Croatian Leftist Critique and the Object of American Studies

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

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

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

1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

policy. (2000: 446)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

devotees of the high priestess of capitalism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6

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

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

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

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

If we seek to participate in the international production of knowledge about the United States, we can do worse than retrieve the *Praxis* group's reception of Heidegger.[11] Not only will this remedy the dearth of philosophy within the discipline[12] but from this intellectual position we will be able to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7

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

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

The second is Nenad Mišćević:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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