Introduction

RIVER FUTURES

Marijeta Bozovic and Matthew D. Miller

Yet the river almost seems
To flow backwards, and I
Think it must come
From the East.
Much more could
Be said about this.¹

"All futures have one great virtue:
they never look the way you imagine them,"
said the father to Leander.²

In his contribution to this volume, the scholar of Germanic and Slavic studies and film and media studies Dragan Kujundžić refers readers to a line featured at the end of his 2012 film *Frozen Time, Liquid Memories*: "As children," relates Jovan Soldatović, "we used to say that if the boat is going up the Danube, it is going to Vienna. If it is going down the Danube, it is going to the world."³ This collection of essays follows the river up-, down-, and understream to explore its many cultural histories. From its beginnings

1 Friedrich Hölderlin, "Der Ister," in *Selected Poems*, trans. Maxine Chernoff and Paul Hoover (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn Publishing, 2008), 304, translation amended by M.D.M.

2 Milorad Pavić, *The Inner Side of the Wind or the Novel of Hero and Leander*, trans. Christina Pribicevic-Zoric (New York: Vintage International, 1993), 3.

3 See Dragan Kujundžić, "Against the Stream: The Danube, the Video, and the Nonbiodegradables of Europe," in this volume.

in the German Black Forest to the Romanian and Ukrainian shores where it meets the Black Sea, Europe's second longest river connects ten countries, while its watershed covers four more. Navigable from Bavaria to the Black Sea, the river serves as the unifying artery of the culturally diverse geographic region of Central and Southeastern Europe, frustrating attempts to divide Europe from non-Europe, and facilitating the flow of economic, cultural, and other forms of international exchange.

The Danube has figured prominently in international symbolizations of human achievement and been endowed with utopian functions across genres, forms, and media. In Friedrich Hölderlin's hymn, this river "is called Ister. It lives in beauty."⁴ Johann Strauss II's waltz "By the Beautiful Blue Danube"—one of the most consistently popular pieces of music in the classical repertoire—was chosen by Stanley Kubrick for *2001: A Space Odyssey* to score humanity's technological conquest of the cosmos. But underneath such aspirational reflections lurk darker memories and unmastered histories of bloodshed: Soldatović, quoted above, is the designer of the monument to the Racija massacre in Novi Sad.

A metaphorical artery of civilization and dreams of world culture, Europe's river has also made for a watery reservoir of bodies. Kujundžić's film, like András Kovács' *Cold Days* (1966), confronts us with the round-up and slaughter of Jews and Serbs in Novi Sad by Hungarian troops in January 1942. Péter Forgács' *The Danube Exodus* (1998) reminds us that the river, always a conduit for economic exchange, served to transport populations of Jews seeking safety and passage to Palestine as well as populations of Germans displaced by the encroaching Soviet army. David Barison and Daniel Ross' *The Ister* (2004) tracks the river upstream past celebrations of NATO's expansion, past the bombed bridges of the former Yugoslavia, to the Mauthausen-Gusen Concentration Camp in Austria. Through a series of interviews with contemporary philosophers, Barison and Ross plumb the river's duality in an attempt to make sense (in the wake) of Martin Heidegger's notorious lecture on the Hölderlin hymn with which we begin our book: "Yet the river almost seems / To flow backwards. . . ." Heidegger's appropriation of classical culture for Germany—backwards, from east to

4 Hölderlin, "Der Ister," 303.

west—is one of the central currents in *Watersheds*' navigation of utopian and dystopian waters.

The Danube flows through a region that has emerged black and blue from a long history of imperial domination: the river itself has been the object of desire of many empires. From Romans to Habsburgs, from Ottomans to Soviets, the multilingual, multicultural, and multinational space traversed by the Danube has figured as a contested site of imperial incursions—with Nazi Germany's exploits the most documented in their murderousness. In World War I, which erupted within the Danubian space of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the river witnessed a marriage of technology and violence hitherto inconceivable. In World War II, the Danube was instrumentalized in crimes against humanity. A mere fifty years later, amid more recent hostilities in the wake of the Cold War, the river ran red again with the fratricidal dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. And the marring of the continent by violent nationalisms continues.

