics as an interplay of the residual and the emergent structures of feeling. Novakovich's engagement with America is from the first strongly colored by the official communist propaganda so that his narrator, a loyal citizen of Yugoslavia, experiences America as fiction, myth, a powerful stereotype even, which is ironically undercut by his fervent yearning to emigrate there (*Apricots*, 19). Emigration, which for him is neither a traumatic breach with the old country nor a matter of economic survival, turns his position into that of the self-imposed "exile" (*Apricots*, 22). This exilic position could be ascribed to the cultural paradigm that regulates the exchange and dynamics between Eastern and Western bloc, where Yugoslavia figures as a militarized stronghold carefully policing its borders, so that every border crossing is potentially dangerous (*Apricots*, 20, 21). On the other hand, exile here must also be understood as an existential condition of writing and creativity in which case borders are seen "not as obstacles but as thresholds to imagined freedom" (*Apricots*, 27). His identity as a writer hinges on the situation of mobility (also as an exile) that literally enables him to write or obtain a prestigious writer's grant won through his dubious exile status and desirable geographic origin.

These issues are continued in *Plum Brandy*, Novakovich's next collection of creative non-fiction, a border genre favored by the writer that enables him to mix "travel stories, memoirs, reflections and portraits" (*PB*, 12). I will mostly focus on the first section of the collection, in which Novakovich covers the period relevant for my present argument: the late socialist years. In this section I will show how a transnationalized perspective and a diasporic node of observation offer another take on the history of Yugoslavia, "with the place and the atmosphere dominating the stories" (*PB*, 12). What begins as an exercise in memory, and thus credits and evokes the memory culture of the 1980s and 1990s, ends with the commemoration of an event, 9/11, which then arguably brings other interests to the fore, displacing the culture of memory.

Novakovich's longer historical arc turns him into a chronicler of the latter days of communism and Yugoslavia in the capacity of a witness; his envisaged Anglophone audience requires a transnational perspective that must eschew a one-sided view; his own wavering status—always in between and in the process of "shopping" for another country—turn him into a sober and wry commentator of both American and Croatian pre- and post-1989 developments. Also, given his American point of reference, the mold he works within is that of the Cold War, which as an international perspective is likely to put different premiums on several facts of Yugoslav history and the state's break-up.

Family memoirs are Novakovich's other favorite form (besides travelogue) intertwined with his vision of the Cold War and post-Cold War alignments. The discourse of memory, especially such that extends across several generations, serves as undertow to the forward thrust of the narrative of mobility so that it continuously tugs at it, pulls it back, or makes it turn in circles as the narrator tries to take stock of historical changes. Unlike Jelušić, whose discourse is "presentist" and immediately relating to the events she describes, allowing for the transposition of experience to proceed with no great temporal delay, Novakovich's slow-paced, circular, and self-reflexive style strives to accomplish in the world of text what in the historical world was no lon-

ger possible: the meeting of East and West (here his approach approximates that of Blažević). Since these two then polar opposites do indeed converge in the history of the transatlantic mobility of five generations of Novakovich's family (on his mother's side; *PB*, 171–72), one could surmise that this (fortuitous) convergence forms the axis of Novakovich's narrative agenda that finds a nice summation even in his most recent collection, *Shopping for a Better Country*, where he circles around his favorite themes (temporality, mobility, identity, and art). His art, moreover, derives from and feeds upon an act of memorializing, most conspicuously his dead parents, as when he states: "My father's death gave me an impetus to write" (*Shopping*, 23). The circularity and uncanny repetitiveness of his narrative discourse (you never visit the same place twice) constitute a specific mnemonic quality marking Novakovich's entire work: "The question of exile and national identity can't cease for me" (*Shopping*, 13).

The author's vision of America, and retroactive vision of Croatia, that feeds upon his experience in emigration, is both individual and generic. It is individual insofar as the stories in several collections are in dialogue with one another, trying to weave the narrative of several generations of his family in their transatlantic migrations and return migrations. It is generic, since the experience is by now almost a standing motif in a range of texts, literary or historiographic, recounting the experience of the turn of the century (19th to 20th), the Great Migration, of which Novakovich's family on his mother's side was part: "My quest for roots here [Cleveland, U.S.A.] was matrilineal" (*PB*, 172). The family arrangements that straddled political boundaries and defied geo-political divisions for generations create a skewed and unorthodox perspective on the Cold War and local histories entangled in it. The blending of domestic (Croatian) and diasporic (Croatian American) characters in his family vignettes contributes to a vernacular version of the global Cold War that is not easily contained by either of the ideological matrices, that of the free and democratic West or the communist and totalitarian East.

The appearance of his "socialist" grandmother, a proud U.S. citizen yet committed to social justice in the ambit of communist Yugoslavia (where she

chooses not to stay), is an example of Novakovich's ironic juxtaposition that eschews standard political or historical taxonomies. The American grandmother, coming on rare occasions to visit her family, is walking proof of capitalism and its wily, seductive nature: not only does she bring commodities casually indicating the American materialist inclination (as the propaganda would have it) and its contagious affluence (as the narrator has it), but she is herself an assemblage of the ingenuity of American capitalism, with her dentures, wig, glasses, and other gadgets. The allure of America in a socialist country, however, is principally embodied in the emblematic image of money, the greenback (*PB*, 25), whose abstract semantic is so universal that it encompasses the entire world: even if the grandson doesn't speak English all that well, the images on the dollar bill are easy to understand. In addition to the universal magic of the greenback, the other channel of capitalist infiltration is English. American pop culture, which enjoyed wide coverage in Yugoslavia after the thaw in relations in the 1950s, as well as general availability of English in public school instruction, made the communist country permeable to the presumably corrosive and corrupting influences of the West. The narrator's immersion in the English language is an equivalent of interior exile from his constraining situation as a Baptist in an atheist society and an individualist misfit in a system that promoted collectivism and bore down hard on dissent. Novakovich deliberately conjoins the totalitarian state, the Baptist church, and his father's sway over the family to create a backdrop against which to project his difference and provide an early motivation for his later exile, migration, and quest.

Novakovich's position as an exile (assuming just one role on a spectrum from political to economic positions) allows for a nuanced perspective of Yugoslavia and Croatia, on one hand, and the United States, on the other. However, let's zoom in on precisely the times that made history, the 1980s, which are for Novakovich marked by several homecoming travels to Croatia. When he got to Zagreb in the late 1980s, he states, it was hard for him to get a real picture (*PB*, 73), meaning that, in Clifford's parlance, the experiential model no longer helps the author to establish and maintain textual authority.

We ought to pose a question: why does the narrator feel that he can no longer cognitively and discursively master what used to be “homely” reality? One of the proposed answers might be that he finds himself in limbo precisely as designated by Raymond Williams’s articulation of the residual and emergent cultural forms that compete and contend in the writer’s vision. As he finds himself in Zagreb, he is baffled by the city even though he is not a stranger. For his Anglophone readers, he explains history at every turn and then provides a set of illustrative comparisons between Yugoslavia and the USSR, a reasonable strategy within the comprehensive Cold War paradigm that otherwise informs his writings. Still, as a baffled ethnographer (on cue from Clifford) Novakovich raises constantly questions pertaining to writing, the representation of social facts, narrative authority, heteroglossia, and cultural translation. The incipient break-up of his textual authority foreshadows (and we tend to retroactively inscribe this into the text by courtesy of later historical developments) dramatic political and social transformations just around the corner at the time of Novakovich’s late-1980s visit. His perspective, due to his particular authorial position and thanks to the texts’ peculiar generic features and capacities, remains one of the most acute and engaged statements on the waning and death of the socialist paradigm and the arrival of a new, transitional and capitalist paradigm not only in Croatian American but also in Croatian literature, to the extent that Novakovich is part of the latter (which we assume him to be).

My discussion has tried to advance and sustain the argument that a segment of literary production of Croatian and Croatian American diasporic writers (the distinctions were hard to maintain at times and irrelevant for the argument) are in a textual, generic, and thematic dialogue as they capture in the form of travelogue and other neo-documentary genres some aspects of continuing and multifaceted relations between socialist Croatia, democratic Croatia, and the United States. This brief look into what promises to be a much broader textual archive should encourage further explorations of the way Croatian and Croatian American diasporic literatures share the image repertoire, but also indicate points of divergence due to the facts of transna-

tionalism, contact zones, heteroglossia, and cultural translation.

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The Post-Yugoslav “America”: Re-Visiting the United States After the Breakup of Yugoslavia

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the U.S.A. was one of the first and most common destinations for post-Yugoslav dissidents who were critical of the rise of nationalism in the former Yugoslav republics. Prominent post-Yugoslav authors Dubravka Ugrešić and Slavenka Drakulić wrote their first collections of essays (*How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, 1992; *Američki fikcionar*, 1993) reflecting on turbulent political, cultural and social changes after the breakup of Yugoslavia in which America is very often the place of the subject’s distanced position as well as a reference in numerous cultural and political comparisons of capitalism and (post) socialist Europe. The paper examines the role of “America” in their critical views on the breakup of Yugoslavia, looks at how America was shaped as a cultural metaphor and re-viewed as a real environment, and finally how Yugoslav socialist legacy is articulated in their perspective on the United States.

Key words: the U.S.A., the breakup of Yugoslavia, capitalism, socialism, Dubravka Ugrešić, Slavenka Drakulić

Pipo’s prophecy

In the cultural texts of the last decade of Yugoslav socialism, also known as the period of *decadent socialism*, signs of political and economic crisis became more and more visible as the decade was approaching its end. The rise of national particularities together with food, petrol, and electricity shortages were very common motifs of films, books, and popular culture of the period.¹

1 Since a comprehensive list of examples would be quite long, suffice it to mention Srđan Karanović’s movie *Nešto između* [Something in between], songs such as *Radnička klasa odlazi u raj* [The working class goes to heaven] by the Yugoslav new wave band *Haustor* or

What reveals itself as symptomatic in the cultural imagery of the Yugoslav crisis of that period is that the motif of the crisis is frequently attached to the motif of leaving for the United States.² In Rajko Grlić's 1984 movie *In the Jaws of Life*, based on the novel *Štefica Cvek u raljama života* [Steffie Speck in the Jaws of Life] by Dubravka Ugrešić, a male character named Pipo also seeks his escape from the country in crisis. Throughout the movie, Pipo is struggling with the dilemma of whether to go or not to go to America, which he perceives as a promised land in both the economic and the cultural sense. In a dialogue with his friend Dunja near the end of the movie, while explaining his urge to go to United States, Pipo makes a very significant remark about the current situation in Yugoslavia of the mid-eighties:

Dunja: So, you've decided? You're leaving for America?

Pipo: . . . Do you know how many people have already left? It will be nasty here, very nasty. For real.

Pipo's comment from today's perspective may sound disturbingly prophetic, knowing the historical facts about the disintegration of Yugoslavia that would follow a few years after the movie was shot. But Pipo eventually decides not to leave Yugoslavia, and the movie has a happy end.

Unlike the movie's happy ending, Dubravka Ugrešić, the author of the novel and the co-author of the movie script found herself in the early 1990s in the middle of the nasty trouble invoked by Pipo. To quote one of her essays

Katakлизma komunizma [The cataclysm of communism] coauthored by the Yugoslav music performers Rambo Amadeus and Riblja Čorba; books such as *Sjaj epohe* [The shine of the epoch] by Borivoj Radaković, TV shows such as *Top lista nadrealista* [Top list of surrealists], *Bolji život* [Better life], etc.

2 For example, in Karanović's movie *Marko*, an Americanized Yugoslav gigolo wants to leave Yugoslavia, a land in deep crisis, and go to the United States, a country that he perceives as a *promised land*. Similar examples could be found in the novel *Made in U.S.A.* by Goran Tribuson or in the popular song *Amerika* by the Yugoslav new wave band *Ekatarina Velika*, etc. For more on these particular examples, see Kolanović 2013.

from the book *Američki fikcionar*³, where the author is writing about her traveling experience to the United States in the early nineties:

The passenger beside me asked in a friendly voice where I was from.
 “Yugoslavia,” I said.
 “Serb or Croat?” he asked, his face showing pride at being in the know. . . .
 I looked at my neighbor, I saw he that he was expecting an answer.
 “I’m neither,” I said. “I don’t know who I am.”
 “Oh, then you’re in big trouble,” said my neighbor sympathetically. (Ugrešić
 28–29)

Ugrešić’s essays from this book were first published in Dutch in the newspaper *Handelsblad*, and in 1993 they were published in Croatian as a book by the publishing house Durieux from Zagreb. It was a book that marked a turning point in the author’s writing *habitus*.⁴ Until the nineties, Ugrešić was well known as a respected author of postmodern fictional works such as the aforementioned *Steffie Speck in the Jaws of Life*, *Lend Me Your Character*, and others. Since the collapse of Yugoslavia and the year of political upheaval, 1991, she has mainly published essays focusing on social and cultural problems and the reality of war. This shift from the early nineties, of course, was not only a shift in the thematic-genre level. It was also a step forward from the homogeneous national discourse on the personal and political level. During the war years, this gesture was publicly stigmatized by the then mainstream media and by some prominent Croatian intellectuals,⁵ and her place in the national cultural and literary corpus was perceived as a politically problematic one until early 2000, when some more relevant analyses of her work ap-

3 The book is translated into English under the title *Have a Nice Day: From the Balkan War to the American Dream*. In the remainder of the article, I will be using the English translation of the book by Celia Hawkesworth published in 1994, although it is slightly modified from the Croatian edition.

