

Odsjek za anglistiku
Odsjek za povijest
Filozofski fakultet
Sveučilište u Zagrebu

DIPLOMSKI RAD

Exceptionalism in 19th century American Historiography

(Smjer: Američka književnost i kultura)

Kandidat: Lovro Furjanić

Mentori: dr. sc. Stipe Grgas, red. prof., dr. sc. Branimir Janković

Ak. godina: 2017./2018.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The myth and symbol school of American studies establishes the myths that permeate American society and both the way Americans perceive themselves and the way others perceive Americans. Some of the most prominent myths that constitute American identity are the myth of the errand, the frontier, American exceptionalism, the pastoral ideal and the jeremiad. The theme of this paper will be the notion, or the myth of American exceptionalism, which is one of the myths and symbols which profoundly affected both the American history and American present and will probably continue to exhibit a pronounced influence on the American future. This paper will focus on the historical aspect of American exceptionalism by drawing attention to the way the notion of American exceptionalism affects historiographical works and the way American exceptionalism is developed in historiography. The theoretical background and methodological implications which make this sort of analysis possible will be explored and the approach which paves way to the analysis of historiographical works will be developed. The paper will culminate in a case study, which will showcase the way this analytical approach can be applied to an existing historiographical work. At the very beginning of this study, it is crucial to point out that the body of texts and other cultural artifacts which could be included into this paper is exceptionally large. The notion of American exceptionalism has loomed large in American public consciousness since Europeans had begun to settle on the American continent. American cultural production has been saturated with exceptionalist ethos since its early days, and American historians are not an exception. Consequently, this paper can not be a product of quantitative research. In other words, it would be almost impossible to analyze each and every relevant text and generalize based on these texts. This is the reason this paper will feature a detailed theoretical introduction, regarding not only myths and symbols or the theory of historiography, but the wider theory of science. Based on this introduction and the thoroughly explained theoretical foundations and methodological apparatus, John Lothrop Motley's "Polity of the Puritans" will be analyzed. The goal of this analysis will not be to discover

or come to conclusions about exceptionalism in historiography which could then be generalized to a wider body of texts, but to question and put to test whether the suggested theoretical and methodological system can be fruitfully applied to a concrete example. The case study will be both an analysis of exceptionalism and a self-reflection on the method suggested in this paper. This analysis will be particularly thorough, with a special attention being drawn to whether, or to what extent, the author is aware of the artificial and rhetorical nature and function of the myth of American exceptionalism. However, this will be far from the only point of focus of this research, as it will focus on the totality of meaning of American exceptionalism, its historical foundations and its contemporary relevance.

2. THE THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

2.1 THE MYTH AND SYMBOLS SCHOOL OF AMERICAN STUDIES

Before defining concrete myths and symbols, it is useful to contextualize their arrival into academic discourse. The crucial element of this context is the myth and symbol school of American studies. Leo Marx, who is one of the most prominent American studies scholars of all times, has on this subject written the article "On Recovering the "Ur" Theory of American Studies." This article offers an incredibly substantive, but compact portrayal of the development of American studies as a scholarly discipline, which is especially convincing as Marx has been a part of this academic movement from its early beginnings. While it would be both impossible to rival Marx's insight and unreasonable to go into such detail in this paper, it is nevertheless an useful starting point for this analysis. While the work done by the myth and symbol school is affiliated with the early stages of American studies, Marx disputes the notion of an unified formal background to the work of the early Americanists. He writes

All of these [some of the most prominent early Americanists, such as Perry Miller and F. O. Matthiessen] scholars were my teachers or colleagues or both, several became close personal friends, and in those early years I was party to countless discussions of the new project. If all or most of these faculty members had subscribed to a formal theory of American studies, I almost certainly would have known it. The problem is that I don't recall having heard any discussion—or even mention—of such a theory. From the vantage of our post-theory era, in fact, Harvard's doctoral program in the History of American Civilization began life in a scandalously "untheorized" [condition.] It was introduced without fanfare, almost casually, as a strictly local experiment in interdisciplinary teaching and research. If a theory was implicit in this modest curricular innovation, it was a rationale for interdisciplinarity. In official announcements of the new project the mantra was

interdisciplinary. ("Recovering the "Ur" Theory" 119)

The early Americanists' focus on interdisciplinarity is exceedingly relevant for this study and will be returned to in a later part of the paper. The lack of a unified theory in early American studies helps portray the setting in which the myth and symbol scholars worked. Bruce Kuklick is another scholar who corroborates this thesis, when he claims that "Smith [Henry Nash] and his followers have written little about their methodological premises" (435). This does not mean that there was absolutely no theoretical reflection among these scholars or that parallels can not be driven between their work, but that there was no single unified theory which dominated their intellectual landscapes. When the works of various early American studies scholars are taken into account, one can recognize various different paradigms they have defined in order to better understand the American experience. The place of theory in early American studies is reminiscent of what Ernest Breisach writes about the position of theory in American academic history at the turn of the century. Breisach states that

In the 1890s and early 1900s, American historians were in no mood for a grand theoretical dispute. They were building their discipline into a powerful and respected force, and many of them were ready to be the proponents and educators of the coming reform era. Why should one struggle to clarify the phrase "scientific history" when, even ill-defined, it inspired historians and gave the aura of modernity to history?" (290)

The processes Breisach writes about took place before the founding of American studies, so it might be imprecise to speak of corresponding situations between the discipline, especially as academic history was a respected discipline long before the founding of American studies. However, the lack of theory was definitely not a phenomenon exclusive to American studies.

Possibly the most relevant work done by the myth and symbol scholars relates to the study of American literature. Winfried Fluck writes that "[t]he amazing disciplinary influence of the myth and symbol school should thus not only be attributed to its focus on American founding myths but,

as the link between myth and symbol indicates, to a skillful combination of intellectual history and key formalist premises taken from New Criticism" (3). It would be wrong to try to establish a strong, constant and direct link between the myth and symbol school and New Criticism, since New Criticism is most usually related to an intrinsic and formal approach to art as an entity removed from the world, while the myth and symbol school is primarily interested in the cultural and historical contexts in which art is created and consumed. However, that does not mean that there were no mutual influences between these prominent American intellectual currents, both of which were strongly focused on interpreting literature. Alan Trachtenberg explains the crux of the myth and symbol school, while acknowledging its features which defy an easy definition. He claims that

Whatever the truth in calling this group a "school," or in attributing to it anything like a consistent scholarly method or outlook, the words themselves—myth and symbol—do denote a fairly clear point of view, one which takes a culture to consist in myths, e.g., constructs whose power over collective intelligence and behavior is uniquely powerful, and powerful especially to the extent that it is irrational, based not on empirically-determined "truthfulness" but on other sources of need, of collective purpose, or ideological imperative. Such myths, the assumption goes, operate as mediating symbols whereby persons in the culture take and share a view of reality: which is to say that reality itself is understood to consist not of "facts" or sense data alone, but of those mediating forms which organize, define, and subdue the details of experience, bringing them into conformity with existing patterns. (667)

Trachtenberg's puts forth a potent explanation of the myth and symbol school as a whole. It is a diverse group of scholars who interpret cultural artifacts, define relatively stable and permanent images created by them, and describe the social role of these images, whether historical or contemporary. Trachtenberg's definition is especially relevant for this study because it focuses on the irrationality in human response to myths and symbols, which is one of the crucial sources of

their social importance and their power of persuasion.

However, it is also necessary to point out that the discipline of American studies can not be reduced to only the myth and symbol school. While one of the basic premises behind this paper is that myths and symbols are still relevant and that the early scholars of the myth and symbol school made a valuable contribution in understanding them, it would be extremely hard to claim that they are the most commonly used paradigm in contemporary American Studies. Leo Marx writes of "the Great Divide" ("Recovering the "Ur" Theory 121) in American Studies, which split the discipline into two eras, one before the Divide (BD), the other after it (AD). It would be best to read Marx's entire article for a nuanced portrayal of the divide, but here it is possible to touch on several key aspects of it. According to Marx,

With the help of the analytic tools provided by these semiotically refined critical theories—structuralist and poststructuralist—a cohort of AD scholars demonstrated that for decades their BD precursors had managed to ignore, in keeping with the nationalistic, patriarchal, racialist, hegemonic “master narrative” to which they subscribed, the sharp differences of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual preference that divided Americans into virtually separate groups. ("Recovering the "Ur" Theory 123)

The Divide in American studies can be seen as a fracture, where the master narrative of an unified American culture broke into numerous radically different experiences. The myth and symbol school, with its neglect of the subaltern American identities, lost some of its appeal after the Divide, and has not regained it to this day. Although Marx strives for a more nuanced reading of the Divide, even he consents that "[i]t is true that we BD Americanists, in our concern with the distinctiveness of American culture and society, persistently overlooked salient differences of gender, ethnicity, sexual preference and—though to a lesser extent—differences of race and class" ("Recovering the "Ur" Theory 124). While the myth and symbol school dominated early American studies, currently it is a more marginal part of the discipline, and some of the contemporary practitioners deem it

outdated. Some would be even more critical towards the early contributions of the discipline, claiming that they helped to reinforce American imperialism. However, this paper will be based on the view that contemporary insight, both disciplinary and philosophical, is compatible with the rich intellectual inheritance left by the early American studies. For example, Stipe Grgas has as recently as in 2014 written that

If they are a scientific pursuit, American Studies could not embrace the totality of their object. On the contrary, they have fielded paradigms without which, if we remember Kuhn's observation, a discipline cannot exist. Put otherwise, American Studies was not merely "looking around" (Kuhn 96), but scholars within these paradigms were seeking out things they expected to see. Without much ado, I hold that the dominant and underlying paradigm of American Studies, one which was initially substantiated by scholars within the field and the one which was afterwards, in different ways, negotiated by later practitioners, is the notion of American exceptionalism. ("Contemporary Disciplinary Practice" 5)

Even if the difficulty in understanding America in its totality is recognized, the paradigms defined by early Americanists still offer remarkable insight into crucial elements of the American society. The paradigm Grgas espouses will be revisited in a later part of this paper. At this point, it can be concluded that the myth and symbol school of American studies was unavoidable in the constitution of the discipline, especially its interdisciplinary background, and that the knowledge created by early Americanists has contemporary relevance despite the fact that the school has, to an extent, fallen out of favour among contemporary researchers.