Ethnic and cultural diversity along the Danube has eluded stable political arrangement; nor have the lives of its peoples been easily distilled into the fraught modern category of the nation-state. In Karl-Markus Gauß' formulation, the "very fact of its multinational character has constituted the blessing of the Danube, and it could continue to have this significance, though often even to this day it has only been its curse."⁵ To be sure, the Danube's status as a connective thoroughfare is no gift from nature but rather subject to the policies of modern states that stake divisive claims along its course or at its end.⁶ Conversely, the boundaries and forms of Central and Eastern Europe's political organization have appeared utterly transient in the longer sweep of history over the course of which the river's flow has remained a rare constant.

The European Union's twenty-first-century expansion eastward along the river's banks appears to suggest a new period of integration, but the process of unification remains contestable, not least with regard to the

5 Karl-Markus Gauß, "The Teachings of the Danube," trans. Mary B. Murrow and Tom Appleton, in *Donau*, ed. Inge Morath (Vienna: Müller, 1995), 19.

6 In "Rivers as Bridges—Rivers as Boundaries: Some Reflections on Intercultural Exchange on the Danube," *Ethnologia Balkanica* 1 (1997), Klaus Roth associates Danubian divisiveness with the policies of states, rather than natural geography (22).

integration of smaller Danubian lands and peoples of the river's lower stretches. How might they be brought into the folds of that project? What balances of economy and culture, identity and language are to be found? If "Danubia," like Milan Kundera's Central Europe in the 1980s,⁷ can be considered exemplary of the continent as a whole, the visible and invisible fault lines bearing on the prospects of European integration along the Danube powerfully evoke the challenges.

Will the EU's intergovernmental model prove better suited to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the world's smallest continent? The process of unification appears as tenuous as ever, compounding the economic challenges of the EU's monetary rather than fiscal union. The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, of inner and outer borders have proven particularly vexed in Danubian spaces. The identification of a border zone marking a European/non-European divide has shifted farther and farther east over time. And its determination has so often exemplified how the continent's geography is overwritten by ethnocentrically driven cultural concepts.

The attacks on the Paris offices of the satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 renewed discussion and debate about the relation of the European project and the EU's rhetoric of integration to the fabric of the lives of the continent's actual inhabitants. The perilous plights of migrants veering across the Mediterranean and/or through the Balkans have tragically highlighted the human costs of "Fortress Europe's" attractive but restrictive appeal. And while Yugoslavia's violent disintegration revealed the perverse cruelty behind the logic of the nation-state, more blood is being shed today at the Danube's end, where the unsettled geopolitical fate of Ukraine hangs in the balance as a transformed twenty-first-century version of the continent's "Eastern Question." Some assert a well-nigh civilizational divide between Europe and Russia, renewing the rhetoric of the Cold War.

7 Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," in *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945*, ed. Gail Stokes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 218. More whimsically, Nick Thorpe, in his westward journey, asks us to consider Europe itself as the "gift of the Danube" in *The Danube: A Journey Upriver from the Black Sea to the Black Forest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), xviii.

While pressures from within and without have contributed to the hardening and reproduction of divisions along the river's banks, the Danube's destiny as a divider is by no means sealed. In fact, the river's complicated cultural imaginaries help us to call into question paradigms of nation and nationality in areas fraught by aggressive discourses on identity, language, the link between people and place, and blood purity. When examined together, the multiethnic, multilingual, and historically intertwined relations of the Danube's populations present an opportunity to explore the river as a site of transcultural engagement and a suggestive instantiation of the global present.⁸

Following in the footsteps of contemporary philosophers of Europe such as Étienne Balibar, we attempt to imagine transnational alternatives that would emerge under conditions of equaliberty.⁹ To underscore the intertwinements of a large and not easily delineated region as well as its critical indexicality to Europe, we appeal to and employ the suggestive term Danubia in this book. Danubia may not align with any extant political ordering but serves instead as a river-oriented cultural concept to shadow, challenge, and complicate official politics' unfolding.¹⁰ That is a first advantage gained by the perspective of Danube studies.

