

# American in Studies Romania

Edited by the Romanian Association for American Studies

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 5 / 04

## Table of Contents

**Letter from the President** Rodica Mihăilă

**Our America: People, Places, Times**

Roxana Oltean

**Ars Docendi**

within the American Studies  
Department in Bucharest

**A Great Year for American Studies**

Barbara Nelson

**Conference Participation:**

Eric Gilder, Iulian Cănanău,  
Ludmila Martanovschi

**Call for Papers**

- The 2005 Nordic Association for American Studies Conference
  - VII S.A.A.S. Conference
  - International Conference on Storytelling and Cultural Identity
    - Defeat and Memory
  - Leisure and Liberty in North America
    - The Second International 'Language, Communication, Culture' Conference
  - Transatlantic Relations in a Changing Cultural Context
    - 6th Graduate Conference
- 26th American Indian Workshop

**Book Reviews:**

Marina Cap-Bun,  
Monica Matei-Chesnoiu

**Academic Projects**

Roxana Oltean,  
Emil Sirbulescu

**EAAS Board Members**

**RAAS New Membership**

**RAAS Board**

This past year has been rich in activities that brought us together and contributed directly or indirectly to the proliferation of American Studies in this country at both the scholarly and the institutional level.

After more than a decade of delays and denials, "American Studies" has finally been included on the national list of specializations (see Monitorul Oficial of June 16), which brings official recognition to an interdisciplinary academic field established long ago in the western world, and allows us to institutionalize it not only at the graduate level but also at the undergraduate one. This is the outcome of a long struggle initiated by the Center for American Studies at the University of Bucharest, soon to be joined by A.I.Cuza University in Iasi, Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, Blaga

tives the consolidation of a strong community of Americanists and the institutionalization of American Studies. Supported by the Fulbright Commission and the U.S. Embassy, RAAS has served as a forum of debate on the institutionalization and a communication network between Romanian Americanists and their colleagues within and outside Romania's borders.

Over the past year, the most significant and efficient RAAS activities in this respect have been: 1) the publication of *America in/from Romania* (Univers Enciclopedic, 2003), a selection of thirty essays by participants in the 2nd RAAS-Fulbright biennial Conference, 2) the creation and expansion of an American Studies website with a link to RAAS (<http://www.american-studies.ro>), and 3) the 3rd RAAS Biennial Conference, "Our

# Letter from the President

University in Sibiu, Ovidius University in Constanta and, more recently, by the University of the West in Timisoara, the University of Craiova and the University of Oradea. Starting with the next academic year, American Studies majors will be offered, for the first time in Romania, at the University of Bucharest and Cuza University in Iasi, while the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj will start a minor in American Studies and the Universities of Oradea, Baia Mare and Galati will continue to teach American topics to English majors, intending however to build independent programs in the future. In addition to the already existing graduate programs in Bucharest, Cluj, Iasi and Sibiu, Timisoara, Constanta and Craiova will launch their own programs. These were all issues discussed by the representatives of these universities, invited to a workshop on "American Studies Programs. Developments and Challenges," organized by the Fulbright Commission and the Public Affairs Service of the U.S. Embassy at the American Cultural Center on June 12.

In all these universities, the reformers, those who initiated the change despite numberless difficulties, are (founding) members of our Association. From the beginning, RAAS has acted as a catalyst for growth in American Studies including among its major objec-

America: People, Places, Times," Bucharest, 5-6 February 2004. As the distinguished literary critic Bogdan Lefter so aptly put it in his presentation of the volume at its "Noi" bookstore launch, *America in/from Romania* gives a measure of the growth and diversification of American Studies scholarship in Romania, its trans-disciplinary, comparative and international focus, its new methodologies and new practitioners - young academics, scholars, critics, doctoral and graduate students from Cluj, Iasi, Sibiu, Oradea, Baia Mare, Tirgu Mures, Constanta and Bucharest, alongside senior colleagues and guests from other countries such as the United States and Norway.

Attended by more than 100 participants, almost half of them from major universities across the country: from Baia Mare, Oradea, Cluj and Timisoara, to Iasi, Suceava, Constanta, Sibiu, Alba Iulia and Craiova, as well as from Université d'Angers, Duke University, George Mason University, University of Michigan and University of Chicago, the 3rd RAAS Biennial Conference was organized, as before, together with the Romanian-US Fulbright Commission. It, therefore, also attracted an impressive number of U.S. Fulbright fellows from various parts of Romania. In the spirit of our Association, the Conference was not only a forum ➤

# A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N R O M A N I A

➔ for scholarly discussion, but also a place of Romanian/European – American interchanges and mutual perceptions, where our virtual community of scholars became real. Moreover, the Conference proved to be instrumental in the institutionalization of American Studies. In his inspiring welcome address to the participants, Ambassador Michael Guest made a commitment to give full support to the process, and a similar promise was made by dr. Barbara Nelson, Director of the Fulbright Commission, who moderated a round table on “Teaching American Studies in Romania”. Following the Conference, the recent inclusion of “American Studies” in the national list of specializations should be regarded as an important achievement and a new incentive. We are grateful to all those who made it happen.

I cannot end my brief Conference remarks without mentioning the challenging keynote speech and the engaging presence of our invited speaker, Professor Michael Kammen, just as I cannot end my remarks without expressing again our thanks to our sponsors: the U.S. Embassy, Saachi & Saachi, the Hilton Hotels and the University of Bucharest. And, last but not least, to Tom Smith for the Jazz Concert.

The Conference hosted the RAAS General Meeting, which had on its agenda reports on the RAAS activities since 2002 and the RAAS Board elections. The activities of the old RAAS Board being appreciated favorably by the participants, the board was re-elected with only one exception: Dorin Drâmbareanu (Blaia University), who was replaced on the board by Emil Sîrbulescu (University of Craiova). Ilinca Angheliescu (University of Bucharest) was elected editor of the Newsletter replacing Cosana Nicolae, currently at Stanford University.

Our Conference was followed, in April 2-5, by the EAAS Biennial Conference “American in the Course of Human Events: Presentations and Interpretations” held at Charles University, Prague. The organizers, and the compelling stewardship of the EAAS President Joseph Jarab, turned the Prague Conference into a

memorable event. I was one of the three Romanians who attended the Conference together with 370 participants from other countries. As EAAS Board member, I also participated in the EAAS Board meeting preceding the Conference. One of the hot items on the agenda referred to the elections of a new President and a new Treasurer, as both Joseph Jarab and Hans Back came to the end of their term. As new EAAS President, 2004-2008, was elected Marc Chénétier (FAAS), and as new EAAS Treasurer, 2004-2008, was elected Hans-Jürgen Grabbe (DGFA).

The future of the ASE Newsletter, clearly presented by the editor, EAAS Vice-President Gülriz Büken, generated long discussions. The final decision (accepted with reluctance by some national associations) was “to switch to an electronic version only, which can be downloaded, printed out, and distributed by national association to members who require a paper copy”. The publishing day is May 15. Reminding you that the EAAS website is <http://www.eaas.info>, I invite all the RAAS members who cannot access this site to ask for a paper copy sending their mailing address to Roxana Oltean (Roxana\_Oltean@fx.ro).

