



EDITORS' NOTE

Leo Marx, a giant within the field of American Studies passed away on March 8, 2022, at the age of 102.

For years, eminent historian David Nye considered Marx a mentor and a friend and, in his own way, helped countless colleagues and students during his long career in Scandinavia. As such, the lineage from Leo Marx to Scandinavian scholars within American Studies is strong and it is only fitting and proper that Nye's reflections on Marx and his legacy lead *American Studies in Scandinavia* 55:1.

Nye first met Leo Marx as a student at Amherst College in the 1960s and brought many of Marx's ideas (as well as Marx himself) to Scandinavia after he founded the Center for American Studies in Denmark in 1992. By then, Marx's work had both shaped and helped transform the field.

After World War II, Leo Marx's generation of American Studies scholars utilized a true interdisciplinary approach to study what Henry Nash Smith called, "American culture and society, past and present, as a whole." In Marx's recollection, American Studies was then a "holistic, affirmative, nationalistic project primarily aimed at identifying and documenting the distinctive features of the culture and society chiefly created by white European settlers in the territory now comprising the US."

Consensus, not conflict, was the object of study, but researchers of this generation were all critical of a United States that did not live up to American egalitarian ideals. Thus, the obvious chasm between American "egalitarian rights and principles" and American political practice in the Vietnam era, brought about a reconfiguration of American Studies. This fissure in the "conception and practice of American Studies" – what Marx in 2005 called "the great divide" – led younger American Studies scholars of the Vietnam era to bring the sharp differences of "gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual preference" into focus. The "great divide," opened the "literary canon" to "hitherto ignored or excluded cohorts of writers" and posed important questions about the very definition of "American."

As an example, Janice Radway in her Presidential Address to the American Studies Association in 1998 challenged the idea that: "bounded territories are naturally disconnected, that cultures are isomorphically tied to those spaces, and that identities follow necessarily and unitarily from them." To Radway, American Studies was more about the United States' imperial impact at home and abroad than consensus and character within American borders. Decades later, the centrality of imperialism and Atlantic World racial hierarchies to contemporary American Studies is obvious, but maintaining an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach within the field remains as important as ever.

In a response to Radway's address, Nye argued for the need to understand the multitude of American identity categories

“in relation to each other” while continuing to research the interdisciplinary potential of literature, environmental issues, “business, technology” and “formal politics,” to name a few subjects. As Nye demonstrates in this issue’s opening essay, Leo Marx’s work helps concretize such a vision.

In “Leo Marx’s Legacy,” David Nye shows how Marx’s always evolving work is still crucial to understanding key challenges in both the scholarly literature and the world. Nye argues for the importance of interdisciplinarity to engage with major societal challenges and illustrates how Marx pushed American Studies to “understand literature as an expression of cultural values, to study landscapes as conflicted ideological expressions, and to examine the ways that technologies embody fantasies of power.” As evidenced by Nye’s essay, and his dedication in *American Technological Sublime* (“to Leo Marx, Sublime teacher”), Marx’s approach to American Studies continues to inspire.

For decades, Leo Marx’s ideas have also shaped pieces in the pages of *American Studies in Scandinavia* (David Nye co-edited the journal between 1996 and 2003), and this issue is no different. This issue includes further reflections on the relationship between nature and literature in American Studies as Susan Savage Lee’s “Literary Border Crossing and Cultural Belonging in Frederick Schiller Faust’s *The Gentle Gunman*” shows. Lee’s text is an excellent transnational study that embraces a broader definition of “American” and shows the breadth and development of

the field. Analyzing *The Gentle Gunman*’s use of early 20th century popular genres such “as the western, the gauchesque, and the detective story”, Lee asks questions of modernity (as opposed to the seemingly “unmodernized, virgin land” of the pampas), storytelling, media, and masculinity to show that literary border crossing can expand worldviews of both fictional and real-life actors.

American Studies in Scandinavia 55:1 also includes Lovro Skopljanac’s inspiring study of memory and literature based on extensive research in an American college town. Skopljanac’s article demonstrates that to American readers, a “coherent kernel of memory”, related to “narrative episodes, quotations, and descriptions,” remains “readily accessible to recall” long after reading literature. Based on 100 interviews, Skopljanac argues that “it is not the specific texts” that make authors memorable, but their “specific way of writing” where “unusual and incongruous characters and plot occurrences” help American readers remember while also using literature as a mirror for their own lived experience.

Lastly, in “In the Womb of Utopia,” Jenny Bonnevier explores feminist science fiction and demonstrates the importance of thinking with and through ideas of the future, as “an important gesture of resistance.” These utopias, Bonnevier argues, “can help feminists frame their responses to assisted reproductive technologies” and think about a future not already colonized by the present. With the hope of a future even better than

the one currently imagined, *American Studies in Scandinavia* will now transition to the editorship of excellent Norwegian-based scholars such as Dr. Justin Parks and Aurora Eide. Before then, please join me in thanking Henry King, Anne Mørk, Jay Cannon, and Claus Rosenkrantz Hansen for the extraordinary care and passion they have brought to our editorial work since 2019. Thanks also to guest editors Marianne Kongerslev, Clara Juncker and Niels Bjerre Poulsen, as well as former editor Janne Lahti, and a host of kind, constructive peer reviewers. Your talents have helped elevate every issue.

April 30, 2023
Odense, Denmark
Anders Bo Rasmussen