4 I deliberately avoid the term “career” here since it has often been abused in discussions of the works of Dubravka Ugrešić.

5 Such as Slaven Letica, Antun Šoljan, Viktor Žmegač, and others. See Williams 2013.

peared in the regional context.⁶ In the period of the early nineties, triggered by the pressures of criticism and threats, Dubravka Ugrešić left the country, deciding not to embrace a newly created national identity and adopting the position of *nowhereness*. As a writer who travelled around the world, she decided to choose the United States of America as her primary point of comparison to think about the turbulent political situation in former Yugoslavia in her first book of essays published after the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Have a Nice Day is a book about the United States, and at the same time, it is about the war in the former Yugoslavia. In that sense, the hetero-perception of the United States is always followed by the auto-perception of Yugoslavia (and what is left of it). In this article, I will try to rethink the quality of these perceptions, how the experience of the United States has influenced the perception of the Balkan war, and how the experience and specific symbolic “baggage” (or capital) of the former Yugoslavia has influenced the subject’s view on the United States. In that book, the United States of America, or simply America— the term more often used by Ugrešić —functions as a deeply culturally rooted metaphor of the West, more a fictional country than a real one. In the early nineties, “America” for the author “seemed about as far away as another planet” (Ugrešić 10); it was the “land on the other side of the looking-glass” (14). What we are dealing with here is thus a discursive image of America where “reception is always a re-projection” (Chew 11).⁷ In reflecting those perceptions rather than judging how false or true they are or of how many stereotypes they consist, I will try to understand their value produced in the specific historical context. In reflecting on the perception of the United States and the war in the former Yugoslavia in this semi-fictional (or semi-factual) book, I will try to explain the complex relationship between

6 See, for example, Lukić 2001; Zlatar 2004; Biti 2005, and others.

7 Dubravka Ugrešić as the author is deeply aware of this, and she frequently stresses in the paratextual (Genette 1997) elements of the book, such as the introduction or afterword, her own doubts when she says that any self-respecting writer should especially avoid writing about other countries, explaining that it is “a kind of disguised indecency” that “reduces the irreducible to little dead sheets of paper” (Ugrešić 12).

the author, texts, history, and culture rather than pointing out its so-called misperceptions of the foreign land or the *homeland*.

Double lenses

The construction of the perception of “America” and the reflections of political processes in the former Yugoslavia in this book are discursively deeply intertwined. We can speak of some sort of double lenses where the United States and the contemporary situation in the former Yugoslavia are simultaneously reflected. Thus, America and the former Yugoslavia in this book, I might say, together form the shape of a *rhizome*, to use the term from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s book *A Thousand plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. As claimed by these two theorists, “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be . . . [E]very trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature: semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status” (Deleuze and Guattari 7). Following further Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts, in this particular book of essays, America is re-territorialized with post-Yugoslav signifiers, and the former Yugoslavia is de-territorialized with American signifiers. This discursive strategy produces the effect of the estrangement of both the American and the post-Yugoslav cultural layers of the book.

In the de-territorialization of socialist Yugoslavia in postsocialist times, the main agent of that process is the fictional quality of America. First of all, the subject of these essays cannot escape the fictional influence of America in its own identity, very often reflecting the special cultural and political role which America had in Yugoslavia. As is well known, Yugoslavia after 1948 started to build its own road to communism between the Soviet East and the Capitalist West, dominantly represented by the United States. This specific feature of Yugoslavia as a “somewhat eccentric member of the family of socialist systems” (Hobsbawm 302), was part of Yugoslav recognition in the

world.⁸ But not just in politics and economy: Yugoslav *in-betweenness* took a prominent place in the country's self-representations in popular culture.

Particularly interesting in reflecting this Yugoslav feature is Ugrešić's essay titled *Yugo Americana*, where the author points to the role of America in the building of the Yugoslav geopolitical identity and everyday settings.⁹ America was received in Yugoslav socialism dominantly through fiction and as fiction; it came, as claimed by Ugrešić, "reduced, fragmented, assisted by images from the small and big screens; it came with the media, newspapers, cartoons, music, books, popular culture, symbols, but also with its living media army – returning émigrés, captains of ships, sailors, migrant workers, the children of émigrés. And so it permeated local daily life" (106-7). Though deeply aware of this fictional quality of "America," the subject of these essays cannot escape its performance in its own perception of America in the new post-Yugoslav condition. In that sense, we can speak of a developed Yugo-American cultural *intertext* (cf. Mathy 3) which permeates the threshold of the subject's perception. Combined with the codes of reality of the Balkan war, the fiction of America primarily functions as a symbolic "anesthetic" in working through the subject's trauma of Yugoslavia's demise. But this fictional continuity of "America" is now placed in the broken chain of postsocialist signifiers. That is why the text is full of short circuits (Lodge 239) in which reality meets fiction of postmodern capitalist culture, i.e. America as a land of living postmodernism and the late capitalism meets former Yugoslavia at that time, a land of brutal conflict that overgrows even the most impossible fictional presumptions.

8 This specific feature of Yugoslavia is written about in a CIA document entitled *The Yugoslav Experiment in 1967*: "Yugoslavia is a Communist state in name and theory, but in practice it is a fully independent state, which has rejected most of the "socialist" experiences of other Communist states, including the USSR. It has deliberately removed a large portion of its economy from direct centralized controls, and despite its retention of a one party political system, it has largely freed its people from arbitrary authority. The Yugoslav experiment appears to be progressing satisfactorily." *The Yugoslav Experiment*, National Intelligence Estimate, No. 15-67, 13 April 1967.

9 About this feature in Ugrešić's book see also Crnković 2003: 158-59.

In the mixture of these two elements follows the fictionalization of the war in the former Yugoslavia and the “post-Yugoslavization” of America as a process of their literary estrangement. In such a process, wartime hell and postmodern spectacle meet at one point where the subject of the discourse plays the role of the editor: “Sometimes it seems to me that I have an editing table in my head. I spread out the pictures, correct the spoiled emotional mechanisms. I cut out the shots of the weeping American supermarket contestants and add them to pictures of massacres at home” (Ugrešić 102). In this vicious circuit, we are dealing with multiple semantic turnarounds in the perception of the schizophrenic subject where real is turned into surreal, such as in the example from the essay significantly titled “Shrink”:

. . . I am a divided personality, I see everything in double exposures, I am a house inhabited by parallel worlds, everything exists simultaneously in my head. I look at the American flag and suddenly I seem to see little red sickles and hammers instead of white stars. I look at a television advertisement for necklaces, that’s the kind I find most soothing and instead of pearl necklaces for only 65 dollars – I see a slit throat. I walk down Fifth Avenue and suddenly see the buildings falling like card houses . . . Everything is mixed up in my head, everything exists simultaneously, nothing has just one meaning and more, nothing is firm any longer, not the earth, not frontiers, not people, not houses . . . Everything is so fragile it seems it will shatter any minute . . . (55)¹⁰

The culmination of the subject’s constructions is the setting of the Balkan war in the middle of New York. The war, as seen from the top of the Empire State building, is conducted as a plot from Hollywood action movies and video games:

From the Empire State Building, Yugoslavia looks like a children’s toy. Brook-

10 As a curiosity, let us mention that this kind of symbolical overlap was also known in the articulation of the author’s work during the Yugoslav period, where a hybridity of American and Yugoslav symbols was visually presented in the poster of the movie *In the Jaws of Life* and the second edition of the novel, *Steffie Speck in the Jaws of Life*.

lyn – That’s Slovenia. The Brooklyn-Slovenes are diligently setting up their frontiers, their customs posts, bringing in their own money which is no longer called the ‘dollar’ but the ‘tollar’. The Brooklyn-Slovenes are abandoning New York forever. And there are Queens-Serbia and Bronx-Croatia. The Bronx is desperately seeking independence, insisting that it always has been independent of New York. Queens won’t let it go, it seems to want to control the whole of New York. The telephone lines between the Bronx and Queens are broken, communications are blocked, the people in the Bronx watch only Bronx-TV, the people in Queens only Queens-TV. And the roads are blocked. You can only get to the Bronx via Boston, and to Queens via Chicago! The New York federal army is on the side of Queens, it’s federal, it’s army, and it’s only natural that it should always want more territory. The Bronx is already half-destroyed, there are a lot of casualties, and the inhabitants of the Bronx are ready to give their lives for the Bronx. And things are hotting up in Manhattan and bubbling in New Jersey . . . Whose side will they be on in this war which is creeping through tunnels, which is coming close to the bridges, which is knocking at the doors as well? America watches the New York war calmly, as though it were a video-game. (29–30)

War as capitalism

The imagined perspective from the Empire State Building highlights the absurdity of the Balkan war from a global perspective, from which the conflicts between the warring ethnic groups can be interpreted as a “narcissism of small differences” (Freud 49). What is interesting about this example, however, is that this schizophrenic construction is not just the result of the subject’s experience of the Balkan war, but also from its experience of capitalism in its developed as well as early transitional phase. Though it might seem that this paranoid vision is connecting that which is unconnectable, if we follow Deleuze and Guattari’s idea, we see that war and capitalism are in fact deeply interconnected: “the investment of constant capital in equipment, industry, and the war economy, and the investment of variable capital in the population in its physical and mental aspects (both as warmaker and as victim of war)” (421).

These connections between war and capitalism resonate throughout the text, context, and the habitus of the author in multiple ways. For example, the beginning of the war in the former Yugoslavia was also the beginning of the transition to capitalism. As claimed by Branislav Dimitrijević (2010):

. . . apart from being an ethnic conflict, the war in Yugoslavia offered the symptomatic model of privatization, of the ‘original accumulation of capital’ (always achieved through ‘resource extraction, conquest and plunder, or enslavement,’ as Marx summed it), so this war was the Real of the celebrated capitalist transition in Eastern Europe.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the nationalist transition protagonists, the author herself was often accused of having *profited* from the war, that the war was a good *investment* for her, and that she had built her “career” on the ruins of the Balkan war. After all, the scenes of atrocities in New York that are invading the subject’s imagination would in 2001, less than 10 years after this text’s publication, become real in the terrorist attack on the symbol of capitalism.

Post-Yugoslav eye

In the overlapping of the perception of socialism, war, and capitalism, signifiers of the United States are thus used to critically estrange the Balkan war, and post-Yugoslav signifiers are used to critically de-familiarize or estrange “America”. Thus, strategies of postmodernist¹¹ modes of writing used in this book such as contradiction, permutation, discontinuity, randomness, excess, and short circuit (Lodge 220–45), already familiar in the Ugrešić’s works published during Yugoslav period, are now shaping post-Yugoslav topics *in the jaws of war* but also *in the jaws of capitalism*, inventing simultaneously a post-socialist “America” and postmodernist Balkans. To be even more

11 See also the analysis of this feature of Ugrešić’s work by Crnković 2003: 161.

specific, I would call the cultural perspective of “America” in Ugrešić’s book *post-Yugoslav* because it is shaped from particularly post-Yugoslav cultural codes and it carries the symbolic politics of Yugoslav in-betweenness. Yugoslavia’s in-betweenness as a form of rhizome of re-territorialized socialism or de-territorialized capitalism thus discursively reflects on the subject’s view of America and the Balkans.

Of course, every exile experience is by default an experience in between, but this one is discursively built from post-Yugoslav cultural codes, carrying the metaphorical, political, and social legacy of socialist Yugoslavia. In this post-Yugoslav social and political perspective, the subject of this book identifies with the economically weak and oppressed, such as the homeless, African-Americans, and *others* in general (Ugrešić 33), but it also negotiates with capitalism, choosing, not without irony, the indulgence of Coca-Cola and American popular culture rather than an essentialist concept of national identity (199) and remaining critical of both sides of Cold-War divisions.¹² In addition to Ugrešić’s view, in this sense I would also like to mention Slavenka Drakulić¹³ and her essay “Communist Perspective or What I saw in New York?” from her book *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, in which the capitalist West and the United States are also reflected from a specific cultural and historical perspective.

In that particular essay, Drakulić develops the thesis that, though communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and in building new nation states socialism is being violently removed or re-written in the institutional memory, its citizens still carry a specific social perspective in which they were raised during communism. That specific perspective is reflected in the situations where she notices bread thrown on the floor, uneaten food in garbage cans, or homeless people as she comments:

12 For example, in making critical comparisons between the kitsch of socialist realism, nationalist kitsch, and contemporary American consumer culture (Ugrešić 171).