The EAAS Board decided that the 2006 EAAS Biennial Conference take place under the auspices of the Hellenic Association for American Studies at Nicosia, Cyprus. The theme of the conference, proposed by Marc Chénétier and adopted by the EAAS Board, is: “Conformism, Non-Conformism, and Anti-Conformism in the Culture of the United States.” I wish to encourage the RAAS members to send proposals for sessions, plenary lectures or individual papers. The Romanian participation in international conferences is still reduced in comparison with that of other neighboring countries.

The contents of the Newsletter will hopefully offer you a more comprehensive account of the RAAS activities. Make sure we have your correct address and take full advantage of your RAAS membership. And remember, we are open to suggestions!

**Rodica Mihăilă**  
RAAS President

## Our America:

### The RAAS - Fulbright Conference

**Bucharest  
5.02 – 6.02. 2004**



Now at its third edition, the biennial conference of the Romanian Association for American Studies, co-organized with The Fulbright Commission, has accumulated a tradition of scholarly excellence, effervescent debate and academic networking. This year, the conference theme, “Our America: People, Places, Times” drew together a particularly impressive array of participants from a wide range of university centers in Romania (Bucharest, Alba Iulia, Baia Mare, Cluj, Constanța, Iași, Oradea, Sibiu, Suceava, Timișoara) and abroad (Cornell University,



**Ioan Mihăilescu - U. B. rector; H. E. Michael Guest - US Ambassador; Rodica Mihăilă - RAAS President**

University of Vermont, Duke University, George Mason University, Kettering University, Université d'Angers.

The concerns of the conference were both of a widely theoretical and of a more specifically practical nature. Thus the plenary lecture held by Michael Kammen (Cornell University), „Cultural Consequences of Political Upheaval and Democratization: The American Case in Historical Perspective”, which opened the debates of

# People, Places, Times

the conference, with its theoretical cultural model and its simultaneous emphasis on historical practice, struck the key note of discussions which followed.

The organization of the conference into thematic workshops allowed for a more flexible structure accommodating formal academic presentations and encouraging prolonged discussion. Workshop 1 (Cultural References: Theory, Discourse and Practice), which all participants were able to attend, contoured the variety and breadth of theoretical approaches explored and exemplified in the remaining sessions, approaches which encompassed concerns ranging from shifting perspectives on "Americanization" (Rodica Mihăilă), to theoretizations of language referentiality (Alexandra Comilescu) to contemporary manifestations of the frontier spirit (Adrian Mihalache), in fact a veritable range of "labors" carried on by



**Marian Gheorghe - Deputy Director General, MER; Barbara Nelson - Director Fulbright Commission in Romania; Eugen Uricaru - Secretary of State, MFA; Radu Florescu - Saatchi & Saatchi; Ioan Mihăilescu - U. B. rector**

"Americus", to borrow from the title of the paper presented by Ștefan Avădanei in the same session.

Ensuing workshops attempted not only to group participants into fruitful discussion groups but also to capture themes of common interest in view of future projects. Thus Workshop 2 (The Politics of Nationhood) drew together possible strands of the myth of nationhood in both historical and contemporary perspectives, while Workshop 3 (Icons of America: Strategies of Mediation) analyzed mediations of America and its icons through the perspective of reading trends, of film and of the mass media.

Workshop 4 (Frontiers and Beyond) ran simultaneously with the previous two, and grouped together discussions gravitating around modulations of American frontiers, in particularly in view of pressing issues brought to the fore by global-



**Welcome address, Rodica Mihăilă - RAAS President**

ization studies.

The next series of workshops, on the second day of the conference, pursued the analysis of American cultural narratives as identity-founding acts (workshop 5, Founding Narratives: Modes and Canons), with a special session dedicated to ethnicity as a key model of constructing identity (workshop 6, Constructing Race and Ethnicity). Workshop 7 (Translations of Cultures, Constructions of Speech) dealt more specifically with the notion of language (from theoretical models to problems of translation) and educational projects as inter-cultural communicative tools.

Workshop 8 (Portraits of Places, Journeys in Time) rehearsed a key topos of American culture, travel writing, but reversing the perspective to look at America as constructed from Europe, while workshop 9 (Cultural Inscriptions), running in parallel, focused on America as a site of moral, ethical de-marcation. The last two workshops drew together investigations of America as a locus of empowerment through widely performed practices (Workshop 10, Reading Cultures) or through nuanced counter-hegemonic discourses (Workshop 11, Counter-Sites of Power).

A key event of the conference was one of a poignantly practical and urgent nature, namely the roundtable moderated by Fulbright Executive Director Barbara Nelson on the theme "Teaching American Studies in Romania," an issue

which is particularly vital in view of changes in the structure of higher and tertiary education in Romania. As a forum for academic interchange but also for the debate of educational strategies, the conference and this roundtable in particular initiated a dialogue between those involved in teaching American Studies in centers all over the country (Romanian scholars as well as American Fulbright lecturers).

Rounded off, on the first evening, by an elegant reception at the Hilton Hotel and, as a grand finale, by a jazz concert featuring Fulbright grantee Tom Smith together with widely acclaimed Romanian musicians, the third RAAS-Fulbright conference managed to capture, and to promote, once again, the major chords and the subtle notes of "Our America" with a cosmopolitanism that is the appanage of performing American Studies in Europe.

**Roxana Oltean**

## EAAS/Fulbright Travel Grants

The 2004 EAAS/Fulbright Travel grants were awarded as follows: (a) Four Trans-Atlantic Travel Grants: Andrzej Antoszek, U. of Dublin, Poland, \$2,500; Eleftheria Arapoglou, U. of Thessaloniki, Greece, \$2,500; Gábor Berczeli, Eotvos Lorand U. of Budapest, Hungary, \$2,000; and Jessica Tang, U. of Zürich, Switzerland, \$2,500. (b) Two Intra-European Travel Grants: Justyna Wierzchowska, U. of Warsaw, Poland, \$1,250, and Jelena Sesnić, U. of Zagreb, Croatia, \$1,250. No Romanian applicant was awarded the grant this year, but those who want to apply next year should not be discouraged, as three of our colleagues have won these grants in the last three years.

A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N R O M A N I A

# Ars Docendi within the American Studies Department: 2000-2004

I remember, and I think it is an interesting coincidence, that the first text I read as a student in American Studies was Emerson's "Self Reliance". This essay is essential for the making of the American culture, but I didn't know that then. I took it very personally and underlined various passages that impressed me most in order to keep them in mind like you want to keep the advice coming from a wise and friendly person. I mention this text firstly, because "self reliance" is probably one of the most important concepts that American culture stands for and secondly because it is one of the things I gained from being a student in American Studies.