In this introduction and the contributions that follow, we seek to demonstrate Danube studies as a productive scholarly framework for grappling with the region's cultural and political pasts, its contemporary challenges, and its possible futures. *Watersheds* leads readers into Danubia's

8 A globalizing age reveals the borders of area studies to be as historical as they are porous, yet such studies continue to provide opportunities for "the analysis of the whole through its parts, and, consequently, of how those components fit together," as Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell have recently written in their methodological justification of Mediterranean studies ("The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology,'" *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 [2006]: 722, accessed March 17, 2015, <http://ahr.oxfordjournals.org/content/111/3/722.full#fn-3>).

9 "Equaliberty" is a term Balibar has developed to grasp the modern democratic principles of equality and liberty in their relation to one another. See Étienne Balibar, *Equaliberty: Political Essays*, trans. James Ingram (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). Balibar's *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, trans. James Swenson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), remains of great value to contemporary European studies.

10 Gauß, "Teachings of the Danube," 21–22. Gauß' seminal essay constitutes an instructive introduction to Danube studies.

political, historical, cultural, and ecological currents to ascertain the prospects of peaceful coexistence along the river. As Europe and Europeans continue to work toward the elaboration of a continental identity, the coupling of geographical proximity of formerly divided or opposed peoples with their political integration places new demands on negotiating transnational relations. We thus seek to follow the river's lead as it winds through and across European territories, refusing the permanence of divisions, to rekindle something of a lost concern for a larger social fabric and contract that will impinge on Danubia's future fate.

If the river presents "an experiment that affects the whole world," in the strong allegorical function that Gauß ascribes to it, then indeed "what goes awry here can fail anywhere and everywhere; that which succeeds here gives us hope for other places."¹¹ The river's function as a connective conduit might serve as a promising sign; this collection in turn, which focuses throughout on the labor of the cultural imagination as integral to the region's possible futures, aims to suggest transferable lessons regarding transcultural coexistence beyond area studies.¹²

Writing the Danube

The great river has long aroused study and scholarly fascination. But who is it that writes the Danube? To a large extent, cultural capital conditions the discursive as well as practical claims on the river. Many of the cultural histories of the river are German or build on the German scholarly tradition; the Danube enjoys an extensive representation in the German-language publishing industry, with Michael W. Weithmann's river history *Die Donau: Geschichte eines Europäischen Flusses* topping a list that

¹¹ Ibid., 16.

¹² For a fuller elaboration of these claims in the context of a case study of Goran Rebić's cinematic contribution to a future Danube in *Donau, Dunaj, Duna, Dunav, Dunărea* (Austria, 2003), see Matthew D. Miller, "Bottled Messages for Europe's Future? The Danube in Contemporary Transnational Cinema," in *Crossing Central Europe: Continuities and Transformations, 1900–2000*, ed. Helga Mitterbauer and Carrie Smith-Prei (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016, forthcoming). For a contextualization of Rebić's film in a cinematic history of the Danube, see Robert Dassanowsky, "Taking the Waters: The Danube's Reception in Austrian and Central/Eastern European Cinema History," in this volume.

extends into countless travel guides.¹³ A leading cultural history of the river has been delivered by the Italian Germanist Claudio Magris, whose background in German and Austrian literature strongly inflects his *Danubio*.¹⁴

The relative resources of cultural capital and their reflections are discernible in this volume, too, and form part of the study. It is no coincidence that three contributors hail from the former Yugoslavia; that more than half work primarily with German-language sources; and that nearly all work in North American academia. Recently, publications on the Danube in English have proliferated for a broad audience. Andrew Beattie's *The Danube: A Cultural History* delivers orientation and background for travelers, while Peter Coates' *A Story of Six Rivers: History, Culture, and Ecology* situates the Danube in the studied context of world rivers.¹⁵ Simon Winder's *Danubia: A Personal History of Habsburg Europe* abounds in darkly comical exercises conveying the histories of the individuals and peoples ruled by the Habsburgs.¹⁶ Nick Thorpe, in *The Danube: A Journey Upriver from the Black Sea to the Black Forest*, reports on a journey that attempts to rectify the imbalance (perspectival and otherwise) between the lower and the upper Danube in the European narrative.¹⁷ And in a more experimental form of presentation, the *Blue: Inventing the River Danube* catalogue documents the 2005 exhibition at the Vienna Technical Museum devoted to exploring the technical invention of the modern river, captured in historical and contemporary artistic photography.¹⁸

The scholarly attention attracted by the Danube in the humanities, however, has often privileged single disciplinary or national perspectives on the river or one of its stretches. Traditionally, such disciplinary divisions

13 Michael W. Weithmann, *Die Donau: Geschichte eines Europäischen Flusses* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2012).

