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## Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues,

It's been a while since the RAAS newsletter was published and, as we all know, numerous events have taken place during this period: new laws and regulations, elections, thoroughgoing changes in Romanian universities, new developments in the political field. Meanwhile, the RAAS has continued its work and encouragement of research in American Studies and may report, as many other realms of human undertaking, both success and failure.

In the "positive" category of commendable events in which RAAS members participated, there are the highly profitable EAAS conference held in Izmir (March 30–April 2, 2012) and the exciting RAAS-Fulbright biennial conference in Constanta (October 4-6, 2012). The former, called *The Health of the Nation*, gathered over 300 scholars in American Studies from Europe and Fulbright grantees from the USA. Romania was represented by four colleagues, out of whom Professor Rodica Mihaila from the University of Bucharest was invited to hold the parallel lecture "Healing the Nation? The Critique of Exceptionalism in the Post-9/11 American Novel." The pleasant environment, the hospitality of the organizers and of the local academics, the high standards of the seminars, the inciting results of recent research in American Studies presented during the conference turned the EAAS event into a unique, excellent experience. Moreover, the EAAS board elected the new treasurer for the following term, a position which, this time, is occupied by the Romanian representative. Having been elected one of the four officers of the EAAS is a challenge for me and I do hope to be able to rise to the general expectations. It is also proof of the appreciation which the EAAS has shown for the RAAS activity on the whole.

The latter activity which the RAAS may report as successful is the biennial RAAS-Fulbright Conference with the title *Remapping Urban Spaces – American Challenges*, held at Ovidius University Constanta in early October, 2012. With Edward Soja, Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning,

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UCLA, and Professor Augustin Ioan, the University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest as key-note speakers, the conference gathered Romanian academics and Fulbright grantees who tackled a large number of topics pertaining to urban studies and the American metropolis (designing, imagining, redefining urban space in culture, literature, popular culture, the media). On this occasion, the RAAS launched the

volume *The American Tradition of Descent/Dissent: The Underground, the Countercultural, the (Anti)Utopian* (Iasi: Institutul European, 2012), which contains most of the articles presented at the 2010 RAAS-Fulbright Conference held in Constanta, with the title topic.

For the second time, two students became the recipients of the RAAS Graduate Student Award: Sorina Chipur from Al. Ioan Cuza University, Iasi received the award for the best PhD dissertation and Cristina-Maria Nitu, from the University of Bucharest, was the happy beneficiary of the award for the best MA dissertation. The RAAS board is very pleased to have managed to have set up a tradition of awarding grants for the best MA and PhD research work.

We all know how fast time flies by. 2012, already in the past, was the election year for the RAAS officers and board members. The colleagues present at the general meeting decided that the Constanta team should serve for another term, the only changes made being those concerning the regional representation. Thanking everybody present at the general meeting for the renewed trust in the Constanta team, we welcome all our new colleagues and hope to achieve better ways of communicating with one another, irrespective of our broader or narrower interests and expertise in American Studies.

As for the "minus" category, however, we have to confess the disappointment at the constant postponing of the first issue of the RAAS e-journal, which was scheduled to come out in spring 2012. After an enthusiastic launch of the call for papers for the *Romanian Journal of American Studies* (RJAS) in spring 2011, after an equally animated response of the scholars who were invited to join the advisory board of our e-journal, the articles sent to undergo the peer reviewing process failed to rise to the highest expectations, as, it seems, they either needed serious rewriting or they did not entirely touch upon the topic of the journal. In spite of the hard work and dedication of the general editor and of our young colleagues who embarked upon this huge ordeal of issuing the first number of an academic journal which we all wanted to be exemplary, the RAAS board and the journal editors decided to drop the publication of the first issue under the previous topic.

The e-journal question was also discussed at the RAAS general meeting in October when the decision was made to publish the essays presented at the 2012 RAAS-Fulbright Conference in two consecutive issues of the RJAS. Consequently, the board's

proposal is that the first and second issues of the Romanian Journal for American Studies (RJAS) contain the best presentations held at the October conference in Constanta, which would have successfully passed the peer-reviewing process. Professor Edward Soja's key-note talk, which he agreed to publish in the first number of our e-journal, I am certain, will make a difference in the immediate reception of the RJAS. The CFP for the finished articles, observing the publication guidelines, is to be found on the RAAS website.

Last, but not least, there are the oncoming EAAS Conference in Hague and the RAAS-Fulbright Conference in Constanta, both scheduled for 2014. For the former, the deadline for seminar proposals is March 15, 2013. We would be very happy if the Romanian colleagues could be counted among the seminar organizers. Alternatively, we would be glad to financially support the RAAS members to participate in the Hague Conference by covering the travel expenses, as we have done in the past four years. Regarding the latter conference, the board expects proposals for the general topic by May 15, according to the CFP posted on the website.

Hoping for ever more flexible and merrier times,

I wish you all a stimulating and academically rewarding spring.

Adina Ciugureanu  
President of the RAAS  
EAAS Treasurer

# **The RAAS - Fulbright Conference: Constanta, 4-6 October 2012**

## **Remapping Urban Spaces: American Challenges**

**Anca-Luminita Iancu**

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

The biennial international conference "Remapping Urban Spaces: American Challenges," organized by the Romanian Association for American Studies in association with the Fulbright Commission in Romania, took place at Ovidius University, Constanta, from October 4 to 6, 2012. Under the auspices of its novel and generous theme - remapping American urban spaces - this edition brought together numerous Romanian academics and foreign scholars from universities in the United States, Germany, Poland, Cyprus, France, and Holland. From an interdisciplinary vantage point, the conference presenters highlighted the complexities of American cityscapes, pointing to the intersections among literature, linguistics, politics, sociology, popular culture, and urban studies, thus enriching the growing scholarship in this area. As intriguing loci of human interaction, the urban spaces explored by the conference presenters appeared as complex physical and emotional spaces of creativity, of permanence or transformation, of memory or trauma, of nostalgia, of unfulfilled dreams or tireless hopes for a brighter future, as spaces fraught with individual and collective social, political, and cultural quests.

The conference opened with Dr. Edward Soja's (University of California, Los Angeles) keynote lecture on "The Spatial Turn in the Human Sciences." Dr. Soja emphasized the significance of spatial criticism as a growing critical dimension across disciplines, such as the humanities and social sciences. Dr. Soja's thought-provoking presentation was followed by several concurrent sessions, among which "Designing the Urban: Contemporary Approaches," "The City: Historical and Political Perspectives," "Apocalyptic Cityscapes," "Redefining Urban Spaces," sessions that re-examined the American urban spaces from a plurality of perspectives.



In re-defining urban spaces from political, historical or contemporary perspectives, the conference presenters focused mainly on urban design, political iconology, and issues of urban sustainability (to mention only a few of the issues discussed) both in American cities (Washington D.C., Detroit, New York, San Francisco, Houston) and in Romanian ones (Bucharest and Constanta). At the same time, the sessions on "Reimagining Urban Identities in Contemporary Literature," reconsidered the complex cultural encounters and influences, as well as the changing public and private identities, in the literary cityscapes of works by William Gibson, Zora Neale Hurston, Paul Auster, Sarah Schulman, Peter Ackroyd, Thomas Pynchon, Jhumpa Lahiri, Don DeLillo, and Richard Wright.

One of the highlights of the first day of conference was the

Fulbright roundtable, "Enriching the Exchange Experience," organized by Dr. Rodica Mihaila, Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission in Romania, and moderated by Mr. Jonathan Stillo, U.S. Fulbright-Hayes Alumnus, City University of New York, Graduate Center. The roundtable brought together Romanian Fulbright alumni: Dr. Rodica Mihaila; Dr. Augustin Ioan, University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest; Dr. Ludmila Martanovschi, Ovidius University, Constanta; and myself, from Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, and former and current Fulbright scholars and grantees in Romania, such as Dr. Barbara Nelson, former Executive Director of the Romanian-US Fulbright Commission, Dr. Gene Tanta, who held a senior award at the University of Bucharest, and Mr. Eric Burnstein, recipient of a junior award at the University of Timisoara. The roundtable offered participants an exciting opportunity to share the outcomes of their Fulbright experience and to discuss the necessity of creating a support network for the new Fulbright grantees within the departments of Romanian universities, the necessity of building more efficient institutional relationships between Romanian and American universities and the creation of a Romanian alumni organization, for a more productive collaboration among alumni.

On the second day of the conference, Dr. Augustin Ioan's (University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest) keynote lecture, "Starchitecture: From a City-like Campus (UC) to a Campus-like City (Cincinnati)," illustrated how the architectural trends on the campus of the University of Cincinnati have influenced the urban design of the city of Cincinnati. In the parallel sessions that followed the captivating keynote lecture, such as "Mapping Generations of Traumatic Memory in American City Narratives," "Autobiographical Quests for the City," "Voices of the American City: the Jazz Age and

Beyond," "Remapping the Marginal and the Countercultural," and "Urban Spaces Reflected in Theatre," the conference presenters centered on quests for cultural identity and belonging, and on past and present individual and collective stories of memory, trauma, nostalgia, and emotional healing in the literary urban spaces of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, among others, as depicted in the works of Robert Lowell, Thomas Pynchon, Jonathan Safran Foer, Eugene O'Neill, Tony Kushner, Anzia Yezierska, Rose Cohen, Toni Morrison, etc. In the sections on film and visual arts, "Transatlantic Visions of Urban Spaces" and "Urban Spaces Reflected in Film and Photography," the conference contributors re-interpreted photos depicting various aspects of city life or focused on the impact of urban spaces in such movies as *Black Swan*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *O. Last*, but not least, the papers in the section "New Challenges: Language and the City" discussed, among others, the challenges of urban linguistic globalization, issues related to digital urban narratives, and the necessity of re-defining U.S. linguistic borders.

Building on a prestigious tradition, the 2012 edition of the RAAS-Fulbright conference has opened a new academic space for stimulating intercultural dialogue and for creating relevant networking opportunities. On the one hand, the participants came together to discover scholars with similar research interests, eager to share their own points of view on remapping, revising, re-defining, or re-imagining American urban spaces, thus adding new layers and fresh perspectives to the unfolding debates. On the other hand, participants had the opportunity to enrich their own research by taking into consideration different scholarly perspectives. Thanks to the tireless dedication and the professionalism of the organizing team, headed by the President of the Romanian Association for American Studies, Professor Adina Ciugureanu, Ovidius University, Constanta, and

thanks to the active contribution of the participants, the great merit of this conference has been to increase the scholarly interest in the ongoing academic conversations on issues of international American Studies. I am looking forward to the 2014 edition!

## American Studies

### American Studies in Timișoara

Roxana Ghita,  
West University of Timișoara

"Choosing an M.A. program to further your studies is a milestone in your lives; you should be extremely careful when making such a decision", is what I frequently tell our often confused students, still in search of their personal and professional paths. Not until long ago, I myself was one of these bewildered students, ready to plunge into the unknown light-heartedly; there seemed to be nothing to lose (or gain). I decided to choose the American Studies M.A. without a clear-cut idea of what I should expect from it, what I would study and how I could benefit from this program. However, I was very enthusiastic about its promising novelty and freshness compared to everything I had studied until then. It felt like opening a box full of surprises.

From the very beginning, what struck me about our courses and seminars was not only that our ideas and opinions seemed to matter to our educators, but that fresh and original approaches, as crazy and unconventional as they might have sounded at times, were strongly encouraged and channeled in creative directions. The teachers were there to listen, offer feedback on our work, and raise our awareness as to the crucial importance of developing a critical

way of thinking in a postmodern world.

My colleagues and I mixed perfectly in the program's "salad bowl", reinforcing its interdisciplinary nature. Our team included graduates from letters, history, political science, philosophy, journalism, eager to expand their knowledge of the "American Dream" and to get a panoramic view of the U.S. as a cultural space. Ranging from 20th Century American Literature, Culture and Civilization, Religion and Politics, Media and Communication to Advanced Text Analysis, A History of American Feminism, American Society and Postmodern Thought, Language and Discourse in American Culture, the classes were meant to offer us a comprehensive perspective on the American society and way of life, as well as an accurate picture of the dynamics of contemporary American culture. Moreover, we were taught how to operate with cross-disciplinary fundamental concepts and to become open-minded when it comes to new patterns of thinking and different worldviews.

During our second year, with courses and seminars such as Recent American Writing, Ethnic Literature(s) in the U.S., Human Rights and Civic Culture, Research Methods, Popular Culture, Institutional Discourse, Geography and Film Studies, we had the opportunity to expand our knowledge and to use extensively the analytical tools acquired during the first year. By the end of the two-year program, we had developed a good grasp of social and political processes and power-relation mechanisms regarding race, ethnicity, class and gender, and we had assimilated the underlying principles of a multicultural and hybrid American society, and its impact on European cultures nowadays.

The successful collaborations with the Fulbright Commission, the Romanian Association for American Studies and various Romanian and American Universities has facilitated the constant presence of Fulbright



lecturers and other visiting professors, who have taught, delivered talks, organized workshops or videoconferences. Such partnerships and collaborations have increased the interactive nature of the M.A. program and have made studying an even more challenging and authentic process. Another faithful partner, always supportive of our actions, has been the American Corner Timișoara, not only a valuable information and resource center, but also our preferred venue for both formal and informal gatherings. First organized two years ago, The American Studies Day has grown into an MA students' colloquium where young researchers are given the chance to present their latest work, get feedback and engage in vibrant discussions on U.S.-related topics.

The solid knowledge of all above-mentioned fields of American Studies that I have gained, the development of my analytical and critical skills have enabled me to participate in high academic standard (national and international) conferences and summer schools, which have given me the confidence to get involved in research and start writing articles. As a result, I am currently enrolled in the West University of Timișoara's doctoral program in Philology. Not only has the American Studies MA program shattered my confusion as to my professional life, it has also engendered a personal autonomy I could not have imagined a couple of years ago. I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the program coordinators for the way in which they have motivated and modeled us, and for their struggle to constantly improve the program and offer us high quality education, despite all the inevitable obstacles.

## American Corners

### The American Agora in Dobrudja: American Corner Constanta

**Coordinators:**

**Claudia Baicu and Rodica Toma**

The American Corner Constanta, a partnership between the US Embassy, Bucharest and Ovidius University, Constanta, is primarily an information and resource center open to those interested in U.S. life and culture, as well as a platform for joint programs. Our corner offers a collection of materials on topics connected to the United States in their historical evolution as well as to contemporary American society. The center is also interested in interacting with the public by conducting programs such as student advising and professional development training.

The opening of this American Corner in May 2006 was a very good idea, taking into account the fact that Ovidius University has a Faculty of Letters with English and American Studies programs. Since then, our patrons' number has increased each year and thanks to a permanent marketing and promotion activity, we have managed to become more and more popular for students, teachers and the wider public.

The American Corner Constanta hosts American guests' lectures and digital video conferences throughout the year. The 2011 Fulbright scholars who visited the Ovidius University and either delivered lectures or organized activities at the American Corner are: Prof. Dr. Barbara Mueller, Casper College, Wyoming, Prof. Dr. Gerald Butters, Aurora University, Illinois and Katelyn Browner, Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. On December 5th we had the honor of

hosting the visit of Dr. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, Professor of Religion and Jewish Studies at Rollins College, Florida. She gave an enlightening talk entitled "Love in the Bible: The Original Reality Show", in which she discussed the different interpretations of love in the Bible from the Genesis and the creation of Adam and Eve to the Song of Songs. The participants who attended the event included professors of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University Constanta as well as graduate students majoring in Anglo-American Studies and Translation Studies and undergraduate students majoring in American Studies and English.



Over the year we organized different activities for university and high school students. Some of our most successful programs covering a wide range of topics included: "The Statue of Liberty: a Gate Symbol to America", "What America Needs: The New President", "Smithsonian Museums: an Entire World in a Museum", "Spanglish: a pidgin, a creole, a language?", "Capitalism: the Economic Jungle", "The Great Depression: Black Tuesday – The Street Crash of 1929", "Grunge - A Consumerist Trend," "Feminine Solidarity: the Mother-Daughter Relationship in Marsha Norman's 'night, Mother'", "Earth Day: Celebrating the Greening of the Job Market", "Grand Canyon: a Magnificent Natural Stone Sculpture" and "The American Indian Heritage Month".

One remarkable event was "Arbor Day", which was organized on April 11th, 2011. The guests were students from several high schools in Constanta and their teachers of English. The coordinators of this event, Adelina Vartolomei and Corina Lungu, doctoral students at the Faculty of Letters, offered those present information on this American holiday. The introduction was followed by the movie screening "Arbor Day - The Holiday That Makes a Difference", which offered inspiring examples of young people who keep the Arbor Day tradition alive. Afterwards there were discussions on the margins of the film and presentations by the participants who had prepared various creations connected to the topic of environmental protection: essays, poems, PowerPoint presentations, drawings, collages in black ink and acrylic, digital and oil paintings.

It is worth mentioning that the celebration of Arbor Day in Constanta had already had several editions. In 2010 the event was enriched by the presence and direct participation of His Excellency Mark Gitenstein, the Ambassador of the United States of America, who had talked to the participants and got involved in the planting of a few trees on the university campus.



On November 15th, 2011 the American Corner Constanta organized an activity entitled American Indian Heritage Month in order to celebrate the month dedicated to American Indian cultures in the USA. For this event

assist. prof. dr. Ludmila Martanovschi invited everyone to watch the documentary *Reel Injun* (2009). Tracing a journey during which Neil Diamond (Cree), the director, interviews people involved in the western and more recent film industry, this documentary deconstructed the distorted representation of American Indians in Hollywood reels. The activity coordinator asked the American Studies students present to analyze the film starting from the notes they took of the interviewees' opinions and express their reactions to the director's demonstration, the discussions revealing the participants' interest in U.S. ethnic minority issues and their media representation.