When I wasn't sure what I would write here, I asked several of my colleagues why they decided to take American Studies as their minor. Someone said she heard about it from an older student, she also read a presentation of the courses somewhere and was attracted by the wide variety of subjects, ranging from economy to film studies, that were included in the syllabus. Another one of my colleagues said she had been to America, became interested in the American culture and decided to pursue the interest further. Someone said he was interested in history and politics and wanted to pursue something more than pure philology. Still, most of us did not know exactly what we were getting into. We knew it was something quite new combining several subjects taught by a young faculty or visiting American professors.

In my first year I had some doubts about whether I had made the right choice. Most of our colleagues from other departments were specializing in two foreign languages and I was wondering what good it would do me to study American culture, it certainly seemed to have no practical purpose. Apparently I wasn't the only one to think like that. After the first year some of our colleagues changed their minor from American Studies to another foreign language. Still, now when I look back, I don't regret I have chosen to continue with this program and I think most of my colleagues, those that have remained, feel the same way. When I say this I have in mind an incident to

which I will refer later and which has made students speak out their opinion about the program.

To me the American Studies program meant an opportunity to study more thoroughly American literature and film. I grew up with American literature, which I loved. As a child I enjoyed Mark Twain and Harper Lee, as a teenager Salinger, Kerouac, Hemingway, Fitzgerald and later Vonnegut, Henry Miller and many more. In spite of this I have to say that my idea of American culture was not a very positive one. It was mostly influenced by European scholars that referred to American culture as inferior to the European one. I wouldn't want to argue for or against the above mentioned opinion. What I want to say is that, while being a student in American Studies, I have come to the conclusion that such a classification is irrelevant and is generally made by people who don't have an overall vision of both cultures.

Now as a graduate student, I have no doubts that a close study of American culture gives one not only a larger frame for the study of American literature, but most of all, a better understanding of the contemporary world. Furthermore, America is now the center of the world, politically and economically speaking. This fact gives the study of American culture a whole new meaning and proves its importance.

This is the case because in the last century the world has undergone a process of Americanization. The American Studies curriculum was organized in such a way as to give us an overall picture about how and why this

process has taken place by familiarizing us with concepts like globalization, multiculturalism, ethnicity, high-culture and popular culture. As students in this department, we have become acquainted with the latest theories in cultural studies which means we are equipped with the necessary tools to conduct an informed criticism of contemporary society and pursue a career in the press, for instance.

I was going to comment on the utility of choosing a career in American Studies, but then I realized career is not the right word. We might be prepared for a career in

American Studies but there are very slight chances that any of us will pursue one. Some of us will maybe work in American companies, others might become members of the department's faculty, but these will be rare cases. Most of us will do something different from what we have been trained for. This however is the case not only with students in American Studies, but with all students in humanities in Romania. Therefore the bad point goes to the current state of Romanian society and not to the department.

There is however utility in the study of American culture in the sense that it implies the study of democracy. We are probably one of the last generations of Romanians that have experienced and still remember the communist regime. This fact probably makes us more apt to appreciate democracy, but at the same time means that have inherited also a sense of submission that comes from growing up under a dictatorial government. By studying American culture we have learned that democracy is a continuous process and not a fixed state, that the fight for democracy never ends. To be honest, before being a student in this department I was a complete ignorant as far as politics was concerned. Probably if I had chosen a pure philological training I would have remained one. The American Studies program has given us a "more pragmatic perspective on life" (to use the words of one of my colleagues). And even more that, I would say it gave us the exercise of democracy.

Probably the best part of being a student in American Studies, and I think all my colleagues will agree on this one, is the fact that we have had courses given by American Fulbright professors or by Romanian professors that have completed their studies in the U.S. Which is to say that we have had the chance of being taught mostly in "the American way". We were asked to put into practice the concepts that were taught in class. Generally our professors did not take the role of the expert sharing his knowledge in a monologue to a class of silent students. They took on a harder task, I would say, that of encouraging students to take a personal involvement in the development of the class and of making them think for themselves. Students were encouraged to be inquisitive and express freely constructive criticism.

# A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N R O M A N I A

At the beginning of this newsletter I mentioned an incident that has made my colleagues and me talk about our experience as American Studies students. A few weeks ago, a visiting professor asked us what our perspectives as American Studies graduate students were. My colleagues answered several things, but the general idea was that we felt we were ready to go into different fields of activity because we did not specialize in only one direction, but in many. The professor went on to declare that he imagined that the typical American Studies student was a spoiled twenty-four something rich person who had traveled all over the world, was bored with everything, and who in order not to commit suicide decided to take some courses at the university. I must say no one in my generation fits even remotely this description. Come to think of it, there is no such thing as a typical American Studies student, at least not in my generation, but many very different individuals. Nevertheless, I am grateful this discussion has taken place because it was a chance to find out the honest opinions of my colleagues about being a student in American Studies.

The professor also implied that this department did not offer a real practical training in a certain field but most of all did not equip its students with a coherent "system of thought", whatever that means. I have mentioned the problem of practical training already and that I see it not as a problem of this department, but as a problem of Romanian society in general. It is the "system of thought" I want to refer to now. I think that unlike students in other departments and faculties we have been helped in building some kind of a "system of thought". More precisely, we been helped to break away from the Romanian tradition of silence and submission, an inheritance from the communist era.

I think it is time I returned to the idea of "self reliance" which I mentioned in the introduction. "Self reliance" is the key element in the "system of thought" that the a student in American Studies might acquire. I saw this "self reliance" in my colleagues when they answered the questions of the above mentioned professor. It implies having personal opinions and uttering them with confidence. At the same it means having faith that your individual contribution can make a change on a larger, more general scale. But most of all it means not following an previously given pattern, but making your own pattern to follow, not to imitate, but to create. The concept of "self reliance" as Emerson referred to it, meant doing away with the past and starting anew in accordance with one's personal principles. "Self reliance" is an essential lesson for any young person, because if we are to take Emerson's friend, Thoreau, word for it, "What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate."

**Maria Andrei, American Studies Graduate**

This is a particularly active time for the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania. Currently 28 Romanians are preparing to leave for the States on Fulbright scholarships and 21 U.S. Fulbright grantees are soon to arrive in Romania. Among the former group are RAAS members Ilinca Anghelescu from the University of Bucharest (awarded a Fulbright Junior Award for her proposal on American/Romanian film) and Cristina Cheveresan from the University of the West in Timisoara (awarded a Summer Institute Grant in American Contemporary Literature). We hope upon their return they will offer us all a short update.

The Commission has just received the new batch of Romanian Junior Fulbright applications for 2005. The Senior competition, which is open to those with a Ph.D., will be advertised starting in August (see [www.usembassy.ro](http://www.usembassy.ro)). Keep in mind if you are applying for a scholarship that your study objective/proposal must clearly state why you need to go to the States to complete your project and must indicate the benefits for Romania upon your return.

American Studies is experiencing a burgeoning interest in Romania: several universities have intensified their programs or introduced new ones this year. The United States Ambassador Guest has been extremely encouraging and supportive of the growth of American Studies and I regret his departure, although it is in accord with the traditional rotation of U.S.