13 Though they are often mentioned together, there are differences in their esthetic as well as political reflections.

There is a deeper reason why the poverty sticks to us, why we recognize beggars, homeless people, bumps, petty thieves, drunks, the sick, junkies, why we take it all so personally, why it hurts us. It's because we have a communist eye. Like a third, spiritual eye placed in the middle of one's forehead, this eye scans only a certain type of phenomenon; it is selective for injustice. Even if the socialist states have fallen apart, the ideas of equality and justice haven't. They are still with us, built in like a chip. We remember them from school, from our movies, from literature glorifying the idea of justice, as well as from the clean, beggarless streets of our cities. . . . Transplanted to the United States, we carry that idea and much more with us, like excess baggage that perhaps we would like to drop off or leave at the entrance to this other, promised world. (Drakulić 119–29)

The postsocialist perspective implies that, though socialism is dead, to invoke Jacques Derrida (2006), the specters of Marx are still haunting the perception and imagination of postsocialist Europe. Like Ugrešić, Drakulić also takes the position in between, remaining critical of U.S. capitalism, Eastern Europe's socialism, and specific variations of post-Yugoslav transition. Therefore, I will slightly modify Drakulić's creatively invented term *communist eye* into postcommunist, postsocialist or, to be more precise, *post-Yugoslav eye*. The post-Yugoslav perspective, to paraphrase literary critic Robert Rakočević (2011), does not mean "after" but rather "never completely overcoming" the Yugoslav experience; it implies full awareness of the past, but not a fatalistic attachment to it marked by the position of the aforementioned writers and their post-Yugoslav writings. In reflecting on the cultural value of their texts, one must take into account the symbolical legacy of Yugoslavia, or, as Deleuze and Guattari (119) theoretically put it, "To make the distinction between two types of semiotics (for example, the postsignifying regime and the signifying regime), we must consider very diverse domains simultaneously."

In this article I tried to show how this simultaneity functions on the cultural pattern of Ugrešić's essays in multiple ways and how it affects the subject's view of the Balkan war and the United States. This view is in many ways rooted in European intellectual history, which often sees America as a cari-

capture (Lowell, qtd. in Mathy 1). But stressing its specificity, we can say that with the post-socialist Eastern Europe things are slightly different. Revisting America during the breakup of Yugoslavia for this author also implies re-writing “America” in a post-Yugoslav mode which echoes with the experience of the Yugoslav experiment. As the symbolic child “of Marx and Coca-Cola” (Blazan 205), or “Marx und Markt” (Maleš 1988), this perspective carries the cultural legacy of Yugoslav in-betweenness in its critical reflections on capitalist, socialist, and postsocialist conditions.

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Derrida's Jefferson¹

Hannah Arendt claims that the American Revolution provides a standard against which political modernity can be analyzed, also that subsequent revolutions failed to engage the conceptual purity of the American model. In contrast to Arendt, Jacques Derrida, in "Declarations of Independence," renounces Jefferson's thought as inadequate, and excuses himself from engaging it on critical terms. Given the fact that Derrida later mobilizes Marx in order to explore similar concerns, now in terms of secularized messianism and from an Abrahamic angle, I analyze how Derrida's Marx constitutes a position from which to reassess Derrida's Jefferson.

Key words: Thomas Jefferson, Jacques Derrida, America, revolution, authority, parataxis

1

There is a curious consistency to how Jacques Derrida commemorates two great thinkers of revolution, Thomas Jefferson and Karl Marx, even though his estimations of the two are different: Derrida extols Marx in the very position where he finds Jefferson lacking.² While Jefferson seems to have mismanaged the revolutionary founding of a republic by misappropriating divine authority in the Declaration of Independence, Marx seems to have remedied Jefferson's mistake by properly associating the revolutionary thought with the secularizing aspect of "Abrahamic messianism" (Derrida 1994: 210). This is how the messianic in Marx is reduced to "an obstinate

1 Research for this essay was supported by the Croatian Science Foundation funding of the project *A Cultural History of Capitalism* (HRZZ-1543).

2 In "Declarations of Independence" ("Declarations d'Indépendance") and *Specters of Marx* (*Spectres de Marx*).

interest in a materialism without substance,” so that the messianic comes to “designate a structure of experience rather than a religion” (Derrida 1994: 212) – a structure of experience formative to political modernity.

That is not the only instance where Derrida’s texts on Jefferson and Marx resonate, just as this particular resonance does not exhaust the scope of Derrida’s argument. It does, however, indicate the structure of the contact: for Derrida, Marx redeems that which Jefferson mishandles in thinking the revolution, in the position where the revolutionary thought appears bound with theology and/or religion. Also, rather than discussing in depth the texts by Jefferson and Marx, or the revolutions associated with them, Derrida finds it more pressing to address a certain irruption into philosophy occasioned by Jefferson and Marx. It is as if revolutions cannot be addressed from within philosophy except as the irruptions that philosophy cannot and perhaps should not process to its satisfaction, so that revolutions keep demanding that philosophy attend to its discontents, much as Freud has confronted civilization with the same problem, in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*.

Hence the significance of the fact that Derrida’s interest in Jefferson and Marx was markedly occasional and commemorative, to be admitted into philosophy with a certain structural delay. Derrida addressed Jefferson on the occasion of the bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence, and Marx just after the fall of the Iron Curtain, when Marxism seemed to have died along with Europe’s socialist states. Occasion here points to the irruption and the contingency that are proper to history rather than to philosophy. Commemoration, on the other hand, implies that history, or historiography, is not altogether equipped to deal with that about the occasional which invokes death or the dead; instead, philosophy is invited to tend to this task, especially in modernity, when theology is denied the privilege of dominating the discourse on death.

That is why commemoration in Derrida is more often than not aligned with mourning. Mourning designates an investment in death that philosophy is asked to process as structural: away from the occasional and into a cornerstone of philosophy’s intellectual economy. Mourning is, therefore, im-

plicit to acts of commemoration; it is an apparatus of sorts, before the fact or the occasion. Derrida described his own work in similar terms. To work on mourning, he observes, “is first of all – and by that very token – the operation which would consist in working on mourning the way one says that something functions on such and such an energy source, on such and such a fuel – for example, to run on high octane. To the point of exhaustion” (1995: 48).³ In other words, one’s intellectual situation is irreducibly indebted to mourning. This is how the intellectual situation itself takes on an Abrahamic aspect: because Abraham is subject to mourning to begin with, as soon as he acknowledges his covenant with God, by pledging to sacrifice Isaac, whom he loves more than himself, so that the eventual taking place of the killing or its not taking place is immaterial to the logic of Abraham’s mourning.

This in turn is consistent with Abrahamic messianism, which Derrida attaches to Marx. Derrida alludes to this relation in the subtitle of *Specters of Marx*, when he joins the state of the debt and the work of mourning into a metonymy. He thereby promotes mourning-cum-debt into an intellectual interval, now between history and philosophy, not unlike the interval that Walter Benjamin explores in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama (Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels)*. Indeed, when Derrida speaks about “the obstinate interest in a materialism without substance,” he could be describing the Benjaminian obstinate mourning, in the face of the world which has become all too material because it is all too intractable, the world rendered such by the thought of the Reformation, and ushered into modernity as a result. (Hence Benjamin’s appreciation of the obstinate angel in Dürer’s *Melencolia I*, who angrily contemplates the world reduced to debris, the world he cannot otherwise engage.)⁴ Yet Derrida seems to imply that Marx, not Benjamin, is the author with whom to address both political modernity and the materialism peculiar to it: because Marx understood the irreducibly Abrahamic character

3 Derrida, says Geoffrey Bennington, “claims that he ‘runs on’ *deuil* the way a car runs on gas” (2010: 111).

4 See Benjamin 140–58.

of this materialism, and of this mourning, whereas Benjamin, with his focus on the intellectual impact of the Reformation, seems unduly swayed by history, so that commemoration and mourning in Benjamin's work remain reducible, as well as contaminated by the occasional.⁵

2

Derrida's reservations about Jefferson, and consequently about the political project of America, betray a similar line of reasoning. When Derrida critiques Jefferson's supplication to divine authority in the draft of the Declaration of Independence, it is not the invocation of God that he reproves so much as Jefferson's presumption to be the author of the Declaration – the authorship and the authorization which must remain suspended, this being the condition of founding a republic in modernity. According to Derrida, "there was no signer, by right, before the text of the Declaration which itself remains the producer and the guarantor of its own signature," so that signature "opens for itself a line of credit" (1986: 10). When Jefferson laments the "mutilation" of his draft at the hands of other signatories of the document, says Derrida, he in fact betrays his aspiration to being its only signatory – a position appropriate to God, insofar as "God is the best proper name, the best one, for this last instance and this ultimate signature" (1986: 12). "A complete and total effacement" of Jefferson's text, concludes Derrida, "... would have been better, leaving in place, under a map of the United States, only the nudity of his proper name: instituting text, founding act and signing energy. Precisely in the place of the last instance where God – who had nothing to do with any of this (...) – alone will have signed" (1986: 13).

Tellingly, Derrida's description of Jefferson's authorial plight is steeped in a vocabulary of mourning. Derrida iterates that Jefferson "suffered because he clung to his text"; he attributes to Jefferson "a feeling of wounding and

5 I argue elsewhere that the sophisticated narrative structure that Benjamin employs in the second chapter of *The Origin*, where he outlines a cultural history of mourning and melancholia, contributes precisely the Abrahamic horizon to mourning. See Jukić.

mutilation” as well as “unhappiness” and goes at length into a story about Franklin’s “consoling” Jefferson “about the ‘mutilation’” of the draft (1986: 12–13). Instead, “an institution – (...) in its very institutionality – has to render itself independent of the empirical individuals who have taken part in its introduction” and “has in a certain way to mourn them or resign itself to their loss [*faire son deuil*] even and especially if it commemorates them” (Derrida 1986: 8). In short, mourning is integral to institutions insofar as institutions, in their very institutionality, are founded around mourning their founders or, more to the point, around processing their residual empiricism into nothingness. Jefferson’s mistake, in other words, was not mourning as such but mourning misplaced, misappropriated, and misunderstood – mourning taken up in terms of empiricism, just as an empiricism is thereby admitted to authority and institution. It is in this sense that Jefferson’s fault appears graver than the one Derrida implicitly attributes to Benjamin. While Derrida’s Benjamin seems unduly moored in the historical and the occasional but is otherwise sensible of the world as irretrievably lost, Jefferson engages the world not as fragmented debris yielding mournful contemplation, but as an experiment in empiricism, failing to appreciate the loss of the world and, ultimately, the Abrahamic horizon of its engagement.

That Derrida approaches Jefferson’s mourning from an Abrahamic perspective can be evinced from the emphasis granted to the imaginary of mutilation. Derrida insists, several times, that Jefferson mourned the *mutilation* of his draft, as if the Declaration were a body or a corpse marked out for sacrifice. To be sure, Derrida points out that mutilation is the word he quotes in this context; “the word is not my own,” he says (1986: 12). Yet, by reiterating the word so emphatically not his own, he in effect *repeats* mutilation *to begin with*; his rhetorical strategy is to remove mutilation from the historical time and situate it in the time of Abrahamism. As a result, the mutilation of the Declaration, in Derrida’s text, is not unlike the suspended mutilation of Isaac’s sacrificial body: even though Abraham never carried out the sacrifice of his most beloved son on Mount Moriah, he in effect carried it out as soon as he pledged to do it to God. This is how mutilation is revealed to be al-

ways already contained in the Covenant (the original pledge), in the form of a most preemptive mutilation of the self. In short, mutilation for Derrida is contained in a kind of preemptive repetition, not unlike the repetition that Freud associates with the death drive.⁶ Abrahamic mourning is thereby revealed as absolute, just as sacrifice precedes any relation to authority or the act of institution.⁷

This is how Derrida demonstrates that his interest lies with the issue of authority and institution rather than with religion or divinity per se; he seems concerned with divinity only insofar as it is structurally complicit in the foundation of authority. It is in this sense that “Declarations of Independence” is a companion piece to *Specters of Marx*, where Derrida attempts to read Marx in light of Abrahamic messianism, as well as to “Force of Law,” Derrida’s long essay subtitled “The Mystical Foundation of Authority,” where he argues that the foundation of authority necessarily supersedes the historical logic in favor of “the ‘mystical’ limit” (2002: 242), religious or not.⁸ Again, it is in this position that Derrida betrays an affinity with Freud, who depends on a similar secularization of Abrahamic logic for his invention of the death drive as the seat of authority.

Jefferson’s fault appears to be just that: in Derrida’s view, Jefferson failed to consider the fact that sacrifice/mutilation precedes any relation to authority or the act of institution, so that his unhappiness about the mutilation of the draft testifies ultimately to a deplorable political shortsightedness. Yet Jeffer-

6 With the plural “Declarations” in the title of his essay, in place of the singular Declaration, Derrida replaces the singularity of the Declaration with a structure of repetition. The same applies to specters in *Specters of Marx*.