14 Claudio Magris, *Danube*, trans. Patrick Creagh (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008 [1989]).

15 Andrew Beattie, *The Danube: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Peter Coates, *A Story of Six Rivers: History, Culture, and Ecology* (London: Reaktion, 2013).

16 Simon Winder, *Danubia: A Personal History of Habsburg Europe* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2014).

17 Thorpe, *Danube*.

18 Barbara Pilz et al., *Blue: Inventing the River Danube* (Salzburg: Fotohof, 2005).

stem from national orientations rooted in specific languages and their philological and literary-historical study. The phenomenon of water challenges the differentiated inquiries of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.¹⁹ The Danube appears to elide the very forms of study anchored in the disciplines that would seek to arrest its flow. Intersecting civilization and nature, physical and imaginary spaces, and connecting cultures seemingly incomprehensible to one another, the Danube demands poly-perspectival treatment—not least due to the river’s long-standing role as a conduit of multidirectional migration.

As the Danube challenges divisions and invites multidisciplinary approaches, it inspires the use of bridge concepts such as circulation, flow, blockage, and pollution in cross-disciplinary communication. We adopt one such real and figurative term to frame our approach to Danube studies. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the English “watershed” derives from the German “Wasserscheide,” used to designate “the line separating the waters flowing into different rivers or river basins or a narrow elevated tract of ground between two drainage areas.” The Brothers Grimm date the term to the fourteenth century.²⁰ But in its figurative usage, in German as well as English, it has come to mark other kinds of historical, political, and cultural boundaries and turning points.

Our anthology finds in its titular term a conceptual metaphor with physical and descriptive resonances. A map of Europe featuring the continent’s river basins and watersheds effects a startling defamiliarization of the continent’s political borders (figure 0.1). The physical terrain underlying the geographic specifics of water basins also points to a division between natural and political times. Paul Robert Magocsi’s *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*, a most instructive geographic resource for the

19 Hartmut Böhme reminds us of this in his introduction to *Kulturgeschichte des Wassers*: “In all hydro-centric scholarly disciplines and technics, there is a remarkable moment immediately related to the qualitative status of water in the circulation of life: the very differentiation of specific disciplines that characterizes modernity proves inadequate and even dangerous vis-à-vis water” (“Umriss einer Kulturgeschichte des Wassers. Eine Einleitung,” in *Kulturgeschichte des Wassers*, ed. Hartmut Böhme [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988], 8, translated by M.D.M).

20 Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm’s *Das deutsche Wörterbuch*, begun in 1838, is accessible online at <http://dwb.uni-trier.de/de/>.

Figure 0.2. Watershed marker at the Lunghin Pass, Switzerland (“Wasserscheiden in den Alpen,” Wikipedia entry)]

constitute two different perspectives onto nature. Is culture in any way akin to either? While the temporal constancy of montane nature contrasts greatly with the fluid instability of borders documented on political maps, cultural time falls in between the two. Whereas long-standing cultural affiliations appear to outlive externally driven political determinations, culture’s histories are clearly shaped by human activity. As powerful as the natural determination of watersheds may seem, it does not prevent human beings from crossing hydrological divides and transforming the natural environs they encounter and inhabit. What is more, as soon as the term “watershed” is used figuratively to describe cultural or political transformation, it becomes increasingly pliable: all claims about the watersheds of time and space involve the thorniness of interpretation.