## A GREAT YEAR FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

The U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania is pleased to note the burgeoning interest this field is experiencing all over the country. The new programs, conferences, meetings and open discussions signal the beginning of a much larger outreach movement of Romanian academics and institutions. The Fulbright Commission is happy to support this development, and welcomes all applications for study and research.

ambassadors every three years. In addition, the Romanian Ministry of Education has recently added American Studies to the national list of recognized specialties. In light of this new interest, the American Cultural Center organized its first American Studies workshop in Bucharest. We hope this is the first of several.

At the recent biannual meeting of EAAS in Prague, Shelly Fisher Fishkin, the current president of the American Studies Association appeared on the opening panel and announced an initiative to foreground research by European academics working in the field of American Studies. In her remarks she noted the appalling neglect which their work has received in the US. Using the annual meeting of the ASA "Crossroads of Cultures" in Atlanta (November 11-14) as a vehicle to further this initiative, she hopes to involve more participants from this side of the Atlantic. (See <http://www.georgetown.edu/crossroads/AmericanStudiesAssn/annualmeeting/>) This is just the beginning of a much larger movement.

Also at the EAAS Dr. Rodica Mihailă represented some of the unique concerns and interests of Romania and ex-communist countries. Her comments made it apparent that Eastern Europe is contributing significant new insights to the conception of American Studies. This is great year to be a RAAS member.

This is also a great year to apply for a Fulbright. Look for the opening of the Senior competition in August and the Junior sometime in October. In the meantime, I hope you will have a wonderful summer.

**Dr. Barbara Nelson**

Executive Director, U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania

## A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N R O M A N I A

## Conference

Eric Gilder

„Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu

**The Secret and the Known**

Annual Conference of the English Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages,  
The University of Bucharest

The annual conference of the English Department in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Bucharest was held in the beginning of June. Drawing from a theme suggested at the end of the previous year's meeting, "The Secret and the Known", the event attracted more than one hundred registered participants from Romania, Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Six plenary keynote lectures in the fields of American, British and Canadian literature, American and British cultural studies and ELT and linguistics were supplemented by over thirty panels on specific specializations in these fields. Two roundtables on empirical inquiry and faith and on MA cultural studies rounded out the varied and full professional program.

Keynote speakers in each specialization included Jacqueline Gueron, Carmen Dobrovie Sorin and Daniele Godard, all of the Université Paris VII (Linguistics), speaking, respectively upon "Syntactic Domains of Temporal Interpretation," and "French Negative Dependency" and a specially announced topic; Michael Hattaway (Sheffield University), Bryan Reynolds (University of California, Irvine) and Stan Smith (Nottingham University) (Literature and Cultural Studies), speaking on, respectively, "Shakespeare's Much Ado about Nothing: Honor, Shame and Guilt", "Transversal Power: Theater's Secret Weapon", and "Still Set on the Spies' Career: Auden, Isherwood & Co and the Hermeneutics of Paranoia."

The roundtables included one led by Eric Gilder ("Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu) and James Ramsay (Anglican Church of the Resurrection, Bucharest), on "Curiosity and the Religious: The Interaction of Empirical Inquiry, Tradition and Intuition in Humane Society" and another on questions of methodology in MA cultural studies led by Mihaela Irimia and Bogdan ?tef?nescu (both of the University of Bucharest). These innovative additions allowed for an informal consideration of topics that crossed all the relevant disciplinary boundaries represented at the conference, a unique opportunity.

To the author's mind, the individual panels and presentations were of very high academic quality. While he could not attend all of them, due to co-scheduling, he can say with assurance that both of the large topic areas in which he participated (British and American literature, and British and American cultural studies), all panels inspired interesting, sometimes vigorous, discussions on a diverse array of subtopics, and the quality of research presented by both younger and older scholars was surprisingly consistent, better so than at many large-scale US-based conferences he has attended over the years.

The well-attended social program included an opening cocktail party attended by Romanian and international personalities, and a festive conference dinner. These vital functions allowed the participants to "break out" of their specializations to share and speak to a wider audience (via interviews with news media) about the high importance of such international conferences in Romania, both for its own national academic development and the internationalization of English-language studies in higher education generally.

Iulian Cănanău

University of Bucharest

**East-West American Studies Conference in Frankfurt**

Since the year 2000, the Center for North American Studies of Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt am Main has been hosting a series of annual American Studies conferences designed to facilitate encounters between junior scholars from Eastern European countries, Western Europe and North America, in an effort to develop and tighten the cross-cultural academic networks. What distinguishes the East-West American Studies Conference from other events with similar objectives is the special format that its organizers, Professor Christa Buschendorf and her team from J.W. Goethe University, opted for. Thus, each of the participants (whose number is limited to 16 persons) is to present his/her book-length project and discuss their work with the rest of the group. The papers are sent well in advance, to allow for the other participants' reading them. The emphasis is on discussion rather than presentation, and every participant is required to prepare questions/comments about each of the others' papers.

Last year (June 26-29) I had the chance to attend this conference, together with four Romanian colleagues (three from Bucharest and another one from Constanta) and participants from Poland, Russia, Canada and the U.S..

The projects that were selected for the 2003 East-West American Studies Conference entitled **Communism, Capitalism, and the Politics of Culture** came from various areas including cultural history, popular culture, literature, philosophy, business, politics and translation studies. Such an eclectic range of research interests surely posed a challenge to all of us. It's not easy to ask well-informed questions about papers in areas you know little about. But if there was one participant who had thoroughly and brilliantly done his "homework", that was the chair of our workshop, Professor Leo Marx. His perspicacious questions and insightful comments, always clearly stated and based on the latest resources benefited each and everyone of those present in the conference room. Even if the Professor has turned to technology and environmental studies in the last decade, perhaps growing estranged from what he called in his opening address the American Studies A(fter).D(ive), i.e. after the 1960s, when the early Americanists' consensual fascination with America was replaced by doubt and hopelessness, it was plain to see that he never lost his interest in the field of learning he helped define and develop.

This year, two more colleagues from the University of Bucharest were selected to participate in this conference. Such a successful project is expected to be carried on as long as there is a need for tightening the cross-cultural academic networks within a growing European Union.

Professor Buschendorf, who gracefully co-chairs the discussions, is assisted by an effective team of conference organizers. I am grateful for their hospitality and kindheartedness.

## A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N R O M A N I A

## participation

Ludmila Martanovschi

„Ovidius“ University, Constanta

**A Good Day for Decolonization:**

Native American Literature Symposium – April 15-17, 2004

Held on the premises of the Mystic Lake Hotel on Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota land outside Minneapolis, the symposium represented a great event both for the veterans who had attended all of the four previous editions and the newcomers alike. Healthy dialogue between writers and academics occurred within and outside the varied sessions that made up the three-day program of the conference. The contributions from the panels dedicated to criticism dealt with literary texts or interdisciplinary issues reaching out towards history, politics and arts such as film, photography or music. The most relevant ones aimed at accuracy of analysis taking into account the decolonization project going on at the heart of the field today.