The activities organized by American Corner Constanta would not have been possible without the constant support of the American Cultural Center in Bucharest. Since the very beginning of our activity, they helped us organize lectures, workshops and presentations, by inviting valuable professionals from various fields. The grants generously offered to the corner by the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest have proved to be extremely useful in our daily activity. We also want to thank to all our collaborators for their support.

## Conference Participation

### **The 6th InASEA Conference: Southeast European (Post)Modernities, University of Regensburg, April 2011**

Costin-Valentin Oancea  
University of Bucharest

The International Association for Southeast European Anthropology organised its 6th conference entitled *Southeast European (Post) Modernities* at the University of Regensburg, Germany, from April 28th until May 1st, 2011. The number of conferees was quite impressive and Romania was well represented by colleagues from several universities such as the University of Bucharest, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași and Ovidius University, Constanța. The conference gave emphasis to topics such as *modernity, tradition, gender relations, history and culture*. The conference opened on April 28th with a plenary meeting where the organizers among whom dr. Ingrid Neumann-Holzschuh, the Vice-Rector of the University of Regensburg and dr. Ulf Brunnbauer, the President of InASEA, held welcoming speeches. This was followed by a key-note lecture delivered by dr. Carol Silverman from the University of Oregon, USA, entitled "Gypsy Music, Hybridity and Appropriation: Balkan Dilemmas of Post-modernity".

Besides ensuring an excellent academic level for the conference, the organisers chose a magnificent city in the heart of Bavaria as its inviting venue. Regensburg is a mixture of old and new (modernity vs. tradition), taking pride in an imposing Gothic cathedral of interest to visitors from around the world.



The section Representing Gender included my own paper "Language and Men's Place in 21st Century Romania" along with several other interesting papers, which tackled different aspects of gender from various perspectives. Each paper had powerful arguments and benefited from fruitful discussions in which everyone present, both the panellists and the audience, got involved.



It is important to mention that the organisers managed to offer travel grants for people from Eastern European countries. I feel fortunate to have received such a grant, which made it possible for me to attend the conference, and I would like to thank my hosts for their support.

On the last evening of the conference, we were invited to a traditional Bavarian restaurant where we enjoyed a delicious meal and got (re)acquainted with German beer. All in all, it was an interesting conference, which I will remember for its engaging theme and organization beyond reproach.

## ***American Pornographies: Consumerism, Sensationalism, and Voyeurism in a Global Context* Conference, Leipzig University, April 2011**

Costel Coroban

Ovidius University Constanta

The MA-level graduate conference *American Pornographies: Consumerism, Sensationalism, and Voyeurism in a Global Context* investigated different notions of 'pornography' on literal and broader levels. Although conventionally associated with sexuality alone, 'pornography' is most productively understood more broadly as the often sensationalist commodification of individual acts and features. Thus, the previously understudied subject of pornography brings new impulses to the study of consumerism, particularly in light of the rising influence of globalization and the Internet.

The organizers were MA and PhD students enrolled in the American Studies program at the Leipzig University, and although all of them were volunteers, they worked professionally for the success of this conference. Even travel grants were available thanks to sponsorships from the American Consulate General in Leipzig and other sponsors. The conference also benefited from the presence of Professor Crister S. Garrett, the American Consul James Seward, and other distinguished guests. Professor John Patrick Leary and Mr. Michael Archer 'skyped in' from the United States and discussed ruin/destruction pornography in the keynote session.

Panels covered a wide array of subjects: 'Pornographic' Strategies in the Media (chair Franziska Wenk), Notions of 'Pleasure' in Porn (chair Julia Neugebauer), Popular Culture and 'Pornography' (chair Andreas Mooser), Shaping Identities via Porn (chair Eleonora

Ravizza), Political 'Pornographies' (chair Ines Krug), 'Pornographic' Pleasures and Aesthetics (chair Stefan Schubert) and Bodies in Pornography (chair Maria Zywiets).

Discussions started with Jana G. Toppe's (Berlin) paper on *Twitter and Celebrity Fetishization* and continued with Justyna Cugowska (Poznań) talking about *Nudity in American Fashion Photography*. Jiann-Chyng Tu (Berlin) discussed the *Economies of Pleasure: The Commodification of the Money Shot*, while Pax Chmara (Berlin) explained why *P* is for *Porno*. Tanja Lange (Rostock) talked about *The Concept of Sexual Consent in Xena: Warrior Princess Femslash* and Diana Petrescu (Bucharest) added that *With Great Power Comes Great Angst: The Advent of Superhero Tragedy Porn*. Annelies Véronique Kleinherenbrink (Utrecht) concluded the panel: "Let's Shoot This Shit!" Lil' Kim's *OneWorld Cover*, 'Burqa Porn,' and Hip-Hop. The second day of the conference, José L. Ramos-Rebollo (Alcalá de Henares) discussed *Gay Porn: Building the Gay Community* while Olivia Badoi (Wrocław) went with her paper *Off or On Our Backs? Visual Negotiations of Lesbian Sexuality in Post-70s America*. Milorad Kapetanović (Ljubljana) concluded the panel by talking about *Porn: The Change of Perception, Production of Image, and Commodification*. The panel on "Political" *Pornographies* was opened by the undersigned, Costel Coroban (Constanța), who introduced some "Recent Developments" in *American Political Pornography*. The panel was completed with Ambrogio Morrone's (Rome) paper on *Pornography and Political Silence*. In the next panel, Stefanie John (Hannover) explored *Performing Victimhood: Sexualized Power Plays in the Serial-Queen Melodrama*, while Alexandra Hähnert (Berlin) continued *Towards the Slaughter: A Hedonistic Reading of Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian*. Roxana Elena Ghiță (Timisoara) opened the next panel by *Redefining Pornography in a Dystopic Future in Margaret*



Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and the last presentation was of Katharina Zilles' (Gießen), who brought us to *Real-Life 'Torture Porn': The Relation Between Representation and Reality*.

In my presentation, I have argued that pornography, which is accountable for disconcerting the ethics of our society with the fascination of the obscene (Munez 2009), has not only put its mark on politics in regards of the disputed legality of the distribution and/or displaying of pornographic merchandise, but, as a complex phenomenon, it manifests itself in the very field of politics, through displays of "morbid" populism, which occur more often in the case of right wing politicians.



The purpose of my article was to explore and try to establish connections between such examples (are there any categories and/or any "laws" that are visible in recent American political pornographies?). It is interesting to note that just like sexual pornography which is ever changing as it requires constant escalation in provocative imagery to keep the brain interested, so do political pornographers have to "keep upping the ante" (Propagandee 2010). In my research I was referring mostly to examples of "pornographic political conduct" shown by Republican or Tea Party Movement politicians, such as Sarah Palin, Newt Gingrich or Dick Armey, during the last 10 years.

In the concluding remarks of the conference both faculty and students agreed that this conference provided interesting academic leads and contributions to

the theory of this still under-developed aspect of human life: the pornographic. Very appropriately, Consul James Seward reminded us of Terece's famous quotation saying "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto", or "I am a man, I consider nothing that is human alien to me."

## Academic Exchanges and Summer Schools

### Et in America Ego: Personal Notes on the American Politics and Political Thought Summer Institute

Raluca Rogoveanu

Ovidius University Constanta

I have wanted to experience America for many years but somehow, the odds were against me. So I confined myself to reading and teaching about it, with the secret hope that maybe once, my America will get a more distinct contour and a more emotional shape. The summer of 2011 changed my coveted dream into reality and a generous grant from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs facilitated my participation in the Study United States Institutes (SUSI) on American Politics and Political Thought. This Summer Institute was hosted by the University of Massachusetts Civic Initiative and the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute.

Upon embarking on my American experience, I was determined to make the best of this academic chance and wanted to scrutinize the United States leisurely, with the eyes of a somehow experienced traveler in Europe longing to check her cultural assumptions about America.

The University of Massachusetts campus in Amherst is a beautiful place to be during summertime, as it combines a diffusely rural appeal with distinctly cosmopolitan incentives. The University of Massachusetts is a top American institution of 10 schools and colleges in which more than 26,000 students are enrolled. For four weeks, Amherst became the academic residence of 18 scholars from all over the world, which is a world in miniature, hosting academics and researchers in Political Studies, Sociology, Constitutional Law and American Studies from Russia, Ukraine, Croatia, Macedonia, Egypt, Nigeria, Cameroon, Swaziland, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Dominican Republic, Mexico, Iraq and Romania. Our formal discussion started during the question and answer sessions which followed the lectures and extended over meals and walks, gradually changing into friendly and heart-felt conversations and, sadly, I did not realize how much I cherished these extended conversations until the program came to its rightful end. This program was also an excellent way to become more sensitively aware of where your country is on the map and how you construct your own cultural identity. While listening to the other participants talking about their own countries, I have grown more immersed in my being a Romanian and at the risk of producing a *cliché* phrase-a global citizen. I spent four weeks there, in that vast green area scattered with four story red brick buildings, dividing my time between attending daily lectures and library visits.

Our staying there could not have been more enjoyable and this is due to a great extent to the commitment of the Academic Director of the Institute, Dr. Lonce Sandy-Bailey, and his staff, who spared no effort to ensure our comfort and turn this academic exchange into a memorable experience.

Professors affiliated with UMass, Shippensburg University,

University of Connecticut, St. Michaels College, Worcester State College and Harvard offered in their lectures a comprehensive and challenging image of American politics in a synchronic and diachronic perspective. The lectures focused on the philosophical and institutional foundations of the American political system and explored in depth the conceptual mechanisms behind the legislative, executive and judicial branches. They also provided a firm theoretical understanding of the roles which the Constitution, public opinion, political parties, campaign and elections, interest groups and the media play in the construction of present-day public policy. The courses also analyzed the articles of the Constitution and its amendments, by identifying both the historical developments of this document as well as its contemporary framework and referred to some famous trials of American history by analyzing their role in shaping the contemporary judicial system. Other lectures elaborated on the ideas, institutions and political agencies which determine and implement American foreign policy, with a special emphasis on present day policies and their long term goals.



The visits and discussions to take place at the City of Holyoke Town Hall, at a meeting of CRUSH members (a grassroots organizing committee), the Massachusetts State Capitol in Boston and at the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. familiarized the participants with the intricacies of urban government and state and national politics. Such field trips proved to be authentic learning experiences, excellent forums of discussions and profound analyses

of the structures and approaches to administration at the federal, state and local level.

Our stay in Massachusetts came hand in hand with plenty of recreational activities. My favorite one: a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert at Tanglewood. Or probably the Chesterfield Parade on Independence Day. My joy that started in Amherst turned into full-fledged enthusiasm upon embarking on the two week study tour which took us from New York City to Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington D.C. I explored New York City by day and by night, hurrying excitedly through Central Park and Times Square on my way to a Broadway show, sailed close to the Statue of Liberty, climbed up the Empire State Building and admired the breathtaking skyline of Midtown Manhattan at night. Pennsylvania offered me a double treat: courses at Shippensburg University and a visit to Gettysburg National Military Park Visitor Center, the largest American Civil War museum which displays a magnificent collection of Civil War relics. I strolled through the campus at the University of Virginia and leaned against the long marble columns of the Rotunda, wandered in awe and silence through Thomas Jefferson's home at Monticello and managed to get an intimate look at the artifacts adorning the house which he designed and furnished for his family. In Washington I started a frantic tour of the Smithsonian Museums, spent long hours in bookstores and on Arlington Bridge, and paid my silent homage to Lincoln, Washington, Vietnam and World War II memorials.

To say that I benefited academically from this program from its beginning to its end is too much of a feeble description of my accurate feelings. To say that I enjoyed it thoroughly is still an understatement. I loved this Summer Institute immensely, and the guidance offered by my professors, as well as the rigorous personal research which I managed to conduct in an organized framework will have a significant

impact upon my future academic career. The books which we were so generously offered will definitely improve the quality of my syllabi and refine my teaching strategies. My participation in SUSI on American Politics and Political Thought was also an excellent networking opportunity, as it enabled me to meet aspiring scholars and well-established researchers in the field of American Politics; many years from now I will capitalize on the insights generated by the intercultural dialogues and stimulating debates and I look forward to turning this act of personal growing into a complex academic experience to be shared with my peers at home.

I earnestly believe that in order to make full use of a cultural experience you need to attune yourself completely to a new set of intellectual and emotional standards, to expose yourself completely to a new intellectual adventure, to immerse yourself wholly into cultural patterns of American vibration. And so I did; by living America intensely, taking enormous academic satisfaction in all the courses on American politics, experiencing exhilaration when getting to Harvard and Yale, gleefully relaxing while listening to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and feeling Hemingway-like drunken elation while wandering the streets of New York at night. I lived my Political Studies experience in poetic rhythms and I have no regrets.

**Two Views, One Summer  
School: Graz University,  
Austria, July 2011**

***On the Americas:*  
Afterthoughts to Deep  
Thoughts**

**Sorina Chiper**

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași

I first read about the summer school in Seggau, Austria, in a previous issue of this newsletter. It sounded serious, highly academic and highly appreciated by the participants – the right place and the right program for anyone interested in the cultural, literary, film studies, economics and sustainability dynamics within the Americas. As a student in the summer school On the Americas organized in July 2011 by the Center for Inter-American Studies in the University of Graz, I could see that the program put together by Dr. Roberta Maierhofer, Dr. Ulla Kriebnegg and Heidrun Moertl was beyond anybody's expectations. It was extremely rich, intellectually challenging, diverse in its range of activities and very rewarding, on a personal level. We worked hard and we played hard, in the quite little spare time that we had and in a wonderful location, up in a castle.

As students, we attended the classes that we had registered for in the afternoon, and in the morning we had lectures given by all professors who had been invited to teach, as well as by special guests such as the Canadian cultural attaché in Vienna. We could thus engage in an interdisciplinary, inter-temporal and inter-media dialogue that occasioned deep thoughts, pertinent questions and comprehensive answers. In the evenings, we watched films made in the Americas and dealing with inter-American issues, played games or displayed our artistic talents in a karaoke night.

I took a course in Economics, with a focus on Development Economics. The course, taught by

associate professor Luis san Vicente Portes, provided us with a broad introduction to macroeconomics, financial markets, international trade and research methods in development economics. I was also privileged to take a course in Creative Writing with the celebrated writer and professor at the University of Texas, Rolando Hinojosa, who was extremely supportive and vivid in his teaching and evaluation.

The summer school brought together students and professors from four continents. It was a unique opportunity to think creatively, develop intercultural skills, indulge in the unmatched Austrian hospitality and savory cuisine, and build long-lasting friendships. It offered food for thought and numberless occasions to create memories – on the playing ground, in the karaoke hall, during our one-day trip to Graz or the occasional outings to the neighboring areas as well as during the classes. I highly recommend it to anyone who has an interest in the budding field of inter-American studies.



***Literary Views of the  
American Other Seminar:  
A "Journey on the Road of  
the Americas"***

**Cristina-Georgiana Voicu**

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași

I really enjoyed my stay for the second time at Seggau Castle for the 2011 edition of GUSS International Summer School on the

Americas. It was a great opportunity to meet new people from other countries. We come from different backgrounds, but really share so many of the same interests in the Inter-American Studies. In this way issues were raised which related not only to an Inter-American cultural identity, but also to a Latin-American alterity (in terms of Other: America as Other, Pan-Americanism, Interculturalism, The Chicano Movement) in the context of transcending cultural limits. I also liked the activities, because there was always something going on and something fun to do. The presentations and lectures were extremely relevant in providing material for practical group work and they were a natural source of academic discussion. I also enjoyed the free-form approach and the intensive style of the learning experience. The fact that everything happened right then and there made it challenging yet rewarding, because you always got feedback from the lecturers and other students. It was demanding, but thoroughly enjoyable, all of the participants being engaged and encouraged to exchange Inter-American ideas and experiences. Consequently, we had the opportunity to prove that the Inter-American identity necessarily becomes a hybrid between several cultures (the North-American, the Caribbean and the Latin-American one). Moreover, the Uni-Graz staff was brilliant, always there, always smiling, always pleasant. They seemed to take real pride in their work!"

The Literature seminar started by acknowledging that (cultural) hybridity is paradoxical in its essence; it also highlighted the concepts of racial identity and ethnicity that contributed to the reinvigoration of specific characteristics of Latin American literature and of the paradox of recurring American stereotypes themselves.

The main focus of the first week of the seminar was Inter-American identitarian phenomenon: Prof. Raab's intention was to relate

the concepts of out-thereeness and in-hereeness in terms of Inter-American identitarian stereotypes. At the level of content, this seminar aimed at constituting a theoretical framework circumscribed to the concept of cultural hybridization within Inter-American Studies and the analysis of certain Mexican-American writings, especially essays by José Martí, José Enrique Rodó, Gloria Anzaldúa, poetry by Rubén Darío, Elizabeth Bishop and Rodolfo Corky Gonzales, as well as excerpts from Carlos Fuentes' *The Old Gringo*, Sandra Cisneros' *Caramelo* and Ana Castillo's *The Guardians*. In this way issues were raised which related not only to an Inter-American cultural identity, but also to Latin-American alterity (in terms of Other: America as Other, Pan-Americanism, Interculturalism, The Chicano Movement) in the context of transcending cultural limits.