The figurative use of the term “watershed” as rhetoric presupposes specific and contestable perspectives on history’s larger course or geography’s

scalar scope. Demarcating the cusps of contested worlds, watersheds have proliferated across modernity's space-time compression. A passing overview of modern Central European history's turning points yields a series of potential watershed moments: 1789, 1806, 1815, 1848, 1870–1871, 1914, 1917, 1918, 1929, 1933, 1945, 1949, 1961, 1968, 1980–1981, 1989, 1991, 2004, and more (to list only the dates of an officious historiography). Which, if any, constituted an interruption of time's course has proven disputable for historians and political actors alike. Watersheds mark sites of contiguity as much as discontinuity—and so, too, Danubia. As little as the river contains its peoples absolutely, it constitutes their physically shared watershed—and the stage of their collective imaginaries.²²

The subtitle of our collection, “Poetics and Politics of the Danube River,” indicates further elastic temporalities endowed with the ability to connect and divide. While the poetics of the river (not least Hölderlin's imaginative encounters between east and west, modernity and antiquity) have been associated with the traverse of “lacerated borderlines” and opposition, Danubian politics have abounded in divisiveness.²³ The contributions in this volume take stock of the challenges while outlining conditions of their transcendence. To render such a desired pivot palpable, *Watersheds* entertains the displacement of terra-centric rationality by a hydro-centric imagination.

Here Danube studies follow an ecocritical turn in the humanities. As the cultural historian Hartmut Böhme has suggested, modern industrialized societies have lost their connection to water as an element of life and culture.²⁴ Contesting the division of culture and nature replicated in the differentiation of the academic disciplines, ecocritical studies have drawn attention to the limitations of nature's exclusion from the

22 By focusing on the Danubian watershed, we intend no reification of the immediate horizon. More than one of the chapters points to the dangers of restoring modernity's neglect of nature via Heideggerian resources. At the same time, the natural environment is irreducible and resists any totalizing deracination into cultural-spiritual life.

23 See, e.g., Magris, *Danube*, 82.

24 Böhme, “Umriß einer Kulturgeschichte des Wassers,” 12.

humanities.²⁵ Ecocritical approaches have ranged widely—from rocks and soils to the high seas—in the environments they emphasize. In *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration*, Dan Brayton has ascertained a terrestrial bias to ecocritical studies, an orientation to the land that reverberates in metaphors of green (rather than blue) studies.²⁶ Land and air, fire and water—the ancient Greek conception of nature's elemental constituents—what hierarchies does such a foursome permit, and with what repercussions?

Ecocritical interventions have particular significance for studies of the Danube. To be sure, the orientation to ethno-nationally conceived homelands has played a huge role in the Danube's curse. While Brayton takes ecocriticism to sea, *Watersheds* takes to the river that connects otherwise landlocked Central Europeans to the maritime. Its riparian focus allows for the analysis of suggestive interplays between water and earth and the signifying regimes associated with their respective pulls.²⁷

We find a precursor to our work in Danube studies in Magris' aforementioned *Danubio*; it resurfaces frequently in the coming pages. Written in the 1980s, this seminal text charts the region's cultural history by following the river's flow. For Magris, the Cold War context—a “state of permanent stalemate” (265)—nearly signaled the triumph of terra-centric rationality's blockage of this flow: it ordered and assigned human bodies to political states, fixed and guarded impermeable borders, and led to ideological ossification on both sides of the proverbially Iron Curtain. Working against this stalemate, Magris follows Heraclitus to privilege the

25 In their collaborations of the 1930s and 1940s, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno laid the philosophical groundwork for contesting modernity's separation from nature and linked the reification of nature to dangerous furies of domination. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

26 Dan Brayton, *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 16–17. With regard to the imperial incursions canvassed above, it may be more accurate to suggest that—from antiquity on—lands and their populations were always the object and the river the means to the control of territory, as demonstrated by Brian Campbell in his *Rivers and the Power of Ancient Rome* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