For all interested in the prestigious or emerging voices of contemporary American Indian literature, attending the writers' readings was a special gift each day. Esther Belin's selection from her volume *From the Belly of My Beauty* along with new poems introduced the audience to some of the preoccupations of a young Diné living and writing in Los Angeles. Roberta Hill Whiteman (Oneida) chose to present some of her new work and her poems reminded readers of the themes and style in her acclaimed volume *Star Quilt*. In what was announced as a "discussion" with Richard Van Camp, member of the Dogrib (Tlicho) Nation from Canada, the writer made his audience laugh and cry through the story of his life that he put forward as a stand-up act. Allison Adelle Hedge Coke (Huron/Cherokee) read an autobiographical piece after explaining the courage she needed to face and write about her troubled past and everyone supported her in the end with a roar of applause. Through his reading of a testimony to a previous war, Geary Hobson (Cherokee-Quapaw/Chickasaw) brought attention to ardent issues concerning war in general and the war in the news today. An upcoming collection entitled *Traces in Blood, Bone and Stone: Contemporary Ojibway Poetry* was introduced by Kimberly Blaeser and Gordon Henry who read both from their own texts included in the volume and some other poets' represented in it. They also talked about the writers who influenced them and answered questions. Offering a further look at the collection mentioned, Louise Erdrich presented a few poems to an audience probably more in love with her novels. The most significant contribution to the understanding of Louise Erdrich's work was made by Debra K.S. Barker (Lakota) in "A Doubter in a City of Belief: Erdrich as a Resistance Poet" through an elaborate discussion of the writer's anticolonial resistance seen in the representation and preservation of her people's culture.

Two sessions were devoted to the analysis of contemporary poets by bringing together separate papers. Thus in one session the Diné poets: Luci Tapahonso, Laura Tohe and Esther Belin came alive in Andrea Penner's work centered around rewriting the boarding school narrative and in Jeff Berglund's study concentrated on reliving the Long Walk, a historical event that marked

the Diné nation. In another session Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), Wendy Rose (Hopi) and Kimberly Blaeser (Ojibway), prominent names in contemporary poetry, were analyzed relevantly. A third session, devoted to a recently published collection of critical essays, was a round table discussion by some of the authors included in the volume. Dean Rader, the editor of **Speak to Me Words: Contemporary American Indian Poetry**, introduced some of the contributors among whom were Robert Nelson and Daniel Justice and let them explain the circumstances of and main ideas in their essays.

A very important session was "American Indian Histories and the Decolonization Project" in which native historians had the chance to give the inside view on problems that certain communities face at present. Susan Miller (Seminole) explained the history of the Seminole-freedmen issue in order to correct the misperceptions propagated by lawyers and journalists even today while Myla Vicenti Carpio (Jicarilla Apache) talked about the Laguna colony in Albuquerque as still definable as Laguna Pueblo people despite relocation. Invited to insist upon the immediate ways to advance decolonization, Michael Yellow Bird (Sahnish/Hidatsa), the chair of the panel, re-emphasized the need for advocating rights and increasing awareness about them.

A panel developed around one great personality with a life dedicated to activism and a surprising literary career was Session 6C, "Beyond American Indian Stories: The Many Voices of Zitkala-Sha", held on Friday, April 16th, from 10.30 to 11.45. The professors who had conducted research on Zitkala-Sha for a long time chose to present less known aspects in her biography and work. The essay "'For the Indian Cause': The Later Writings of Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin" by Dr. P. Jane Hafen (Taos Pueblo) proves that a closer reading of the Yankton Sioux author is always received with interest and questions from academics in the audience. My own contribution to the session was "From 'Unknown Tongue' to Substance of 'Magic Design' in Zitkala-Sha's Autobiographical Writing" in which I demonstrate that the imposition of the English language through the boarding school methods does not succeed in the total domination of the individual, but enables her to resist colonization through self-expression.

As I am formulating the fact that the Native American Literature Symposium 2004 is not only memory to me, but also a presence that continues to open new paths and possibilities in my research, I realize I haven't thanked enough all those who made my participation a reality: Dr. P. Jane Hafen who coordinates my one-year project at University of Nevada, Las Vegas and organized the panel I joined, all the organizers who worked hard for the success of the conference directed by Dr. Gwen Griffin (Sisseton-Wahpeton/Oklahoma Cherokee) and the Fulbright Professional Enhancement Grant board that provided support for my trip through the Institute of International Education. The motto of the conference was "It's a good day to be Indigenous!" and I do think that the fifth anniversary edition of the symposium in 2004 enormously advanced the decolonization project and will continue to take it forward each year that will take place.

A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N R O M A N I A

# Call for papers

## The 2005 Nordic Association for American Studies Conference

May 25-28, 2005

Växjö University, Sweden

The 2005 NAAS conference will be held at Växjö University May 25-28, 2005, in co-operation with Blekinge Institute of Technology in Karlskrona, the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö and the Swedish Association for American Studies.

This first call for papers invites suggestions for workshops and individual papers in all areas that can be accommodated under the title of American Studies! The purpose of the broad theme is to be as inclusive as possible, and to make possible a survey of the broad spectrum of research and teaching projects which exist in such varied areas as (but not limited to) literature, English language, history, political science, film and media, pedagogy, ethnology, religion, economy, and geography, and multidisciplinary approaches such as queer studies, and gender studies.

Proposals for the NAAS conference should be sent to the program committee by September 1, 2004 at the following address:

Dr. Gunlög Fur

School of humanities

Växjö university

351 95 Växjö

e-mail: [gunlog.fur@hum.vxu.se](mailto:gunlog.fur@hum.vxu.se)

<http://www.vxu.se/hum/NAAS2005>

## VII S.A.A.S. Conference

Jaén, 16-18 March 2005

The 2005 SAAS (Spanish Association for American Studies) Conference will be held in Jaén, Spain, 16-18 March 2005.

Within the theme "Masculinities, Femininities And Hybridities In Us Culture" the Program Committee invites colleagues to submit proposals for individual papers, on diverse aspects of this topic, within the panels proposed below.

- 1) Drawing Masculinities in Latino Caribbean Literature / 2) North American Avant-Garde Poetry Anthologies: Challenging masculinities and femininities / 3) Masculinities and Gender Relations in Contemporary US Women's Literature/ 4) Gender Issues in American Life-writing / 5) Gender and/in Colonial America: Visions and Constructions of Gender in the Early Days of the Nation / 6) Discursive and Physical Limits of Identity. Cyborgs and Gender Construction in US Culture. / 7) Out of the Closet: Black Lesbians and Gays in African American Literature. / 8) Lesbian Representation and Cultural Tropes / 9) Women, men, and two-spirit peoples: the construction and re/revision of Native American gendered ethnicity / 10) Hybrid Gender in Science Fiction / 11) Strategies of Identity in US Theater / 12) The I and the Other in the North American Short Story / 13) Gendering America / 14) Male, Female and Hybrid Bodies / 15) Outstanding Protagonists in the History of the United States of America /

- 16) Ethnic and Gender Hybridities in Contemporary US Literatures / 17) The Dialectics of Diasporic Identification: Hybridity, Gender and Affiliation / 18) Alternative Femininities in Nineteenth-Century American Theatre / 19) Miscellaneous Panel

Please send your proposed abstract directly to the Chair of each panel (via E-mail) by 15 October, 2004 (full papers should be sent by 15 February, 2005). Should your paper not fit into any of the panels, you can send it to Prof. Francisco Collado's e-mail address [fcollado@unizar.es](mailto:fcollado@unizar.es), for there will also be a miscellaneous panel for a limited number of selected proposals. Members of International Associations of American Studies are invited to participate.