The seminar also dealt with the exploration of the transliterary content of Latin American writings, identifying, for example, Vasconcelos's "cosmic race" and Americo Paredes' Mexico-Texan identities, and analyzing them from an integrated textual-cultural perspective. As far as the methodological foundation of this seminar was concerned, we can say that it relied on a critical reading of concepts, methods and accepted theories, and foregrounded a cultural exploration of the relation between the identity of the self and the identity of the American Other, hence the rapport between self and alterity. The methodology employed at the seminar was appropriate to the objectives: it was based on a logical, systematic construction of a conceptual scheme, and combined explanatory-theoretical methods with demonstrative ones, employing not only analysis, comparison and analogy, but also theoretical reflection. The simple presence of the American Other within the textual structure was enough evidence of the ambivalence of the Latin American texts, an ambivalence that destabilizes their

claim to absolute authority or unquestionable authenticity.

To conclude, the Inter-American approach was an ideal vehicle for entering the in-between space, and for allowing us to dwell there longer and longer as we rid ourselves of preconceived notions of race and gender.

### **International Challenges and the American Elections: Report on the Conference and Reunion of SUSI on American Politics and Political Thought Alumni in Zagreb**

Raluca Rogoveanu

Ovidius University Constanta

In October, 19-21, The Department of Political Science of the University of Zagreb hosted the conference *International Challenges and the American Elections*. The event, which drew participants from all over the world, was remarkable not only as it featured the research interests and projects of scholars coming from eleven different countries (the United States, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Brazil, Argentina and Romania) but as it also provided the opportunity for an emotional reunion. Indeed, the event brought together former alumni of the *Study for the United States Institute on American Politics and Political Thought*, a six week summer institute in the United States sponsored by the U.S. Department and State and organized by University of Massachusetts Civic Initiative and University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute.

For three days, The University of Zagreb became the celebratory venue of an authentic bridge across generations which reunited SUSI alumni from 2005 onward. Consistent with the SUSI of philosophy of fostering mutual understanding and intercultural

exchange, this event became the perfect opportunity to engage in crosscultural dialogue, reconnect with friends and establish new academic ties all over the world.

The mastermind orchestrating this dynamic event was Dr. Michael Hannahan, the Director of University of Massachusetts Civic Initiative during his coming to Europe as a Fulbright Specialist in Croatia during 12-28 October, 2012. The conference benefitted from the passionate commitment and logistical support of the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb. Dr. Ana Matan, Dr. Hrvoje Cvijanovic and Dr. Berto Salaj, all former SUSI alumni, had a particularly significant contribution to the preparation and development of this impeccably organized conference and reunion.

Since a SUSI reunion in the absence of the dedicated Academic Director of the SUSI program would have been an incomplete event, Dr. Lonce Sandy-Bailey succeeded in making the trip to Croatia to be with us.

There is a certain intellectual magic about SUSI on American Politics and Political Thought that pours its energy onto all the academic events organized under its aegis. It might stem from the interesting talks of the American professors lecturing on this exquisite program or it might emerge from the passionate commitment and intellectual generosity of the two people behind this academic program, Dr. Michael Hannahan and Dr. Lonce Sandy-Bailey. It might be the magic of 18 people coming from all over the world and bonding with each other in a new academic community, which is to last for 6 weeks in the United States and forever in the memories of the participants; or it might have something to do with the exciting two week study tour taking the participants to New York City, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington D.C. Or maybe it is the synergic mix of all the above, melting into a unique receptacle of intellectual debates and emotional exchanges...Or how else can I



account for the frantic exchange of academic ideas and photos across many social media between former SUSI participants still dwelling on the indelible memories about America many years after their SUSI journey ended?

Dr. Hannahan's announcement about SUSI reunion in Zagreb and his subsequent call for papers was enthusiastically answered by academic and researchers working in diverse areas of social sciences, yet united in their academic pursuits by an unwavering commitment to American Studies. The conference facilitated highly stimulating and enlightening talks, seminal presentations, thoughtful comments and helpful suggestions. The welcome address of Dr. Zdravko Petak, the Dean of The Political Science Department started the academic workings of the conference, which continued with Elena Nacevska's lively presentation on "The Spectre of Islamism in U.S. Elections and the New Islamism in the Balkans" and Dr. Anna Unger's challenging paper on "The Challenges of Democracy in Eastern Europe and the U.S. Foreign Policy". Dr. Andreas Stergiou's paper on "The U.S. - Russian antagonism in the Eastern Mediterranean Region" discussed in a comparative perspective the new geopolitical complexities coming out from the conflicts and new alliances occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean after the Arab Spring. Dr. Jovo Bakic's "The Politics of the U. S. Towards the Former Yugoslavia Region" offered thought-provoking points of view on the U.S. foreign policy in the Balkans and Dr. Yulya Sida provided an engaging comparative analysis of the features of electoral behaviour in the U.S. and Ukraine. Dr. Cimea Bevilacqua's presentation provided a glimpse into the discursive and symbolic construction of the "Americas" seen from a Brazilian viewpoint and Dr. Federico Winer offered an overview of the political system in Argentina. Daniel Krosiak's paper elaborated on the legal aspects and implications of electoral politics in

Slovakia. Dr. Lonce Sandy-Bailey's paper "The Extended Republics and the World wide Web implications for the Madisonian Political Arrangements" analyzed the doctrine of pluralism understood as overlapping cleavages among people who move away from the politics of doctrine into the politics of interest. His enlightening talk revolved around the role of the Internet in raising political awareness and enhancing ethical standards for individual and collective political action and also provided an in-depth diachronic presentation of the doctrine of pluralism. Dr. Michael Hannahan's talk "Free Speech, U.S. Foreign Policy and the Islamic World" focused on the debate occasioned by anti-Muslim videos and acts having recently taken place in the United States. His study provided a comprehensive coverage of "fighting words" as a heavily disputed ground in the Supreme Court. His discourse highlighted the battle over free speech, hatched in the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights more than 200 years ago, which continues to play out around the world in political conventions, courtrooms and street demonstrations. My own presentation, "Is There a Pro-Romanian Lobby in the United States?" was an analysis of the Romanian ethnic organizations in the United States and their strategies to coordinate a pro-Romanian lobby meant to advance Romania's interests on the American national political agenda and create a pro-Romanian trend in the United States and abroad.

The daytime academic activities provided the perfect opportunity to share our insights into the topics under discussion and there were no few occasions in which sharp comments and challenging presentations turned the classrooms of Zagreb University into hothouses of intense intellectual exchanges. The academic sessions were well complemented by the social program, which included two group dinners (generously offered by Dr. Hannahan), leisure strides along

Ilica street, the longest and busiest street in Zagreb, sightseeing and souvenir shopping downtown. However, the organization of the SUSI conference and reunion was only a point on the busy agenda of the Fulbright Specialist Michael Hannahan in Croatia. During his half month stay he delivered six guest lectures on *Public Policy Making in the U.S.*, *Domestic Sources of US Foreign Policy*, *Obama v Romney: How Do Americans Disagree?*, *Mass media in US Political Campaigns*, *Cultural Divisions*, *Political Culture and the US Presidential Elections* and *Civic Education in the US* to large audiences made up of undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Zagreb and University of Dubrovnik and to the general public. In addition, he gave interviews to two major national papers, to Croatian National TV and Croatian Radio.

A specific point of interest was the organization of a two day workshop focused on the creation of an American Studies track at the University of Zagreb. The discussions revolved around the structure of a B.A. in American Studies that should unite the curriculum of Political Science and Journalism with that of the existing American Studies program currently housed in the Literature Department. The event, chaired by Michael Hannahan, gathered faculty members from the Department of Political Science and Journalism who discussed the development of an undergraduate program of an essentially interdisciplinary nature, which should combine modules of culture and values, history and politics and society and communication. This seminar, which benefitted from the considerate assistance of an official representative of the American Embassy in Zagreb, represented a fruitful site for exchanging ideas and experiences between departments. Dr. Hannahan's advisory role was instrumental in clarifying the distinction between American Studies scholarship as complex imbrications of ideologies and

practices, a theoretical-driven core of critical thinking which investigates concepts such as national identity and national character, dominant American archetypes and race, gender and class and American Studies as a B.A. program of a larger interdisciplinary breadth, which transcends its dependence on literature to include several areas of humanities and social sciences pertaining to American culture, history, politics and economics.

I, for one, regard myself as privileged for having had the chance to share my knowledge of American Studies with such an enthusiastic community of academics and friends in the frame of a cultural event put together by the successful endeavors, resourcefulness and dedication of Michael Hannahan and some faculty members of the University of Zagreb, former SUSI participants from Croatia. And I think I speak on behalf of many SUSI participants that I strongly hope that the event having taken place in Zagreb will start a new tradition and pave the way for future similar projects in Europe and elsewhere.

## **Summer Research at Duke University, Durham, NC**

**Roxana Ghita,**  
West University of Timișoara

The moment I decided to apply for one of the library research fellowships offered by Duke Center for Jewish Studies at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, was the beginning of the most incredible experience of my life.

Prior to my arrival in the U.S.A., Serena Elliott, the amazing coordinator of the Duke Center for Jewish Studies, took care of every single detail, from booking my plane ticket, to booking my accommodation at this jewel of a hotel, Duke Tower, and to preparing all the necessary documents for me to receive my visa. As I had not been

to the U.S.A. before, I was quite apprehensive before leaving Romania, I was afraid of possible situations I would not know how to deal with and I did not find particularly attractive the idea of being all alone for two weeks on a different continent. But all these thoughts faded completely the first morning I got there, when I met Serena and then Rachel Ariel, the wonderful Jewish Studies Librarian. Not only did they tell me and show me everything I needed to know about how the library and the system were organized, so that I could immediately set out to work, but they also took care of every single detail to make sure I would not experience any difficulty, to make me feel very much welcome there and to make my stay at Duke and in Durham unforgettable.

I first applied for this research fellowship to gather bibliography for my doctoral project on cultural and literary configurations of Zionism in the U.S. society, as Duke Libraries are famous worldwide for the impressive collections of materials that they hold. The Jewish Studies collections at Duke Libraries include a wide variety of resources, from current publications, films and videos to rare and unique manuscripts and archival material. During my two-week visit to the Libraries, I had the opportunity to examine literature written by both Jewish-American and Hebrew authors, as well as books on modern Jewish history, Zionism, the history and society of Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the microform collections which include clippings from Jewish journals in the U.S. Except for the list of materials I wanted to consult that I had put together before going to Duke, Rachel Ariel and her two very efficient assistant librarians, Adrienne and Crystal, helped me add on my list some other key resources related to my research that I was not aware of and they guided me through the wide collections of materials.

In addition to offering unlimited access to the materials

hosted by Duke Libraries, the fellowship enabled me to be part of a stimulating community of researchers, librarians and faculty, further positively impacting my work. Moreover, Professor Shalom Goldman and Professor Judith Ruderman invited me to take part in their classes and to participate in the discussions, which was another extremely rewarding aspect of my stay at Duke, as not only did I acquire fresh views on the topics I have been researching, but I also came back home with new teaching ideas and resources that I have already started to experiment with my own students.

Towards the end of my visit, I also had the opportunity and I was pleased to share the outcomes of my research at Duke Libraries with Faculty from Duke Center for Jewish Studies. We engaged in a lively discussion and I received feedback and further research suggestions for my doctoral project, which I am very grateful for. Both the wealth of resources I was able to consult while at Duke and the precious feedback that I received helped me to refine my core research question and to consider new ideas that I can also include in my project.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Duke Center for Jewish Studies for offering this very generous fellowship which allowed me to explore the vast collections of materials hosted by Duke Libraries. My very special thanks go to Serena Elliott and to Rachel Ariel, whose kindness, cheerfulness and professional advice created a great atmosphere and working environment for me while I was at Duke and in Durham, to Professor Erik Meyers, the Head of the Center for Jewish Studies, Professor Shalom Goldman, Professor Judith Ruderman, Adrienne, Crystal and Ben, for making my stay at Duke an unforgettable experience.

<http://jewishstudies.duke.edu/resources/library-research-fellowships>  
<http://library.duke.edu/research/subject/guides/jewishstudies/about.html>

## Ph.D. Theses

### **Transatlantic Connections: A Critical Study of Eugene O'Neill's Reception in Romania**

Adriana Bulz

University of Bucharest

The thesis opens with an introduction that presents the three avenues of O'Neill's reception, laying emphasis on the particulars of the reception process and on the individual context which determines the critical reaction, the translator's and the stage director's choice to approach a play in a certain fashion. The necessity of such a study is connected to the sphere of interest of American Studies in Romania, in the post-colonial era of the widening and interconnecting of critical enterprises linked with conceptualizing this particular cultural field. The interest for the subject is equally explained through the favorable context created by the organization of the "Eugene O'Neill" Symposium at the National Theater in Bucharest in the year 2003, as well as by the adherence to a series of concepts from the field of cultural translation, critical concepts which frame the present thesis and belong to Homi Bhabha, George Steiner and Paul Ricoeur. At the same time, the introduction briefly exposes the main reception theories that have inspired my critical approach, with special focus on Hans Robert Jaus' "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory", and on Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading*.

Chapter one, entitled "Critical Perspectives on O'Neill's Drama", discusses the Romanian and foreign approaches (especially the American ones) to O'Neill's works, using as method the historical and thematic presentation of critical opinion. The purpose of this incursion into the criticism dedicated to the playwright is that of building a hierarchy from the contributions of

the various studies and articles from the viewpoint of their relevance to understanding O'Neill's dramatic universe. I have attempted to circumscribe the ideas in their context of reception, both historically and geographically, by distinguishing between the opinions belonging to the European critics of various nationalities (among whom the Romanians occupy a privileged position) and comparing their views with those emitted from the other side of the Atlantic, thereby emphasizing the initiation and continuation of a cultural dialogue around O'Neill's works. Thus, the subchapter dedicated to presenting the period of negotiation of O'Neill's literary status comprises two aspects: firstly, the period up to the playwright's reception of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936, where I have included the analysis of the first critical reactions from the United States and from the continent, and which culminates with the appreciations of the Nobel Prize Awarding Committee. The second stage of critical reception, unfolding until the sixties, is that of the consecration of O'Neill's genius. The second part of the first chapter, entitled "Mapping Out O'Neill Criticism in International Perspective", analyzes the branching out of the various critical directions that emerged especially after the sixties. In order to ease the presentation, I have divided the approaches into four major directions, with multiple orientations: contextual criticism, biographical criticism, formal criticism, and audience-oriented criticism.

The first critical direction, the contextual one, comprises approaches connected to the original context of the works themselves, such as the analysis of the "Little Theater" movement and of O'Neill's role within this movement, as well as discussions of the artistic opportunism of the playwright and of his "colleagues" from the critical establishment who were eager to uphold his literary status as a genius of the New American Drama. The second critical direction brought into

discussion, the biographical one, focuses upon the salutary contribution of biographies, closely tied to the "sincerity cult" of the dramatist, a direction that gained momentum from the sixties onward, being also correlated with the developments in psychoanalytical criticism. A third direction, the formal criticism of O'Neill's works, deals with aspects connected to the plays' structure, style and genre. An original contribution in this field is brought by Romanian criticism, especially as regards the possibility of O'Neill's revival of tragedy, a critical claim fervently upheld by Petru Comarnescu and one which many other Romanian intellectuals debated over in the forties. As regards audience-oriented criticism – the fourth direction of critical investigation – I have focused on several contributions dealing with the impact of staging upon the audience or with the cinematic transposition of the plays, discussing the various existing "adaptations" and the ways in which O'Neill's text facilitates or renders the reception process more difficult. I certainly didn't ignore the analyses of the presence of O'Neill's theater in various cultures, presenting the main contributions in this field: the indispensable reference source *American Drama in Romania* by Rodica Pioariu, Shaughnessy's volume of critical opinion and reviews, *O'Neill in Ireland*, as well as the ample collection of essays from international criticism by Liu and Swortzell, *O'Neill in China*. These volumes laid the ground for the discussion connected to the reception of O'Neill's theater in Romania that I dealt with in the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter, entitled "The Romanian Critical Response to O'Neill's Drama", presents firstly the evolution of Romanian critical opinion connected to O'Neill's works, and secondly three analyses of individual critical reactions, with a focus on explaining their ideological and aesthetic positioning. The chapter commences with an introduction into reception theory upon which the critical approach in

the chapter is based. In the first subchapter, "A Historical Overview of the Romanian Critical Opinion", I underlined the central role played by Petru Comarnescu in the reception of the American dramatist in our country, starting with the critic's first articles on the subject and ending with the post-mortem publication of his fundamental study, *O'Neill and the Revival of Tragedy* (1986). Besides Comarnescu's contribution, I analyzed the various reactions of his generation colleagues – Alice Voinescu, Mihnea Gheorghiu, Eugen Schileru, Al. Philippide or Ion Marin Sadoveanu – but equally those of the younger critics, such as Andrei Băleanu or Lăcrămioara Radeș. For a better framing of the context of O'Neill's initial reception in Romania, I focused extensively on the debate that took place in the fourth decade of the 20th century, regarding the tragic and anti-tragic elements in O'Neill's most significant play, *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

In the second subchapter, entitled, "Individual Case Studies: The Stakes of Aesthetic and Ideological Considerations", I applied elements of reception theory to the analysis of the critical reactions of three Romanian intellectuals towards O'Neill's plays. By looking into the intellectual background of the three critics – Comarnescu, Philippide and Gheorghiu – I tried to identify the particular themes and motifs of their respective discourses, laying emphasis on explaining the motivation of the critical approaches. Thus, in subchapter 2.2.1, "Neoclassicism as Negated Alterity: Petru Comarnescu's Reading of Eugene O'Neill's Drama through the Grid of *Kalokagathon*", I tried to explain the intellectual affinities that made Comarnescu resonate profoundly and adhere totally to the American playwright's cause. Mainly, as I have tried to show, the idealistic dimension of the O'Neillian dramatic universe was translated by the Romanian critic with a solid grounding in aesthetics into the field of the ethical

conjunction between the good and the beautiful. Such a translation, not wholly motivated by the content of O'Neill's plays, could be explained by applying the psychoanalytical theories of reception developed by Norman Holland. In the next subchapters, I have looked into the motivations of the francophile critic Al. Philippide and of the Marxist critic Mihnea Gheorghiu, who both made negative appreciations of various aspects from the playwright's work, but who also acknowledged his value as a dramatist. Thus, the three study cases reflect, from the viewpoint of the coordinates of reception, the particularities relevant for the diversity of critical attitudes manifested toward O'Neill's works in Romania.