27 Such calls for the humanities to set sail also yield such fine results as Ian Chambers' counter-hegemonic approach to modernity in his *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

river as “*the* site for the questioning of identity” (23). Over the many pages of his journey downstream, Magris, exploiting Central European irony (cf. 58), continually offsets ingrained terra-centric claims about origins, genealogy, and the necessity of defensive formations to emphasize the Danube as a great mixer of people(s) and wrecker of “all closed social hierarchies” (34). His juxtaposition of the Danube to the Rhine is indicative of this approach. Associating the latter with German *virtus*, purity, and the loyalty of the Nibelungen, he appeals to the Danube as “German-Magyar-Slavic-Romanic-Jewish Central Europe, polemically opposed to the German Reich” (29). Whereas the Rhine River is signified in terra-centric terms—identifiable bloodlines matched to soil and the Nazi German mission to exert domination over Central Europe, the hyphenated hybrid of the Danube speaks to the fluid connectivity between its populations—and to the prospects of a nonidentity without hierarchy.²⁸ Privileging those Danubians who “think with the minds of several people” in their embrace of Danubia’s multinational currents (291–292), Magris asserts Danubian multiculture against nationalistic reductions and embraces the fluidity of signification in culture’s indelible flow.²⁹

Combing the literary resources of the region, Magris imaginatively opens Danubia up to a more promising, connective, and internally differentiated identity formation than the kind externally enforced by political interests. Yet his assiduous attention to the multiplicity and indeterminacy of Danubian identities notwithstanding, Magris seems unable to relinquish the Germano-centric imprint of his orientation. In search of some glue for the grounded identities he dissolved in Danubian waters, Magris

28 E. B. Ashton’s translation of Adorno’s *Negative Dialektik* renders the relevant line as “utopia would be above identity and above contradiction; it would be a togetherness of diversity,” in Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1983), 150.

29 For the sake of extreme contrast, one could compare Carl Schmitt’s infamous 1942 book *Land und Meer* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2011) to Magris’ project. Schmitt speculatively historicizes the relationship between land- and sea-bound approaches to space. His substantive appeal to the four elements as classically conceived ominously moves from water through land and air to fire as master determinants of entire ages (see especially 104–105). By contrast, Danubians such as Magris thankfully stick with a semiotic approach to the elements, which permits the reversal of Schmitt’s series back to water.

problematically toys with the Germans' leading role as "*Mitteleuropa's* Romans," who have "created a single civilization out of a melting-pot of diverse races" (312). Unconvincingly straddling an abyss between Danubian unity and diversity, Magris' resourceful study illustrates the need for a collaborative and decentered approach to the multifaceted river.

What we nonetheless gain from Magris' pages is a formidable early attempt to displace the terra-centric rationality of maps and political borders, of dry land and national identities. Magris' volume, if slim on politics, contained enough prescience to foresee the return of transnationalism's legacies and unfulfilled longings. Whereas Magris traced the line of Central European legacy from Habsburg Europe to a Yugoslavia whose future he could not predict (331–332), his review of the history of cultural tensions in the region clearly relates to Europe's contemporary challenges. *Watersheds* aspires to extend the hydro-centric turn undertaken in Magris' one-man *Danubio*.

Watersheds

Adopting a broadly conceived cultural-historical approach, *Watersheds* embraces the river's complexity as an occasion to foster collaboration across disciplinary divisions. It also challenges imagined divides between the democratic and Western-leaning "center" and "foreign" (once "Bolshevik") ideology coming from the Russian East or the Balkan South. We explore the cultural and economic flows moving downriver and upstream, as well as map cultural capital through spatial and temporal metaphors, against the all too settled mappings of centers and peripheries, of pasts and futures, that a terra-centric rationality has imposed.

Watersheds brings together a number of leading and rising scholars across disciplinary divisions to harness the critical energies and interpretive strategies offered by their respective fields. Probing nodal points in the riverine region's poetic and political life, we learn from the diverse expertise of contributors who not only supplement one another but also enter into critical dialogue. Drawing together a number of regional studies

and methodologies—Germanophone and Slavic studies, history and anthropology, film studies, musicology, architectural history—*Watersheds* channels these approaches into a work of collective and multidisciplinary research. The arrangement loosely follows the river's geography by moving from west to east—with many returns in between.

Our volume opens with Katherine Arens' essay, "Danube *Limes*: The Limits of the Geographic-Cultural Imaginary," which draws attention to the historical and embedded character of scholarly cognition and traces the philosophical and political ruses to which the geographical history of the Danube has been subjected. From ethnographic approaches through ethno-national appropriations that have shaped German literary histories to her account of Heidegger's work on Hölderlin's river poetry back to the riverine facticities addressed in Barison and Ross' film *The Ister*, Arens reveals how the Danube constitutes its own limits vis-à-vis its scholarly abuse.