Conference fee: 110€ (70€ for SAAS members). Please, check the SAAS Web page for further details: <http://www.usc.es/ia303/saas/saas.html>

## International Conference on Storytelling and Cultural Identity

Terceira, Azores (Portugal), June 27-29, 2005

The primary focus of this conference is to explore the power of storytelling in the recuperation of memory, collective identity formation, and the presence of oral traditions in literature and the sister arts. All forms of storytelling narrative (oral and written), performative, cinematic, musical, and hybrid as well as methodologies (literary, linguistic, sociological, political, anthropological, etc.) will be considered as long as they relate to the themes explicit and implicit in the title of this conference. Papers may be presented in any of the following languages: Portuguese, Castilian, English, and French.

Deadline for receipt of abstracts and a concise (1/2 page) narrative cv is July 31st, 2004. Please include a separate cover page with the following: Authors name and affiliation / Email / Mailing address / Title of presentation. Please email your abstract to [ics@www.brocku.ca](mailto:ics@www.brocku.ca) Late submissions will not be accepted, and we cannot accept papers that are to be published elsewhere. Acceptance of your paper for presentation implies a commitment on your part to register and attend the conference. Notification of acceptance will be sent out by September 30th, 2004. A selection of the papers presented will be published in the independent volumes in Portuguese and English.

Visit the conference web page for details [www.cm-ah.pt/ccc](http://www.cm-ah.pt/ccc)

## Defeat and Memory

University of Edinburgh, 8-9 Sept. 2005

The aim of this conference is to examine the manner in which defeat in its military form has been understood and remembered by individuals and societies in the era of modern industrialised warfare.

In exploring the way that the experience and memory of defeat affect societies, this conference will focus on the 19th and 20th century, although proposals referring to earlier periods will be considered. The themes of the conference might include: classical and literary inspirations in time of defeat / heroic defeats and national pride / notions of heroism and masculinity / scapegoats and the quest for revenge / collaboration and resistance / silence and denial as a personal or national response / the experience of imprisonment or demobilisation / the impact of occupation/ the cultural implications of peace settlements and post-war tribunals / reform and revolution / defeat as a spur to decolonisation or a changing world role

The conference will be held on 8 and 9 September 2005 at the University of Edinburgh. Proposals should be no longer than 500



# A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N R O M A N I A

words and should be forwarded to Dr Jenny Macleod (via email or the address below) by 10 July 2004. It is anticipated that the papers presented at the conference will be published as a collected volume.

Email: [jenny.macleod@ed.ac.uk](mailto:jenny.macleod@ed.ac.uk)

## Leisure and Liberty in North America

Université Paris IV - Sorbonne

The Center for Western American and Asia/Pacific Studies

Sorbonne, 12 - 13 November 2004

Leisure is commonly regarded as free time activity and somehow refers to our way of exercising freedom, individually or collectively. Leisure was once considered as a prerogative of aristocratic elites, but is now perceived in a less restrictive and more democratic way, especially in North America where it has become some sort of standard consumer good, easily and largely accessible to the masses. This conference intends first to redefine the boundaries of "leisure" within American society (a pursuit that goes back to Max Weber and Thorstein Veblen, among others) and investigate the impact of these borderlines on the extension, supply and enjoyment of leisure. If you are interested in presenting a paper that addresses related topics, send a proposal of approximately 200 words and a provisional title before July 15 to:

Pierre Lagayette [pierre.lagayette@wanadoo.fr](mailto:pierre.lagayette@wanadoo.fr) /

Adrien Lherm [adrienlherm@hotmail.com](mailto:adrienlherm@hotmail.com) /

Yves Figueiredo [yves.figueiredo@paris4.sorbonne.fr](mailto:yves.figueiredo@paris4.sorbonne.fr)

Further Queries about the conference may be addressed to:

Pierre Lagayette, Director of the Center

[pierre.lagayette@paris4.sorbonne.fr](mailto:pierre.lagayette@paris4.sorbonne.fr)

## The Second International 'Language, Communication, Culture' Conference

Beja, Portugal, Nov 24-27, 2004

Themed session: CULTURE, POLITICS, AND THE FUTURE

Deadline for 150-word abstracts: July 15, 2004

All abstracts to be submitted through Mundiconvenius:

<http://www.mundiconvenius.pt/2004/culture/default.htm>

[info@mundiconvenius.pt](mailto:info@mundiconvenius.pt)

Session organiser: [anilopes@clix.pt](mailto:anilopes@clix.pt)

## Transatlantic Relations in a Changing Cultural Context

Varna, Bulgaria, 22-24 October 2004.

What is happening in, and to, the North Atlantic area? Are the Old World and the New World linguistically and culturally converging, or are they drifting apart? What are the relationships, contrasts, similarities, conflicts or complementary developments that shape the civilization(s) on both sides of the Atlantic? Are there illuminating transatlantic phenomena to indicate where the modern world is heading? Perspectives from, but not necessarily limited to, linguistics, cultural studies, anthropology, literary criticism and theory, history, sociology and political science are welcome.

Please send proposals with abstracts of 100 words by 1 September 2004 to

Assoc. Prof. Romyana Todorova by email

[r\\_todorova@yahoo.com](mailto:r_todorova@yahoo.com)

or mail: 115 Universitetska Street, Department of English Studies,

Faculty of Humanities, University of Shumen, 9700 Shumen, Bulgaria.

## 6th Graduate Conference

Erlangen

Border//Crossings Nov 5 - 7, 2004

Border//Crossings Culture - Media - Economy

Keynote speakers: Giorgio Agamben (to be confirmed) and Elena Esposito

The concept of 'border' is - paradoxically? - gaining new relevance in the wake of what is usually described as 'globalization', including such diverse phenomena as migration, inter-cultural communication, transformation or hybridization. This concept is equally important for those theories centering around identity and those centering around difference. In trying to cross national as well as disciplinary borders we are looking for contributions with current theoretical and/or empirical perspectives, critically analysing the concept and/or the construction of borders. Panels with three to five speakers will last two to two and a half hours. The time allocated for each paper is about 10 minutes, in order to permit ample time for discussion. Before the conference, each contribution (3 to 10 pages) will be posted on our web page in order to facilitate discussion and scholarly exchange. The deadline for submitting these short contributions is October 15, 2004. Please send abstracts and short papers to [gradabstra@arno.franken.de](mailto:gradabstra@arno.franken.de) in Rich Text Format (.rtf) or Portable Document Format (.pdf).

Please register using our online submission form at <http://www.gradnet.de>

The deadline for paper proposals (1-3 page abstracts) is August 31, 2004 (registration for other participants until October 31, 2004).