The third chapter of the thesis, "O'Neill's Romanian Translations between Cultural and Political Frames", commences with an ample discussion regarding the cultural context of the reception of American literature in Romania, at the same time discussing the political framing of cultural initiatives in the course of time. The textual analyses proper, from the section "Romanian Patterns of Translation", include the evaluation of the respective translators' achievements and failures, comparisons between the different textual variants, as well as discussions of the cultural interferences due to translation (I have presented the cases of several Romanian texts from the forties that were influenced by O'Neill's drama). I also took into account discussing the Romanian stage version of some of these plays, for which I had access to the alterations made by artistic teams who staged the plays. All through this chapter, I have regarded the challenge of translation as a consciously endorsed cultural act evaluated in the context of the developing and continuing transatlantic dialogue between our country and the United States.

The fourth chapter is also understood as integral to the sphere of contributions for the development

and maintenance of transatlantic relations, this time enacted through staging policies. Entitled, "O'Neill in Performance: Romanian Cultural Agents, Censorship and Public Taste", it starts with introducing the notions of public taste, reception and performance theory useful for framing the discussion regarding the plays, followed by a presentation of the Romanian theater issues from the inter-war period, which are defining for the context of American theater reception in general and for O'Neill's plays in particular. Besides discussing the problems connected to repertory and public reaction, I included in this section a presentation of the contributions of various cultural agents involved in modernizing the Romanian stage, among whom Petru Comarnescu, Alice Voinescu, Camil Petrescu and Liviu Rebreanu. The second part of the chapter, "O'Neill's Romanian Performances: Struggles with Censorship and Beyond", lays emphasis upon the obstacles of censorship and on their being surpassed at different historical moments, the continuity of O'Neill's theater in Romania demonstrating at the same time the mutual Romanian-American cultural interest, starting from the initial experience of the forties, when the performance of *Mourning Becomes Electra* registered an unparalleled success. After the "silent" period of the fifties, the interest for O'Neill's plays resurges powerfully, through staging, in the period of the new stage realism of the sixties and seventies. The next subchapter discusses the feeble attempts at modernization from the eighties and nineties, when O'Neill's plays seem not to have posed significant challenges to directors from the former political regime or to those from the post-revolutionary period. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the post-2000 performances when the revival of O'Neillian drama seemed assured through the initiative of director Alexa Visarion to constitute a Romanian-American theater company within the National



Theater in Bucharest. Unfortunately, at the onset of the new millennium, the interest in the work of the first American playwright became obscured, a reality equally mirrored by the diminishing of the Romanian-American cultural exchanges.

The fifth and last chapter of the thesis, "O'Neill 'Sites of Memory' in Romanian Culture", investigates the emotional load of certain architectural sites and of some artifacts connected to O'Neill's lingering presence in the memory of Romanian culture. Starting from Pierre Nora's essay "Sites of Memory", the chapter constitutes an invitation to the resurgence of critical interest connected to the work of the American playwright, and it equally emphasizes the significance of transatlantic connections accomplished by such cultural intermediaries as Petru Comarnescu and Alexa Visarion.

The thesis ends with a brief chapter of conclusions connected to the history of Eugene O'Neill's reception in Romania, the author expressing her hope in a possible resurgence of the interest for the classical American theater, and especially for O'Neill's plays. This possible revival is seen as depending upon private cultural initiatives which require a sustained lobby, individual dedication and efficient cooperation, for the moment there being no particular concern of the cultural authorities for resuming the interrupted dialogue with the works of an author regarded as difficult in the perception of contemporary public sensibility. And yet, the advantages of such a resurgence would be multiple, especially in the sphere of the intensification of Romanian-American cultural exchanges, the diplomatic relationships between the two states having thus the opportunity of being considerably enhanced.

*The thesis was defended in  
January 2012*

## **Exploring Cultural Identities in Jean Rhys's Writings**

**Cristina-Georgiana Voicu**

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași

Since we consider that there is no action or human behavior without cause or reason, in what follows, we try to expose the reasons that led us to choose the doctoral dissertation entitled *Exploring Cultural Identities in Jean Rhys's Writings*. The first reason referred to my interest in hybridity, a concept within the larger one of cultural identity, alluding to the mixture, combination, fusion, *mélange* especially generated by the processes of migration. According to the metaphor of *mélange*, cultures are presented as 'flowing' together (like body fluids) hence the existence of a 'fluid identity'. Starting from the acknowledgment that (cultural) hybridity is paradoxical in its essence and that only an ambivalent attitude is able to encompass its contradictory wholeness, we were interested in highlighting the concepts of racial identity, ethnicity or masculinity that contributed to the reinvigoration of the aspects specific to Caribbean culture as described in the work of Jean Rhys. The second reason centered on the paradox of the colonizing effects themselves: for, by exploitation, colonizers created an alterity or 'limit' in the sense of 'margin' so as to define themselves as 'centre' – a system that evaluated and employed everything in relation with the superior standards of Western European civilization, thus promoting and developing the concept of 'Eurocentrism'.

In the context of the above, my endeavour in writing this thesis concentrated on the study of the identitarian phenomenon. Thus, my intention was to relate the concepts of out-there-ness and in-here-ness in terms of identitarian neighborhood, detachment, distanciation, alienation, depersonalization, etc., emphasizing the characters' refusal

to allow the world to enter the self. Consequently, Jean Rhys's use of the 1st person pronoun marks the point in which the preexisting and repeatable language system and the existence of the self as unique and unrepeatable person in a specific social and historical situation articulate. In other words, in her case the act of creating the self is not an option, but an obligation. This is but natural since we have to create ourselves, as the self is not given to us, i.e. our self "does not have an alibi in existence", as Bakhtin argued.

As far as the opportunity of the chosen topic is concerned, we can state that at the level of content, this thesis aims at constituting a theoretical framework circumscribed to the concept of cultural hybridization within postcolonial experience and the analysis of certain situations of existential ambivalence that operate at the boundary between sign (colonial difference) and symbol (imperial authority), thus bringing forward issues related not only to cultural identity, but also to alterity, racism and colonialism in the context of transcending cultural limits. At a methodological level, the topic brings together two reputed fields: the postcolonial literature – addressing mainly identitarian concerns – and the field of cultural practices, in an integrated critical research that combines cultural studies with textual analysis. Consequently, by applying the theory of cultural hybridity as a mirroring-space of identitarian dynamics in Jean Rhys's work, we had the opportunity to prove that postcolonial identity necessarily becomes a hybrid between two cultures, founded on destruction through adaptation, (as colonizers destroyed, annihilated, yet took viable elements from the former culture, hence the tetrad: take over, adaptation, promotion and development).

The idea that postcolonial culture is in fact a hybrid culture is very attractive as it derives from the notion of deterritorialization, in the sense that we witness an ever

intense traffic between cultures – a consequence of colonization – accompanied by a *mélange* of uprooted cultural practices, and producing new hybrid and complex forms of culture. Consequently, we believe that the notion of ‘deterritorialization’, in a large sense so as to include what Garcia Canclini called “the loss of the ‘natural’ relation between culture and the social and geographical territories” (Canclini, 1995: 97) was an important one for our critical discourse. Thus, from the point of view of cultural experience, what becomes important is the way in which this widening of social relations affects the character of the real place. Hence the duality of the cultural settings in which the characters of Jean Rhys’s fiction usually move; on the one hand, familiar aspects, i.e. the protagonists stay ‘at home’ and on the other hand, the alien features rather ‘placed’ in that place by distant forces. In this sense, the experience of ‘dis-location’ in postcolonial society is not an alienating experience, but an experience of cultural identity ambivalence.

Coming back to the concept of hybridity we may imply that the notion of hybrid culture could prove useful in understanding the type of cultural identity that rose in the ‘transnational’ cultural space. Consequently, we undertook an analysis of the ‘hybrid’ seen as metaphor and in correlation with the exploration of cultural changes suggested by the notion of deterritorialization, that encapsulates the idea of place transformation with both positive and negative features, yet resisting to the temptation of interpreting it as a simple impoverishment or dissolution of cultural interaction. Thus of interest for the topic of this thesis was an investigation of the intrinsic ambivalence of deterritorialization, applied to the ‘life experience’ of the characters in Jean Rhys’s works, becoming ‘naturalized’ and taken as such in the current flow of experience.

In the first part of the thesis, we established the key concepts most appropriate for my investigation and insist upon the dialectic relationship between identity/self and alterity. In the second part, we continued with the exploration of the transliterary content of Jean Rhys’s writings identifying the Creole and racial identities in the postcolonial society and analyzing them from an integrated textual-cultural perspective.

The personal contribution in this respect relies on the introduction of the concept of fractal identity, an identitarian hologram whose parts, when broken or destroyed, ‘identically’ preserve the features of the whole. The premise from which we started was that the literary work, seen as a form generated by the principle of diversity and structural complexity, can be interpreted as a fractal model (applied to Rhys’s characters), meeting specific compositional rules defined by Mandelbrot’s theory. The five fractal principles (primacy detail, non-linearity, the primacy of contemplation, internal omotetia and fractal dimension) are to be found in Jean Rhys’s fiction. Moreover, the fractal living space is one of continuous experience. In this sense, the fractal perspective on Jean Rhys’s characters restores the link between I and Other; the fractal dimension of the self integrates the presence of a fluid continuum, the ego no longer being an individual, but a knot of identitarian relations. Thus, the notion of ‘person’ is restored; the ego regains a different identity, entirely different from the existing ontological models which see the man as an autonomous universe. Its nature as reconsidered in Jean Rhys’s fiction foregrounds a fictional decentralization of the characters who have the consciousness of identity fragmentation.

My approach pinpointed the strong connection between two reputed fields: postcolonial literature and cultural studies. Mirroring each other, the two identities – cultural and textual – simplify and

complicate one another in a *mise en abyme*. Looking inside this abyss, we aim at acquiring a dialectic vision on postcolonial literature as both authentic and poetic. At the level of content, we analyzed the postcolonial cultures based on the mutual relation between the practices and cultural identities that Jean Rhys tries to define and explore in her writings and we tried to synthesize the definitions and descriptions of the fundamental concepts (such as hybridization as ‘identitarian fractality’, deterritorialization, a general cultural condition followed by reterritorialization and miscegenation, etc.), as well as to discuss in detail the experience of hybridization as one which escapes incorporation (in which cultural hegemony absorb and reshape subordinate cultures according to their own image and for their own purposes), remaining marginalized in a ‘border zone’ and modifying the texture of cultural experience.

Moreover, in the second part of the thesis, which is mainly analytical, particular attention was given to the study of the experience of uprootedness, separation and metamorphosis, *mélange* and creolization. The analysis focused on the ambiguity of cultural identity, on the relation between colonizer and colonized, with reference to man’s condition in a society based on abuses, violence, discrimination, characteristics of the colonial empire.

In our critical discourse, the stress fell on the exploration of cultural identities and identitarian structures created by the phenomenon of cultural hybridization. The simple presence of the colonized Other within the textual structure is enough evidence of the ambivalence of the colonial text, an ambivalence that destabilizes its claim to absolute authority or unquestionable authenticity. This study tried to point out that a proper consideration of colonial elements, long viewed as only incidental, illuminates a colonial continuum in Rhys’s work beginning with her earliest

publications. In other words, the textual analysis evinced Rhys's consistent preoccupation with issues of race, and examines the ways in which her racial representations interplay with the depictions of gender and sexuality. Thus, commenting from a consciously gendered and racialized position, we combined close textual analysis with theoretical discussion as we traced common themes, such as racial violence, cross-cultural identities, and the denial or erasure of race. We also examined the depiction of white male protagonists, exploring the ways in which such depictions require a transracial, cross-gender performance on the part of the woman writer.

Our exploration begins with the cultural identity theory, then it goes on with the description of the concept of hybridity and its uses in cultural studies, followed by a critique of assumptions, those referring to ethnicity, marginality and alterity.

In the second chapter, we argued that, in contrast to some culturally discordant understandings of self and others offered by the constitution of 'hegemonic masculinity' that have emerged in Caribbean culture, the postcolonial period liberating 're-descriptions' of masculinity for the contemporary Caribbean. In other words, it is imperative that issues of masculinity in the Caribbean be carefully attended to. As socially constructed, the hegemonic masculinity in the Caribbean is a major cultural symbol that prevents true emancipation in the region. As opposed to the masculine dominant identity, the white female Creole identity in the postcolonial Caribbean will be considered within the multi-layered complexities of a geographically fragmented and imperially constructed region.

Chapter three focused on the cultural identity in Jean Rhys's fiction. Here, I provided an in-depth exploration into the multifaceted topic of cultural differences. To understand the dynamics of cultural differences in various contexts and

settings an array of topics was examined. These included: the formation of Creole identities, ethnicity and masculinity. Our intent here was to facilitate a deeper understanding of and sensitivity toward racial relationships. The chapter also revealed how abstract concepts such as cultural difference, identity, diversity, hybridity, individual racism, and ethnocentrism actually operated in Jean Rhys's novels.

Chapter four explored the concept of intertextuality in four novels of Jean Rhys applying plural intertextualities, illustrating shifts in the narrative perspectives, and blurring the limits between the world of fiction and reality. In this respect, we employed an intertextual strategy – interrogating Rhys's texts within cultural matrices – that provides a wider web of relevant circumstances, from which to account for her transforming views.

In the final chapter, we explored the ambiguities and struggles of the construction of female racial identity in Caribbean contexts, with particular attention to moments of textual rupture which signal the possibility of fluid identity. In constructing a new female Creole identity, Rhys employs a variety of narrative techniques which allow readers to enter an in-between space, a starting point for the transformation of consciousness and of society. Within recurring patterns of racial dynamics, a West Indian female racial identity emerges in the body of Rhys' work as, consciously and unconsciously, her white heroines identify with black slave women, and seek another form of 'blackness' through alcoholic oblivion. In conclusion, cultural identity is an ideal vehicle for entering the in-between space, and dwelling there longer and longer as we rid ourselves of preconceived notions of race and gender.

The thesis was defended in  
September 2011.

## **Performative Identities in the Contemporary Caribbean British Poetry**

**Monica Manolachi**

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The intention of this paper is neither to locate Caribbean British poetry in the postcolonial or the English literary canon, nor to discuss Caribbean poetry in general or in relation to prose, nor to focus on the Britishness or on the Caribbeanness in the "Caribbean British". This both synchronic and diachronic study rather explores a set of particularities, related to how nine Caribbean poets who publish in Great Britain reconfigure the identity of the contemporary migrant and of the former colonized. They are John Agard, Jean Binta Breeze, Fred D'Aguiar, David Dabydeen, Linton Kwesi Johnson, E. A. Markham, Grace Nichols, Dorothea Smartt and Benjamin Zephaniah. It also explores and interprets the intricate process of responding to the English dynamic society (with its 1970s racism and its own hybrid particularities developed throughout the last decades) and the image of the blacks in European literature, art and history. I demonstrate how, by various poetic techniques and discursive strategies, contemporary Caribbean British poets move away from previous versions of racial, ethnic, gender, historical and religious identities, and create new syncretic and flexible spectres of identification, which contribute to their acceptance as British authors, while preserving homeland cultural features.

While Caribbean poets of the interwar period contributed to what in the United States is known as the Harlem Renaissance, Caribbean poetry became prominent in Britain mainly after the arrival of the Empire Windrush generation of novelists and after the echoes of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in the United States gained influence in Europe. In parallel with and supporting the arrival of the (im)migrant writers and of other scholars, an intellectual

Caribbean cultural agenda achieved prominence in Britain with the path-breaking academic work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, both being cultural theorists with significant achievements in the domain of cultural politics and a huge impact on postcolonial literary criticism.

Chapter 1 ("Performative Identity, a Dynamic Reconceptualization of Cultural Hybridity") begins by explaining why the title of the thesis includes the term "Caribbean British" and not the former "West Indies", and continues with two main approaches to cultural hybridity regarding poetry emerged in the Caribbean: one that is more materialist, rooted in the specificity of the Caribbean history and social structure, initiated by Kamau E. Brathwaite in the 1970s, and another one that is post-structuralist, routed in the elusiveness of meaning that often involves a focus on cultural psychoanalysis. The meeting point of the two resides in the distinction between the Bakhtinian organic and intentional hybridity, which marks a difference in awareness regarding the hybridization process. Brathwaite's effort to show the importance of the Creole language demonstrates that creolization means not only organic but also intentional hybridity, which has had a significant influence for postcolonial agency. The underlying discourse of such a stance sustains the hubristic side of cultural hybridity which can often mask inequalities. However, the lawless desire of hubris can be interpreted, at its best, as a type of happy spiritual imprudence and as a condition for understanding what Homi K. Bhabha calls "the burden of the meaning of culture" as a gold mine for rebirth and becoming. The chapter includes a section on what is called the "Creole continuum", a flexible language behaviour in Bill Ashcroft's view, which allows writers to position their literary discourse on the continuum between Creole and Standard English, according to the aims of their message and to the audiences they have in mind.