7 See Derrida 2008 for a comprehensive analysis of the story of Abraham.

8 Derrida himself identifies “Declarations of Independence” as the text which anticipates the horizon of “Force of Law” (2002: 235). In “Force of Law” he expounds on the meaning of credit, the word he emphatically associated with the Declaration of Independence. “The word *credit*,” Derrida points out, “justifies the allusion to the mystical character of authority. The authority of laws rests only on the credit that is granted them. One believes in it; that is their only foundation. This act of faith is not an ontological or rational foundation. Still one has yet to think what *believing* means” (2002: 240).

son contributes a different perspective altogether: his covenant seems to be the Lockean one with the people, the social contract, so that any government resulting from this contract remains steeped in the contingent and the occasional, equally at the expense of mysticism and of foundation.⁹ It is significant that Derrida speaks of law where Locke would insist on contract, the contractuality here designating precisely the contingent and the occasional that law could not support. Equally, where mutilation to Derrida eventually spells out debt and credit, to Jefferson it seems to spell out waste, expense and bad economy. (It is almost as if Derrida stands for Freud's mourning and for the Freudian death-drive, where Jefferson would stand for Freud's melancholia.)

3

Both Freud and Derrida were annoyed with America, even though they recruited their most dedicated patients and/or disciples from among the Americans and were keen to cater to the American intellectual market; this suggests that their annoyance with America had to do with America per-

9 How empiricism contributed to the ideation of America is suggested by Arendt, who remarks that the signers of the Declaration of Independence engaged "the horizontal version of the social contract," championed by Locke. The Lockean social contract relates to "the only form of government in which people are bound together not through historical memories or ethnic homogeneity, as in the nation state, and not through Hobbes's Leviathan, which 'overawes them all' and thus unites them, but through the strength of mutual promises" (1972: 86–87). After the fashion of the Latin *societas*, says Arendt, this is "an 'alliance' between all individual members, who contract their government after they have mutually bound themselves," which is how society "remains intact even if 'the government is dissolved' or breaks its agreement with society, developing into a tyranny" (1972: 86–87). Quoting further from Locke, Arendt emphasizes that "the power that every individual gave the society, when he entered into it, can never revert to the individuals again, as long as the society lasts, but will always remain in the community" (1972: 87). Arendt traces this political logic to "the American prerevolutionary experience, with its numerous covenants and agreements" – the very model that Locke "actually had in mind" when he said that "in the beginning, all the world was America" (1972: 85). This, of course, implies that Jefferson's grief is not misplaced, as Derrida would have it, but derives from a different grammar of affect as it were, one commensurate with the horizontality of the contract in which it participates.

ceived to be an (inferior) order of exegesis and understanding.

Derrida's response to America in "Declarations of Independence" is acutely symptomatic of this structure. In 1976 Derrida was invited by the University of Virginia, an institution founded by Jefferson, to deliver an address on the occasion of the bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence. He accepted the invitation, to then refuse to address the occasion except "in the form of an excuse" (1986: 7). Put differently, he spoke about Jefferson only in order to excuse himself from speaking about Jefferson, in the heart of Jeffersonian America, so that Jefferson and America remain framed by the discourse of excuse and poor judgment, if not insult. Yet Derrida never bears the brunt of the blame and the guilt that are implicit to excuses. Instead, he assigns to Jefferson the guilt and the blame that he has mobilized, by targeting what he perceives to be Jefferson's poor judgment, as if Jefferson were the one who should have offered an excuse. In fact, one could well speculate that Derrida produced the excuse at the beginning of his address only so as to secure the guilt and the blame for further circulation.¹⁰

This, of course, is a rhetorical operation appropriate to literature, not to philosophy or law – or appropriate perhaps to the zone of resonance where literature, philosophy, and law feed off each other. Derrida suggests as much when he emphasizes that it was initially proposed to him that he should at-

10 That the circulation of guilt was the effect for which Derrida was aiming can be inferred from his perspective on forgiveness: "Far from bringing it to an end, from dissolving or absolving it, forgiveness can (...) only extend the fault" (2008: 126). J. Hillis Miller concedes that Derrida begins by emphatically breaking his promise to speak about the Declaration of Independence, but insists that the broken promise was meant to reciprocate the revolutionary gesture of the signatories of the Declaration (who broke their colonial promise, to England) – now in the context of academic discourse. To be sure, Hillis Miller is at pains to reconcile what he claims is Derrida's revolutionary gesture with Derrida's subsequent excuse, the speech-act not easily reconciled with revolutionary rhetoric; he eventually explains Derrida's rhetorical choice as one of irony (118). Yet, even Hillis Miller feels obliged to quote the Abrahamic Derrida, to the detriment of his own argument, when Derrida remarks: "I fully intend to discuss with you (...) the promise, the contract, engagement, the signature, and even *what always presupposes them, in a strange way: the presentation of excuses*" (ibid.; emphasis added).

tempt an analysis of Jefferson “at once philosophical and literary” (1986: 7), this being the intellectual tradeoff suited to approaching Jefferson’s writings. Derrida, however, dismisses the tradeoff and relegates it to the “improbable discipline of comparative literature” (1986: 7). To Derrida, comparative literature is not only an improbable discipline, but also one to which he responds with astonishment and intimidation: “At first, I was astonished. An intimidating proposition. Nothing had prepared me for it” (1986: 7). He seems to object not to literature but to the proposed metonymic confusion of literature and philosophy, to their taking place “at once” or, more precisely, to their sharing the same, undifferentiated space. Instead, his rhetoric in “Declarations of Independence” suggests that guilt and blame should precede a confluence of literature and philosophy, so that their coming together is always already inflected in their relation to law. Put otherwise, the confluence of literature and philosophy seems pre-inscribed for Derrida in an Abrahamic relation, a hypothesis Derrida fleshes out when he, later, joins the secret structural to “the elective Covenant [*Alliance*] between God and Abraham with the secret of what we call literature, the secret of literature and secrecy in literature” (2008: 121).¹¹

Significantly, “comparative literature” stays in English in Derrida’s French text, as if to emphasize that comparative literature is Anglo-American in character *and* foreign to the Abrahamic relation that Derrida cultivates for literature. By extension, Anglo-American literature itself appears to be foreign to this relation. This can be evinced from a lengthy interview Derrida gave in 1984, about deconstruction in America. “Anglo-Saxon literature,” he remarks, “which is after all the vehicle for deconstructive movements in

11 “I think of Abraham,” says Derrida, “who kept the secret – speaking of it neither to Sarah nor even to Isaac – concerning the order given him, in tête-à-tête, by God. The sense of that order remained secret, even to him” (2008: 121). This is the secret inflected in literature as Derrida sees it, so that the sense of literature remains outsourced precisely in the position where it cannot circumvent order (or guilt, or blame). Symptomatically, in “Force of Law” Derrida speaks of “juridicoliterary reflection” which belongs with “critical legal studies,” to then enter a conjunction with “a deconstruction of a style more directly philosophical or motivated by literary theory” (2002: 236).

English departments, I know poorly. (And it's in English departments that things are happening more than in departments of French or philosophy)" (1985: 23). "When I read deconstruction in English," he says, "it's something else": "What happens in the United States becomes absolutely vital. It is a translation supplement that is absolutely called for by something which must have been lacking in the original. With the effect of strangeness, of displacement" (1985: 23).

Derrida's tone seems more conciliatory now, as if to suggest that America may be admitted to deconstruction without excuse. Moreover, in the same interview, Derrida defines deconstruction as "a coming-to-terms with literature" – a process in which "deconstruction is also a symptom" that "takes a philosophical form most often" or, rather, the form which is "[p]hilosophical and literary" (1985: 9, 18). While comparative literature is thereby almost legitimized, one should not overlook the rhetoric of pathology that is assigned to the assemblage of literature and philosophy: this assemblage is a symptom, just as America contributes to deconstruction the effect of strangeness and displacement, however called for. In this fashion the earlier excuse, with its free-floating rhetoric of guilt and blame, hovers still in Derrida's argument, nowhere so pointedly perhaps as when Derrida acknowledges American Puritanism as imperative to understanding deconstruction in America – as if to contain Jefferson's misappropriation of God. In Derrida's own words, "We can't understand the reception that deconstruction has had in the United States without background – historical, political, religious, and so forth. I would say religious above all" (1985: 2).¹²

12 "[T]he teaching of religion, and above all its institution," says Derrida, "is something very strong in the universities in this country"; "because of this the protestant, theological ethic which marks the American academic world acted all the more 'responsibly,' basically taking deconstruction more seriously than was possible in Europe" (1985: 11–12). Arendt, in contrast, even as she acknowledges the impact on Locke of American pre-revolutionary covenants, emphasizes that the Lockean contract, with its imprint on the founding of the American republic, should be distinguished from "the Puritan version of consent" (1972: 86).

4

Derrida's position forms an interesting angle to Carl Schmitt's argument about the birth of modernity out of the spirit of Protestantism. Schmitt (2006) contends that a new political era dawns after the uniform theological platform in Europe has been compromised with and by the Reformation, compromising in its wake the legitimizing procedures, as well as the figure of the sovereign.

According to Schmitt, the crisis of authorization thus brought to the fore is best grasped from within literature. Literature registers this crisis as the irruption of time into its very structure; by processing the irruption, literature arrives at a position from which to reconstitute itself into an apparatus critical to negotiating the rationale of politics and authorization in modernity. For Schmitt, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is exemplary in this sense. Indeed, Schmitt draws upon Benjamin's discussion of *Trauerspiel* and of the German literary Baroque in order to promote *Hamlet* as a specimen story of political modernity, with mourning once again acknowledged as this modernity's intellectual situation.

In line with Benjamin but more particularly, Schmitt insists that this is also how to think revolution, as the event structural to politics in modernity. "Shakespeare's drama coincides with the first stage of the English revolution," he says, which "lasted a hundred years, from 1588 to 1688," during which time England did not "set up a state police, justice, finance or standing army in the way Continental Europe did" (2006: 54, 56). Moreover, Schmitt relates the English Revolution to England being "the country of origin of the industrial revolution, without having to pass through the straights of Continental statehood" (2006: 55–56), thus associating the industrial revolution with the political one. This is in line with Arendt (1963: 162), who, quoting from William Blackstone, claims that "absolute power becomes despotic" not when or because it retains a link to "transcendental quality," but when or because it cuts itself loose from it, so that no transcendence is available to this power which "must in all governments reside somewhere." ("This exposure of the dubious nature of government in the modern age," Arendt continues,

“occurred in bitter earnest only when and where revolutions eventually broke out” [1963: 162].) In his observations about the English Revolution, Schmitt admires precisely the irreducible *somewhere* of this power: it resides not in any place, metaphor, person, or destination, not in state police, state justice, standing army ..., but is metonymic to various places and positions – it works in a capillary fashion and is prey to a political microphysics. While this may be a platform from which to reassess Marx’s intellectual legacy, in political economy and cultural history alike, it is also a conduit to discussing the American political experiment, as the American revolutionaries could not but mobilize, critically, the intellectual and the political assumptions of the English.¹³

Like Schmitt, Derrida is drawn to *Hamlet*, especially in *Specters of Marx*, in the position where Shakespeare’s play registers the irruption of time as the lynchpin to its intellectual constitution. Hence Derrida’s repeated references to the time which is “out of joint” – the irruption that he perceives as hosting specters and mourning on a scale on which no particular unhappiness, like the one he attributes to Jefferson, counts as significant or signifying.

Yet *Hamlet* attracts Derrida also in the position that Schmitt could not sustain. While *Hamlet* to Schmitt is the harbinger of the English Revolution, Derrida reads *Hamlet* as the literature of injunction: to Derrida, *Hamlet* makes sense insofar as Hamlet, as well as the play as a whole, responds to the injunction issued at the outset by the ghost of the father.¹⁴ As a result, Hamlet’s melancholy discourse, exhausted in homicidal/suicidal pledges and promises, constitutes but a massive excuse in the face of the ghost’s injunction. Excuse is again unleashed for circulation, with Derrida’s Hamlet recip-

13 Schmitt loses sight of the metonymic character of the American Revolution when, elsewhere and in passing, he ascribes to Jefferson a metaphorical understanding of God – “the reasonable and the pragmatic belief that the voice of the people is the voice of God – a belief that is at the foundation of Jefferson’s victory of 1801” (2005: 49).

14 When Derrida (1994: 10, 11) insists that the specter in *Hamlet* “begins by coming back,” that it “figures both a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again,” the repetition he thereby promotes is exactly the repetition of the Freudian *Todestrieb*.

rocating Derrida's Abraham in the face of God, now as Abraham and Isaac in one. (Conveniently, this is also how Derrida's *Hamlet* is absolutely literary, insofar as literature to Derrida is Abrahamic.)¹⁵

5

Derrida's response to *Hamlet* is decidedly hypotactic and metaphorical. In fact, the hypotactic structure of Derrida's argument evokes Erich Auerbach's reading of the Abrahamic episode in the Old Testament.