2.2 THE DISCURSIVE MANIFESTATIONS OF MYTHS AND SYMBOLS

As has already been mentioned in the general introduction, concrete research calls for a varied theoretical introduction. After explaining the context in which the study of myths and symbols gained relevance, it is necessary to analyze both specific myths and symbols and their complex relationships. The myths and symbols studied in this paper function on different levels of

society and their formal analysis calls for the study of different discourses. For example, this is especially conspicuous when the structure of the pastoral ideal is taken into account. Leo Marx studied the pastoral ideal in greater detail, and he claims that "the answer to this central question must start with the distinction between two kinds of pastoralism – one that is popular and sentimental, the other imaginative and complex" (*Machine in the Garden* 5). The fact that Marx introduces this distinction already points to the different discursive levels on which myths and symbols function. In this particular example, the discursive levels to which Marx refers are the imaginative one, which "affects the nation's taste in serious literature" (*Machine in the Garden* 6), and the popular one, which is "an expression less of thought than of feeling" and is "widely diffused in our culture" (*Machine in the Garden* 5). The imaginative one manifests in works of the authors which constitute the core of the American literary canon, such as Ernest Hemingway and Mark Twain. The popular one, on the other hand, appears in different guises as a part of American everyday culture. According to Leo Marx, the pastoral ideal appears and affects both everyday culture and the works of authors such as Mark Twain, although they obviously are not the same type of discourse. This example clearly proves that myths and symbols are not constituted as monolithic entities, but that the same myth appears in different types of discourse, where they are formulated in slightly different ways. Despite this plurality, it is still possible to talk of the myth as a relatively coherent entity and study the ways it affects cultural perceptions. However, in order to properly appreciate the role myths and symbols have in American society as a whole, it is important to reflect on the way they function in different cultural artifacts. Of course, such an extensive analysis would be far out of scope of a project much more ambitious than this diploma paper. The goal of this paper is to shed light on the way myths and symbols function in a relatively well-defined body of texts. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that myths and symbols are present in numerous other discourses, and that the analysis of these discourses might call for a different methodology than the one presented in this paper.

2.3 MYTHS AND SYMBOLS IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

The study of myths and symbols was often limited to the types of discourse which are referred to by Leo Marx, that is literature and everyday culture, but these are not the only places where the influence of myths and symbols can be found. Formal academic scholarly and scientific discourse can also be influenced by the American myths and symbols. The academic works which directly study myths and symbols, such as the already mentioned Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*, are obviously influenced by them, but there are also other academic texts which have been influenced by different myths without paying direct attention to them. In these academic works the influence of myths and symbols can be seen in spite of the fact that they are not the subject of the study. In this respect, the myths and symbols can affect the scholar or the scientist although he is not directly aware of their influence. Although there is a wide plethora of disciplines that can be influenced by the myths and symbols, this paper will be focused on their influence on academic history. Once again, it is useful to point out that history is a relatively vaguely defined and multi-faceted area, so it is possible and necessary to further delineate the object of this study. It will be focused on historiography, the texts that are the product of an academic historian's study of history.

Before going further with the study of the influence of the myths and symbols on historiography, it is useful to point out that they are strongly present in other areas of history, such as the way history is presented in primary and secondary schools. For example, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen write about

the narrative of declension that says Americans are disengaged from history because cultural radicals have captured the schools (and museums) and are teaching gloomy stories about our nation – stories about McCarthyism rather than America's triumph in the cold war, about Harriet Tubman rather than the Founding Fathers, about destroying Indians rather than taming the West. (45)

The presence of myths and symbols is obvious. Taming the West refers to the myth of the frontier, some of the first European settlers of America are related to the jeremiad and, more importantly, the

errand, while America's triumph in the cold war can easily be connected to the notion of American exceptionalism. This short example shows that different aspects of the way humans construct the past can be a fertile ground for this type of analysis, but focusing on one part of it enables a more consistent methodology and avoids potential theoretical issues that could stem from a diverse group of examples. The theory of historiography is not the same as the theory of history education or history didactics. Opting for including only historiography in this study enables an unified theoretical background and should result in a more compact analysis. If the methodology used in this paper enables a fruitful analysis of this phenomenon, the research can easily be expanded to cover different areas of history. However, in that case, it might be necessary to alter the methodological tools being used as dictated by the particularities of the new problem being researched.

2.4 THE PLACE OF MYTHS AND SYMBOLS WITHIN THE THEORY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

Keith Jenkins stipulates that "past and history are different things", adding that "the past and history are not stitched into each other such that only one historical reading of the past is absolutely necessary" and that "the same object of enquiry can be read differently by different discursive practices" (7). Jenkins tries to explain that the past, that is, the events that happened in the world that existed at the time the events took place, is not the same thing as what historians write about it. The historian is not completely objective or completely sure that what he writes about the past is the absolute objective truth¹. This means that the historian intervenes in the presentation of the past and the intervention opens a way for the appearance of myths and symbols. E. H. Carr writes that "we can view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present" (24). The contemporary situation has a profound influence on the way the historian works. Returning to Marx, the fact that the contemporary situation is important in the formation of

1 This builds upon the postmodern perception of the basic precepts of science. In this concrete example, it is necessary to recognize the fact that a historian can not be sure that his works present the objective truth, but regardless of this, he should strive towards making his texts as objective as possible.

historiographical works means that something like the popular pastoralism, which permeates the contemporary situation, can influence the historian and in turn be manifest in the historiographical work the historian writes, regardless of whether he is aware of that influence or not.

Jenkins further states that "[i]deology seeps into every nook and cranny of history" (24), and myths and symbols have definitely been a constitutive part of American ideology for a long time. A basic definition of ideology is provided in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy which claims that "[i]deology refers, in a general sense, to a system of political ideas" (Sypnowich). Each and every prominent cultural artifact studied by the myths and symbol school of American studies has strong ties with the political ideas which shape American reality. Of course, ideology has been one of the staples of social sciences in the last hundred years and there are different ways it has been defined over time. Ideology is not limited exclusively to political ideas, but can also encompass other relevant social forces, such as perspectives or worldviews. It would hardly be possible to list all the conflicting definitions of ideology and it is not crucial for the primary subject of this research. However, it would be reasonable to assume that under most standard definitions the link between ideology and the prominent myths and symbols of American culture would be pronounced. From this perspective, this paper can be seen as a reading of the complex and nuanced relationship between ideology, culture, and history. It has already been established that myths and symbols are constitutive parts of the American ideology. For example, the myth of American exceptionalism is the force which drives American ideology towards the belief in global American superiority. Because of this, American exceptionalism is an extremely important part of American ideology. Leo Marx points out the crucial role of the scholars who studied myths and symbols in his rendering of the history of American studies, where he writes that "[t]he myth and symbol scholars helped to establish a new canon of "classic" American literature" ("Recovering the "Ur" Theory 121). Establishing a canon of national literature alone is a profound undertaking which proves the deep mark these scholars have left on American culture, but that is not the only influence that their

criticism has exerted on it. Society reacts to scholarly and scientific trends, if not to specific units of research, and the myth and symbol school remains one of the most important legacies of early American studies. In this sense, both the study of culture and ideology, and culture and ideology themselves are among the most pronounced elements which influence the diachronic mutation of society. Leo Marx claims that "American studies "BD" (Before the Divide) was an essentially 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" ("Recovering the "Ur" Theory 121). The way early American studies as defined by Marx influence culture is obvious. In this sense, the dynamic nature and relationship of academic American studies and American culture and ideology is clear. The assumption behind this essay is that American historiographers were not only affected, but also that they were not always aware of the way myths and symbols, which are cultural constructs and key elements of the American ideology, affect their historiographic writing. If this assumption is correct, it does not only mean that studying myths and symbols helps shed light on historiographical works, but also helps pave the way for understanding how history functions in relation to ideology and culture. In this sense, history is introduced into the lively relationship between ideology, culture and American studies.

On a theoretical level, it is obvious that there is a considerable possibility that the myths and symbols have had a significant impact on historiography. Furthermore, according to some understandings of the theory of historiography, myths and symbols have the capacity of influencing the most basic precepts of a historian's work. Hayden White claims that "the number of strategies available to the historian for endowing events with meaning will be coterminous with the number of generic story types available in the historian's own culture" ("Historical Pluralism" 488). Myths and symbols have a deep influence on the American culture and function as some of the most commonly used building blocks of American texts. According to White, the way stories are formed

in a certain culture reflects and defines the way historiographical works of that culture are written. Since myths and symbols profoundly affect stories, the same can be claimed for historiography. Each and every historian does not subscribe to White's theory of historiography and this paper is not intended either as either a reflection or a value judgment of his theoretical opus. However, the presence of myths and symbols in American historiography is evident, as will be shown in the later parts of this paper, and this is consistent with White's thoughts on the interrelatedness of constructing stories and historiography.