By associating three concurrent categories, Chapter 2 ("Performative Gender, Race and the Postcolonial Politics of Power") stresses the importance of gender play in the postcolonial poetry dealing with Caribbean diasporic and transnational subjectivities, which is defined as a plural, flexible act that can continuously connect the materiality of the subject with its spiritual potentialities. Essentially, the postcolonial realities have altered the fixed, binary nature of gender as well as the colonial realities altered the racial binary. By showing how gender is further inflected with the category of race (and, to a certain extent, ethnicity), the chapter draws demarcations between black and coloured male and female poets' vision on their own subjectivities, on each other's and on the discursive construction of the white man and the white woman. It illustrates how Western gender and race stereotypes and interpellations are appropriated as hubris or burden and transformed into self-revealing discourse through double-coding techniques. By correlating E. A. Sedgwick's queer theory to that of Judith Butler on gender performativity, the last section includes samples that resist such demarcations, because they comprise masquerade modes of sharing the gendered and racial self with other subjects, with (dis)empowering effects.

Chapter 3 ("Postcolonial Metamorphoses of Maternity") explores the complex rapport between mother and child by projecting it from the domain of the family bonds to the domain of cultural hybridity. Relying on Donald Winnicott's theory of transitional objects and phenomena, such an approach can help studying postcolonial poetry in more depth by allowing for the literary text as a transitional object and viewing "the third space" from a gender perspective which permits to associate the hubristic burden of cultural hybridity with birth and growth. In this context, the chapter presents what Stuart Hall calls "metaphors of transformation"

whose tenor is transformation itself, among which (m)other metaphors are one type that can translate the Caribbean experience to the Western cultural world. Three following sections trace several metamorphoses of the mother/child rapport, which can explain the immigrants' resistance in considering England as motherland, the emergence of the Caribbean and African maternal symbolism, and an increasing dialogue between mother and child, meant to tame Otherness. The last section delineates a significant shift regarding the metaphor of childhood: from the disparaging colonial expression "bush children" to the positive symbol of postcolonial "rainbow children".

Chapter 4 ("Collective Trauma and Memory") focuses on the importance of cultural psychoanalysis in bridging spirituality with the submerged memory of the Middle Passage, slavery, transgenerational traumas and the effects of some contemporary collective violent events. Caribbean British poets have adopted a wide range of attitudes toward trauma, from protesting to more intimate and even humorous perspectives upon it. As the colonial trauma has been more difficult to digest, some authors devote volumes to capturing many of its intricacies. Drawing on contemporary psychoanalytical theories ranging from the Fanonian thought to transcultural and cross-cultural psychiatry elaborated by authors such as Laurence J. Kirmayer, the chapter interprets poems that match three main stages of trauma: denial and unintelligibility of the event, the formation of phantomatic subjectivities and the moment of healing and forgiveness.

Chapter 5 ("Expressions of Faith, Doubt and Blasphemy") introduces several postcolonial and historical theoretical particularities that explain the postmodern approach to the sacred in Caribbean poetry that has been transferred to Britain and to other Western countries. Essentially, as



Sugirtharajah (2008) pointed out, postcolonial critical theory has offered a liberatory and plural direction to spiritual thought. In addition, a few recent insights into the historical background of the Caribbean region show what Laura E. Donaldson (2008) considers as “the crucial role of Christianity in promoting the Anglo-European imperialist project” (522), and how African, European and Asian beliefs have intermingled to create various strands of religious thought that did not remain in the Caribbean, but travelled and were absorbed in a tidalectic fashion on the continents.

In the context of the actual British multicultural social project, Caribbean British poets’ diasporic experience has turned into a literary phenomenon through the equal critical attention given to what French historian Pierre Nora calls “places of memory” and to the force of imagination caused by the catalytic role of hubris in cultural hybridity. Given the fact that Caribbean British poetry is hardly known in the Eastern Europe, this paper is meant to be an introduction and a starting point for further projects on Caribbean literature and culture, recently celebrated in Britain by awarding the T. S. Eliot prize to the Nobel prize winner Derek Walcott in 2010.

The thesis was defended in  
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## **America in post-1945 Romanian Travel Writing**

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The study is itself part of the current academic work on travel writing, and since the genre is so all inclusive and hybrid, my research focused only on the travel literature written by Romanians who journeyed to the U.S.A. in the post-1945 period, and on the way they depicted America in their travelogues; among them: Viorel

Sălăgean (*Meridianul Mississippi*, 1985), Silviu Brucan (*America v zut de aproape*, 1962), Dan Grigorescu (*Marile Canioane*, 1977), Ioan Grigorescu (*Cocteil Babilon*, 1963), Romulus Rusan (*America ogarului cenu iu*, 1977), Ana Blandiana (*Cea mai frumoas dintre lumile posibile*, 1978), Ion Dinu (*C l tor prin America*, 1991), Nicolae Baciut (*America, partea nev zut a lumii, jurnal de c l torie*, 1994), Bogdan Ficeac (*California, Mirajul Vestului*, 1996), Sanda Golopenția (*America, America*, 1996), Stelian Tănase (*L.A. vs. NY. Jurnal American*, 1998, 2006), Ștefan Avădanei (*Acoladatlantic*, 2001), Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, (*Homo americanus: o radiografie ortodox*, 2002), Victor Coroianu (*America mea!*, 2007). Establishing a dialogue between texts from various historical periods of the last sixty years enabled my research to identify and analyze certain recurrent topics and aspects connected to American society, life, institutions, culture and landscapes, and to show how those topics had been raised and investigated by Romanian travel writers since 1945 to the present, aiming to make an inquiry into the construction of America at the crossroads of Romanian and American cultures.

The books analyzed in the thesis explore the ways in which Romanian writers address the American space, giving Romanian readers access to mysterious and fascinating regions, and the values, attitudes that are ascribed to them. The writers focus on aspects of the contemporary period such as multiculturalism, transnationalism, relationships between the local and the global, the New World Order, and the post-colonial/post-Communism destabilization of borders, aspects which have created new areas of negotiation between Romanian and American cultures.

The travel writers under discussion are all scholars with a philological background, coming from different fields of activity (journalists, professors, political analysts) who, at certain moments

of their lives, taught within the American universities and decided to relay or communicate their experience of the other, the exotic, the different as subject, to their own group.

Apart from a close reading of their different types of travel narratives (diaries, essays, historical reflections), I investigated and analyzed the way the writers had read and translated the American space and the impact of their writing upon the formation of a real/constructed American image in the readers’ consciousness.

I have considered an eclectic method of research as it offers the opportunity to approach in meaningful ensemble different fundamental issues within the sphere of cultural/postcolonial studies, issues that are in close relation to the problems raised and developed by the travel writers who make the subject of analysis.

The first two chapters explore the theoretical definitions and positions I use as the basis for my reading of the primary sources, while subsequent chapters offer close readings of the texts under analysis. The first chapter “Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing” provides a larger framework and critical discussion about the puzzling genre of travel writing. It offers a map for the multiple and complex understandings of travel and travel writing and tackles landmark theoretical views and their interplay with cultural studies theory at large, in terms that are relevant for the study. Chapter two “Travel Writing as a Means of Cultural Translation” parallels the first one in terms of approach and methodology and points out a different and quite new critical understanding of travel writing, that of a cultural translation instrument. The analysis is placed at the confluence of literary and cultural studies, and focuses on the common denominators of the two disciplines that impact this hybrid genre. Special attention is granted to the way travel may be read as a process of translating one culture into another and to the manner in

which hegemony, power relations impinge on the travel texts.

Section three, entitled *The Romanian Discovery of America*, is the starting point of the case studies proper. The discussion covers the Romanian literary discovery of America, namely the translations of American literature from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to present, and secondly, in historical perspective, the corpus of authors that make the subject of the investigation. Romanian travel texts (generated by the geographical and cultural discoveries of the U.S.) along with translations of American literature, unravel the socio-cultural contexts, ideologies and institutions, networks of relations and interactions between the two countries. This double survey constitutes the framework for my last two chapters in which – based on a close reading of the texts – I show with examples how travel texts construct the image of America in the Romanian imaginary.

What the dissertation puts forth in the fourth and fifth chapters is a communist/post-communist approach of America, with an emphasis on the differences of interpretation given by various 20<sup>th</sup> century ideologies. Thus, chapter four - *Romanian Travel Writing on the U.S.A. from 1945 to the end of the Cold War* – enhances critical approaches to communism, marking the main theories and interpretations related to it, with an elaborated presentation of the bilateral cultural relations and the U.S. constant, symbolic presence in Romania. Then, a close reading of the travel texts puts forth the common themes of the travelogues along their interpretations – the attempt to demythologize America in the 1950s through different stereotypes, and to reconstruct it after the 1960s by bringing readers topics of relevance such as America's history, its social life, cities, landscapes. I also look briefly into those texts generated by Romanian émigrés who have collaborated with Voice of America and engaged in the ideological fight

and indirectly brought down the Iron Curtain.

The fifth chapter titled *Romanian Travel Writing on the U.S.A. in the post- Cold War Era* analyzes post-communism as a category of cultural analysis in the study of travel writing. The travelogues under analysis are structured on a variety of issues and reflect various modes of enunciation and contextualization of America as a geographical and scriptural space resonating in Romanian culture, and, nevertheless, offer interpretative valorization of *the other*, footnoting discussions of hybridity, cultural identity, and repositioning Romania as America's cultural "elsewhere".

My study was meant to open a new study direction in Romania, and to expand the contemporary criticism on travel writing by analyzing the constructions of travel texts under discussion, and by placing them within the context of Romanian-American relations, in order to show their relevance for a better understanding of those relations as well as for a better understanding of each of the two cultures. The intention was to show to what extent the interest in the U.S.A. shapes the Romanian reflection of American values and how travel writing represents a modality of mediation between the two cultures.

The thesis was defended in  
September 2012

## Reflections of a U.S. Fulbrighter

Katelyn Browher

Catholic University of America, DC /

Ovidius University Constanta

In the past four months, I have adopted a similar affection for Romania—specifically Constanta—as I have for my native New Hampshire. I will not go so far as to say that I love everything about my new home for this academic year. That just wouldn't be true, and I don't think it needs to be true.

Maxi Taxis: a perfect example of my fondness for Romania. At first, I was scared of these vans. My landlord told me about how they work but I was skeptical. I watched others board them and disembark with a wary eye for nearly a week before I got up the courage to give it a try. I followed my companions for the journey and found myself in the shadiest public transportation I have ever ridden on. I was pleasantly surprised. In my mind, I had imagined the twelve-seat vans so popular among large families in the US, with bench seats to be shared by three or four passengers and with riders climbing over and around these seats in a most uncomfortable, writhing mass.

The maxi taxi looked full when it pulled up to the station where I was waiting. It looked full after seven passengers climbed out. It looked full after the eight people in line in front of me got on. It looked full when I climbed in. It looked full when three other people climbed in after me. Then, I discovered that maxi taxis are like Mary Poppins's carpet bag; they have no maximum capacity.

Maxi taxis are uncomfortable, especially when you spend the first ten minutes of your commute to school squatting next to the driver, pressed against the center console under the cracked windshield. Nevertheless, maxi taxis are my

favorite form of local transportation in Romania. They are affordable, convenient, and familiar. When I return from the US, I will miss them terribly.

Romania has surprised me in many ways. I was never under the pretense that I had everything about Romania figured out before my arrival, but I still could not help but be amazed at some unexpected revelations. Romania is a very international place. Perhaps there is a bit of a bias in my experience, since—as a foreigner—I am more likely to stumble upon foreigners in everyday life (most notably in my Romanian language course), but I seem to meet people from other nations all over Constanta. I have met Germans, French, Russians, Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Canadians, Swedes, Portuguese, Israelis, Afghans, Chinese, British, Georgians, Americans, Slovaks, Malaysians, Moldovans, Egyptians, Cameroons, and Indians. That's about the same number of different nationalities I have encountered in the United States, which I know is more statistically diverse.

While I was at first surprised to discover so many people of different nationalities living in Romania, now that I am more familiar with the country, I am realizing that this should not be a surprise to me at all. Nearly every Romanian I meet speaks English, which makes it especially easy for foreigners to find their way around. (At first I found this extremely helpful, but now that I am more serious about learning Romanian I wish I was required to speak Romanian much more in day to day life.) Furthermore, the universities offer English courses at cheaper rates than those of many other countries, appealing to

international students who want to study. Lastly, in four months I have never felt snubbed or excluded for being a foreigner. I was never under the impression that Romania would be unwelcoming, but I certainly didn't expect I would broaden my horizons to so many new cultures during my stay.

The most disheartening and the only truly negative experience I have had in Romanian is the rampant plagiarism problem in the education system. In the United States, plagiarism simply is not tolerated. In many universities you can fail the course for your first offense, even if it was unintentional, and be expelled on subsequent offenses. As the end of the first semester drew to a close, I was bombarded with homework assignments from my students that had been copied verbatim from Wikipedia and other websites. It got to the point that I could identify, on sight, the opening sentences of the Wikipedia articles on Thanksgiving and stereotypes. I had multiple students who only turned in work that had been copied and pasted from the internet. The most astounding thing to me was that students seemed dismayed that they received no credit for their plagiarized assignments. I had heard about this problem before I arrived in Romania, so I took precautions to prevent students from plagiarizing. I gave a speech about plagiarism on the first day of class. I described plagiarism on the syllabus. I designed homework assignments so that the vast majority of them requested personal opinions and little to no researching. It simply didn't work.

I am left reevaluating my course of action for my classes next semester and pondering over what I

can do differently. Regardless, I intend to maintain my hard-line stance from this semester and encourage students to complete their work on their own. Despite this pitfall, I am thoroughly enjoying my experiences with the Romanian education system.

As a middle and high-school teacher in the United States, I am curious about secondary education in Romania and sought out working with younger students, in addition to my university classes. I teamed up with my university's division of the student organization AIESEC to lead training sessions on personal finance to local high school students. I gained insight into the function and process of secondary education, and I got the opportunity to work with younger students with a strong drive to learn. They helped me to improve my Romanian language skills and to get the most out of my time abroad. I grew fond of them all and at the end of the program decided—with a Romanian friend—to start English classes with those students who want extra practice in preparation for their national exams.

The first half of my stay in Romania has been enlightening and overall positive. For every quirk I find—such as the maxi taxis—I do not find myself irritated. Rather, I find myself more attached to this country every day. I must face the most severe case of plagiarism I could have dreamed of, but I go forward on my next five months in Romania with nothing but high hopes and expectations of an enjoyable stay, which I know will end in a bittersweet farewell come June.

## Book Reviews

### *Jonathan Edwards and the Gospel of Love*

Ronald Story

Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012

**Raluca Rogoveanu**

Ovidius University Constanta

Unlike most interpretative approaches to Jonathan Edwards which circumscribe him to the limiting paradigm delineated by his staunch adherence to Calvinism, his imprecatory sermons and his contribution to the Great Awakening, Ronald Story's *Jonathan Edwards and the Gospel of Love* proposes an alternative reading of Edwards' life and work which captures new doctrinal nuances and theological inflections. The book, which stems from the author's longstanding interest and academic commitment to Jonathan Edwards' work, is a multi-faceted reformulation of Edwards' philosophical vision and theological creed and represents a departure from the almost canonical view of Edwards as the theologian of sin and damnation. Rather than recapitulating the major critical directions which have portrayed Edwards as the dark and fiery preacher of the 18<sup>th</sup> century New England, the author sets himself the daunting task of critically rediscovering Jonathan Edwards as the compassionate spiritual leader and preacher of charity and love. The result of his endeavor is a rounded description of Edwards' work which balances the ideas of the absolute sovereignty of God (as articulated in his upholding theological determinism) and the perfection of God's holiness as expressed in his contemplation of beauty, virtue, charity and love.

*Jonathan Edwards and the Gospel of Love* focuses on the passionate commitment of a spiritual leader who asserts visions of hell as an awareness-raising mechanism, uses imagery of dread as a plausible, necessary and reasonable

approach to frighten people away from hell and compel them to relate themselves lovingly to God's benevolence and holiness. In Ronald Story's book, Jonathan Edwards emerges as the preeminent spiritual leader whose sermons emphasize the sense of emotional participation in the spiritual reality of the congregation and strike a meaningful balance between rational understanding and religious enthusiasm.

Unlike many scholarly studies on Edwards which rest on his largest anthologized sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, and pay little interest in his unpublished sermon manuscripts, Story considers a more comprehensive research corpus made up of Edwards' relatively unexplored sermons which nevertheless make for a repository of his best expressed ideas and pastoral concerns.

The first chapter is a biographical account which highlights the most important events of Edwards' life and the second chapter (*Personae*) identifies the cornerstones of his intellectual and theological pursuits. While elaborating upon Edwards as the intellectual, Story's discourse glides gracefully through Enlightenment theories to assess his indebtedness to Newton's findings and Lockean epistemology and analyze his stand on the efficacy of reason as a means for evangelical purposes. The authors makes a compelling case while presenting Edwards' unwavering commitment to Calvinism by emphasizing his doctrinal polemic with Judaism and other Christian traditions and religious beliefs such as Catholicism, proto-Unitarianism, Anglicanism, congregationalism and millennialism. The second chapter portrays Edwards as the theologian who determined significant changes in the Puritan thinking of doctrinal questions and devotes considerable attention to the revivalist movement in Northampton and the profound implications of this awakening of faith paralleled by the regeneration of soul. This chapter offers an



exploration of the beginning, development and legacy of the Great Awakening, its transformative effect as well as the ideological tensions and community dissensions generated by this spiritual and ideological upheaval.