According to Auerbach, the style of representation in the Old Testament is hypotactic, in contrast to the parataxis of the Homeric world. In Homer, parataxis means that phenomena are "externalized" and "connected together without lacunae in a perpetual foreground" (11). Hypotaxis, on the other hand, means that "the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is nonexistent," so that "the whole, (...) directed toward a single goal (and to that extent far more of a unity), remains mysterious and 'fraught with background'" (11–12). While hypotaxis is determined by that which is causal or at least temporal, says Auerbach, parataxis is defined by its mobilization of "and" (70–71); in brief, parataxis is words and phrases added on rather than subordinated to each other – subordination is the aspect of the hypotactic grammar.¹⁶ This is why "Homer can be analyzed," says Auerbach (13), "but he cannot be interpreted" – the interpretation being a fit for the Abrahamic narrative. There is a marked political aspect to the hypotactic style: "The Scripture stories do not, like Homer's, court our favor, they do not flatter us that they may please us and enchant us – they seek to subject us, and if we refuse to be subjected we are rebels" (Auerbach 15). This observation is important for yet another reason: it explains why an Abrahamic idea of literature may want to subordinate comparative literature to literature in an

15 Seyla Benhabib (15–16) writes about the metaphysicalization of revolutionary violence in Derrida.

16 I rely here on Edward Said's description of parataxis in his introduction to the fiftieth-anniversary edition of *Mimesis* (Auerbach x).

absolute sense.

This may also explain Derrida's unease about Jefferson. The constitution of Jefferson's thought is paratactic, most insistently perhaps in his adherence to Greek and Roman antiquity, which finds its intellectual situation in Epicurean philosophy and the poetry of Lucretius. The intellectual debt of the Founding Fathers to Roman authors is a well-documented fact; Arendt (1963) especially insists on consulting the habitus of Roman antiquity as the horizon appropriate to understanding the American Revolution.¹⁷ Jefferson contributes to this horizon a markedly materialist inflection, refracted through Epicureanism; Stephen Greenblatt reports 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," noting that "[t]he atoms of Lucretius had left their traces on the Declaration of Independence" (262, 263). In a way, this is how Jefferson and Derrida replicate the pair of the first chapter of Auerbach's *Mimesis*: Jefferson's Lucretian materialism is to Derrida's Abrahamic "materialism without substance" what Homer's paratactic narrative grammar is to the hypotactic narrative grammar of the Old Testament.¹⁸

Parataxis becomes political for Jefferson or, more to the point, politics

17 In a comment about the American Founding Fathers, she writes: "If their attitude towards Revolution and Constitution can be called religious at all, then the word 'religion' must be understood in its original Roman sense, and their piety would then consist in *religare*, in binding themselves back to a beginning" (1963: 198). (See also Honig 110 about the revolutionary firstness.) While this appears to dovetail with Derrida's argument about "the mystical foundation" of all authority, revolutionary included, there is a rupture to this logic, because the imperatives of Roman religion did not overlap with those of the Judeo-Christian tradition, just as the two did not cultivate similar relations to philosophy. (See Veyne 1997 about the specifics of Roman religion, and philosophy.) Arendt is explicit about this: "One could indeed ... assert that the Constitution strengthens the American government 'with the strength of religion.' Except that the strength with which the American people bound themselves to their constitution was not the Christian faith in a revealed God, nor was it Hebrew obedience to the Creator who also was the Legislator of the Universe" (1963: 198).

18 Karl Popper notes "that a direct historical connection leads from Democritus and Epicurus via Lucretius not only to Gassendi but undoubtedly to Locke also" (289). Interestingly, Marx wrote his doctoral dissertation on Epicurean natural philosophy.

for Jefferson becomes paratactic, parataxis describing precisely the revolutionary character of politics. Jefferson seems to have understood revolution as the shift whereby authority is translated from hypotactic into paratactic conditions. Jefferson's concept of freedom, implicit to his vision of the new continent for the new man, is paratactic in character, because freedom is thereby imagined primarily as the freedom of movement – the proposition Arendt (1963: 25, 275) hails as definitive of revolutions. Paratactic in character was also the American revolutionary “application of Montesquieu’s theory of a division of powers within the body politic,” which, says Arendt, “played a very minor role in the thought of European revolutionists at all times” (1963: 24), to whom national sovereignty reigned supreme.¹⁹

When Derrida says that he can address Jefferson only in the form of an excuse, he is in fact subordinating the paratactic logic of the American Revolution to a hypotactic horizon. Derrida’s forefronting of excuse signals that translation and subordination are indeed taking place, simultaneously, so that the translation of the paratactic into the hypotactic turns out to be possible only as a case of subordination.²⁰ In other words, Derrida could not have

19 There is another detail, reported by Arendt, which testifies to the paratactic character of the American Revolution: “The unique and all-decisive distinction between the settlements of North America and all other colonial enterprises was that only the British emigrants had insisted, from the very beginning, that they constitute themselves into ‘civil bodies politic.’ These bodies, moreover, were not conceived as governments, strictly speaking; they did not imply rule and the division of the people into rulers and ruled. (...) These new bodies politic really were ‘political societies’, and their great importance for the future lay in the formation of a political realm that enjoyed power and was entitled to claim rights without possessing or claiming sovereignty. The greatest revolutionary innovation, Madison’s discovery of the federal principle for the foundation of large republics, was partly based upon an experience, upon the intimate knowledge of political bodies whose internal structure predetermined them, as it were, and conditioned its members for a constant enlargement whose principle was neither expansion nor conquest but the further combination of powers” (1963: 168).

20 This may also be the position from which to address Derrida’s repeated references to impassés and losses as structural, not incidental, to the act of translation, so that translation itself – especially from (his) French into (American) English, and vice versa – surfaces in Derrida as an Abrahamic, hypotactic practice, whose boon is always already implicated in

spoken about Jefferson except in the form of an excuse; every other mode of address would have eroded the order of his discourse, what is more, it would have eroded its secret: that there may be a subordination to deconstruction. In fact, Derrida's Jefferson invites a comparison with Heidegger's Hölderlin: Theodor Adorno (1992) argues that Heidegger depended on subordinating the paratactic logic of Hölderlin's references to Greek antiquity in order to admit Hölderlin's poetry to his philosophy's language. It is a small wonder, therefore, that Derrida, in "Declarations of Independence," should readily sacrifice Jefferson to his interest in Nietzsche, just as he readily subordinates his interest in Schmitt's political theory, in "The Politics of Friendship," to his interest in Heidegger.

This, of course, is hardly a conclusion, because it heralds a more comprehensive discussion of Derrida's America, and of deconstruction in America. After all, Derrida himself has identified Hölderlin as a key to his understanding of America. I am alluding to Derrida's sustained references to America in *Memoires for Paul de Man*, where America serves to house Hölderlin for deconstruction and for what turns out to be Paul de Man's decisive encounter with Heidegger, and with the imaginary of Nazism.²¹ This again raises the issue of the politics of deconstruction, spiraling back to Derrida's rejection of Jefferson on political grounds.²² Instead of approaching this spiral from within Derrida, I imagine taking it up as the twenty-first chapter of Auerbach's *Mimesis*.

the symbolism of sacrifice.

21 See Derrida 1989: 15-18, also Warminski 1985.

22 My reference here is also to Derrida's remark that addressing the Declaration of Independence, along with the Declaration of the Rights of Man, calls for "a juridico-political study" – a "task inaccessible to me" (1986: 7). What appears to be taxing about the two texts is their commitment to politics, too much politics as it were. Derrida suggests as much when he observes that some of the questions he would have liked to tackle – but now excuses himself from doing – "have been elaborated elsewhere, *on an apparently less political corpus*" (1986: 7, emphasis added).

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(Mis)Learning from American Education: What Is American About Bologna?¹

The paper presents a discussion of some differences and similarities regarding higher education in the United States and Europe (or rather, the changes undertaken in Europe as part of the Bologna process). The focus of discussion is on the issues of degree compatibility, institutional structure, and educational philosophy. Attention is called to the current context of massification and internationalization of higher education, which in turn presents the same kinds of challenges to higher education in both the United States and Europe. However, the paper suggests that, particularly in terms of educational philosophy, the Bologna process has not brought European higher education closer to the American concept of liberal education.

Key words: higher education, the Bologna process, American universities

Among the expectations and anxieties brought about by the Bologna process in European higher education,² those incited by the comparison with the American system of higher education have a special place. However, given the rather broad range of possibilities of constructing comparative analyses of American and European higher education, I will limit this article to three per-

1 This essay is part of research conducted in the project “A Cultural History of Capitalism: Britain, America, Croatia” funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ-1543).

2 This article is not based on a comprehensive analysis of Bologna in either the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) or the EU. This would require an empirical overview of great scope. However, the article is intended to point to problematic elements or trends in Bologna, which follow from the combination of the objectives of Bologna and the most general institutional characteristics of European higher education. Many of these characteristics are particularly evident in Croatian higher education.

spectives that I think are indispensable to the analysis of the problems facing all contemporary “models” of higher education. These are degree compatibility, institutional structure, and educational philosophy.

American higher education, of course, has a diverse range of institutions: private and public institutions, historically black and historically women’s colleges, institutions with a historical confessional affiliation, research universities and former land-grant universities (A&M universities for instance), “national” and “regional” universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, schools on semester calendars and schools on quarter calendars, etc. But at the center of American university life still firmly stands the four-year college, the completion of which is a requirement for graduate programs (masters and doctoral programs) and professional programs (medicine, dentistry, law, business). These are the components that make up American research universities, many of which are private, and many of which are state universities, including a number of highly ranked schools. This structure emerged over the last century, mostly through mutual comparison and emulation, and without much central (i.e., federal) orchestration of the processes of compatibility (in part because delivery of public education is entrusted to the states and not the union). University accreditation processes are also not federal but regional; therefore, American universities assumed their current shape by looking at national examples of what the administrative jargon today calls “best practice.” In effect, the high level of compatibility and the dominance of the above model of the research university emerged as a consequence of processes and actions undertaken by the universities themselves, their governing boards and state-level education bodies. In something of a contrast, the harmonization of European higher education launched by the Bologna declaration has been a top-to-bottom process, which began in 1999 as a ministerial platform to be implemented by national higher education systems and individual institutions. The modern American university started to assume its present shape more than a century ago, and its main structural features have remained constant for at least the last half century, whereas the Bologna process was meant to be implemented in a relatively short time-

span, which understandably gave rise to many concerns over preparedness for it. The prospect of an almost instantaneous transformation produced a great deal of anxiety, reservation, and criticism, some of which was expressed as a fear of the “Americanization” of higher education. On the other hand, the language of the founding texts, the Bologna documents, was in some ways too broad and accommodating of existing situations in European higher education. In particular, the idea that the first cycle could be either three or four years long has effectively opened up room for new incompatibilities within and among national systems with respect to both the first and the second cycle. Recent data shows there is a considerable split in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) regarding the length of the first cycle, with 58% of the programs conducted in the 180 ECTS model (effectively three years), and 37% in the 240 ECTS model (effectively four years).³ A particularly difficult problem turned out to be the definition of the baccalaureate (first-cycle degree) as a qualification, as well as the problem of how it does in the labor market. There is also a great deal of variety in delivery of doctoral programs across the EHEA. The third cycle was not in the focus of the early Bologna documents, which were much more concerned with the first two cycles, until the *Bergen Communique* of 2005 attempted somewhat to redress this lack of focus. Around the world, doctoral programs are now deemed crucial to a “knowledge economy,” but it is a matter of much close reading to decipher the steering direction of the Bologna documents on questions of design and the institutional position of doctoral programs within the university, not to mention funding. It is also not entirely clear why the new (Bologna) doctoral programs have been placed within unrealistically set boundaries – the third

3 See The European Higher Education Area in 2015. *Bologna Process Implementation Report*. http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/SubmittedFiles/S_2015/132824.pdf, p. 52. The quoted data is complicated by the fact that, in a number of countries, programs in so-called regulated professions (medicine, dentistry, architecture, and the like) are often integrated first- and second-cycle programs. As for the second cycle in the EHEA, there is also much variation: for instance, there are four-year programs in the first cycle that are supplemented by two-year programs in the second cycle. In addition, a number of countries feature so-called short-cycle tertiary education programs (usually lasting two years).

cycle is very often only three years long.⁴

Another development that coincided with the Bologna process⁵ – the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) by the European Union – may appear to have the effect of providing an additional stimulation to address the disparate realities of Bologna, as much as to further the cause of comparability of qualifications across Europe. It is through the EQF that a massive effort – a profoundly bureaucratic one – to systematize the “learning outcomes,” that is “knowledge,” “skills,” and “competences,” has been launched, leading also to the harmonization of national qualification networks with the EQF. Again, there is no such top-to-bottom process in tertiary education in the US⁶; and consequently, there is no such official bureaucratization of academic standards and practices in curricular issues. We can perhaps hope that this surge of bureaucratism in European higher education is only a stage, perhaps a necessary one to usher in a new kind of academic structure, but it certainly is taxing. Of course, any such categorization of knowledge, competences and skills is bound to raise questions about the validity of its uniform application across the entire range of academic disciplines. Along with this productivist conceptualization of “learning outcomes,” there is a tendency in some European countries towards the mechanistic metrification/evaluation of research conducted by academics, a particularly unsuitable practice in some areas of academic work.