This study will be dealing with the works of historiography which pertain to America. The reason for this is obvious. Historiographical works about America are the ones where the myths and symbols which constitute American identity are most likely to be found and most likely to have influenced the historian. This does not mean that a similar methodology could not be used to analyze historiography written by non-Americans, only that one should be aware of the differences between the texts being studied and, if necessary, adapt the methodology used to the novel requirements by a different type of text. This theoretical background will offer a firm backdrop on which the influence of the myths and symbols on historiography can be analyzed. The analysis of specific historiographical works is the logical consequence of this theoretical background. Such an analysis will try to discern to what extent historiographical works had been influenced by the myths and symbols pertaining to the United States.

2.5 THE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF HISTORIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

The earlier American scholars are particularly useful for this sort of analysis. Although a contemporary scholar can certainly be unaware of the way the myths and symbols influence his work, having knowledge of the 20th century works on both general epistemology or theory of science and specific theory of historiography can help a scholar retain his objectivity and avoid taking myths and symbols at face value. Additionally, the works of American studies scholars draw attention towards the inconsistencies of different myths and symbols making them harder to slip

unnoticed into academic discourse. The historians who analyze parts of the past that are most closely related to myths and symbols are likely to have at least a passing notion of the wealth of academic writing about the myth or the symbol in questions. In that sense, they are likely to be aware of the possibility of their influence on the research they are conducting. Consequently, the academic works of the historiographers from the 19th century are more likely to turn out to be valuable sources for the analysis suggested in this paper than the works of contemporary historians. Ernest Breisach claims that "[b]y the mid-nineteenth century history had achieved a strong position in American life, with the nation and its historians seeming to be as one" (286), and this shows that history was definitely an important part of American culture during the 19th century. The relationship between American nation-building and historiography is one of the defining features of American 19th century historiography and will be commented upon later in this paper. Nineteenth century historiography is particularly suitable for this analysis since it is the era when history, which has already become formalized to an extent, is already an important part of culture. Simultaneously, the historians writing these texts are less likely to be aware of the artificiality of myths and symbols because there has been no systematic and thorough study of them, and the wider theory of science and historiography is not as advanced as, for example, in the second half of the 20th century.

2.6 AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Several of the most prominent myths and symbols have already been mentioned in this paper. It is obvious that, because of the deep cultural importance of myths and symbols, a thorough analysis of the influence only one myth had on historiography would be far out of the scope of a study such as this one. Consequently, it is necessary to focus on one single notion described by the myth and symbol school. This notion will be the idea of American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism is not a symbol, but a myth, and one whose deep political importance offers myriad options in studying its function within historiography. Henry Nash Smith, who is one of the scholars responsible for the creation of the myth and symbol school, states that

I use the words ['myth' and 'symbol'] to designate larger or smaller units of the same kind of thing, namely an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image. The myths and symbols with which I deal have the further characteristic of being collective representations rather than the work of a single mind. (vii)

According to Smith's definition, the notion of American exceptionalism is definitely one of the larger intellectual constructions in question. Before going on to explain why this paper will focus on exceptionalism instead of another possible myth, it is necessary to point out that the theoretical introduction to other myths and symbols is an important part of this paper. As will be explained in a later part of the paper, myths and symbols are interconnected and their cultural importance can not be properly appreciated without realizing that their spheres of influence coincide with one another, so the focus on exceptionalism must not be accompanied by ignorance regarding other myths and symbols. The historiographical text analyzed in the case study, "Polity of the Puritans", makes obvious the connections between different myths and symbols. That connection will be explicated in the part of this paper which will deal with "Polity of the Puritans". In this context, when necessary for the analysis of the text in question, other myths and symbols will be invoked. However, in spite of the importance of other myths and symbols, American exceptionalism will be the primary focus of the research.

Jack P. Greene writes that "the concept of American exceptionalism with its positive connotations was present at the very creation of America" (6), so it is crucial to understand that exceptionalism has existed for as long as America has existed and that it still exists today. As the notion of American exceptionalism is one of the most important ideological constructs regarding America, it has over time been defined in different terms by different scholars. A definition which is both precise and instructive from the perspective of this paper is the one offered by Donald Pease, who claims that "American exceptionalism includes a complex assemblage of theological and secular assumptions out of which Americans have developed the lasting belief in America as the

fulfillment of the national ideal to which other nations aspire" (*The New American Exceptionalism* 7). This basic definition of American exceptionalism is the starting point from which the term will be used in this paper. This definition underlines the temporal aspect of American exceptionalism, which is completely in accord with Jack Greene's writing. Additionally, it puts emphasis on the fact that American exceptionalism is based on both secular and theological grounds and functions in a complex matrix of religion and secularity. Although it is not the direct theme of this paper, in this context it is necessary to point out the complex nature of the American perception of religion, especially in context of the notion of civil religion². In spite of the potency of his definition, Pease's portrayal of American exceptionalism obviously does not cover each and every aspect of it. Stanley Hoffman claims that "[e]ach nation tends to see itself as unique. Two—France and the United States—consider themselves as exceptional because—or so they claim—of the universality of their values. One only: the United States, has tried to develop foreign policies that reflect such exceptionalism" (1). His writing of American exceptionalism is instructive because it puts the American variant in comparison to a similar French ideological construction. This is especially interesting as the notion of American exceptionalism intrinsically defies an easy comparative approach. In other words, the fact that it underlines America as the single most exemplary nation by itself posits comparison as valid only when done to justify American hegemony or point towards a deficiency in some other nation. Hoffman also mentions the supposed universality of American values. This universality is not only spatial, in that the values are or should be universal to each and every nation that currently exists, but also temporal. In this context, the temporal dimension means that the American values are the culmination of history. According to American exceptionalism, American values are superior to the historical values from which they have evolved, but this reading also opens the road to understanding the American values and political system as the final and most optimal system possible. Heike Paul writes that "the phrase 'exceptionalism' has been used in very

2 More about civil religion can be read in Jan Stieverman's paper *Religion and the American difference*.

unspecific ways to claim American superiority vis-à-vis non-Americans and to legitimate American hegemony outside of the US; it also conveys notions of uniqueness and predestination" (14). Although most of what she mentions is a part of the other definitions offered in this paragraph, or can at least be inferred from them, Heike Paul's definition is interesting because it touches upon the notion of predestination. This is in turn related to the interconnectedness of the spiritual and the secular in American exceptionalism. This notion of predestination is one of the crucial factors which enable the power and presence of this myth over such a long historical period. This is especially relevant when the myth of exceptionalism is analyzed in the context of other similar ideological constructions, such as Manifest Destiny. This will be revisited in a later part of this paper. Another important aspect of American exceptionalism, which is particularly relevant from the perspective of political history, is the fact that it has been used as a means of legitimizing the American claims for global dominance. In this context, the notion of American exceptionalism offers a blueprint from which one can create a narrative that justifies American superiority over any other nation. This can, in turn, help legitimize concrete American political or military actions in countries spatially far removed from American soil.

It would be exceedingly hard to pinpoint the myth or symbol which is the single most important one for understanding the American experience. However, the notion of American exceptionalism is one which offers a particularly stimulating starting point for analyzing historiographical texts, especially those written in the 19th century. The cultural turn which took place in the humanities of the second half of the 20th century has had a profound effect on both history and American studies. History is currently perceived as an eclectic discipline, where focus is spread between various equally important fields which range from disciplinary stalwarts with long traditions, such as social, economic or political history to relatively new approaches, such as public, environmental or gender history. However, academic history has for a long time been focused on a narrow range of past's totality. When speaking about the 19th century historiography, especially

early 19th century historiography, the study of political history is the dominant paradigm for academic historiography. David Joyce and Michael Kraus write how "in John Bach McMaster's *History of the People of the United States*, whose first volume appeared in 1883, we have the real precursor of the social-history school in America" (5). This text, which is among the first works of American historiography that branch away from the traditional political historiography, was published near the end of the century in question in this paper. The text analyzed in the case study was published more than thirty years before McMaster's book. Arthur Shaffer and Lawrence Friedman claim that

For all their partisan differences, the men and women attracted to the writing of American history at the end of the eighteenth century were united by an emotional and intellectual commitment to the Revolution derived from firsthand experience. Born between 1725 and 1763, most of them had reached maturity during or immediately following the Anglo-American controversy. All had been ardent advocates of the Patriot cause; most had been active in the Army, in public life, or had supported the Revolution from their pulpits and with their pens. [...] Despite differences in background, geography, and persuasion-almost as multifarious a group as the nation itself-they brought to their work a sense of common enterprise. They set out to place the nation's past into a pattern that contradicted the reality of American life. Though local loyalties and internal dissensions were the persistent facts, national unity became their credo, a credo which outweighed partisanship. (196-198)

Similar to the reasons European historians were focused on traditional historiographical themes in the 18th and 19th century, American historians had a specific nation-building project in which the study of political history had a singularly important place. However, unlike their European counterparts, the American historians' stake in this intellectual project was even higher because of their personal participation in American revolution. Ernest Breisach writes how "[i]t also would soon become clear that American attitudes toward the nature and theory of history constantly

blurred the line between the public purpose and the strictly scientific purpose of historiography, theoretical statements to the contrary" (288). Even the gradual movement, which became especially pronounced in the later parts of the 19th century, towards more formal and rigorous theory and methodology of history did not root out the nation-building purpose of American historiography. Another important event which occupied the attention of 19th century historians was the American Civil War. Breisach points out that "[i]n the immediate aftermath of the Civil War there ensued—as is usual in such cases—a war-guilt debate" (260). Although, despite starting immediately after the Civil War, this debate took place over a shorter period of the late 19th century, it is another factor which drew historians' attention towards political history. The turn towards a more all-encompassing history started at the very end of the 19th century. Breisach writes that