In the effervescent space of New England, Edwards' sermons represent not only instruments of worship in a liturgical context, but also essential elements in the cultural and intellectual life of the community, eloquently delivered speeches meant to uplift mind and raise affection, which balance the solid theological argument with the intensity of feeling. While accounting for the persuasiveness of these doctrinal assertions and their role in refining and channeling spiritual devotion and religious commitment or in determining startling expression of piety and zeal, Ronald Story reconceptualizes the sermons of fear as a sermon of love. Edwards' uttering his words of holy wrath with compassion, tenderness and love create powerful performative contexts likely to foster intense spiritual experiences, prepare people for the outpour of grace and induce spiritual conversion.

Merging discourse analysis with historical contextualization, the chapter "*Tropes*" represents a noteworthy departure from the "traditional" critical reception of Edwards as a conservative evangelist and an in-depth thematic analysis of Edwards' sermons which demonstrates his preference for concepts like light, beauty, harmony and sweetness.

The chapter "*Charity*" analyzes Edwards' understanding of the principle of charity as the ultimate manifestation of love for God and His creation, as expressed not only in concrete gestures of sharing material wealth but also in the generosity of spirit. This part also demonstrates the centrality of this principle in Edwards' life and ministry and describes it as a corollary of love to God and the most genuine measure of religious zeal and communion. Alternating descriptive passages with extended commentaries of theological arguments and drawing on biblical examples as well as on keen

observations of colonial politics, this chapter represents a meticulous exploration of Edwards' engagement with this topic over years.

The chapter on "*Community*" portrays Jonathan Edwards as the minister of the gospel of community, accounts for his concern for salvation which is premised on the personal relationship between God and man unfolding within a community space and analyzes the manifold representations of togetherness as social peace, unity, harmony, collective worship, conversation, friendship, neighborliness and holy community.

The next chapter focuses on this principle of "*Love*" as an all-encompassing concept of Edwardsian theology and represents an extensive elaboration on Edwards' core principle in its social, theological and dimensions. Balancing Edwards's doctrinal understanding of spiritual love with the description of romantic elements in his discourse of earthly love and multiple references to the Old and New Testament with intertextual references to Dante and other classical texts, this chapter makes a compelling case of Edwards as the passionate supporter of the gospel of love.

"*Afterword*" provides a conclusive description of Jonathan Edwards as the preeminent intellectual and spiritual leader of the 18<sup>th</sup> century whose theology upholds a holistic vision of the Creator and propounds love as the ultimate principle of creation and exalts the virtues of charity and compassion.

A meaningful contribution to Jonathan Edwards's scholarship, *Jonathan Edwards and the Gospel of Love* is not only a rich and insightful analysis of Jonathan Edwards as the most prominent Christian preacher and philosophical theologian of New England, but also an excellent guide which can appeal to a wide readership in many disciplines and unfailingly meet the critical expectations of specialist readers and general public alike.

# US Embassy Events/Notices

<http://romania.usembassy.gov/>

<http://www.facebook.com/bucharest.usembassy>

## Fulbright Scholars 2011-2012

### ROMANIAN SENIOR GRANTEES

Adriana AGAPIE

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

Host University: California State University East Bay  
Field: Economics/Econometrics

Adrian BIRZU

Home University: Al. Ioan Cuza University of Iasi  
Host University: Saint Louis University  
Field: Chemistry/Physical Chemistry

Radu N. CATANA

Home University: Babes-Bolyai U. Cluj  
Host University: University of California, Berkeley  
Field: Law/Corporate Law

Dan COGALNICEANU

Home University: Ovidius University of Constanta  
Host University: Oklahoma State University  
Field: Environmental Sciences/Biodiversity

Irina CULIC

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: New York University  
Field: Sociology/Ethnicity& Migration

Olivia DORNEANU

Home University: University of Medicine and Pharmacy Gr. T. Popa Iasi  
Host University: Louisiana State University  
Field: Medical Sciences/Microbiology

Augustin IOAN

Home University: University of Architecture and Urbanism Ion Mincu Bucharest  
Host University: University of Cincinnati  
Field: Architecture/Architecture of Public Space

Cristina MODREANU

Home Institution: Romanian Association for Performing Arts  
Host University: New York University  
Field: Performance Studies

Laura SITARU

Home University: University of Bucharest

Host University: Georgetown University  
Field: History (non-US) and Cultural Studies

Catalina ULRICH

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Field: Education/ Educational Program Development

### ROMANIAN JUNIOR GRANTEES

Mihai COPACIU

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies  
Host University: Northwestern University  
Field: Economics/Finance

Irina COSTACHE

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: University of California Los Angeles  
Field: Gender Studies

Bogdan DOSPINESCU

Home University: National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest  
Host University: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Field: Political Communication

Ciprian DUMITRACHE

Home University: POLITEHNICA University of Bucharest  
Host University: Georgia Institute of Technology  
Field: Aerospace Engineering

Delia MATEIAS

Home Institution: The Romanian Academy  
Host University: George Washington University  
Field: Education

Oana MISTREANU

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: University of Missouri, Columbia  
Field: Communication/Journalism

Olimpia MOSTEANU

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: The New School for Social Research  
Field: Political Sociology

Ana PASTI

Home University: "I. L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Cinematographic Arts, Bucharest  
Host University: University of Southern California Los Angeles, CA  
Field: Acting

Florin Andrei POENARU

Home University: Central European University Budapest  
Host University: City University of New York  
Field: Anthropology

Maria Ruxandra POP  
Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: Indiana University, Bloomington  
Field: Visual Anthropology

Georgeta Bianca SARBU  
Home Institution: ETH Zurich, Center for Security Studies  
Host University: George Washington University-Elliott  
School of International Affairs  
Field: International Affairs

## **FULBRIGHT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Alexandru NECHIFOR  
Home University: POLITEHNICA University of Bucharest  
Host University: Georgia Institute of Technology  
Field: Electrical and Computer Engineering

Catalin Stefan TISEANU  
Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: University of Maryland, College Park  
Field: Computer Science

## **HUBERT H. HUMPHREY GRANTEES**

Cristian ALECSE  
Home University: National Institute for Economic  
Development, Bucharest  
Home Institution: Habitat for Humanity Pitesti  
Host University: Michigan State University  
Field: Economic Development/Finance and Banking

## **AMERICAN SENIOR GRANTEES**

Dr. Holly McKinzie BEENE  
Home University: Maricopa Community Colleges - Tempe,  
AZ  
Host University: University of Bacau  
Field: Communication, Culture, and Globalization

Dr. Jennifer Sue FEENSTRA  
Home University: Northwestern College - Orange City, IA  
Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
Field: Psychology

Dr. Yudit Kornberg GREENBERG  
Home Institution: Rollins College - Winter Park, FL  
Host University: University of Bucharest, Bucharest  
Field: Jewish Studies and Religious Studies

Dr. Paul HAMILL  
Home University: Ithaca College - Ithaca, NY  
Host University: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu  
Field: American Studies

Dr. Mohsen RAZZAGHI  
Field: Mathematics and Statistics  
Host University: Bucharest Technical University of Civil  
Engineering  
Home University: Mississippi State University - Mississippi  
State, MS

Ms. Laura Gluckman WAYTH  
Home University: Florida Atlantic University - Boca Raton,  
FL  
Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
Field: Theatre Performance

Dr. Jane Elizabeth WESTLAKE  
Home University: University of Michigan--Ann Arbor  
Host University: University of Bucharest, Bucharest  
Field: American Drama Pedagogy

Dr. Stephen Joel CUTLER  
Home University: University of Vermont - Burlington, VT  
Host University: University of Bucharest, Bucharest  
Field: Sociology, Demography

## **AMERICAN JUNIOR GRANTEES**

Ms Kelli WILBERT  
Home University: Northwestern University, IL  
Host University: Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi  
Field: English Teaching Assistantship

Ms Nicole Kay WELLS  
Home University: Hastings College, NE  
Host University: Transilvania University of Brasov  
Field: English Teaching Assistantship

Mr. Nicholas Emmanuel SVEHOLM  
Home University: Indiana University, Bloomington, IN  
Host University: Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu  
Field: History, Modern

Ms. Katelyn Arlene BROWHER  
Home University: Catholic University of America, DC  
Host University: Ovidius University of Constanta  
Field: English Teaching Assistantship

Mrs. Karla HOPPMANN BURU  
Home University: University of South Carolina, SC  
Host University: University of Petrosani  
Field: Social Work - Cross-Cultural Social Work Practices  
in the Jiu Valley

Ms. Laura EVERS  
Home University: College of William and Mary, VA  
Host University: Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava  
Field: English Teaching Assistantship

Ms. Jessica Lynn MILLER  
Home University: At-Large, Pennsylvania  
Host University: University of the West, Timisoara  
Field: English Teaching Assistantship

Ms. Anca Izabel Galliera  
Home University: University of Pittsburgh, PA  
Host University: University of Arts, International Center for  
Contemporary Arts (ICCA) Bucharest  
Field: Art and Architectural History (special program,  
carried out in Bulgaria and Romania)

## RAAS Officers & EAAS

### RAAS

President: **Adina Ciugureanu**, Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanta, Aleea Universitatii 1, Campus, Constanța; <aciugureanu@univ-ovidius.ro>

Vice President: **Roxana Oltean**, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of English, University of Bucharest, 7-13 Pitar Mos Street, 70151 Bucharest; <roxana.oltean@txmail.ro>

Secretary and Newsletter editor: **Ludmila Martanovschi**, Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanța, Aleea Universitatii 1, Campus, Constanța; <ludmila\_martan@yahoo.com>

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**European Association for American Studies (EAAS)** <<http://www.eaas.eu>>

## Letter from the President

Dear All,

The year 2010 was very fruitful and largely rewarding for the Romanian Americanists, if we take into account the two important events organized in Europe and at home (Dublin and Constanța) in the field of American Studies. The celebratory moment to us, members of the RAAS, was the Biennial RAAS – Fulbright Conference, entitled *The American Tradition of Descent/Dissent: The Underground, the Countercultural, the (Anti)Utopian*, held at Ovidius University Constanța, Oct. 7-9. The conference gathered about 90 scholars and young academics from thirteen Romanian universities and several European and American ones, including twenty Fulbright senior and junior grantees in the ongoing academic year. Our special guest speaker was Professor Janice Radway, Walter Dill Scott Professor of Communication and Professor of American Studies and Gender Studies at Northwestern University, USA, whose research in, and contribution to, the field of American Studies are exceptional, her books and articles being a 'must' in the undergraduate and graduate bibliography of any popular culture and gender studies course. Her plenary lecture with the topic "Girl Zines, Middle Class Privilege, and Affiliation as Dissent" was a highly stimulating, enlightening talk on the relatively recent phenomenon of self-published texts created from cuts and images from magazines and other popular publications. As a manifestation that favors traditional means of communication (typing, collage, snail mail) and covers both areas of popular culture and gender studies, the growing phenomenon of 'zining' is definitely worth investigating and Professor Radway did it with intensity and accuracy. The second plenary talk was held by Professor Rodica Mihaila from the University of Bucharest and former President of the RAAS. Professor Mihaila's topic tackled the question of American exceptionalism, by reconsidering it in her most challenging analysis of post 9-11 fiction which dwells on the dichotomous pair: falling man / fall of man.

We also enjoyed the presence of His Excellency, Mark H. Gittenstein, Ambassador of the United States to Romania, who opened the conference with an excellent talk on the topic and presented the prize and diplomas to the first two winners of the *Graduate Student Award* offered by the RAAS: Dana Mihăilescu, University of Bucharest, for *the best PhD dissertation* and Adelina Vartolomei, Ovidius University

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Constanta, for *the best MA dissertation*. According to the rules of the GSA competition, posted on the RAAS site, the winning dissertations are the best among those defended in the two-year interval between the RAAS conferences. Although the RAAS board advertised the competition well in advance, we believe that only shyness hindered young Americanists from sending their theses for a new evaluation. We would like to encourage them to participate in future competitions and to trust the RAAS board's capacity of organizing a very serious and mostly rewarding contest.

The second important event of 2010, in reverse chronological order, was the Biennial Conference of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS), held in Dublin, March 26-29. The topic of the conference, whose motto was "Forever Young," inspired a large number of Americanists from all the European countries, members of the EAAS. It is however true that a few countries, among which Germany, Austria, the UK, Ireland, and Poland were much better represented than other countries (among which Romania) who had fewer participants. It is regretful that Romanian academics do not get involved more deeply in the EAAS conferences, especially as, according to the comments during, and the conclusion of, the RAAS – Fulbright conference in Constanta, American Studies is seriously and solidly done in the Romanian universities. It is understandable that one of the reasons for the reduced participation interest in the EAAS is the high costs which attendance would involve. However, besides the grants that the American Cultural Center may offer on these occasions and some support from our home universities, the RAAS General meeting in October also decided to offer partial coverage of the costs for young academics and seminar coordinators, active members of the RAAS, whose proposals or papers will be accepted for the 2012 EAAS Conference in Izmir, Turkey. We are hoping that, in this way, younger and less young colleagues will be better motivated to attend. We are also positive that Romanian Americanists' research contribution to American Studies in Europe will not go unnoticed, especially as we intend to bring the EAAS conference to Romania in 2014. It is high time that our research in American culture, history, media, literature, became more visible. Therefore, by augmenting the RAAS participation in the 2012 EAAS Conference at Izmir, we would increase the RAAS chances of being granted the honor of organizing the next conference in 2014.

The RAAS General meeting, held on October 9, in Constanța, agreed on a number of changes in the RAAS board. Due to new academic engagements, Dr. Ileana Marin, elected Secretary of the RAAS in May 2008, could no longer serve the association in this capacity, so Dr. Ludmila Martanovschi has

replaced her and Dr. Ileana Jitaru (Ovidius University) has now become the new Treasurer in charge of collecting the fee and making the necessary payments to the EAAS and other institutions or individuals, if need be.

Most importantly, the RAAS General meeting decided upon the introduction in the RAAS articles of the honorific title of *Founding President*. The title was unanimously granted to Professor Rodica Mihăilă for her seminal role in launching the association and in supporting the development of American Studies in Romania.

The ongoing odd year between the two important American Studies events, 2011, is crucial for us all who intend to attend the EAAS Conference in Izmir and the RAAS Conference in Constanța in 2012. The RAAS site ([www.raas.ro](http://www.raas.ro)) and our letters to all the members will keep you informed about deadlines and topics. Besides, the RAAS board is discussing now the editorial board and publishing details of the RAAS journal which, we hope, will be a serious publication to enhance American Studies in Romania. As regards the board's activity in 2011, we have scheduled a meeting on May 9, in Constanța, on which occasion we will come forth with the dates and topic of the next RAAS Conference and the details about the RAAS journal we intend to start this year.

Wishing you all a wonderful New Year, prosperity and achievements to your hearts' desire and looking forward to your comments, suggestions and proposals,

**Professor Adina Ciugureanu**  
President of the RAAS  
Ovidius University Constanta

# **The RAAS - Fulbright Conference: Constanta, 7- 9 October 2010**

## **The American Tradition of Descent/Dissent: The Underground, The Countercultural, the (Anti)Utopian**

**Professor Janice Radway**  
Northwestern University

The Biennial International Conference of the Romanian American Studies Association was held at Ovidius University in Constanta from October 7 to 9, 2010. Organized around an exciting, provocative, theme -- "The American Tradition of Descent/Dissent: The Underground, the Countercultural, and the (Anti)Utopian" -- the conference was jointly sponsored by Ovidius University and its Faculty of Letters, including the English Department Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies; by the Romanian – US Fulbright Commission; by the Romanian Association for American Studies; and by the American Cultural Center, Bucharest. The conference featured the work of some 87 scholars drawn from all over Romania, the larger eastern European region, and around the world. Clearly building on the highly successful efforts of the RAAS under the able leadership of Professors Rodica Mihaila and Adina Ciugureanu to promote ground-breaking work in American Studies throughout Romania, the conference was remarkable for the way its carefully crafted theme engaged emergent trends in international American Studies scholarship while re-considering and revising our collective understanding of the social, cultural,

and political history of the United States.

Most notably, conference presenters together established clearly that traditions of dissent in the United States have played a pivotal role in both contesting *and* constituting the very idea of the "American" over the years. By focusing on the key role played by African-Americans, especially African American women, as well as by immigrants and ethnic communities in the US, the conference was highly successful in establishing that strong ties have always connected the US to other regions, cultural traditions, and nations. Attendees also made it clear that the familiar notion of American exceptionalism has always been contested by a critical and internationalist counter-tradition. The RAAS conference was additionally remarkable for its ability to attract scholars working in a range of disciplinary traditions, including literature, art history, film studies, political science, anthropology, and sociology, as well as for the obvious vitality of its efforts to integrate the work of a high number of extraordinarily creative graduate students with the research and writing being done by more experienced scholars. Finally, the conference was notable for its ability to incorporate the study of American popular culture into its agenda.

His Excellency, Mark H. Gitenstein, U. S. Ambassador to Romania, who spoke forcefully about the role dissent has played in American history, formally opened the conference program. Grounding the right to dissent in the First Amendment to the Constitution, Ambassador Gitenstein explored how the amendment has both enabled and protected vigorous debate within the U. S., thereby allowing its people, institutions, and leaders to be self-critical, to change policy and direction, and generally to revise what is understood as the American tradition. My own paper, "From the Underground to the Library Stacks and Beyond: Girls, Zines, and Itineraries of Dissent at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," sought to familiarize conference attendees with the vibrant, unruly feminism practiced by a small cohort of

largely white, middle class, girls inspired by all girl punk bands in the 1990s. Calling themselves riot grrrls, these young women communicated among themselves through hand-made, self-published, underground pamphlets known as zines, where they explored the slights and everyday oppression experienced by girls in high schools, colleges, workplaces, and on the streets. Significantly, as these zines began to circulate more broadly, they drew many more girls to the form, including young women of color who critiqued zines' political limitations. Recently, girl zines have begun to migrate to other cultural venues like libraries, classrooms, and art installations significantly perpetuating the impact of their particular understanding of feminism.