4 This is the case in 23 EHEA countries; in the other EHEA countries doctoral programs take three to four years, four years, or more than four years (2015 *Bologna Process Implementation Report*, p. 65). The *Bergen Communique* speaks of three to four years as the expected duration of doctoral programs.

5 The Bologna process also includes European countries outside the EU.

6 Interestingly enough, a process of harmonizing standards in elementary secondary education (in mathematics and “English language arts”) is currently underway in the United States, known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative, sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association: <http://www.corestandards.org>). This has been a state-led effort, and the standards have been adopted in a majority of states, though not all.

The second perspective, related to the first, is that of institutional structure. Even though there are many voices in American academic debates that bemoan the isolationism of departmental cultures,⁷ the fragmentation of European universities, at least those built on the faculty model, is much more profound. Some degree of disciplinary nationalism is inevitable in academic life; after all, disciplines are a reflection of the necessarily specialized character of specialized knowledge (tautology intended here). But the integration of departments (and “schools” and “colleges”) as units of university organization within the common administrative structure and the strategic “mission” of the university is much more pronounced in the United States. There are very few universities in Europe that resemble the institutional structure of the American research university, and possibly none that resemble it in all respects. But more importantly, there is no part of the Bologna process that expressly seeks to establish a comparability of European and American institutional structures.

Governance is an important area of difference in institutional structure. In the US, more often than not, governing boards have a great deal of power in managing the strategic direction of a university (which in the case of public universities is broadly framed by policies defined by either the state legislature or the state department of education); in reality, the prerogative of governance is seldom transformed into projects of sweeping reform (from the working or prospective academic’s point of view, the most intrusive form in which that power is manifested is the pressure to cut programs, especially at public universities). In Europe, the Bologna process established a relatively strong platform of reform, and the implementation of the main reform principles into practice is ideally envisaged as a dialogue between the “stakeholders” within and outside the university. There is a great deal of variance among European countries in terms of university governance (of course, there is a

7 A good example of such criticism can be found in David Damrosch’s book, *We Scholars: Changing the Culture of the University* (1995).

great deal of variety in governance structures and practices between private and state universities in the US, as well). But again, the main distinctive characteristic of the current European situation is the existence of a supranational strategy (the Bologna process), which is in greater or lesser friction or accommodation with national strategies and actual university policies. In Europe, the pressures to reform the university are often perceived as being generated within the political sphere and as encroaching on academic freedom; this is mainly because Bologna was initiated as a political decision at the intergovernmental level and thus conceptualized mostly from above. The most recent period has made clear the necessity of an extensive debate about the relationship between academia and its external “stakeholders,” but it has also shown how difficult it is to orchestrate a social conversation about these issues.

There is a common problem converging on both European and American universities with great force at this time: the issue of money. This is not simply a question of funding, nor one of the ideological struggles that have surrounded the various policies on funding public education. The trends of rising tuition at American public universities certainly appear to be similar to the controversies over tuition at public universities in European countries. But here I have in mind primarily the new historical situation of the research university. That is, the funding of research (facilities, equipment, projects, staff) under conditions of massified education and the high costs of developing new knowledge and technologies (big science that requires big budgets) has in recent decades become ever more problematic for a growing number of universities competing to be viewed as research institutions.⁸ If we take as an example a small or even midsize European country, it is questionable whether its universities can develop a full array of research interests (especially in science) that characterize the many top research universities in a

8 For a discussion of the “political economy” of science, see Michael A. Peters, “The Rise of Global Science and the Emerging Political Economy of International Research Collaborations.” The primary focus of this article is on science rather than the university, but it proposes an interesting argument about contemporary forms of research collaboration, which have at least in part arisen due to the high costs of big science.

global power such as the US. This is a challenge even for larger and wealthier European nations and one of the reasons why many research projects in Europe today are international in scope. The EU Framework programs, such as Horizon 2020, which are designed to support the European Research Area and promote intra-European collaboration in research, also have the effect of alleviating some of the funding problems resulting from the new predicament of the research university in Europe – and here the situation of the university is made more complicated by the fact that, in large parts of Europe, fundamental research is often conducted within independent institutes (with which the universities are thus in competition for funding, while also often being in collaboration). Another money-related issue shared by both American and European universities is the problem of what to do with commercially viable products or processes developed by researchers working within the institutional structure of the university – the problem of patents, rights, sales, academic spin-offs and incubators, etc. Public universities face these kinds of problems as much as private ones, and it is not easy to establish regulatory standards in this field that would protect the educational aspects of university activities, ensure that academic freedom is not compromised by commercialization of research, and prevent conflicts of interest.

The third perspective I wish to highlight has to do with curriculum, and in a wider sense, the philosophy of education underlying curricular design. In this regard, it is probably not a stretch to claim that the Bologna process has not pushed European education significantly closer towards the American model. In the broadest of terms, the American model is still underwritten by the concept of liberal education, which means that undergraduate students are required to take courses in the broadest range of fields and disciplines alongside courses in their major (which is usually less than half their total course load). In contrast, students at European universities tend to take

courses mostly in their major (or two majors).⁹ The difference is much more than mere arithmetic: these arrangements have far-reaching consequences for the idea of university education, university structure, and students' choice of majors. Undergraduate degree requirements in the United States are such that there is less emphasis on vocation and specialization than at European universities; for students studying at American universities, this means more choice in terms of the courses they can take. This in turn also means that American universities have to maintain a wide range of disciplines and courses on offer, while at the same time they may evoke student preferences regarding courses and majors in making decisions about developing, restructuring, or cutting programs. Here, the size of the American educational system also plays a role, in the sense that the sheer number of universities and programs they offer may offset large program shifts at individual institutions from a big picture point of view. A similar effect proceeds from the categorization of higher education institutions; even though there is no official nation-wide (federal) classification, there are clear ways in which HEIs get recognized as belonging to different categories. For instance, the so-called Carnegie classification differentiates between (private and public) doctoral universities, master's colleges and universities, and baccalaureate colleges; on the other hand, since the 1960s, some states, like California, have developed three differently tuned state-wide public systems (the University of California system, the California State University system, and the California Community College system); other states have structured their public higher education systems in

9 There is, of course, a great deal of variety in Europe in this regard; for instance, Heidelberg University offers different levels of focus in undergraduate programs (100%, 75%, 50%, 25%), and not all levels of focus are available in all subjects. See <http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/courses/prospective/academicprograms/index.html>. On the other hand, the University of Manchester offers an undergraduate three-year English program ("course" in English usage), as well as a four-year undergraduate program in English literature and French (or German, etc.). See <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/2016/00060/english-literature-3-years-ba/>. Such variations could compose a long list, but the point is that the general structure of the undergraduate curriculum is unlike that of the American undergraduate curriculum.

comparable ways. In reality, the stratification of universities can be observed in the fact that some universities (the ones that are generally better funded, for one reason or another) tend to place a great deal of emphasis on research, and that they also tend to develop a wide range of strengths in research and teaching (while often also focusing on particular areas where they see themselves as especially innovative or competitive). On the other hand, a number of schools which have to make do with less funding expect their academic staff to focus more on teaching than research and offer a more narrow range of disciplines and majors, while their graduates receive diplomas which carry more symbolic capital regionally than nationally, and certainly less symbolic capital than diplomas issued by top research institutions, public or private. However, from the point of view of students, the symbolic capital of a university degree has undergone some change in recent years regarding employment opportunities, and not for the better. In the US, the undergraduate degree was a rather effective credential in the labor market in the second half of the twentieth century. It was generally pursued with the understanding that employment would not be hard to find. The recent crisis, which has reduced employment opportunities (at a time when the overall number of university graduates is still growing¹⁰), has motivated higher enrolment particularly in post-baccalaureate programs. In Europe, undergraduates tend to receive a more specialized education, and universities tend to develop and phase out programs and determine enrolment quotas based on the assessment of social demand (which is done by the universities themselves or funding bodies such as education ministries or agencies), rather than on student preferences (it is a widespread practice in Europe to enroll students in major programs, which means that universities have to plan enrolment quotas; in contrast, students at American universities are not usually required to declare their major until the end of the second year). It would be highly interesting to investigate com-

10 “In fall 2015, some 20.2 million students are expected to attend American colleges and universities, constituting an increase of about 4.9 million since fall 2000” (<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>).

prehensively and comparatively, within the EHEA and in the period since the launching of Bologna, the different policies undertaken by European universities, policy makers, legislators, and other “stakeholders” to address issues of educational philosophy, program design and central planning of the educational system. Back to the question of the size of the educational system: in the US the universities fall into an unofficial but recognizable educational/research niche (the positioning is often planned and managed on the state level, and at the same time influenced by nation-wide trends), but this could not work in smaller European countries, in which it is necessary to develop more compact and focused strategies of national higher education (in terms of founding, developing, categorizing, and funding higher education institutions). Conceptualizing the place and framework of national higher education within European and global contexts has indeed turned out to be the central challenge of the new predicament of the European university. Much of the harmonizing effort of Bologna has focused on the harmonization and recognition of qualifications, which in turn has promoted greater mobility of students and degree holders. American university students and graduates are very mobile nation-wide; this is only beginning to change across Europe (even though some more prestigious European research universities have been traditionally able to attract considerable numbers of international students). In addition, the employability of university graduates is bound to become an increasingly European affair, which may sometimes result in brain drain from some areas of Europe, the ineluctable consequence of the fact of uneven economic development within the EU.

University life in the United States is an experience that is unified spatially (the concept of the campus facilitates the idea of a common curriculum, so to speak), academically (as the freedom to study in different fields of knowledge, to cite one of Humboldt’s academic freedoms), and culturally (as an institution sustaining a lively debate about its commonalities and goals across disciplinary divides); this kind of concentration and integration is less present in European contexts, where very different, centrifugal features obtain, reflecting different historical trajectories in the development of uni-

versities. European universities are often spatially scattered in their city environment, students often have limited choice in pursuing different subjects of study within the framework of the university (due to spatial but also program limitations), and one of the common problems of European universities has been facilitating dialogue on integration. In spite of the drive for inter-European harmonization and the tangible reforms that have often caused vocal opposition, generally speaking, with regard to educational philosophy, Bologna has not made European higher education significantly more similar to the American model.

However, what Bologna does make obvious (though not always in a clearly effective way) is that universities in Europe are now facing the same kinds of challenges as the universities around the world. The current administrative focus at universities worldwide, with catchphrases such as excellence and innovation, is also often expressive of a new prominence of the issue of funding, and debates on the funding of higher education seem to dominate the academic conversation these days. Yet the Bologna moment is irreducible to simply financial or economic issues. We should remember here two important elements of the global context of the Bologna moment. The first is the lingering global dominance of the American university, which has attracted both researchers and students from around the world during the last half-century much more than any other place. In this sense, Bologna clearly started as an expression of the European intention to compete globally in a more organized way than it had been able to do in the past. (French and German universities, but especially those in the UK, are very successful in attracting foreign students already.)¹¹ Europe is not the only area trying to increase the global competitiveness of its higher education. High levels of investment in education and research are no longer limited to rich Western countries; in some Asian countries investment in research is quickly catching up to West-

11 See, for instance, UNESCO's data on student mobility at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>.

ern standards. For instance, China was the world's second in spending on R&D in 2009, with South Korea posting high numbers as well (Hazelkorn 14). Some analyses suggest that the countries of Mercosur are in the early stages of harmonizing their higher education, possibly under the influence of the Bologna process.¹² Global ranking of higher education institutions has now become a matter of global media play, with ARWU, a Chinese-based ranking started in 2003, now enjoying a great deal of citation.

The second element of the Bologna context has to do with an important threshold in the history of higher education: on the national stage, higher education has become a matter of mass education¹³ in a number of countries, a situation decisively different from that of only half a century ago, when university education was still considered by and large the preserve of social elites (no longer possible after the 1960s). In the US the decisive turn to massification happened in the 1960s, and the numbers of tertiary education students are still rising.¹⁴ Most European countries have been steadily working to raise the percentages of university graduates for several decades now, encouraged by various EU objectives. In Croatia, there was a sharp rise in tertiary enrollment at the turn of the century, and it is estimated that in the 30–34 age group the percent of those with completed tertiary education in 2014 was 32.2% (the EU average was 37.9%), and in addition there is a high dropout rate,¹⁵ altogether meaning that large numbers of secondary-school

12 See Mario Luiz Neves de Azevedo, “The Bologna Process and Higher Education in Mercosur: regionalization or Europeanization?”

13 The massification of higher education should not be conflated with the issue of equal access to higher education. It is likely that the beneficiaries of massification have often come from the more affluent circles in many different national contexts, but it is also common sense to propose that massification necessarily affects the social dimension of education.

14 The percentage of recent high-school completers enrolling in college rose from 45.1% in 1960 (already a relatively high percentage) to 68.4% in 2014. See http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_302.10.asp.