While in Turner's appeal for historiographical modernization, published as "The Significance of History" in 1892, his methodological approach remained generally in line with the prevailing positivism of contemporary American historiography, his ideas on the substance of history were remarkably innovative. Historiography must become life-encompassing rather than being dedicated to affairs of politics and state, deal with all the people and not just elites, explain history in terms of the structural forces "behind" the institutions, recognize the pervasiveness of change, and have world history as its ultimate reference. (313)

It would be impossible to give a uniform overview of 19th century historiography because processes which brought about a profound change in theoretical background and the methodology of the discipline started at the end of the century. However, the American historiography of the first half of the 19th century is still firmly traditional in the themes historians wrote about, while relevant from the perspective of the study of American exceptionalism. The historiographical climate of the 19th century not only puts into focus the dominance of political history, but also gives further reasons for choosing American exceptionalism as the paradigm studied in this paper. American

exceptionalism is inseparable from the American national identity, more so than the other myths and symbols. Consequently, it is particularly suitable for the analysis of 19th century historiography, seeing as nationalism and nation-building were among the most prominent features of a major part of the historiography written in this era. Although it is not the only one, American exceptionalism is one of the myths and symbols which are most likely to appear in works of political history. If the historiography of another era was analyzed, different myths and symbols could be more pertinent for this type of analysis. For example, the notion of America being the Nature's Nation would offer a good starting point for reading environmental history. If the theory and method presented in this paper deemed sound, different historiographical works and different paradigms of American studies could almost certainly be analyzed in similar ways and to similar effect. In spite of other possible options which could be studied, in this paper, American exceptionalism will be the myth in the analytic spotlight.

However, the fact that American exceptionalism is the myth which could be applied to the historiographical works studied in this paper easier than most other myths is not the only reason this research will focus on it. American exceptionalism is also a concept that is singularly important for understanding the contemporary United States. The globalized world offers a novel stage for the manifestation of American exceptionalism and, as a consequence of the different setting, the myth functions in ways that do not mirror its functions in the 19th century. This difference is further corroborated by the fact that America is currently the leading global power, or at least one of the few most powerful states, which was not the case in the 19th century. However, understanding the nuances of the myth and its social importance in a different time can help shed light on the contemporary situation. For example, Donald Pease writes that "[t]hroughout the Cold War, US dominance was sustained through the US's representation of itself as an exception to the rules through which it regulated the rest of the global order" ("Re-thinking "American Studies after US Exceptionalism" 19-20), which presents a more contemporary manifestation of the exceptionalist

ethos. Hayden White claims that "narrative might well be considered a solution to [...] the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific" ("The Value of Narrativity" 5). Understanding and interpreting American narratives, especially those that are replete with specific cultural artifacts relating directly and exclusively to America, can help understand the general American experience. While keeping in mind the different setting, the knowledge created by the study of the historical manifestations of American exceptionalism can help one better understand the way exceptionalism affects the contemporary America. This contemporary relevance and the pronounced position of exceptionalism in 19th century historiography are the reasons American exceptionalism stands apart from alternative myths and symbols and is the object of this research.

2.7 ON DISCIPLINARITY

It would be tempting to define this paper as an interdisciplinary work because it is a diploma paper both in history and American studies. However, there is both an intrinsic problem with such a claim and a problem more closely related to the theoretical and methodological approach used in this paper. The intrinsic problem is the problem of terminology. Building upon that issue, it is much more precise to define the theoretical background of this research and to describe and enumerate the different methodological tools which will be used than to try and fit this research into a preordained disciplinary framework. It is better not only because it gives room for using the exact methodology which will be deemed to be the most proper approach to studying exceptionalism in historiography, but also because different disciplinary frameworks and different perceptions of disciplines can have their own specific problems. This does not mean that the valuable research of theory of science will be ignored, but that it will be scrutinized from a critical perspective and applied to the research in so much as the theoretical basis on which it is being conducted allows it and as much as it helps better understand the phenomena in question.

Interdisciplinarity is a buzz word in contemporary science and different authors use

numerous different approaches and theoretical models when they claim that their work is interdisciplinary. This terminological mess gets even murkier when one takes into account the different terms, such as transdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, which are often used for approaches to disciplinary science which are mutually similar, but are not the same. The same approach will by some authors be defined as an interdisciplinary approach, while others will claim it is based on transdisciplinary foundations. In this context, before defining this paper in relation to its disciplinary background, it is crucial to take into account some of the ways these approaches are defined. This is hardly a place for a thorough analysis of the wide plethora of different definitions of disciplinarity. However, it is useful to point out some definitions which are pertinent to this area of study. For example, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines the different disciplinary approaches as following

Interdisciplinary research or collaboration creates a new discipline or project, such as interfield research, often leaving the existence of the original ones intact. *Multidisciplinary* work involves the juxtaposition of the treatments and aims of the different disciplines involved in addressing a common problem. *Crossdisciplinary* work involves borrowing resources from one discipline to serve the aims of a project in another. *Transdisciplinary* work is a synthetic creation that encompasses work from different disciplines. (Klein 1990, Kellert 2008, Brigandt 2010, Hoffmann, Schmidt and Nersessian 2012, Osbeck et al 2011, Repko 2012)

However, one can almost effortlessly find different definitions of these terms without looking for faults within the definitions included in the Encyclopedia. For example, a prominent researcher of the different perceptions of disciplinarity, Basarab Nicolescu, claims that interdisciplinarity "concerns the transfer of methods from one discipline to another" (5). Although he does add that "[i]nterdisciplinarity has even the capacity of generating new disciplines, like quantum cosmology and chaos theory" (5), this definition is completely different from the one offered by the

Encyclopedia. According to the Encyclopedia, interdisciplinary research must feature a new project or a new discipline, while, to Nicolescu, it is enough that a part of methodology is borrowed from another discipline, regardless of the fact that the research in questions remains within a relatively well-defined traditional discipline. Nicolescu's interdisciplinarity has features of both the crossdisciplinarity and the interdisciplinarity listed in the Encyclopedia. Furthermore, it is closer to the research which is considered crossdisciplinarity in the Encyclopedia. This example is used simply to illustrate the existence of different approaches to defining disciplinarity and its development, as this paper is not a thorough study of terminology. One could easily find different and conflicting definitions of the disciplinary models listed above.

It is also useful to point out that, in this context, the problem of terminology is widely known. For example, Julie Thompson Klein points out that

"transdisciplinary" is a label on a host of Internet sites. Examples range across learning assessment, arts education, distance education and special education; plus mental health, the handicapped and children with multiple disabilities, rehabilitation and pain management. The term also appears on web sites dedicated to engineering problems, ecological economics, human population biology, language and thought, preparation for teamwork and collaboration, cybernetics and infomatics, and knowledge organization. (43)

The paragraph quoted in this paper features numerous different areas of human life, but it does not encompass all the uses listed in Klein's study. As a consequence of this diversity, Klein claims that "[t]o speak of a shared discourse among the heterogeneous group of people who gathered in Zurich for the Transdisciplinarity Conference is not to demand conformity to a single definition but, to echo *Bernard Giovannini*, acknowledge a "general goal" (43). The problems of defining the different approaches to disciplinarity are evident after even a superficial analysis of terminology, and several of the definitions presented here could be applied to this study.

However, none of the aforementioned definitions fit the approach used here quite as well as

the term postdisciplinary. Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum reflect on the issue of disciplinary knowledge in a postdisciplinary framework when claiming that they

reject the discursive and organisational construction (and, worse, the fetishisation) of disciplinary boundaries. This means in turn that we cannot describe our approach as inter- or multi-disciplinary in its aspiration—even though, *faute de mieux*, we draw on concepts, theoretical arguments and empirical studies written from existing disciplinary perspectives.

(89)

According to, for example, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, an interdisciplinary approach would bring about the creation of a new discipline, which is not a terribly positive development based on the assumption that science should gradually move away from disciplinary division. If disciplinary boundaries are to be challenged, interdisciplinarity is almost as unwanted as traditional disciplinary division. Louis Menand also comments on this phenomenon when he states that "interdisciplinarity is not only completely consistent with disciplinarity - the concept that each academic field has its own distinctive program of inquiry - it actually depends on that concept" (52), and also points out that "[m]erely adding new areas of study (women's history, postcolonial writers, and so on) doesn't threaten the integrity of a discipline, even if it entails (as it often does) rethinking traditional standards and practices" (54-55). As one of the most important aspects of postdisciplinarity is the rejection of traditional disciplinary boundaries, a postdisciplinary scientist must be critical towards inter-, multi-, cross- or transdisciplinary epistemology regardless of their influential positions within the contemporary theory of science and within wider academic discourse. However, as Jessop and Sum point out, this does not automatically include the rejection of valuable contributions which originate from disciplinary frameworks. There is an almost immeasurable amount of valuable scientific insight created in a strictly disciplinary setting. A postdisciplinary approach to science or a postdisciplinary turn does include turning a blind eye towards these insights, but changing the conceptual framework within which new research is being

done. Menand mentions humanities centers which were "antidisciplinary in temper (they were established to compensate for some perceived inadequacy in the existing departments)" (54) and similarly a postdisciplinary approach to science must intrinsically compensate for a disciplinary inadequacy. This inadequacy is the failure to approach research in a holistic manner which would try to appreciate the metaphysical or ontological totality of the phenomenon being researched. This call for holism does not propound the search for a master theory or a theory of everything as the only goal of science. However, it does stipulate a need for the avoidance of a reductionist approach when such an approach is not potent enough to explain the holistic nature of the object of research. Moreover, some valuable and important elements of the postdisciplinary research agenda could easily be fitted into a traditional discipline. Although the term postdisciplinarity is considerably younger than the myth and symbol school of American studies, the early Americanists' endeavor to understand America in its totality is similar to the postdisciplinary insistence on understanding reality in a holistic manner.