It is difficult to summarize the extensive and impressive program of papers that followed this initial session. I'm certain my fellow conferees felt as frustrated as I did in trying to choose which sessions to attend. More often than not, I deeply regretted having to miss the sessions scheduled simultaneously against those I finally selected. I should note, however, that generally these sessions enabled participants to rethink American literary traditions through dissenting voices and discourses; to learn about counter-traditions in American political philosophy and literary theory; to investigate key historical events and movements involving subaltern populations and to take account of their dissenting perspective on events that have usually been seen through documents left by the privileged; to explore the ways various discourses of dissent have sought to contest

the structure and meaning of capitalism and commercialism in the U. S.; and finally to take careful note of the extraordinary vibrancy of American popular culture, of its roots in underground and counter-cultural passions and political concerns, and its extended, still percolating effects on all that has been considered mainstream. Even a short list of some of the topics examined in conference papers demonstrates how successful the conference was in complicating our sense of what constitutes the American cultural tradition: the literary work of Anzia Yezierska, Douglas Coupland, Paul Auster, Sandra Cisneros, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Wendell Berry, Ernesto Quinonez, and many others; the autobiographies of contemporary American immigrant women; the pragmatic philosophical tradition in the U. S.; multiculturalism as counter-history to discourses of assimilation and assent; old order Amish communities; Quakers and abolitionism; underground commix; quilts and election posters; blogs and social networking; Afro-centrism as a form of political dissent; advertising of the 1940s and 1950s; the art of Kara Walker; the films of James Cameron, Paula Vogel, and Quentin Tarantino. Conference presenters examined all of this and much more.



This summary of what was clearly a dynamic and consequential conference would not be complete without a short account of the thoughtful keynote address given by the RAAS's first president, Rodica Mihaila of the University of Bucharest. Characteristically grounded in her deep familiarity with past American literary traditions as well as her knowledge of the most contemporary of American literary

work, Professor Mihaila focused on four post 9-11 novels written by Jonathan Safran Foer, Don DeLillo, John Updike and Cormac McCarthy.



She suggested that the national trauma surrounding the events of 9-11 pushed these writers to re-examine the self-destructiveness of American exceptionalism and the costs of a too confident belief in the possibilities of redemption embodied in the figure of the new man, the new American Adam. Yet Professor Mihaila demonstrated clearly through an analysis of the workings of the falling man/fall of man trope in this fiction that despite their desire to face with determination the tragic deterioration of the human condition in our contemporary era of technologized violence, these profoundly American writers, ironically and paradoxically, also sought to transfigure the consequent fear, terror and horror by exploring the possibilities for their amelioration in a new ethical relation between Self and Other necessitated by a world characterized by mobility, fluidity, and ineluctable, unavoidable encounters and confrontation.

It was a fitting culmination to the ongoing conversation generated by the conference's theme about the relation between American traditions of descent and dissent over the course of several centuries.

## U.S. Ambassador's Remarks at the RAAS - Fulbright Conference

### Dissent and Peaceful Change

H.E. Mark H. Gitenstein

Some time ago a young student asked me if I could name the one most important contribution America had made to world culture. It was a difficult question. I assumed he meant something positive, something that had made the world a better place. Not the cure for polio or even the I-pod. Not McDonald's, hamburgers or Coca Cola.

After a few minutes of thought, I said the First Amendment to the U.S. constitution. It reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

When the 13 U.S. states set about to ratify the new Constitution in 1789, some of its critics, led by Thomas Jefferson, decided that the Constitution needed a Bill of Rights and first among them would be this unequivocal recitation of civil liberties. In effect we created a powerful new government and at the same time an ironclad limitation on its power, enshrining in our organic law the right of the people to criticize their government.

A few years later in his inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson set out the basic rationale for the protection of dissent and the untrammelled right to disagree with the government and each other: "Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."

One of our greatest Supreme Court Justices, Oliver Wendell Holmes, said it slightly differently



over a hundred years later: "The best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market."

But they were both making a very similar and fundamental point about what defined us as Americans and what I believe is at the heart of our success as a country. We built into our country, its government and its culture, the notion that the best way to combat mistakes is to leave people free to debate and argue with each other.

So we created a mechanism that corrected error by the government and the society as a whole. At the time it was a unique notion and, indeed, it was the first time such a basic civil liberty was enshrined in the organic law of any republic.

We have made our share of mistakes in America, but one thing that you can count on in America is that we have the ability to self-correct through open and robust debate and usually we're able to recognize and correct our mistakes.

Ours is a government based on the consent and the wisdom of the governed freely expressed.

For almost 50 years here in Romania that was not possible. Under fascist and communist regimes, ideology drove your government policy and authoritarianism stifled all dissent. Your government was based on the principle that all the wisdom resided in the government and any disagreement from the governed needed to be ruthlessly repressed. I daresay that is why a despot like Ceausescu could starve his people and almost destroy this beautiful country.

But you and I have seen how dissent can, in the end, fundamentally change the direction of a culture for the better. You saw it here in Romania 20 years ago and I saw it where I grew up in the Deep South of the United States 50 years ago.

In December 1989, Laszlo Tokes appeared in the window of his apartment in Timisoara to tell his parishioners that he had not been evicted.

As one congregant put it recently:

"Laszlo appeared at the window and made a sign with his arm for us to come forward. Though

he did not know it then, it was the beginning of the Revolution."

With that simple act of reassurance and courage he, in effect said, come forward and let you defy the power of this tyranny.

Like Dr. Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks in my home state of Alabama, in the U.S., Laszlo Tokes inspired the dispossessed to assert their God-given rights and in so doing launched a revolution.

In that sense dissent is the critical catalyst for change. Indeed, I would argue without this freedom of speech, real and lasting change is really not possible.

As young Romanians who care about the future of your country, the most important question you should be asking yourself is how you preserve this freedom to dissent, leaving truth free to correct error.

I would argue that there are at least five basic safeguards that you must protect above all else:

- Remember the basic rule of every patriot – eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. You must be prepared to challenge any threat to freedom of speech. But it takes more than just moral courage to disagree. You need your institutions to serve as the fora and vehicles for both hosting that debate and implementing its conclusions within a democracy.

- So too, you need a court system that will adhere to the rule of law and protect anyone against the power of the state which seeks to suppress dissent

- Three, you need an independent media -- not simply independent of the state but independent of powerful economic interests that use the media to manipulate the discourse;

- Four, you need political parties that are strong, independent of these economic oligarchs and committed to the welfare of average Romanians

- Five, you need a free market that is protected from powerful economic concentrations by antitrust laws and sensible regulation.

We have learned in America that it is not enough just to have a First Amendment and even a citizenry committed to its principles. In America, as President Eisenhower once said "we are

descended in blood and in spirit from revolutionists and rebels – men and women who dare to dissent from accepted doctrine."

But one hundred years after our revolution, in the late 1880s, we still had powerful economic interests controlling our economy, our political parties and our media. Sound familiar?

Dissent was not particularly meaningful in those years in America when those economic interests controlled the media and the political parties and, through them, the court system.

That began to change with the political reform movement in America.

In the United States our monument to our greatest presidents is Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. George Washington is on Mount Rushmore because he led our revolution; Jefferson because of the First Amendment; Lincoln because he preserved the union and ended slavery. Teddy Roosevelt is on Mount Rushmore because he led a reform movement which began to take on these economic oligarchs. In so doing he helped to strengthen these other institutions which make change possible by curbing that economic power.

That will happen here in Romania as well but until it does, dissent and the ability of truth to combat error will not be ensured. And without that core freedom, lasting change is not possible.

## **RAAS Graduate Student Award**

In June 2010 the Romanian Association for American Studies launched the RAAS Graduate Student Award, which aims at rewarding one best MA dissertation and one best PhD dissertation submitted by graduate students and/or junior faculty members every two years. The submitted manuscripts will be evaluated on the clarity and persuasiveness of

the demonstration, on the originality and significance of the research and on their making an outstanding contribution to American Studies in Romania (defined as literary, cultural, or historical studies focused on the United States of America).

This year the association awarded the following RAAS members for their dissertations defended between 2008 and 2010 and submitted for the Graduate Student Award:

**Dana Mihăilescu, University of Bucharest, for the best PhD dissertation;**

**Adelina Vartolomei, Ovidius University Constanta for the best MA dissertation.**

The awarding ceremony took place on October 7<sup>th</sup>, on the occasion of the 2010 RAAS-Fulbright Conference opening, when H.E. **Mark H. Gitenstein, U.S. Ambassador to Bucharest**, presented the GSA certificates to the two awardees.

(<http://www.raas.ro/stiri>)

## **Ethical Dilemmas and Reconfigurations of Identity in Early Twentieth Century Eastern European Jewish American Narratives**

**Dana Mihăilescu**

University of Bucharest

My Ph.D. research thesis is a comparative study of the Jewish response to complex identity in Eastern Europe and America in early twentieth century narratives of writers coming or descending from either the Pale of Settlement (Mary Antin, Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yezierska) or from the slightly less restrictive background of Romania (M.E. Ravage, Konrad Bercovici, Maurice Samuel or Michael Gold). In relation to this, I have probed into how dilemmas associated with identity for early twentieth century Eastern European Jewish immigrants to America has been a critical element in fashioning their

modern subjectivity, by considering the modifications brought about by relocation to a new regime of state, namely the passage from understanding identity as fixed in autocratic Eastern Europe to seeing it as contingent and fluid in democratic America. My other interest has been to investigate the need to re-imagine the subject's ethical agency in a new regime of state by showing that there is a passage from double ethical standards used in Eastern Europe as a result of official unfair practices against Jews to emphasis on ethical responsibility for the other via critical resistance to limitations of institutional norms in the U.S.

In order to articulate my thesis, I have analyzed the power relations within these writers' narratives as instances of moral "struggles for recognition" set out by society, drawing on Axel Honneth's ideas. By also using Emmanuel Levinas's and Judith Butler's insights, I have meant to show that these works offer not simply a critique of the dominant norms of different regimes of state but also an alternative agency carried out by unique individuals who pay attention to the vulnerability of a unique existent and who are ready to challenge society's imperfect justice in the name of the vulnerable. In that, my project finally sustains, I believe, Adriana Cavarero's recent suggestion that narration can stand for an alternative sense of politics that takes into account people's uniqueness. Finally, I have drawn on Martha Nussbaum's insights from *Love's Knowledge* (1990) and *Poetic Justice* (1995), showing how early twentieth century literary texts by Eastern European Jewish American authors sustain that the quality of human life does not primarily depend on opulence or utility but on human functioning and capability, on the acknowledgment of the complexity of individual lives and the salience of individual differences. In the final analysis, I have meant to prove how these books sanction Nussbaum's idea that literary imagination is essential in both the theory and practice of citizenship.

Related to this, my other aim has been to recuperate the literary voices of Romanian Jewish immigrants to the United States by

considering the writings of M.E. Ravage, Konrad Bercovici, and Maurice Samuel. My intention has been to revitalize the histories of their experiences in the face of loss and forgetting, underscoring their specific voices out of the pool of generalizations associated to early twentieth century Eastern European Jewish American writings. There has also been a social component to my endeavor – the attempt to show the locally specific forms of power relations and types of logic that worked towards creating dominant norms which discriminated against others and the attempt to trace the emergence of an ethical agency out of suffering which worked as an alternative individual stance of responsibility for the precarious other.

In the final analysis, I have considered the importance of Foucauldian power fields for analyzing early twentieth century Jewish American literature, but rather than focus my argument on the mere struggle with different norms, I have argued in favor of an *ethics out of contingency* (drawing on Honneth, Levinas, Butler and Cavarero), stressing that East European Jewish Americanness is basically a matter of uncertainty, dependence on variable events, and individual responsibility as opposed to the fixed set frames of Eastern Europe.

*The thesis was defended in January 2010.*

## **In with the Old, Out with the New: The Black Woman's Doppelganger before the Civil War**

**Adelina Vartolomei**

Ovidius University Constanta

The paper, *In with the Old, Out with the New: The Black Woman's Doppelganger before the Civil War*, focuses on the similarities and differences between the African American women described in Alice Walker's novels, *The Color Purple*, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, *By the Light of My Father's Smile*, and *The Temple of My Familiar* and the ones in Kara Walker's cut paper silhouettes. The idea of the



doppelganger is introduced in order to explain black women's identities nowadays in connection to their past. Moreover, parallels are drawn between the two artists and other writers that have focused on similar topics; writers such as Toni Morrison, Jean Rhys, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and even male writers such as Alex Haley and Ralph Ellison have presented their view on the hardships that African Americans have had to overcome in the past as well as the challenges they still face in the present.

The first chapter, "Women Alienated in Words and Images", reveals the problems that women have of adapting in various social and political contexts. It actually consists of five different parts, each part taking a closer look at a certain aspect of women's isolation from the mainstream and their struggle to being accepted. These five subchapters are: 'The Issue of Race in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*', 'Madness and Silence', 'Nostalgia after Africa', '8 Possible Beginnings' and 'Representations of Black Female Bodies: Stereotypes'.

The first subchapter draws a comparison between Jean Rhys's novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. This parallel between the two novels demonstrates that race is not necessarily a factor influencing the degree of difficulty women have when fitting in because Rhys's novel has as a protagonist Antoinette, a white woman, while in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* the main character is Tashi, an African woman. Both novels are a sequel or prequel to another book that has managed to establish itself within the cannon. The protagonists, Antoinette and Tashi marry men who desire to "colonize" them and pressure them into assimilating a different culture. They are both forced to change their names and no matter how hard they try to satisfy their husbands, they simply end up being considered marginal, misunderstood, mad, and belonging to a mysterious culture. Consequently, Antoinette and Tashi are each other's double despite their different skin color.

Furthermore, the concepts of madness and silencing are tackled

as a cause and effect in women's lives. Various characters in Alice Walker's novels, such as Tashi, from *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, and Irene, from *By the Light of My Father's Smile*, go back in time only to reveal gruesome details in their sisters' history. There is physical abuse meant to stop many of them from talking or different types of torture to prevent them from contributing to a conversation. If they refuse to conform to these norms, they are quickly described as mad. Unfortunately, some even abandon any contact with reality because of the pressure.

Moreover, the nostalgia after Africa is noticed in both Alice Walker's novels and Kara Walker's silhouettes. In fact, Kara Walker's short motion picture, *8 Possible Beginnings*, is analyzed in detail so as to offer a greater understanding to this sense of alienation that black people have felt for such a long time. An attempt at an explanation takes form under the last subchapter. African American women have been seen very much as exotic beings. This, of course, also meant that they were portrayed as intellectually and spiritually inferior. As a consequence, they were not allowed to better themselves as such an ability was thought extinct in them. They could not learn how to read and write or express themselves artistically. Most representations of them focus on their bodies.

The second chapter, "Polymorphous Sexuality", bears in mind Freud's theory regarding abnormal perversity which occurs in a very repetitive, obsessive way as opposed to a normal perversity which lies within us all. Kara and Alice include various forms of sexuality in their work which might be deemed as taboo. Consequently, the chapter divides itself into three parts, each part describing a dominant form of sexuality: 'Women's Comfort in Other Women', 'Interracial Relations', and 'Aggressive Love'.

In the first part, more attention is given to Alice Walker as she is the one that stressed the theme of lesbianism. However, it is not only sexuality that brings women together. There are different types of comfort they find in each other either as friends or sisters. Kara

Walker portrays miscegenation in her entire work, presenting her perspective on the relations between white and black people. Alice Walker, on the contrary, rejects the presence of any Caucasian men or women. She takes on the systems left behind by white masters but replaces the masters with black men and slaves with black women.

Last but not least, both artists take a closer look at the aggressiveness of the nature of love. Black women were forced to submit and obey their masters', husbands', fathers', and sons' desires. As slaves they were beaten, raped, and practically transformed into sex objects meant to satisfy men's sado-masochistic dreams. Kara takes a step further, depicting bestiality in her paintings and silhouettes.

In the third chapter, "Creation and Destruction", I focused on the acts of creation and destruction and the manner in which they intertwine. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Alice Walker states that "Creation itself began with mutilation and rape...", an idea which Kara Walker manages to transmit through her silhouettes. Both women describe the process of birth as one that is more painful rather than blissful and offer an insight into African American women's struggle with violence. "Creation and Destruction" is made up of four sections: 'Giving Light', 'Motherhood', 'Torture and Death', and 'Creation'. The two women present a less cheerful perspective of motherhood. Alice Walker writes from her experience and her own struggle to combine writing with taking care of her daughter. Nonetheless, her conclusion is a positive and optimistic one and manages to reflect the advantages of motherhood in her novels.

Kara Walker takes a different path as she portrays the hard times black women had during slavery. They were making babies as if they were making jars of jam, not having one moment to get attached to or even get to know their offspring. For this reason, her cut-paper silhouettes tend to be grotesque and to depict motherhood as a messy and obligatory chore. Moreover, she presents scenes of torture and suicide so as to

emphasize the dreadful times before the Proclamation of Emancipation.

However, both Alice and Kara believe that creation and destruction quite often come hand in hand. It was only from the miserable moments that they had learnt something they wanted to transmit further on. Other times, it was only their outlet as artists that stopped them from turning to violence and self-loathing. They turned to their roots in order to understand their present and to deal with their being set aside as outcasts.

As one has observed, Kara's entire art, i.e. paintings, drawings, collages, shadow-puppetry, light projections, and video animations, shocks and awes. One might assume that in order to make a statement through visual art, one needs to be more direct in order to reach the audience instantaneously. Alice Walker has hundreds of pages at her disposition to make her ideas clear and to create an impact on her readers. She can afford the time to describe the subtle racism in her world, the roots and traditions of her ancestors and African-Americans' attempt to integrate into this New World. However, Kara has to portray all of the above in one cut paper silhouette.