15 See *Pregled obrazovanja i osposobljavanja za 2015. Hrvatska*, p. 7. <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2194>.

completers pursue tertiary education. In other words, in Croatia, higher education has recently been showing features of massification. How to manage this massification from the point of view of academia as well as the society at large is a momentous issue, and Bologna in all its local variants can be seen as both a symptom and an example of the process.

The imperatives of mass higher education and internationalization (which in turn calls for dealing with the issue of degree compatibility) are common predicaments for both American and European higher education. The consequences are comparable in spite of the differences: since the numbers of undergraduate degrees in specific age groups are becoming quite high, in the US many are seeking an advantage in the labor market by pursuing post-baccalaureate degrees (especially in the last 15 years, the period coinciding with pronounced economic instability). Although the reasons are not quite the same, a similar trend can be observed in Croatia, where master's degrees are routinely pursued at the expense of first-cycle degrees.¹⁶ In addition, due to processes of internationalization and brain drain, it is becoming increasingly awkward to "plan" higher education and research strategies simply in terms of the national context. The massification of tertiary education is an equally important issue facing universities around the world, and in this context one often hears talk of the need to streamline university education into a rationalized outfit focused on production of "experts" and "specialists." Observers of tertiary education in many European countries can hardly ignore the fact that a narrow approach (especially a narrowly profession-based approach) to curricular design of the first and second cycles often in practice means endorsing this kind of utilitarian understanding of the university, a dubious proposition for a variety of reasons, one of which being that, at this his-

16 In fact, almost 75% of first-cycle degree holders enroll in the second cycle. See *Pregled*, p. 7. On the other hand, in the recent period the unemployment rates for secondary-school completers and tertiary education completers in the 25–29 age group have been roughly the same, a little more than 20% (*Pregled*, Slika 3, p.8), which suggests that a tertiary qualification in the recent context of the Croatian economy is not an advantage over secondary-school qualification in finding employment.

torical juncture, the character of knowledge is changing so fast that breadth rather than narrowness in education seems the more reasonable way forward, not to speak of the various other advantages of a liberal university curriculum as opposed to an exclusive educational focus on expertise. In this regard, the Bologna process has so far remained largely unconcerned with the dangers of educational utilitarianism, falling short of learning productively from the American model of liberal education.

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The Marvel of the American Dream in *The X-Men* Graphic Novels and Comic Books

The point of debate that is the focus of this paper is the position of graphic novels and comic books in relation to the (de)construction of the notion of the American Dream. This notion is, as one would suggest, heavily influenced by perpetuated notions of American national identity, which is discursively constituted with tolerance towards people from other parts of the world who can fulfill their dreams and get a better life in America, while the system enables that kind of chance and provides protection from any kind of danger and injustice that exists in other countries. To make the American Dream more firmly posted within the construction of American national identity, the relationship has to be reciprocal. When these values of America as a perfect nation that protects its people are established through discourse, by following Benedict Anderson's concept of nation as the imagined space of collective belonging, the citizens who enjoy this kind of perceived security and opportunity attach themselves to that imagined space. This paper proposes that the concept of citizenship is a part of enabling someone to feel they are part of the American nation, which is formed with values that are established and perpetuated within popular media (including graphic novels). By relying on Lauren Berlant's work on the construction of citizenship through specific narratives in popular culture, this paper focuses on the representation(s) of race, racism, and tolerance in superhero narratives that are seen as an integral part of American popular culture in establishing discourses about the American Dream and American national identity. The paper aims at addressing the specific case of the *X-Men* series, specifically the *Giant Size X-Men* issues, as an example that actively problematizes themes such as intolerance and diversity related to race while at the same time perpetuating different other discourses that stereotype certain nations and ethnicities. The paper attempts to determine specific practices for American citizenship in relation to the American Dream and the representation of the American Dream that is dependent on representation practices of race, ethnicity, and gender in the aforementioned *X-Men* canon.

Key words: American popular culture, comic books, cultural citizenship, difference, discourse analysis, visual analysis, race, gender, ethnicity

Upon their inception during the late 1930s, superhero comic books were immediately labeled as something that contained the attributes of a low-culture product, and the label stuck until many cultural theorists pointed them out as something that should be understood as popular culture. Through their extravagant and science-fiction themes and impossible premises, including people jumping off buildings, wearing masks, and exhibiting extraordinary abilities, they were grounded only in a manner of addressing certain political and social issues of their time. Beginning with World War II, continuing through the era of moral panic about youth culture, and eventually referencing the feminist and Civil Rights movements, superhero comic books and graphic novels, as a special genre of comic book, solved American political problems with ease. Today, superheroes are retrospectively labeled as “the defining fantasy of the comic book form” (Hassler-Forest 6). With most of their narratives, motifs, and tropes derived from penny dreadful novels and other forms of American popular literature such as pulp fiction, comic-books managed to fuse image and text into a substantial form that eventually dispersed into various sub-genres, creating their own narrative strategies and establishing new tropes that influenced popular culture on a much wider scale. Consequently, they managed to address, sometimes reinforce, and criticize as well, political and cultural trends that were happening at home – in the United States. In that manner, comic-books can be used “as significant cultural artifacts from the past” (Neuhaus in Pustz 11) which, as many other artifacts of the same manner, give us certain information about the time, as well as the social and cultural context within which they have been developed. Within cultural theory, the mode of surpassing “structural formalism” (Smith and Riley 183) posits these comic-books as more ambivalent products that divulge different themes and ideologies which are constantly being reshuffled between the text and the reader. This article attempts to focus on one of those positions where certain denotations and connotations can be

seen as valuable factions in composing certain meta-texts within American society that started in the 1950s and are still perpetuated through superhero narratives today as well.

The rise of the popularity of superhero comic books and graphic novels, together with their increasingly successful film and television adaptations, undeniably raises questions of its value and contribution to contemporary social and cultural discourses. These discursive tendencies are important within a strictly American context, as well as on a larger global scale. A particular point of debate when discussing the position of comic books within the American context is their relation to the (de)construction of the American Dream, as well as to their role in the construction of the dominant representation of a true American (in terms of race, class, and gender). The notion of the American Dream is, as one would suggest, heavily influenced by perpetuating values of national identity as well as by the notion of citizenship. In her work on the citizenship model, Lauren Berlant extrapolates its cultural significance as something that is relational, among strangers who occupy the same space of a certain nation state (“Citizenship” 37). These relations are noted in Benedict Anderson’s work on nation as an imagined community, which he relates to the process of identification, in which there has to be a conceived “deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). Noting these insights, this paper postulates that the concept of citizenship is an important part of enabling someone to be a part of the American nation (their sense of belonging) and that the specific values of this nation can be established and perpetuated within the popular media (including comic books). This enabling is closely related to the ability of the citizen to understand, respect, and live the American Dream to its fullest. Taking this into consideration, the paper focuses primarily on the effect of superhero narratives in the context of forming a sense of belonging to or detachment from the nation in analyzed superhero discourse. The question arises about what happens to people in the United States who do not fit in, who immigrated there, or who are visually not immersed or recognized (because of race, sexual orientation, or gender) as truly American. The issue of not having the same values and postulated feelings of comradeship, due to a

person's arrival in the nation state as a stranger or being labeled as such because of racial and other social characteristics is something that posits a question about the role of cultural citizenship. Berlant notes "cultural citizenship" as a term that describes the history of subordinated groups and the ways in which they fit in the grand narrative of national belonging ("Citizenship" 41). This kind of belonging is not the part of official and legal narratives but is related to different representation practices within (popular) culture.¹

Following Berlant's work on the consistency of various popular culture narratives in articulating different aspects of American national identity, this paper tries to unravel these discursive practices in one particular product of popular culture which has been ignored – superhero comic books. It should be noted that this paper cannot analyze all distinctive and diverse issues and themes within this "uniquely American phenomenon" (Regalado 84) nor does this paper establish a universal reading of selected texts. Rather, it tries to provide insight into the inception and narrative development of superhero comic books on the basis of one specific case that acknowledges racial and ethnic differences in the United States, and it tries to approach this case in relation to the construction of citizenship, which is connected to the discourse on the American Dream. The wish to fulfil the American Dream that becomes evident through narratives on establishing this fulfillment is an additionally important aspect for this analysis, as it provides some answers to questions about how popular culture's construction of citizenship relates to specific issues connected with the representation of race.

This study approaches American superhero comic books in two ways: firstly as a certain critique of the situation in the United States, and secondly as an indicator of the representation of citizenship models in America but also in the rest of the world, which is heavily influenced by American popular culture. *The X-Men* comic books have had a specific narrative since their

1 For more on this topic, read Lauren Berlant's work on nation, fantasy, and citizenship that is problematized and analyzed in works such as *The Anatomy of National Fantasy and Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*

inception in 1963, with allegories that relate to the African-American Civil Rights Movement and ongoing xenophobia combined with human rights debates concerning people who do not fit in the grand narrative of the American citizen. The aim of this paper is to analyze discourse² (visual as well as textual) to determine specific practices concerning American citizenship in relation to the American Dream and representations of the American Dream that are dependent on the racial, ethnic, and gender representation practices used in the aforementioned *X-Men* canon. Text does not have a specific strength or function without meaning, and the essential part of producing and exchanging meaning, according to Stuart Hall, is representation (17). If we take into consideration Hall's statement that "Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language" (Hall 17), then it should be possible to determine what kind of discourse(s) determine attributes that construct or reinforce the dominant hegemonic sphere of a certain nation or culture. Consequently, it is possible to analyze certain ideological images of a perfect citizen. An important aspect of this kind of premise is that the perfect citizen is embedded in the imagined space of national belonging, enhanced by the fulfillment of the American Dream. In that notion, this paper aims to point out how and in what way this imagined space of national belonging is articulated in specific superhero comic books (and thus in a specific public sphere).

Comic books and graphic novels enter the public sphere due to their popularity and distribution; there, they create specific modes of belonging (such as whiteness and heteronormativity³) to the dominant hegemonic

2 Methodologically, it is also important for this analysis to note that discourse is considered within Sara Mills' view as "a domain for written and oral communication" (7) and, by locating her analysis in Foucault's work on discourse theory, acknowledging in such a way that every text has meaning and consequences for the so-called real world. All discourses, according to Foucault, make a group of written or spoken acts which are regulated in some way and constructed by a particular force (Mills 7).

3 This, as well as many other modes, is something that Lauren Berlant writes extensively in her works, one of which is *Cruel Optimism*.

sphere of a certain nation or culture, isolating those individuals who do not possess these specific modes due to their skin color, place of origin, or sexual orientation. But how are these ideological images transferred in *The X-Men*, and how strong is their role in rendering the nation supreme and powerful?

The Superhero Phenomenon

Superheroes, a product upon which the two biggest comic book publishing houses, Marvel Comics and Detective Comics, depend, have been a part of popular culture since the first appearance of Superman in 1938. Marvel and DC have always had a strong presentation of their superheroes in the context of relating them to specific contemporary political and social situations. Anderson's viewpoint on the nation as a community that is socially constructed and imagined by the people, is something that coincides with the ways in which we think about the popularity of the first superhero comic books, specifically and especially Captain America.

Captain America, one of the most famous superheroes, appeared during World War II by punching Hitler in the face on the cover of the first issue. He enforced the perpetuation of American identity and maintained a sense of security and collectiveness during the war. He did so within various situations in which he confronted the Nazis, Japanese soldiers, and foreigners in general who were portrayed (visually, as well as textually) as a threat to the American way.

Not so long after that, superheroes became the dominant medium of youth culture, appearing in radio shows, on television, in parades, and in commercial stores as well as in comic books. The first few years (during World War II) were pivotal, when critiques of politicians, corrupted elites, and police officers were developed, as they were seen as among the most important aspects (and reasons) for the economic crisis and decreased quality of life for the working class. Superheroes were positioned as a means of confronting the perceived enemies of American society while protecting the "little people". It did not take long for superhero comic books and their authors to start commenting on other social issues in American society and

reflecting on them in different ways – sometimes reinforcing and sometimes fighting certain stereotypes and preconceived misconceptions. They promptly started to have a big role within the popular culture apparatus, similar to how newspapers formed a specific imagined world where their readers developed a sense of collective, a sense of unity that for Anderson constitutes the nation as an imagined community (63). Even though maintaining certain predominating hegemonic values of an archetype superhero as someone who is good-looking, white, and male, Marvel and DC offered specific female and black superhero stories in different periods of social and political upheaval. In an attempt to comment on them by providing new types of superheroes, these comic books would perpetuate more of the same values appropriated from previous discourses on the American way of life and citizenship, as the example with *The X-Men* will point out. Relying on Foucault's notion of discourse that functions as a certain "regime of truth" (316), we can focus on the type of superheroes and their values that have been perpetuated in discourse until this day. With various ethnicities, races, empowered female characters, the ideal types and most recognizable superheroes are still nonetheless most accepted and popular in the form of white men. This is a notion that becomes more evident in the analysis of Marvel's *The X-Men*.