It is obvious that the way postdisciplinarity is formulated as the basis of this research is incompatible with the relativistic perception of postdisciplinarity offered by Louis Menand, who writes about "a backlash against the scientism and the excessive respect for disciplinarity of the Cold War university" (58). A scientific, or a scientist, approach and disciplinarity are not irrevocably linked as science can progress out of disciplinary shackles. Menand describes the approach he considers scientist when he writes that

[a] vocabulary of "disinterestedness," "objectivity," "reason," and "knowledge," and talk about such things as "the scientific method," "the canon of great books," and "the fact-value distinction," have been replaced, in many fields, by talk about "interpretations" (rather than "facts"), "perspective" (rather than "objectivity"), and "understanding" (rather than "reason" or "analysis"). (57)

One must acknowledge the numerous epistemological problems with the traditional scientific

categories, such as "objectivity" or "facts", which were put into an especially strong focus by the postmodernist thinkers of the second half of the 20th century. Without trying to thoroughly analyze this epistemological anxiety, it is possible to claim that these notions are a proper starting point and an ideal to be followed in scientific discourse, regardless of their problematic nature. In other words, even if there are questions about the feasibility of a truly objective objectivity, that does not mean that science should not strive towards objectivity, as unreachable as it might be. Additionally, it is necessary to point out that interpretations can exist alongside facts, similar to how objectivity can exist while recognizing the different perspectives from which a phenomenon can be perceived.

2.8 TOWARDS AN OPEN METHODOLOGY

To summarize the disciplinarian introduction, it must be pointed out that this paper is not a historical or a cultural study of a part of American reality. Instead, it aims at being exclusively a study of a part of reality, that is, the way American exceptionalism is used and formed in early historiographical works, without the added disciplinary baggage and limitations. In other words, this paper will call upon any insights which can help shed light on the theme being studied, regardless of whether they originate in historiography or cultural studies. The theme of this paper is particularly receptive to this sort of analysis. Michael Kraus and Davis Joyce argue that "[a]fter the 1870s American historical writing ceased to consider itself a branch of literature and claimed the exalted position given to those subjects called "scientific." (4). As Motley's text was published before the 1870s, it still belongs to the time when American historians' self-perception was not completely based on scientific premises. In this context, different insights and explanatory models are both needed and warranted in order to better understand Motley's writing and appreciate its social relevance. Similarly, the early American studies were based on interdisciplinary ideas and it makes sense to retain their methodologically liberal impulse when applying a paradigm they developed, that is, when writing about American exceptionalism. Naturally, meta-historical analysis will be a prominent methodological approach because the text being studied is a historiographical

work, despite its differences from the contemporary academic historiography. Additionally, the study of cultural artifacts and their function in both the local and global culture is necessary because of the parts of the historiographical work this paper aims to focus upon.

However, another method that will be called upon is close reading, which is most commonly used in the analysis of literature. Earlier in the paper, the link between American studies and New Criticism has been established, which further corroborates the choice of including the method of close reading into this study. Despite the fact that the texts studied in this paper are not works of art, close reading can help with the interpretation of any text, including these works of historiography. On a theoretical level, narratology can be used as an explanatory framework for not only literature, but for a wide range of cultural artifacts. Seymour Chatman writes that "[l]iterary critics tend to think too exclusively of the verbal medium, even though they consume stories daily through films, comic strips, paintings, sculptures, dance movements, and music" (9). Similarly, Hayden White has coined the term *historiophoty*, which denotes "the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse" ("Historiography and Historiophoty" 1193). Although this paper will focus on the written medium, it is useful to keep in mind that the structuralist analytical approach can be applied to a very diverse collection of narratives and that history is not mediated exclusively through the textual medium, despite its dominant position among the traditional representations of the past. However, if this type of research is to be expanded to other cultural artifacts, the narratological methodology could easily be retained. In another essay, Hayden White claims that "[i]n contemporary historical theory the topic of narrative has been the subject of extraordinarily intense debate" ("The Question of Narrative" 1). In spite of the fact that the position of narrative within historiography is an extremely interesting and important issue, this is another area of theoretical musings which will not be covered to great detail in this paper due to space constraints. However, narratology as the discipline which deals with narrative is obviously intimately related to historiography.

Philosophy is another discipline which has already been a key part of this paper. In traditional terms, it would be easiest to sort the reflections in this paragraph under the philosophical field of epistemology or theory of science. The need for self-reflection within science can be traced to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who writes that "[t]he Spirit that, so developed, knows itself as Spirit, is *Science*; Science is its actuality and the realm which it builds for itself in its own element" (14). It is possible to interpret this need for the Spirit to recognize itself as Spirit as the need for science to look at its basis, that is, at what makes science science. This interpretation is further corroborated by Hegel's insistence on Spirit building the realm of science within its own element. According to this interpretation, it is necessary to recognize the basic facts and motives of science as a human practice. Based on this reading of Hegel, a scientist or scholar must be aware of the structure of knowledge and the theoretical background behind any academic text. In this context, the theory of science is unavoidable, as each and every good paper is, at least to a certain extent, rooted in the theoretical and methodological background of science. The insistence on self-reflexion, which is rooted in Hegel's writings, is especially pertinent for history, as Hayden White claims that "[h]istory is perhaps the conservative discipline par excellence" ("The Burden of History" 112) and adds that "this suspicion of system has become a sort of conditioned response among historians which has led to a resistance throughout the entire profession to almost any kind of critical self-analysis" ("The Burden of History" 112). White's text was published in 1966, and there has been a positive improvement regarding critical self-analysis in historiography, but there is still ample room for improvement in that regard so Hegel's theoretical ideas can be fruitfully applied even to contemporary academic history. However, Hegel does also claim that "the *basis* or principle of the system is, in fact, only its *beginning*" (14). Following the earlier interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a philosophical reflection on theory of science is a crucial part of any scientific enterprise, but the epistemological field covered by science consists of much more than theory of science. Although theory of science is an important part of this paper, the other disciplines

listed are also crucial for the success of the research. Those are just some of the traditional disciplines and disciplinary methodologies which are pertinent to this paper, which will in no way be exclusively limited to what was listed in this paragraph.

3. CASE STUDY: JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY'S "POLITY OF THE PURITANS"

3.1 JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY

Before studying the text "Polity of the Puritans" in greater detail, it is useful to shortly remark on Motley's life and his position in American historiography of the times. He was born in Boston on April 15, 1814 and died in Dorchester on May 29, 1877. In addition to his contributions to historiography, which are the primary subject of this case study, Motley was also a distinguished politician, having served as a minister to two different countries, Great Britain and Austria ("John Lothrop Motley." *Encyclopedia Britannica*). Ernst Breisach summarizes his education when he writes how Motley "[h]ad learned his historical craftsmanship in Göttingen and Berlin, possessed the literary aspirations and skills of other New England historians, and knew Europe from his prolonged diplomatic service there. His message was once more that history was progressing unalterably toward liberty for all" (259). Motley's literary prowess would come especially handy as he is considered a part of the pre-scientific history which was strongly grounded in narration. Breisach corroborates this thesis when he remarks on Motley's writing "based as it was on a [...] model of literary presentation" (45). Another scholar, Peter Novick, claims Motley was one of the historians who "did not hesitate to "tell," in an era that preferred the writer to "show"; to make their political and moral judgments explicit" (46). As will be seen in the text analyzed in the case study, Motley definitely does make his judgement explicit. However, before the text is analyzed in more detail, it is useful to delineate Motley's place in the historiographical climate of his times. Breisach defines a mutually similar group of early American historians when he writes that

In the nineteenth century the American national experience had epic character and brought forth appropriately epic histories by five major historians: George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, William Prescott, John Motley, and, less successful in gaining popular renown, Richard Hildreth. All but Hildreth were New Englanders, imbued with the sense of tradition

of that region, highly literate, Harvard-educated, and possessed by a missionary commitment to what they considered "the higher purpose" of their country. (255-256)

Despite their intellectual sophistication, Breisach does add that the works of Motley and the other traditionally educated historians he mentions "were based on sincere scholarly efforts, although their methods have seemed outdated to later historians" (259). When compared with the works written by historians after history's turn towards a more scientific methodology at the end of the 19th century, the texts written by the historians mentioned by Breisach might seem to be not as rigorous or analytically precise as they could have been. However, contemporary theory of historiography opens the space for a more nuanced appreciation of early historiography. Peter Novick writes "of the "scientific" professional historians' determination to distance themselves from their "literary," "gentleman amateur" predecessors of the early nineteenth century: George Bancroft, William Lothrop Motley, William H. Prescott, and Francis Parkman" (44). Based on their education, what Breisach calls "sincere scholarly efforts" (259) and the fact that they, according to Novick, "had performed exhaustive labors with original sources" (44), amateurism does not seem a label particularly applicable to these scholars, but they were obviously perceived as such by later historians. Regardless of whether these perceptions were warranted inside these historians' systems of evaluating the merit of historiography, it is useful to point out that the professionalism of the times was not very well-defined. Hayden White writes of the issue

Yet, if historical studies were professionalized during this period, the theoretical basis of its disciplinization remained unclear. The transformation of historical thinking from an amateur activity into a professional one was not attended by the sort of conceptual revolution that has accompanied such transformations of other fields, such as physics, chemistry, and biology. Instruction in the "historical method" consisted essentially of an injunction to use the most refined philological techniques for the criticism of historical documents, combined with a set of statements about what the historian ought not to attempt on the basis of the documents

thus criticized. (*Metahistory* 136)

When White's assessment of this issue is taken into account, whether a 19th century historians was considered professional by his peers does not seem exceedingly relevant regarding the quality of his work. It is also useful to point out that the project of nation-building did not lead each and every scholar who participated in it into writing exclusively about the United States. For example, Breisach points out that Motley was one of the historians whose "fascination with the American past did not lead them to write histories of the United States but of topics more or less related to it" (258). Motley's text which will be analyzed in this paper can be considered a history of United States, but his primary research interest did lay elsewhere.