Selected papers will be published in the conference proceedings.

The conference fee is 20 EUR.

For further information please do not hesitate to contact us at [gradinfo@arno.franken.de](mailto:gradinfo@arno.franken.de).

## 26th American Indian Workshop Amerika Haus

Munich April 11 - 13, 2005

"New Buffaloes" - New Ways? Traditions and Transitions in Native American Culture: What has lasted, what has changed? & Current Research Session

"New Buffaloes" - New Ways?: The term "new buffalo" is used as a metaphor for Indian casinos by both Indians and Non-Indians. This workshop will deal with a wider range of "New Buffaloes" and their effects on Native American culture. These "New Buffaloes" include Native American commercial art, music, film, literature, tourism, on- and off-reservation economic enterprises - and casinos. We invite papers that deal with this topic.

Current Research Session: We invite persons, who do not feel represented by the general theme of the 26th American Indian Workshop to give an overview on their current research in this session. We especially encourage students going for their M.A. or Ph.D. to present their research.

Abstract: Maximum of 150 words

(incl. title, name, address, and email of author)

Deadline: October 31st, 2004

For more information see webpage:

[www.amerikahaus.de/program/events/AIW26/AIW26.html](http://www.amerikahaus.de/program/events/AIW26/AIW26.html)

<http://www.bartlconsult.de>

For more details on any of these conferences, please write to [office@american-studies.ro](mailto:office@american-studies.ro)

# Book Reviews



**Marina CAP-BUN**  
**CRIS-CROSS**  
**Essays in Romanian and**  
**Comparative Literature,**  
**Radu Bărbulescu Verlag,**  
**Munich, 2004**

The present volume is a collection of essays that builds on the author's previous work, but also significantly expands it to include some papers delivered at international conferences in East-European Studies, fragments of the courses she taught at University of Washington, and public addresses also given in Seattle, at the remarkable Romanian cultural events she organized. There are numerous original contributions in this unflinchingly engaging book. "The Symbolism of Light in Ion Creangă's *Memories of my Boyhood*" is an insightful analysis of one of the most famous novels in Romanian literature from a totally new perspective, having a lot to benefit from the psychoanalytical essays of Gaston Bachelard. The symbolism of light is deciphered not only as a rhetorical device, but also as a therapeutic instrument in the author's struggle with the horrible symptoms of epilepsy. The next study debates the necessary changes in the critical perception of Mihai Eminescu's life and poetry brought about by the recent discovery of previously unknown correspondence of the poet with his lover Veronica Micle. In spite of the opinions of authoritative critics like Titu Maiorescu and G. Călinescu, Cap-Bun brilliantly demonstrates that Veronica was indeed his true muse, in the authentic Romanic *forma mentis*. The essay on Nichita Stănescu continues the idea of love poetry as a form of religion, illustrating the polyvalence of the possible lyrical attitudes in a different age of Romanian poetry.

Her chapters on Caragiale, as a figure who mediates between Poe on the one hand and Eugène

Ionesco on the other, and the critical analyses of some of the major plays of Ionesco are especially accomplished. They represent a fragment of the Comparative Literature class she taught at University of Washington, which proved her ability to put together a historically wide-ranging (from Greek to postmodern conceptions of the fantastic) and intellectually challenging seminar.

"The Spirits of the Waters: an Exercise in Comparative Anthropology" is an interdisciplinary study of ancient Romanian and American Indian myths related to fishing and man's symbolic and pragmatic relationship with the waters. It demonstrates a profound knowledge of Romanian mythology and literature, and offers an assiduous exploration of American Indian texts, which was part of her research objectives in Seattle.

The last study "Christmas in Romania" is a public conference delivered by Cap-Bun at the Romanian Evening she organized on December 1st 2001, at the Center for Ethnic Studies in Seattle, meant as a celebration of Romania's National Day. Being in the audience myself I was able to notice not only the emotional reaction it provoked in members of the Romanian local community, but also the remarkable interest of the American audience.

Overall Marina Cap-Bun is a truly distinguished intellectual and an original thinker who is bound to make a difference to everyone who is fortunate to know her, the readers of this book included.

*Raimonda Modiano,*

**Professor of English and Comparative Literature; Director, Textual Studies Program, University of Washington**

## **Monica Matei-Chesnoiu** **Writing Clues for Students**

(București: Editura Cartea Universitară, 2004)

This invaluable handbook provides students, from beginners to post-graduates, with a shortcut to the mastery of written communication in the academic world. In a highly accessible style, Chesnoiu demystifies the process of writing step by step, offering advice on how to generate ideas, develop an informal essay, and meet the more demanding requirements of the research paper, literary critique, or science report. Helpful Hints at the end of each chapter review essentials and serve also as a checklist for revising finished drafts. Technical complexities of appropriate documentation are clarified by ample illustrations for note taking, citing sources, and preparing bibliography. Equally useful are explanatory diagrams for improving style and usage. No student should be without this guide to good writing.

*Frances Barasch*

**Professor Emerita, City University of New York**

# Academic Projects

Roxana Oltean

**PhD Thesis: Spaces of Utopia  
in the Writings of Henry James**  
Scientific Coordinator: Prof. Rodica Mihăilă, Ph D

The PhD thesis entitled "Spaces of Utopia in the Writings of Henry James", defended on the 18th of February at the University of Bucharest, rereads the literary and cultural contribution of Henry James in view of his role in the context of current debates centered around contemporary phenomena such as globalization or cosmopolitanism. The key concept which allows such a rereading in fresh notes is that of utopia, redefined in the spirit of a more flexible understanding which includes the notion of dynamism and the play of spaces based on a desire for alternatives.

Simply put, the main argument of this thesis is that utopia is a distinctive feature of the jamesian imaginary, contoured both in his realist and in his anti-realist writings as a foundational impulse of James's cultural allegories, which are still eloquent today. Spaces of utopia in James's works are thus recuperated and analyzed in the present thesis not only as indicative of an active engagement with the world, but as spaces of exile, desire and artifice, pointing to a utopian impulse. Henry James's imaginary is not simply a picturesque presence from a waning world but, on the contrary, suggest models and patterns (or utopias) that are particularly relevant for our contemporary cultural context, still oscillating between the Old World and the New World, fascinated or distraught at the prospect of cosmopolitanism and of globalization.

More precisely, three main methodological and thematic approaches to utopia are proposed and explored in this thesis, drawing on and expanding the recent revaluations of utopia in critical discourse, which all share a central notion of desire, suggesting inherent tensions and nostalgias of utopian space. Firstly, from the perspective of predominantly postcolonial methodology, utopian projections are analyzed in view of colonial patterns of conquest and assimilation, revealing absolute exotic otherness, but also heterotopian spaces of hybridity and exile. Secondly, utopias are explored as coherent modes of self-narration, surfacing as family romances which motivate complex plots investigated, from psychoanalytical standpoints, at the level of personal and social imaginative mechanisms. Thirdly, reading utopia as a version of *natura artificata*, the intersections between utopian drives and aestheticizing stances are investigated from the stance of cultural studies, particularly in view of the intersections between two discourses, fetishism and modernism.