White Male Dominance and *The X-Men*

There can be different strategies in perpetuating the values of an imagined political community (Anderson 6) and one of specific interest to this article is the strategy of creating additional differences within an already different people in that community (different in the context of representation). In this case, they are mutants, specific humans (not aliens) with specific abilities (not superpowers) that make them heroes, villains, or innocent bystanders (minorities who suffer and wait for some change). As they are exposed to the rest of (American) society, mutants suffer a great deal of prejudice and discrimination from people who are scared of or angry at them. Although, as products of evolution, they are superior, they are seen as mistakes and dangerous because of their abilities. Very early in *The X-Men* issues, a differ-

ence was established between mutants and humans, and the stories often dwelled on the question of equality, making the issues of racism and bigotry main themes for the X-Men narratives. The central conflict was the conflict between ideologies, personified in the good Mutants (X-Men) and the bad ones (Brotherhood of Mutants). The X-Men, led by Professor Charles Xavier (Professor X), advocates for peace between humans and mutants, while the Brotherhood and their leader, Max Eisenhardt (Magneto), have opposing views regarding that relationship, refusing possibilities of peaceful coexistence between humans and mutants. These two characters symbolize different ideologies similar to the Civil Rights Movement and the major figures behind it – specifically, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Although the writers never admitted or acknowledged this, many previous analyses conducted by fans and media have pointed out this connection. *X-Men* mirrored that situation and dealt with racism and homophobia in America through the allegory of superhuman mutants.

The representation of non-white characters, especially black characters, was heavily stereotyped during the 1950s and 1960s. They were short-tempered, spoke with bad grammar, and had distinguished physical characteristics. In the case of the *X-Men*, this was not the case because black characters were basically non-existent. Even though the theme was about race and prejudice, all the primary members of the X-Men were white males, with the exception of one white female. The narration of difference in *The X-Men* was dealt with through the presence of whiteness even though the theme in a certain way demanded that the comic book be more racially diverse. If we take Gillian Rose's insight on discourse, where she emphasized the importance given to things that are said or written as well as to things which are not being said (Rose 157), then we can state that in ignoring the race aspect from one deeply imbedded racial premise, the discourse established here started to form an ideal citizen within a white milieu. The only female *X-Man* at that time was Jean Grey, a mutant with telekinetic abilities who was objectified and teased by the other, male members of the team. Even though the main theme was established as an allegory and representation of real racial and

sexual conflicts in society in the '60s, it has long been a fight in which handsome, confident, and able white men (and one woman) are led by an elder white man in battle and constant conflict with the Brotherhood of Mutants, who were mostly white men as well (although not so physically perfect as the *X-Men* members). In that way, the approach of comic book writers at that time was still aimed at whiteness within the population, addressing serious issues but in the end forming a national rhetoric for being a model American citizen knowing that acceptance will come first and foremost if you are visually and culturally part of the dominant, and to put it in Berlant's terms, hegemonic white male patriarchy that can be one of the aspects of national fantasy (*Queen of America* 5). The importance of noting the beginning of the *X-Men* canon is in labeling the context more precisely and, in doing so, concentrating on the issue which finally addressed the fact that the white *X-Men* are not alone in the world and that the United States of America is not the only place where these kinds of (fictional) problems could arise. In the tendency of "mapping the context within which discourse is used as a term needed to narrow the range of possible meanings" (Mills 3), the focus of this analysis is on the later expansion of the *X-Men* team and its use of the ideology of the American Dream to disrupt and reinforce the already established notion of the ideal American citizen with additional attributes. The paper will now focus on the answers for what kind of additional attributes there are in the *X-Men* comic-book and how it "articulates" (Laclau and Mouffe 105) a representation of citizenship models in America.⁴

More Diverse X-Men – How the American Dream Worked

By the end of the 1970s, Marvel started to expand the core group of *X-Men* by adding mutants of different races and ethnicities, which should have made their representation of racist struggles and critique of intolerant

4 Articulation is "any practice establishing a relationship among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice," while a discourse is "the structured totality resulting from this articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 105 in Stavarakis, Norval and Howarth 7).

societies more concrete. Nonetheless, as was evident in other superhero series by Marvel and DC, the attempts to present a difference often backfired because of additional stereotyping of certain aspects of society and its members. This was done in 1975 with the *Giant Size X-Men* series, in which Professor Xavier decided to recruit additional members to fight a new threat but also to attend his School for Gifted Youngsters, an institution that was working within the X-Men mansion. The mansion functioned as a sanctuary, but also as an educational institution, with X-Men members teaching young mutant kids how to handle their powers and deal with the social problems that came with them. Cantor sees the educational aspect as the part of the vision of the American Dream, noting that “this vision of the American Dream was bound up with trust in American institutions. The goal of long-term security rested on faith in financial institutions (...) Americans also looked up to their educational institutions, from primary schools to universities” (Cantor). Therefore, the purpose of the X-Men was not only to discern the nation, the world, or the people from external threats and other mutants, but it also had an educational function that offered a certain control and surveillance of its members, thus embracing another important aspect of the American Dream. The *Giant Size X-Men* series served as a link between the original X-Men and a new team of mutants coming from different parts of the world and, in doing so, added much needed diversity to an otherwise not-so-diverse group of *different* people. The new team consisted of seven people, gathering some members who were known to readers from earlier issues together with completely new ones. Sunfire, who was from Japan, had first been portrayed as a villain who hated America but later changed his ways to protect mutants with his ability of solar radiation (clearly referencing the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima). Wolverine, a masculine Canadian anti-hero with a short temper who had appeared in earlier issues and gained popularity, was also included in this new generation. The last mutant who was known from previous issues was Banshee, from Ireland, who possessed a sonic scream. His name and attributes were appropriated from Irish mythology and the creature of the same name. These three heroes had supporting roles due to

introduction of new ones. The remaining four were given considerably more pages in these issues, making their characterization and representation the main source of narratives concerning the American Dream.

Marvel's tendency to make X-Men more international and diverse continued with first of the four new members – Nightcrawler, a mutant from Germany with dark blue skin, three fingers on each hand, and a tail as a side effect of his mutant powers. The pages of the comic book denote images of villagers chasing Nightcrawler with pitch-forks and fire in an effort to punish and kill him. The setting was portrayed as a village full of “monsters with mindless prejudices” that had “hardly changed over the years” (Marvel Comics 3). By placing these mindless, prejudiced people in a rustic foreign place, the authors conveyed two messages – one was that this kind of behavior belongs to the past and should no longer exist today, and the second was that, if it does exist and if it is a problem, then it is only a problem of other countries. Consequent to the latter, racism must be connected with explicit violence as presented here. While elaborating on the ideal of American citizenship, Berlant notes that “a modern American citizenship is derived from franchising African Americans” (*Queen of America* 13). In many cases, this sort of tendency can be applied to all people who are labelled as different and in similar discourse code as is used to so label African Americans. In the case of *X-Men*, this role can be filled by Europeans, Asians, and Native Americans, as well. Following the culturally based concept of the nation, according to which the nation is an area of integrative social inclusion, the expansion of this space puts citizens in the isolated specter of the publicity which claims to represent them. Europeans, and, for that matter, every American who is different from the majority (immigrants, minorities, etc.), are in this way included in the culturally formed nation and citizenship. In this inclusion, residues of such representations that signify them as different still persist and are therefore still trapped in that different publicity, different perception by the majority. Berlant notes that these kinds of transformations enforce the idea of the American Dream, a sort of utopia which the Americans already dwell in or aspire to (*Queen of America* 3–4). By exponentiating this notion, in the case

of Nightcrawler we see its alternative if he refuses to go to the United States when he has been given a chance – he will be stalked or burned alive in the ancient, primeval backdrop of a European state. These notions become clearer in the case of the second new member, Storm, a black, female character from Africa who can control the weather and is “only happy here among the elements” (Marvel Comics 9). Her home is portrayed as inhabited by tribal people who are scantily clothed and bear tribal insignias on their bodies, depicting the established image of Africa as a savage, more primitive continent, where the inhabitants have established a more prolific connection to nature. This wild connection to nature is portrayed in Storm’s abilities and in her short-tempered and unpredictable manner. She is additionally portrayed as a barefoot goddess with long silver hair, eyes that are “crystal blue and older than time” (Marvel Comics 8), white pupils, and tribal accessories. Her being depicted as a goddess by her own people connotes the ambivalence of a non-American, mostly Oriental religious system that is usually portrayed through American popular culture before and after these comic book issues. All these differences are well-established differences between the West and the East, as they have often been perpetuated in literature other than graphic novels and comic books.

The third new member is Colossus, a white man, but from Siberia, a strong and naïve mutant who works in his village and leads a simple life. When Professor Xavier approaches him and offers him the opportunity to go to America, he is perplexed by that image, and the question that he poses – To whom does his power belong? – is something that creates a dichotomy between Russia and the United States. As a Russian, he is convinced that his abilities and his work belong to the state, but the American leader of the X-Men explains that in America his powers are free, free in a manner that “belongs to the world” (Marvel Comics 12). Again, we can observe discourse mechanisms of establishing difference, in this case political and legal in human rights (or mutant rights), positioning the American system as better and fairer.

Thunderbird is the last one that Professor X tries to recruit, and for

Thunderbird he does not have to go outside the United States. He is an Apache, and he possesses superhuman athletic ability. Before becoming a member of X-Men, he is enlisted in the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam War; he is therefore already a part of America. The character of Thunderbird is portrayed as short-tempered, wild, eager to prove his strength, and, once he has accepted membership, his costume visually depicts Native American details such as a feather and boots. In this way professor X convinces him to join the X-Men by making Thunderbird react to his accusations that “the Apache are all frightened, selfish children” (Marvel Comics 14). The mystification of Native Americans by noting pride, dreams, and warrior abilities is something that is and has always been quite frequent in Hollywood cinema and other popular culture products. In this way, even though sharing the same space and laws as other American citizens who are in the position of power, Native American characters are differentiated from other members by cultural aspects such as clothes.

It is important to note that, while they all form a certain kind of stereotyped characteristics, they also, to put it in Stuart Hall’s terms, connote that this kind of difference can only be imported to United States from other countries, thus distancing Asian-Americans and African-Americans from the feeling of being able to establish the dominant citizenship construct (as in the case of Storm and Sunfire). By Berlant’s “franchising” (*Queen of America* 13) of difference throughout the discourse about the American Dream, the omnipresence of “inevitable America” (*Queen of America* 16) conserves the ideology of the core white American group, white and mostly male, who tolerate and accept Others in their space, while not allowing them to get too close. This distance is visually perpetuated by various visual codes, their costumes, ways of thinking, and the maintenance of their different identities.

By adapting to the X-Men team, these strangers, non-Americans, can adapt by working and living as well as any American citizen/mutant. In that way, the comic maintains the imaginary of the American Dream, the yearning of non-Americans to come, stay, and succeed in this country, even though they are portrayed as different. Their belonging cannot be fulfilled in entire-

ty, as the hegemonic tendencies within the discourse, as shown in these examples, maintain the white male Americans in the position of power. These Americans hold the most coveted attributes and values reaffirmed in these comic books, manifested by white people who are the classic and more experienced members (as noted in the analysis of the first X-Men issues), by the image of their leader, professor X, and by his reassuring voice and image, which recruits differently the visually depicted and presented foreign members and reassures them that America will take care of them if they take care of America.

Concluding remarks

We can interpret this kind of (re)presentation of national American qualities as a critique of the exclusion of non-white characters in American popular culture, but this analyzed comic book did not make such an interpretation so plausible and concrete. The reason for this is the stereotyping or “over-determined narration” (Scott 299) perpetuated by a portrait of an African woman as one with nature, East Europeans as simple-minded folk with simple lives, and Europe in general as a medieval terrain where they burn people who are different from the majority. This kind of strategy is still evident today, with more diverse characters based on nationality, race, sexuality, and gender grounded in a different aspect and cultural citizenship than is most wanted by citizens of America, reminding them, in the most hegemonic way, where they still belong. There has been a gay wedding, Storm is now one of the most famous leaders of the X-men, and parallel to that, we still have various narrative devices that frame them within specific discourses and representations. This paper has noted the beginning of a kind of narrative framing of the American Dream and cultural citizenship that should, and hopefully will, be researched in more detail in the future.

As Berlant notes, the role of one particular medium in constructing the hegemony of the normative nation must be understood as partial and not an absolute moment in the genealogy of national identity crises and the production of national subjects (*Queen of America* 35). Comic books and graphic

novels, as seen in the case of *THE Giant Size X-Men*, have the potential to be a part of a bigger role and bigger picture in which, while providing different and important stories about racism and difference, they still perpetuate and create ways to maintain hegemonic relations between different national subjects. In the case of superhero comic book popular culture, *different people* could and can be incorporated in American society and yearn for the fulfillment that white, mostly male, American citizens have. But the inability to fully become an American is something that is constantly addressed in many popular culture manifestations through these kinds of representation(s) of difference that the *X-Men* issues are just one small part.

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