3.2 INTRODUCTION TO "POLITY OF THE PURITANS"

Although Motley was neither exclusively nor primarily a scholar interested in America, American history and society were prominent fields of his research. One of the papers he published in *North American Review*, "Polity of the Puritans", is especially suitable for the analysis suggested in this paper.

Early on in his text, he compares the settlers of San Francisco with the first wave colonists of America, writing that "[p]robably the character of the adventurers who are the present pioneers of civilization in the neighborhood of San Francisco does not vary materially from that of their predecessors at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Virginia" (470-471). Motley does not eulogize this group of first wave colonists, but focuses on the material situation which resulted in their migration. The difference between these colonists and those Motley refers to as "men of ice and granite called the Puritans" (472) is exactly the fact that the Puritans were not focused on material gain. According to Motley, "[a] single idea led those rigid colonists" (472), that idea being, of course, "the establishment of the great American democracy" (472). Despite the fact that not all first wave colonists are constructed as role models, Motley deciding to compare the migrants of his time to the original colonists speaks of the presence of the original colonists in the imaginations of

Motley's contemporaries. It is also necessary to recognize that the early colonization of America is a particularly important and strongly mythologized part of American history. Stipe Grgas points out that "Jamestown in Virginia [...] was blatantly a commercial enterprise" ("Contemporary Disciplinary Practice" 7). However, the mythical overlooking of the earlier failed commercial settlement in Virginia in favour of the later settlement in Plymouth is a staple in the traditional American self-perception. Motley recognizes that commercial adventurers came to America before the traditionally eulogized "men of ice and granite" (472). In this sense, he avoids misrepresenting the early genesis of European settlement in America, probably because of his work on primary sources. In "Polity of the Puritans", he also writes directly about the colony in Plymouth, and this will be covered in a later part of this paper.

The author believes that "the advantage in character belongs to the Californians" (471), but the rationale behind this beliefs is deeply influenced by the myths and symbols. Motley claims that the California colonists "fulfil the mission which has been impressed upon the country, and felt in every generation since it was first colonized, to carry the Anglo-American standard towards the setting sun" (471). This explanation falls firmly within the paradigm of Manifest Destiny. Frederick Merk and Lois Bannister Merk define Manifest Destiny as "expansion, prearranged by Heaven, over an area not clearly defined" (24). They enumerate the possible interpretations of the territory to which Manifest Destiny applies by claiming that "[i]n some minds it meant expansion over the region to the Pacific; in other, over the North American continent; in others, over the hemisphere" (24). The colonists Motley writes about fall within the first group mentioned by Merk, as they are among the first colonists to approach the Pacific Ocean³.

3 It is useful to keep in mind that there are different interpretations of Manifest Destiny, some of which are more pertinent than others for the understanding of contemporary American polity. This interpretation refers to the global expansion of American influence and is closely related to the notion of American exceptionalism. A switch towards the globalist interpretation of Manifest Destiny can be traced all the way back to the end of the 19th century. In year 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner held a speech at the World's Columbian Exposition which took place in Chicago and claimed that there is no more land which can be colonized in America. The profound globalist consequence of such a claim is particularly obvious from the contemporary perspective, where America is the leading power in the world.

3.3 THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MYTHS AND SYMBOLS

Before going further with the analysis of Motley's paper, it is crucial to return to one of the most important features of myths and symbols, which was superficially defined in an earlier part of this paper. That feature is the fact that different myths and symbols are strongly interrelated, which is also conspicuous in Motley's text. On a theoretical level, Manifest Destiny depends on the paradigm of the errand, which is in turn closely related to the notion of American exceptionalism. Without the American exceptionalist ethos, there is no intellectual background which can make Manifest Destiny into the potent ideological tool that it has been for several centuries. Ian Tyrrell claims that the "idea of the United States as a special case outside the normal patterns and laws of history runs deep in American experience" (1031). This idea is the starting point of American exceptionalism. One would be hard pressed to subscribe to the idea of Manifest Destiny without perceiving America as a special case in world history. The reasoning for the belief that America is entitled and destined to spread on new territories stems from the belief that America is an exceptional country and that the laws which apply to other countries do not always apply to America in the same way they apply to another, less exceptional country. The notion of American exceptionalism is also related to biblical imagery. The biblical image of the City upon the Hill was introduced into the American cultural imagination in the sermon which John Winthrop held on board the *Arbella*. According to the image, America is the singular nation which should be an example to other nations, both in moral prudence and economic success. The interrelated nature of this image and American exceptionalism is self-explanatory. Motley writes about "a certain pseudo-patriotism which may be supposed to mingle with the motives of the multitude now farthest advanced in prosecuting that vast system of *internal colonization*, which distinguishes the polity of this country from that of any other known in history" (471). Motley knows that countries have often acquired foreign or unclaimed territories in the past. However, the belief that Americans are on an errand from God to create an exceptional nation makes him think of unclaimed territories in America as parts of the country which are yet to be claimed. According to the myth, God has made

the territories part of the country the moment he sent Puritans into America, and what is left is for the chosen people to make them a part of their country in practice. This belief is underlined by the common exceptionalist idea that the American situation is different from any other historical situation. This part of Motley's text is a prime example of the interrelated nature of different myths. The idea of the errand enables the exceptionalist position taken by the author. The close relationship of Manifest Destiny and exceptionalism in Motley's text corroborates the theoretical relationship between the paradigms. The colonization of California is obviously in line with the concept of Manifest Destiny, but the reason why these colonists have "the advantage in character" (Motley 471) in comparison to some early colonizers of America also falls within the domain of American exceptionalism. These colonizers are superior because they move westwards not only in search of material gain, but also to colonize California in the process of spreading the exemplary American democracy.

3.4 THE META-HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF MYTHS AND SYMBOLS

Another interesting issue is the relationship of myths and symbols and the early musings about the theory of historiography which are present in Motley's text. For example, he is critical of "the lovers of that kind of speculation which deals with history as it might have been, supposing that nothing ever happened which did happen, and that every thing happened which did not" (471-472). From the contemporary perspective, musing about the developments which would have taken place if something had happened differently from the way it happened does not seem to have a place in historiography other than possibly as a passing comment. However, the methodological norms of the middle of the 19th century were markedly different from the contemporary norms, and this sort of comment shows that Motley is interested in theoretical issues and takes a stance in theoretical discussions. This is useful to keep in mind even though it is hard to relate this idea to a concrete myth or symbol.

Although Motley is engaged in meta-historical issues, his work remains a 19th century

narrative which is deeply different from contemporary historiographical or other scholarly texts. For example, when analyzing another historiographical work, Motley claims that "[i]t is perfectly trustworthy as to facts. It is written entirely from the original sources, and we are not aware a single event, important or trifling, in the whole history of the period, which has been omitted. [...] We are hardly acquainted with any work of importance, chronicle, journal, or tract, which has not been consulted" (475). Leaving aside his dividing events into important or trifling ones, which is also a place of tension regarding historiographical analysis, an outdated approach to the study of past is visible in this quote. For example, it is hardly possible to include each event of a period in a written text. Even relatively short periods feature a wide plethora of different events which make it impossible to claim that the whole history of the period has been covered. Keith Jenkins' view of the theory of historiography corroborates this thesis, as he states that

no historian can cover and thus re-cover the totality of past events because their 'content' is virtually limitless. One cannot recount more than a fraction of what has occurred and no historian's account ever corresponds precisely with the past: the sheer bulk of the past precludes total history. Most information about the past has never been recorded and most of the rest was evanescent. (13-14)

Of course, the historical significance of events is debatable, but most are at least tangentially relevant for some historiographical research. In that respect, each historiographical undertaking is a work of selection. The historian does not include each event which happened in some time frame into his analysis, but selects events which he considers relevant to his research. Although this would be considered slack theory from the contemporary perspective, it is necessary to point out that such an approach to history was usual at the time Motley wrote his text. However, in the context of his meta-historical positioning, it is useful to bring attention to this place of narrative tension.