In "Taking the Waters: The Danube's Reception in Austrian and Central/Eastern European Cinema History," Robert Dassanowsky tracks the Danube in film. His survey opens with the Danube's inscription into the structure and cultural formations of the Habsburg Empire. Dassanowsky follows the development of cinema along the photogenic river, from Austrian interwar, German Nazi, to postwar representations and finally the explosion of transnational, virtually "unplaceable" films that paradoxically claim Vienna and/or the Danube as home.

Evoking the Danube Monarchy's claims to the river by opening with Strauss' famous waltz (initially called simply "Opus 314"), Micaela Baranello's "Viennese Blood: Assimilation and Exclusion in Viennese Popular Music" examines how the history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire can be read by listening to its music. She offers a portrait of Vienna as an imperial center, assimilating countless outsiders even as it remained an epicenter for ethnic and national tensions. These conflicts play themselves out in the production history and the *fabulae* of the quintessentially hybrid genre of the Viennese operetta. Much to the consternation of elites, the popular form refused to close itself to the influences of outsiders and thrived on the instabilities associated with the empire's end.

In "Caught in the Effluvial Draft: The Fluid Sources of the Folktale," Henry Sussman moves from Franz Kafka to the folktale to Stanley Kubrick's

2001: *A Space Odyssey* and back. If Kafka's "virtual" and haunted landscapes had any homeland, Sussman argues, it was the folktale. In such alternative logics, Gilles Deleuze, too, found elective affinity and inspiration for his ground-up attack on Western metaphysics. Sussman explores the fluid sources thereof in a critical reading of Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's "Undine." In so doing, he probes the Danube's role as a Romantic river of ethnic, intellectual, artistic outsiders that not only might serve a potential symbolic function against logo- and terra-centrisms but also as a site of more ominous iterations of Romantic ideology and brutal exclusion in the twentieth century already legible in Fouqué's appropriation of the river in "Undine."

In "New York on the Danube: The Transatlantic Transference of Habsburg Ethnology and Autocracy in Kafka's *Amerika: The Missing Person*," Robert Lemon productively entertains—along with his author—the displacement of the categories and coordinates of the Habsburg Empire to the United States. Counter to the American dream of successful immigration, assimilation, and prosperity, we encounter an Amerika that mirrors the realia, ethnic tensions, petty prejudices, and hopeless prospects of the Danube Monarchy. The peculiar trajectory of the protagonist Karl's flight invites a cross-examination vis-à-vis the downward spirals addressed by Sussman.

In "Private Looking and Collective Memory in *The Danube Exodus* (1998)," Jennifer Stob turns to one important film, Péter Forgács' experimental documentary *The Danube Exodus*, for a close look at the exchange of peoples, subjective and historical memories, and documentary and essayistic film footage. She interrogates the fine ethical lines behind the experiment, drawing attention to the gaze and its exchange. Her essay carefully contrasts the voyeurism still present and possible in the film with the expanded, deconstructed, and relational incarnation of the multimedia installation.

Karl Ivan Solibakke's "Jelinek and the Roma: A Danubian Tragedy" shifts our attention to one of the Danube's most scandalous writers in recent times, the fierce and unsparing playwright and novelist Elfriede Jelinek. While Jelinek's feminist and Marxist provocations in such novels as *The Piano Teacher* and *Lust* are better known, Solibakke draws our

attention to her efforts to lend voice, or platform, to the voiceless—the persistently persecuted Other in Europe, the Romani people, including the voice of Romani poet Ilija Jovanović.

Robert Nemes takes us into the river kingdom of Hungary in “Ravaged Empire: Water and Power in Prewar Hungary.” Known once as the land of wild waters, Hungary underwent a dramatic taming at the turn of the century. Nemes tells the story of the drainage of the Ecsed Marsh, which empties into the Tisza River, the longest of the Danube’s tributaries. One of many dramatic ecological interventions along the river and its tributaries, this one highlights the perceived onslaught of “too much civilization” in a suggestive episode of modernization and its discontents. Nemes tells of festivals and folklore celebrating the marsh that once was as well as recent efforts for rehabilitating Ecsed.