James's utopian spaces suggest a powerful cultural allegory which operates in multiple registers of significance, a rich intertext which doesn't speak about "us," yet infuses allegories of colonialism, modernity and Empire with the drama of psychoanalytic scenarios. Utopias as a subjective intertext stage, in this sense, the "personal drama of the future," borrowing James's prophecy for the international theme (Preface to vol. XIV x), and it is this overlap and simultaneity of the "personal" and the "drama of the future" that might account for James's striking visibility in contemporary cultural studies discourse.

Emil Sirbulescu

**Transgressing the Watery Borders:  
The Black Atlantic and the Literature of a Diaspora in the Age  
of Multiculturalism**

The concept of the 'Black Atlantic' denotes the great diversity of the broad cultural zone surrounding the Atlantic Ocean in which peoples of African descent now live.

The present project – to be finalized in a book on the black Atlantic and the literature of the African diaspora, written in Romanian, for a Romanian audience, and in English, provided that a British or American publisher becomes interested in such a project – focuses on the increased and increasing interaction between numerous literatures and cultures from various parts of the world, with a special stress on the literature of the African diaspora. Using the tools of the comparatist, we will endeavor to identify different forms of transition and transgression characteristic of the information society, fully aware that – whilst globalization entails almost instant access to information about different literatures and cultures from all over the world – it does not necessarily follow that the traversal of geographical boundaries, or the transcending of cultural limits and traditions, will result in meaningful and productive debate amongst literary scholars about such issues as the (re)reading of older or deceased authors or the understanding of current writers from different regions, countries or continents.

The attempt to construct an African literature rooted in African traditions has led both to an attempt to censor the profound entanglement of African intellectuals with the intellectual life of Europe and the Americas. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the whole concept, however, is to list a few sets of major figures that can be linked across the zone, a closer analysis of which will become distinct chapters of the final version of the book: the South African journalist and novelist Solomon Plaatje and W.E.B. Du Bois; the Kenyan novelist and playwright Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Frantz Fanon; Aimé Césaire and the Senegalese poet Léopold S. Senghor; Léopold S. Senghor and French ethnography; Michelle Cliff and the South African novelist and short-story writer Bessie Head; Miles Davis and Hugh Masekela; etc. In each case noted, important cultural influences have passed, in all directions, from one geography to another.

As for the research to be carried out in the USA, I am going to make full use of the multilingual collections of books and periodicals, the international collections, as well as the special bibliographies of such outstanding libraries and institutions as the Library of the Congress, the Smithsonian Institute, and the libraries of prestigious American universities. My work will allow for ample contacts with American specialists in the field. Participation in comparative literature conferences and seminars will be seriously considered. The compilation of an anthology of prominent texts by the authors to be discussed might also be taken into consideration, provided that a publishing house is willing to participate in the project.

A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N R O M A N I A

Romanian Association for American Studies – RAAS

7-13 Pitar Moş Street, 70151 Bucharest, Romania

President: Rodica Mihăilă, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of English, University of Bucharest. 7-13 Pitar Moş Street, 70151 Bucharest, Romania. E-mail: mrodica@fx.ro

Vice-President: Ecaterina Popa, Faculty of Letters, Department of English, Babeş-Bolyai University. 31 Horia Street, 3400 Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: kittypopa@lett.ubbcluj.ro

Secretary: Irina Grigorescu Pană, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of English, University of Bucharest. 7-13 Pitar Moş Street, 70151 Bucharest, Romania. E-mail: irinapana@fx.ro

Treasurer: Ioana Luca, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of English, University of Bucharest. 7-13 Pitar Moş Street, 70151 Bucharest, Romania. E-mail: dinuluca@hades.ro

Board Members:

Adina Ciugureanu, Faculty of Letters, Department of English, University of Constanţa. 124 Mamaia Bd, 8700 Constanţa, Romania. Email: adina.ciugureanu@seanet.ro

Odette Blumenfeld, Faculty of Letters, Department of English, the Al.I. Cuza University of Iaşi. 11, Copou Bd, 6600 Iaşi, Romania. E-mail: odyimir@uaic.ro

Emil Sîrbulescu, University of Craiova. Bd. 1 Mai, bl. DD10, ap. 13 Craiova, Romania.



Edited by the Romanian Association for American Studies

Editor: Ilinca Anghelescu bookster@fastmail

Art Director: Răzvan Rădulescu pentru viziile de presă

RAAS NEW MEMBERSHIP (June 2003- June 2004)

- Albu, Cristina, University of Bucharest... Cheveresan, Cristina, University of Timişoara... Chiper, Sorina, "Al. I. Cuza" University, Iaşi... Georgescu, Sorina, Hyperion University, Bucharest... Godeanu, Oana, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest... Florea, Adrian, University of Bucharest... Ivancu, Emilia, "1 Decembrie 1918" University, Alba Iulia... Lupu, Olesia, "Al. I. Cuza" University, Iaşi... Onet, Alina Elena, University of Sibiu... Mitocaru, Elena Simona, "Al. I. Cuza" University, Iaşi

- esmitocaru@yahoo.co.uk Nicolae, Mariana, ASE Bucureşti... Păcală, Nicoleta, University of Bucharest... Petraşcu, Mirela, University of Sibiu... Pioariu, Rodica, "1 Decembrie 1918" University, Alba Iulia... Popescu, Raluca, UTCB... Popescu, Veronica, "Al. I. Cuza" University, Iaşi... Stanca, Nicoleta, "Ovidius" University, Constanţa... Stroe, Mihai, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest... Vlaicu, Cornelia, American Cultural Center

EAAS OFFICERS, February 2003

- President: Josef Jarab, Palacky" University, Dept. of English & American Studies... Vice President: Gülriiz Büken, Department of History, Bilkent University... Treasurer: Hans Bak, Vakgroep Engels-Amerikaans... Secretary: Ole O. Moen, Department of British and American Studies, University of Oslo

- Phone: +33 1 44 78 34 14 Fax: +33 1 44 78 34 73... Jerzy Durczak, Department of American Literature and Culture... William Anthony (Tony) Emmerson, School of History and International Affairs... Hans-Jürgen Grabbe, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik... Martin Heusser, Englisches Seminar, Universität Zürich

- University, Department of American Studies, School of Philosophy, Thessaloniki... Alain Piette, Ecole d'Interprètes Internationaux... Eulalia Piñero, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid... Yuri V. Stulov, American Studies Center, European Humanities University... Jenel Virden, American Studies, University of Hull... Reinhold Wagnleitner, Department of History, University of Salzburg

EAAS BOARD MEMBERS

- Carlos Azevedo, Universidade do Porto... Tiziano Bonazzi, School of Political Sciences, University of Bologna... Marc Chénétier, Université de Paris VII, Institut Charles V... Savas Patsalidis, Aristotle

ASE NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Gülriiz Büken, Department of History, Bilkent University, 06533 BILKENT, Ankara, Turkey