On the other hand, exceptionalist ethos is clearly visible in Motley's discussion of the relationship between language and narration. Motley states that "[w]e consider the German

language to be less adapted to narrative, and particularly to historical narrative, than any language of Europe with which we are acquainted" (473) because of "the constant tendency to involutions" (473). He further explains that "[i]f the whole force of a sentence is not revealed till the last word, [...] the chance is, that the reader will become wearied before he arrive at the last word, and so lose the pith and marrow of the whole period" (473-474). Although linguistic concerns are usually glossed over in discussions of the theory of historiography, Motley pays attention to them and offers his perspective on the issue of language. The exceptionalist influence on his view is visible when he writes about the advantage Dutch historians have over German historians because "the language has approached more nearly to the directness of its Teutonic sister, the Anglo-Saxon" (473). In this sense, English is more direct than German and English scholars are able to write better historiography because of a basic feature of their language. A similar perception of a link between one's nation and narrative style is also present at the end of his text as a lighthearted critique of his own milieu. Motley quotes Teodore de la Gard, who contends that "[w]e have a strong weakness in New England, that when we are speaking we know not how to conclude; we make many ends before we make an end; the fault is in the climate" (498). These final words of Motley's text seem more like comic relief than the introduction of a new subject of analysis, but it is interesting to point it out in juxtaposition to his views of the German language. That perspective is interesting regardless of being outdated. Although the feeling of exceptionalism is not as clearly visible in this case as in some other positions the author takes, it is especially interesting because it deals with a meta-historical issue. Motley is not discussing a specific past phenomenon or a group of phenomena, but describing why he thinks historiography should be written in one way and not in another, in this case, in English and not in German or Dutch. The fact that exceptionalism influences the position Motley takes on this specific issue shows that the influence of myths and symbols runs very deep in his historiographical writing.

Another reason Motley's argument about the difference of languages is relevant is the fact

that it in a way forebodes a wider debate in American historiography which took place at the end of the 19th century. Ernst Breisach remarks how

On the surface little changed in that relationship [between the American nation and American historians] until late in the century, when the public and the historians became fascinated with, perhaps even awed by, science, although few people knew what exactly they meant by the term. Among its [the American Historical Association] forty-one founders were some German-educated, academic historians, including Herbert Baxter Adams. These historians were full of enthusiasm for a "scientific history" in the German manner and demanded a vigorous training of young historians in the search for and critical use of sources. Such a training would eventually create a split between the old-style amateur historians and the new-style professional historians. (286-287)

Although it would be possible to argue that Motley was not really an amateur historian, he is obviously not a part of the German scientific school of historiography. Seeing as Motley died about the time science was being pushed into the most prominent historiographical spotlight, it would be inaccurate to consider him a prominent member of the meta-historical debate and dialogue between "scientific" and "narrative" historians. However, it is useful to keep in mind that, in a text published in the first half of the 19th century, Motley ponders a theoretical issue which is extremely pertinent from the perspective of the debate that followed in the later part of that century.

3.5 THE COMPLEX AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM IN THE EARLY COLONIZATION OF AMERICA

Motley's text offers a fertile ground on which a nuanced perspective of early American historiography can be based. It is obvious that the American exceptionalist ethos is an important factor of his text. However, it would be extremely irresponsible to reject his essay as an outdated artifact removed from any semblance of objectivity based on the exceptionalist elements which are present in it. The complex nature of his view of the early colonists is obvious when he writes that "[w]ith all their foibles, with all their teasing, tyrannical, and arbitrary notions, the Pilgrims were

lovers of liberty as well as sticklers for authority" (490). Tyrannical ways do not fit with a love of liberty. To work through his seemingly incompatible generalizations, a more detailed reading of Motley's rendering of the early American colonies is needed. A key aspect of American existence studied by Motley is democracy, which is also an important part of the way exceptionalism affects public imagination. In accord to American exceptionalism and as a comment on the complex sociopolitical processes which took place in the middle of the 19th century Europe, Motley writes of democracy as "[t]he system, after which the popular heart of Europe is panting" (492). Seeing as Europe is panting after democracy, while it is a natural thing in America, points towards the perception of America as a city upon the hill, which is closely related to American exceptionalism.

The presence of exceptionalist elements is obvious in Motley's text, but it is also necessary to point out that he takes a critical stance towards some aspects of this exceptionalist tradition. Motley himself comments about the lack of a nuanced analysis of the value of the early Puritan tradition when he claims that "[t]he Puritans deserve to be treated with more justice than they have yet received. Indiscriminate and fulsome eulogy, or virulent abuse, has been their portion for the last two centuries" (476). Motley here calls for an objective assessment of these early settlers of America. He understands and acknowledges that they were not ideal, but also declines to paint them in an exclusively negative light. The fact that contemporary research would be richer if more scholars followed Motley's example does not paint the current state of academic analysis in a favourable light. Despite state-of-art theoretical sophistication, some contemporary scholars are too eager to put forth almost uncritical opinions of early texts as soon as they locate any problematic area in one of these texts. This analytical fallacy is especially present when these problematic areas are related to well-known sources of limited objectivity in older texts, such as American exceptionalism, whose agenda is often at odds with the liberal outlook that is usual among scholars. Motley writes that "[w]e believe, that the habit of pouring out unmeasured praise upon the founders of New England has created a prejudice against them which is singularly unjust" (477). In this

instance, his almost two hundred years old analysis is more perceptive than many pieces of contemporary research. Moreover, Motley's text is a proof of how hard it is to reduce early text to simple categories. His admiration of early Puritans coupled with his striving towards objectivity is particularly visible when he writes about the virtues and vices of these settlers.

Their virtues were many, and among the noblest which can adorn humanity; indomitable courage, patience, fortitude, self-denial, generosity, extreme purity of morals, piety, energy and singleness of purpose almost superhuman, - all these elements of the heroic, and even the saintly, they possessed in an eminent degree, and no man can gainsay it. Their virtues were many and colossal; their vices were few but formidable, for they were intolerance, cruelty, tyrannym and bigotry. (476)

This passage is extraordinarily exceptionalist, while at the same time critical of early Puritans, who are one of the main objects of exceptionalist eulogization. He affirms and extends the exceptionalist idea, while being critical towards it. The strength of Motley's character and his scholarly striving towards truth is visible because he has the moral integrity to criticize people who were, at least to an extent, his role models. The character of the early Puritan settlers is not the only part of the exceptionalist narrative towards which Motley takes a critical stance. He also questions whether the early politics of these settlers were democratic. He claims that "there is no doubt that a democracy, the most extensive and powerful which the world ever saw, has been the result of that movement, combined with many other and subsequent causes" (477). The exceptionalist streak is conspicuous here, but Motley goes on to point out that "the real reason why the democratic principle prevailed was because it is a true principle, and because it never before had so fair a chance to develop itself" (477). However, contrary to the traditional exceptionalist reading, Motley writes that "[t]he New England fathers, however, had no notion of establishing a democracy. [...] The movement hither was purely a theological movement" (478). He moves even further from the exceptionalist standard when he claims that "[t]he Plymouth rock compact was drawn up *ex necessitate*, and was rather

intended as a solemn agreement among a very few individuals to stand by and support each other, under very trying circumstances, than as a formal annunciation of political principles" (478). Motley moves the establishment of democracy away from the minds of the early settlers and avoids invoking the name of God in his analysis. He does not believe that Puritans were sent by God to create a democracy, but that they migrated due to material reasons and democracy arose as a consequence of the circumstances in which they found themselves. They helped create democracy only because their personalities were compatible with some precepts upon which democracy is founded and because they believed that a democratic government would benefit them in their predicament. Additionally, they found themselves in a place which was especially suitable for the development of a democratic government. Motley bases his analysis on the early settlers' own words as written in the Plymouth manifesto, wondering "[h]ow could forty-one persons, acknowledging themselves [...] as the 'loyal subjects of their dread sovereign,' dream of announcing the sovereignty of the people" (480). After an ironic and quite humorous rendering of what these colonists would think when confronted with exceptionalism, Motley goes on to point out that "[t]his little pious church congregation had but one object; they wished a resting place for the soles of their feet" (479). This analysis of early colonists is obviously in stark contrast with the usual exceptionalist narrative. It is impossible to argue that Motley's text furthers exceptionalist ethos, but it is also markedly critical towards some of its aspects. Motley summarizes his view of the narratives about the early colonists when he writes that "[w]e think that too much political importance has been attached to the history of the Plymouth Colony by our author and by Mr. Bancroft" (481). He does not view these colonists as people on an errand, but a nonconformist group forced to find a place for themselves in an unknown area. In that respect, their material reality was a concern far more pressing than the creation of democracy or any such complex issue of philosophy or politics. However, these colonists did help pave the way for democracy, which is constructed as an exceptional social organization in Motley's text.

Following his analysis of the early Plymouth colony, Motley moves his focus onto the slightly younger colony in Massachusetts. Motley agrees that the Massachusetts colony was "a colony led and governed by men of aristocratic birth and education, with whom church reformation was the leading principle of their lives" (483), but he also states that the original intention for the colony was almost exclusively based on material grounds. He claims that the predominantly business enterprise funded by rich investors morphed into a more spiritual space because "the only persons much in earnest in the matter were those with whom the religious idea was the predominant" (482). In that respect, his rendering of early Massachusetts also both promotes and questions the traditional exceptionalist narrative. The origin of the colony is not the sole contrast to the exceptionalist narrative. Motley claims that "[t]he government resided in the hands of the freemen, not of the population" (483), judging that "[t]here was but little democracy in all this" (483). Moreover, this is not the only undemocratic quality of colony. Motley adds that in 1632 "membership of a Calvinist church was established as an indispensable prerequisite of citizenship" (484), making the colony even less democratic than before. However, almost simultaneously to his critique of the undemocratic aspects of the colony, Motley praises the magistrates of the colony as "single-hearted and pure, but stern and inflexible" (483). He states that the dangers of Calvinist arrogance was avoided because of the "personal character, the singular virtue, of the leaders of the emigration" (485). The humble character of these leaders, together with the inherent virtue of the democratic principle, helped create a democratic system instead of a theocracy. Despite these positive qualities, Motley also criticizes the early leaders of Massachusetts for embodying a very strict and unjust society, where "religious toleration, so far from being considered a virtue at that day, was rather accounted a crime" (486). Although he claims that the law was not too strict in questions of religion exclusively, Motley summarizes "the social aspect of the little colony [... as] pious, hardy and industrious" (489).