Turning to a darker side of Hungarian history, Jessie Labov’s “*Cold Days in the Cold War on the Hungarian-Serbian Border*” delivers an account of András Kovács’ 1966 film adaptation of Tibor Csere’s novel. Tracing the waves of acknowledgment, denial, and polarization that haunt acts of interethnic violence, Labov scrutinizes the mechanisms of identification and recognition and their bearing on community formation in the film’s fictionalized treatment of the 1942 Racija and in the Cold War reception of the novel and film. In so doing, she also tellingly demonstrates how the possibilities for confronting the arbitrariness of ethnic identity and its implications in the legacy of violence were greater during the Cold War than in its aftermath.

Reexamining scenarios of identification and their pitfalls from a different angle, Tomislav Longinović’s “Allergic Reactions: Danube and the Ex-centric Imaginary of Europe” opens with the mythologies of the Danube, the Ister, and uncovers a trail of doubled and false beginnings. The river is never what they call it—and “they” are not to be taken at their word. Through the namings and misnamings of the river, Longinović recalls a history of violent rhetorical subjugations, dominant centers, increasingly marginalized outskirts, and manufactured hatreds but also of haunting and shared stories.

With “Against the Stream: The Danube, the Video, and the Nonbiodegradables of Europe,” Dragan Kujundžić offers a hybrid piece, which in many ways continues the work of his documentary film *Frozen*

Time, Liquid Memories. His project seeks not only to tell but somehow to preserve the stories of the Jews and Serbs killed in the Novi Sad Racija, as well as the countless others sent by train to death from France. Both stories are personal (the personal is the political), and both demand more than the classic tools of the academic trade. In film, in digital media, in the telling and retelling of our stories, we must try to recover from the collective traumas—of 1942 as of today.

Amanda Lerner responds to the work of both Kujundžić and Longinović in “Deconstructing Claims to (Jewish) Victimhood.” Beginning with Milan Kundera’s programmatic 1984 essay, “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” Lerner questions Central and Southeast European identifications with Jewish victimhood. Against Kundera’s appropriations and rhetorical parallels that discover in every enemy a “fascist,” Lerner considers the work of writers and scholars who tell stories of shared tragedy. How do we remember and represent, much less learn from, history without falling into the dichotomies of media representations and ever-perpetuating orientalized others?

In “Modernization’s Undercurrents: The Folk in Postwar Socialist Romanian Architecture,” Juliana Maxim mediates the rural and the urban, the primitive and the modern, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and water and land in her reconstruction of postwar Romanian architecture and its surrounding discourses. She thereby radically rethinks and rehabilitates the architectural style most often dismissed by scholars and theorists. Rather than viewing the late socialist architectural style in Romania (as along much of the Danube) as an alien imposition, Maxim rereads its structures as pastoral, even vernacular architecture.

Finally, Tanya Richardson’s “Where the Water Sheds: Disputed Deposits at the Ends of the Danube” takes us to the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta—where land and water begin to blur as the Danube merges with the Black Sea. Richardson’s anthropological research focuses on two environmental conflicts involving hydraulic infrastructure and turbid water: the afflicted Sasyk as lake versus lagoon and the status of the Bystre Canal as a shipping lane. She considers the ways in which these entanglements with turbid water create socio-political worlds that both reinforce and subvert divisions in contemporary Europe. Highlighting Danube water’s ontological multiplicity and thus the different kinds of concepts it

can generate for thinking about culture and politics in contemporary Europe, Richardson outlines the challenges of international politics in Europe on the eve of Ukraine's turmoil beginning in 2014.

In sum, *Watersheds* advances cross-disciplinary dialogue through translations literal (navigating German, Hungarian, the once Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Ukrainian, and Russian) and figurative. Many essays foreground the aesthetic mediation of actual and possible communities, in search of utopian promise even amidst, and in the wake of, historical atrocities. The new field of Danube studies that we are collectively advocating emerges immanently from our work: our contributions thus reflect the training and language of our respective disciplines but also an attempt to go beyond, to meet and merge. We imagine this as not the culmination but the beginning of a project with future returns.