3.6 EXCEPTIONALISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN

AMERICA

Motley partly bridges the gap between his summary of the early colonist experience and the traditional exceptionalist narratives by focusing on the diachronic aspect of the colonies' political system. After proving several mistakes or points of tension of the exceptionalist presentation of the early colonists, he explains how this undemocratic system was able to morph into the democracy he respects. He points out that "[t]he sword has founded most aristocracies; but their only foes, the Indians, were soon subdued" (491). From this perspective, the presence of an external enemy is a powerful stimulus for the creation of an undemocratic system. America's location, the oceans separating it from other powerful political entities, created a buffer zone against the elements which could have disrupted the onset of democracy in America. Oceans helped America avoid direct confrontation with external enemies, which, had it occurred, could have been used as an argument in favour of a less democratic regime.

Although not directly related to this topic, Stipe Grgas' analysis of the importance of including the study of the ocean into the research agenda of American Studies is related to Motley's argument. Grgas points out that "the barrier of the ocean [...] was a prerequisite which enabled the proliferation of the myth of innocence in spite of American "cosmopolitan" military presence" (*Američki studiji danas* 303). Similarly to how important oceans were for hiding external enemies in the days of the early American settlers, they are nowadays important for hiding American military involvement from Americans themselves. Of course, information is readily available in the contemporary world, which can not be said for the time Motley writes about, but the distance of American military conflicts from the mainland, distance filled with seawater, still serves as a type of buffer against the tragic reality of war. A comparison of the ocean as a formative factor in helping create democracy by avoiding conflict and its influence on the current American politics is not the subject of this paper, but the study of Motley's text does open up the space for such an analysis in some other form. What is of potentially crucial importance in such a potential study is the fact that Motley describes democracy as a system arising because conflict was avoided, while

the common contemporary discourse tries to vindicate military violence because it is supposed to create democracy in undemocratic countries. This is another area where Motley seems to have a deep understanding of a currently relevant subject, potentially deeper than some contemporary analysts.

To return to the subject of the onset of democracy in America, Motley also claims that "[l]anded property has been the great bulwark of aristocracy; but in the wilderness territory was to be had almost for the asking" (491). Although seemingly less important than these two geographic realities, Motley also praises the early leaders of the settlers for their role in creating the social context favourable to the creation of democracy, claiming that "[t]he private virtues of the aristocrats themselves diminished their political power" (491). In spite of the importance of the lack of political enemies and the vast available land, Motley contends that "the great cause which has made democracy inevitable in America [...] is the Past" (492). The Past is obviously intimately connected both to territory and to politics. About the American Past, Motley writes that "[e]very thing here is fresh, and of yesterday" (493). This reading perfectly fits into defining America as a forward-looking nation, a nation where future has precedence over past. This belief about America is made concrete in the myth of the American Adam. R. W. B. Lewis defines the American Adam

The new habits to be engendered on the new American scene were suggested by the image of a radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure: an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources. It was not surprising, in a Bible-reading generation, that the new hero (in praise or disapproval) was most easily identified with Adam before the Fall. Adam was the first, the archetypal, man. His moral position was prior to experience, and in his very newness he was fundamentally innocent. The world and history lay all before him. And he was the type of

creator, the poet par excellence, creating language itself by naming the elements of the scene about him. All this and more were contained in the image of the American as Adam. (5)

The myth of the American Adam is another of the most prominent myths and symbols of American culture. The Adam is the American freed from what Motley would name "the Past". Once again, the interrelated nature of the myths is revealed. The American Adam, the new man in a new world, one who is unburdened by past experience is also the individual who can help establish the new political system, one which is supposed to be exceptional in its own right and unburdened by earlier social and political systems.

The American Adam, alongside America itself, looks towards the Future and not the Past. When Motley empties the Past of semantic content, the only logical option is for the Present to look towards the Future. Motley corroborates this reading when he writes that "[t]he Future seems more than anywhere else to be grappled to the Present in a country which had been so rudely and abruptly severed from all connection with the Past" (495). While America looks towards the Future, in Europe "the Present is battling with the Past" (494). Besides the relatively limited opposition of the Indians, the continent empty of the Past is empty of both any substantial opposition to the arriving migrants or of a particularly developed economic system. The lack of an economic system enable immigrants to take what land they desire, while the lack of past political systems links with the power of the oceans to create an insular nation. Moreover, the lack of the Past does not manifest on exclusively material grounds. After an artistic rendering of the national history which can be found all around the world, Motley exclaims "how naked and impoverished does America appear!" (494). However, America only appears impoverished or naked. The Past can help foster the national sense of a group, but, according to Motley, in America "this absence of the Past" (494) guarantees "much of the security of our institutions" (494). It is exactly the lack of peoples' reliance on symbols of some past political systems which enables the onset of "the true principle of government" (494). Motley sees democracy as an optimal and natural type of government which was not achieved in

other parts of the world because of the baggage of the Past which paved way for other, less optimal social systems. In the standard exceptionalist manner, Motley goes on to apply his view of American temporality to the European political situation of the time. When he claims that America has "become the model republic" (494), he invokes the traditional exceptionalist view of American society. Based on the American example, the European battle of the Present and Past can be favourably resolved only according to his suggestion which says that "before the republic can be successfully produced, every thing must be uprooted" (494). Despite the traditional presentation of America as a city upon a hill, Motley once again removes himself from stock phrases and standard ideas. He is not sure "[w]hether the example is, upon the whole, good for Europe" (497) since the elements he described beforehand as crucial for the formation of democracy are not present in Europe. However, he still believes that America is a good example and a worthy subject of study for Europeans, writing that "[w]e wish that our republican friends across the water could learn a lesson or two from the New England character" (498). In this sense, once again he shows a nuanced understanding of the issues traditionally marked by American exceptionalism.

4. CONCLUSION

Making a well-informed judgement regarding the influence of myths and symbols on American historians, even if only early American historians of a well-defined era and a single myth are isolated, requires a detailed analysis of a significant body of texts by different authors and far outstrips the relatively limited scope of this paper. John Lothrop Motley's "Polity of the Puritans" offers a starting point for a more detailed analysis of American exceptionalism in historiography by providing a concrete example not only of the effect myths and symbols have on historical writing, but also how deeply intertwined they are with the way history is conceptualized. However, it also introduces an early text which defies being unequivocally defined as a space of strong exceptionalist influence. It would be hard to conclude how American exceptionalism functioned within Motley's psyche, but its influence on his historical writing is visible. This is relevant not only as a theoretical conclusion of a meta-historical analysis, but also because historians shape the way societies perceive themselves. In this sense Motley's text steers the American self-perception towards Motley's particular rendering of American exceptionalism. However, Motley's nuanced and critical approach to the part of history often idealized in American culture is a testament to his prowess as a historian. The theoretical and methodological background developed in this paper was effective in offering the framework for the analysis of Motley's text. Consequently, it would be both interesting and instructive to see it applied to another text, or another cultural artifact. This example shows how the myths and symbols described by American studies scholars not only affect and skew the analysis of a specific historian, but also affect the way this historian approaches and thinks about history. This effect is manifest in both his choice of the historical phenomenon to write about and the way he writes about that phenomenon. However, although different myths and symbols are obviously and overwhelmingly present in this text it is necessary to keep in mind that not all authors uncritically subscribe to everything embedded in the traditional rendering of a specific myth or symbol. The postdisciplinary theoretical background and the methodology used by different

traditional disciplines helped shed light on Motley's rendering of early American history, and it is my hope that such an approach can help deluminate other important aspects of not only American history, but wider human existence.

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6. ABSTRACT

Exceptionalism in 19th century American Historiography

Key words: disciplinarity, exceptionalism, John Lothrop Motley, American studies, historiography

American exceptionalism is one of the most basic constitutive elements of the American national identity. There is an exceedingly wide body of texts which contribute to the crucial role exceptionalism has played in American self-perception. This paper is primarily a theoretical introduction to the study of the way historiography contributes to the myth of American exceptionalism. The myth and symbol school of American studies and theory of historiography are the natural starting points for this research. Although the paradigms defined by the early myth and symbol scholars are no longer the most prominent analytical tools in American studies, this paper argues that they doubtlessly carry contemporary relevance and can contribute to a holistic understanding of the American experience. The main thesis of this paper is that the methodology of a single discipline does not create an explanatory framework which is potent enough to properly analyze the nuances of the complex object of this research. Consequently, the insights and methodologies of different disciplines are needed to accurately conduct this research. In this context, the various approaches to disciplinarity, such as interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary or transdisciplinarity are reviewed. In a general sense, these concepts correspond to the key ideas behind this research, as they are open to a wide plethora of different insights and the use of widely differing tools in search for knowledge. However, in spite of a general movement towards such perceptions of disciplinarity, these concepts are not free of their own points of tension. From terminological uncertainties to questionable strategic contributions to the development of science, it is necessary to keep a critical approach to these useful concepts. The disciplinary framework which is most precisely aligned to the approach used in this paper is postdisciplinarity. After the theoretical introduction, this paper features a detailed case study of John Lothrop Motley's "Polity

of the Puritans". Despite the unequivocal presence of exceptionalist ethos in Motley's text, it is necessary to point out that the elements of exceptionalism in the text are presented in a thought-provoking and critical way.