Change and, especially, progress will prevent the chance of history repeating itself. If one fails to learn from one's mistakes and from the mistakes of others as well, one is bound to repeat the injustices and misjudgments from the past. Improving the present and the future does not mean ignoring and eventually forgetting past events. Kara Walker focuses on slavery from the moment it started until Abraham Lincoln made the Thirteenth Amendment official. She depicts most painful and grotesque events that no longer take place nowadays and are completely reserved for the past. If one was not aware of the period portrayed by Kara Walker, one would not be able to understand Alice Walker's novels. What would the angelus novus be like if he flew into the future without even taking a small glimpse at the past? How familiar would the surroundings be for him or how aware would he be of the meaning of his own skin, gestures and expressions? No longer would

African American women be capable of recognizing their sisters in suffering and reassure them that they are not alone and strange on account of their feelings of inadequacy. Celie, as an angel of history among Kara Walker's cut-paper silhouettes, observes the tragedy of her own life and manages to escape it.

*The dissertation was defended in July 2010.*

## American Studies

### American Studies Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca: The BA and MA Programs

Șerban Văetiși

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

If we were to describe the American Studies at the Babes-Bolyai University in two words we would say *multidisciplinarity* and *transatlantic perspective*. The members of our Department's faculty are teachers specializing in a wide range of fields related to English, literature, law, philosophy, cultural anthropology, political studies, film etc., while the Euro-American and global perspective (expressed in many course topics but, mostly, in the MA program in Transatlantic studies) is animated by a curricula addressing such issues as: modernity, ideologies, Americanization, postcolonialism, postmodernism, race, class, religion, or human rights – seen in particular and broader contexts, both theoretical and as comparative discourses, as well as social-cultural-political forms in the US, Europe and at the global level. Distinctively from many other departments of American studies in Romania, our department emerged outside of an English Language and Literature program, although we have faculty who graduated in English or Philology.

Founded in 1997, when a master degree in American Studies

was established at the Faculty of European Studies, the American Studies program in Cluj epitomized a long tradition and interest of American scholarship here, ranging from the interwar studies in American politics authored by the sociologist and Americanist Virgil Barbat to more recent courses held at various faculties at Babes-Bolyai University, dedicated to American topics, such as those taught in the departments of Letters, History, Philosophy or European Studies. Thus, in 2004, when the Faculty of European Studies and International Relations initiated the BA program in American Studies, and then, in 2009, when the MA program changed its name into Transatlantic Studies, we may say that a whole series of preoccupations matured into an institution where professional research and best learnings could be offered. Fortunately, within the process, fruitful relationships have been established with the Fulbright Commission in Romania and the Romanian Association for American Studies, with some American universities, such as Michigan State University or Plymouth State University, as well as with European partners such as the Department of Transatlantic and Media Studies of the University of Lodz, Poland. The Institute of English and American Studies in Debrecen, Hungary, and the American Studies Seminar in Salzburg, Austria. At the same time, members of our department's faculty studied or lectured in American universities. All this, together with the conferences they participated in, the articles and books they wrote, and the competent university environment where they evolved contributed significantly to the experience of a still young professional group. Recently, this experience of researching and teaching in American Studies took shape in a collective volume titled *America Today. Essays in American Studies*, coordinated by Professor Marius Jucan.

On a subjective evaluation I would say that our department is well versed in approaching and formulating discourses on contemporary issues concerning the American and Euro-American space, and the social, cultural,

political, legal, philosophical or artistic fundamentals and transformations these spaces experience.

The courses offered in the first year introduces the students with basic information on American politics, law, history, institutions, and literature, as well as with theoretical and critical knowledge about the American society (provided by such courses as "American Sociological Paradigms" and "American Urban Studies") and the very American studies as discipline (with the "Introduction to North American Studies" course).

In the second year students have the opportunity to apply this knowledge and broaden their background with courses and seminars on "American Constitution", the "American Political System", "The Civil Rights Movement", "Contemporary American Economics" and about the "African-American Culture and Literature", "Aesthetics of Jazz" or "Material Culture in America". Of more theoretical interest are, in the same study year, the courses on the "Philosophy of the American Pragmatism", the "American Legal Studies" or "Approaching Postmodernism".

In the third year students are oriented towards more discursive and critical approaches through courses on "American Intellectual History", "American Film", "American Contemporary Theatre", "American Arts" or "Representations of American Popular Culture" as well as with "American Perspective in International and Transatlantic Relations", "Interethnic Relations in the US" or "The Role of Religion in American Society". Besides these core curricula, students take two foreign language courses (English and another language from German, French, Spanish or Italian), complete an internship practice in a local institution, and, optionally, complete the pedagogical unit.

The two-year Master Program in Transatlantic Studies, coordinated together with the Department of International Relations, is a curriculum of interest for graduate students from many fields and scholarships, both Romanian and international Erasmus students. This program

benefited from the beginning, more than the Bachelor program, from the contribution of other professors throughout Babes-Bolyai University offering courses related to American and Transatlantic studies, as well as of some American professors participating in the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program. Our Master program acknowledged recently a particular focus on Latin America, as legitimate part of the American continent, and as suitable partner of the Euro-Atlantic dialogue.

The topics range from theoretical aspects of transatlantic relations, expressed in such courses as "Euro-Atlantic Intellectual Perspectives" or "Theories of International Relations" to more historical-political approaches on the "History of Transatlantic Relations: Europe, USA, South America", "The Cold War: A Transatlantic Perspective" or "Terrorism and State in the Transatlantic World". Some other courses are dedicated to critical reassessment of historical and contemporary processes linking the two regions, such as: "Transatlantic Geopolitics: Europe and the Two Americas", "Postcolonialism and Globalization in Transatlantic Perspective", "The Americanization in Europe and South America after 1945 and the Anti-American Backlash" or "Nationalism and Multiculturalism in the View of Global Theory", while other are designed to study contemporary processes affecting the Euro-Atlantic region, seen in a comparative perspective: "The US Constitution and The EU Constitutional Treaty: Comparative Juridical Perspectives" or "Transition and Consolidation in Eastern Europe and Latin America". Finally, some other courses, such as: "American and European Film in the 20<sup>th</sup> century", "Representing Social Dilemmas in Film: Europe and the Two Americas", "Dystopian Imagery in Euro-Atlantic Fiction and Movie" or "Individual and Community in North and South America" are representative as visual, literary and ethnographic support for critical descriptions and appraisals of Europe, Americas and the transatlantic relations.

As anyone can figure out, and the students generally appreciate

that, the methods involved in these courses are varied but balanced, covering a series of styles and approaches, from lectures on political history, philosophy or law to interpretations of literature, music and film, and from composing a scientific text to analyzing racial discourses, buildings, pop art or objects of consumption. From exposing theoretical debates on historical and contemporary problems, the courses and seminars invite students to participate in seminar debates, to critically think about controversial issues, or simply contribute with essay-like articles to the discussions suggested by the seminar topics and readings. Courses are normally interactive, many of them providing multimedia materials (photographic, audio, video) and the possibility to express alternative points of view or positions. Thus, values such as democracy, tolerance, participation, critical thinking, creativity etc. are suggested, exercised and internalized by students in a dynamic curriculum where they can profitably learn about America.

They have the opportunity to confront or merely converse about all these in the regular meeting at the American Club ("Clubul americanistilor"), where also students from other departments and even non-students are invited to participate. A great part of these curricula and activities is presented on the Department website.

The American Studies in Cluj have continuously received attention from students and people interested in America and Euro-American relations, and, over time, have constantly developed and diversified the courses offered in the curricula, for an increasingly numerous and diverse groups of students. Consequently their focus is not limited only on teaching and on the regular university activities, but also on collaborating with other institutions (cultural, media, or administrative) and on responding to various educational, scientific or professional requirements from the broader community.

# American Corners

## A Living Space for American Culture: American Corner Timișoara

**Coordinators: Sebastian Ciocan and Călin  
Murariu**

The American Corner Timișoara, a partnership between the US Embassy, Bucharest and the Timiș County Library, with the support of the Timiș County Council, is primarily an information and resource center for the public of all ages interested in US life and culture, as well as a platform for joint programs. It is the first Corner opened in Romania, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005. AC – Tm offers a collection of materials on topics covering US culture, lifestyle, and values, both in their historical evolution and as part of contemporary American society.



The American Corner Timișoara is interested in interacting directly with the public by using its resources in conducting programs from speakers and student advising, to art exhibits and professional development training. Our book collection is destined for a wide range of readers, from kindergarten children to retired people. Our titles include books on American history, geography, political science, art, literature, environment, educational advising, biographies, Gale reference resources, English grammar books and more. Over the last five years, we have organized

events on different kind of topics: lectures, film presentations, children's programs, educational advising sessions with the support of the Fulbright Commission from Bucharest, Digital Video Conferences, Holiday Events.

This year we have had important events happen at our American Corner. In our programs we have an enormous support from Peace Corps Volunteers, NGOs and the American Studies Program at West University - Timisoara. At the beginning of the year we were glad to be visited by Professor Tom Grunfeld, Senior Fulbrighter at West University in 2009. He returned to Timișoara for a month, in which he accorded enough time to our Corner for lectures requested by our public. Topics such as Middle East Relations with the European Union and the USA or Globalization and its impact on East European countries raised our audience's interest in Professor Grunfeld's talks. In the spring we had the opportunity to receive the visit of His Excellency James B. Gray, the US General Consul in Bucharest, for the third time at our Corner. His Excellency addressed the students, teachers and the general public present there on the importance of the Romanian – American relations and the role of the International Security Treaties. The audience asked questions, which meant that our topics were interesting for them.

Almost 3000 Romanian students are studying in the US with the financial support of American Universities. How is this possible, and how can our students apply for studying in the US? They could find out information through the Fulbright Commission in Bucharest, which organized two advising sessions in April 2010 for graduate and undergraduate studies. The participants were high-school students and college students, as well as teachers from Timisoara, interested in applying for the US educational system. Dr. Mihaela Arsene, the director of the Fulbright Advising Center, promised to help those students who want to apply

for financial aid in order to be admitted to US universities.



In May American Corner Timișoara was the host of the conference with the subject: "Ecocriticism and American Studies" organized with the support of the American Studies Master Program from West University Timisoara. A group of eleven students joined by their professors presented their works on environmental subjects inspired by the modern and contemporary American eco-literature. At the end of the conference the students attended a Digital Video Conference sustained by Dr. Stacy Alaimo from Texas University, Arlington, USA.

There are many good reasons for everyone to visit American Corner Timisoara, located downtown, in the main building of the Timiș County Library, P-ta Libertății nr. 3. ([www.bjt.ro/ac](http://www.bjt.ro/ac)) Welcome!

## Conference Participation

### ***East-West Cultural Passage Conference, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, April 2010***

**Anca Luminita Iancu and Ana Karina  
Schneider**

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

A tradition was inaugurated at the Department of British and American Studies at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu in communist times of

organizing an American Week in spring. When this tradition was taken up again in the mid-1990s, it gradually became one of the events organized under the aegis of the C. Peter Magrath Centre for Cross-cultural Studies (set up in 1999) and it incorporated the annual Fulbright scholars' conventions, while its student symposium component remained a constant. The events take place under the generic titles "East/West Cultural Passage" and "Cultures in Transit" respectively, although the conferences vary thematically from one year to the next.

This year's edition of the "East/West Cultural Passage" Conference, the ninth, organized by our Department in association with The Fulbright Commission in Romania, took place on April 23, 2010. Under the auspices of its generous theme, *English Studies Reconsidered*, the conference brought together Romanian scholars and Fulbright researchers who offered thought-provoking points of view on American Studies through literary, linguistic, or cultural studies lenses. The conference opened with Dr. Samuel Ludwig's (Université de Haute-Alsace, France) keynote speech on "Currencies and Realities: Capitalism, Formalism, and American Studies." Dr. Ludwig discussed issues of general theory (from formalism to poststructuralism) and demonstrated "the artificiality and inadequacy of such a project, which reduces all issues to a currency of 'exchange value'." The keynote speech was followed by concurrent sessions. In "Fictions and Representations," the presenters explored aspects of American history in the fiction of Philip Roth, transatlantic perspectives in D.H. Lawrence's fiction, instances of Jewishness in Kafka's short prose, and the metaphor of the desert in Cormac McCarthy's fiction. The section titled "New Perspectives on Language and Education" included presentations on the significance of foreign language acquisition as a means of self-development, the consequences of new media development on language, and an examination of patient-doctor communication (in English and Romanian) from a pragmatic

perspective. The "Cultural Encounters in Media and Film" section comprised multimedia presentations on film, the media, and photography, exploring the sex masquerades in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, the tensions in interracial and intercultural dating in two romantic comedies (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and *Something New*), the intriguing story of the short-lived "Radio New York International" in the 1980s, and a breath-taking visual journey through the American West. The sections on interdisciplinary and cross-cultural dialogues examined thought-provoking East-West perspectives on the environment, sports, medical sanatoria, immigrant identity, and on Chinese cultural values. The conference concluded with two round tables: one that brought together national and international scholars who debated "The Contribution of Modern Languages to Promoting Intercultural Communication" from a global perspective, and one that examined the local implications of the connections between secondary- and college education in Sibiu.

The "Cultures in Transit" student symposium (21-22 April 2010), too, opened with a keynote speech, delivered by last year's Fulbright senior scholar in Sibiu, Matthew Ciscel, on "The Impact of Global English on Linguistic Minorities in Romania and Moldova: Global Integration or American Cultural Imperialism?" The papers were then presented in parallel panels, covering almost as wide a range of literary and cultural topics as the conference and eliciting enthusiastic debates. The event also included a creative writing workshop conducted by Dr. Claudia Doroholschi of West University, Timisoara, as well as a much enjoyed performance by our Department's Reading Club of Brian Friel's play *Translations* and a music evening with the Confucius Institute Band at LBUS and student Flavia Dârvă of Timisoara.

A selection of the proceedings of both events is included in the two publications issued by the C. Peter Magrath Research Centre, *East/West Cultural Passage* and the students' journal, *Cultures in Transit*.

The American Week has of late become Anglo-American in scope, and, as of last year, it has encouraged the participation of academics and students from throughout the country. The 2011 edition of the "East/West Cultural Passage" Conference has already launched its Call for Papers, inviting presentations and round table proposals on the theme of "Contact Zones in the Global World." The organizers hope to welcome an ever increasing number of Anglists and Americanists, Romanian and foreign, to Sibiu in early May 2011, and thus to continue a prestigious tradition of English Studies and intercultural dialogue.

### **Third International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca, University of Vienna, Austria, May 2010**

**Rodica Ștefan**

Spiru Haret University, Bucharest

The University of Vienna hosted, between 22 and 25 May, the *Third International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca*, following the success reached by the previous editions held in Helsinki (2008) and Southampton (2009). About 200 delegates participated in the three main sections of the conference: sociolinguistics, methodology and teaching. Also, special time slots were allotted to visual presentations (posters).

In the first section, the contributions discussed the situational features of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as they have emerged in a wide variety of environments, geographically and professionally, ranging from East Asia workplaces to the Court of Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from Swiss University lecture halls to Catalan secondary schools. The use of language was analysed in relation with identity, accommodation strategies and cross-cultural aspects.

The papers in the methodology section focused on the emergent patterns in ELF pronunciation, lexico-grammar and creative use of idioms in the process of achieving a fluent and mutually understandable discourse. Equally, the use of various corpora (VOICE, ELFIA)



was described as a valuable support for in-depth research.

Finally, a great number of presentations discussed the implications of ELF in language education and in language policy. Of particular importance was the issue of designing and implementing specific courses, tests and materials, teachers' and learners' attitudes towards ELF, and intercultural awareness. On the other hand, the decision-making process as regards curricula in South Korea, Brazil and Finland was investigated from the point of view of the solutions found to teaching in a Lingua Franca environment.

All of the contributions addressed, in one way or another, the fundamental matters concerning ELF and its evolution. The spread of English and its status acquired along centuries have reached a global scale nowadays and therefore call for a reconsideration of traditional approaches. The fact that myriads of communicational interactions conducted in English occur between non-native speakers throughout the world on a daily basis has to be taken into account.

Moreover, ELF stands for the natural use of language in its own right and not for an unacceptable version of native English. ELF has developed its own formal features, motivated by authentic situations as globalisation brings together people of different linguistic backgrounds. Practitioners and researchers are therefore getting ever more interested in examining the nature and specificity of this new variety, and in its implications for teaching: which English (EFL or EFL?), what kind of communicative competence and, consequently, what kind of testing are more appropriate in the current educational context?

The conclusions drawn in the plenary sessions and panels of the four-day conference emphasise the need for further research in this quite dynamic field of linguistics and the assessment of ELF impact on communicational interactions in our globalised society. The fourth edition of the ELF Conference, to be held in Hong-Kong in 2011, will definitely present significant results in these respects.

### ***Travel, Trade and Ethnic Transformations - Seventh MESEA Conference, Pécs, Hungary, June 2010***

**Monica Manolachi**

University of Bucharest

Have you ever got lost on streets with strange names? Have you ever seen Othello stepping out of Shakespeare's drama to try the Devil's Fiddle? Have you ever tasted wine while listening to *The Blue Danube* in a vineyard under a wonderful sunset? Did you watch FIFA World Cup South Africa, when Germany lost 0:1 against Serbia? Have you ever tried cold berries soup or seen teenagers smoking narghile in the central park? Have you taken photos in a church with the priest and after half an hour relaxed on the carpet in a mosque? Have you seen an Irish bridegroom wearing kilt? You may have done all of these, but what if they happened in the same place, the European cultural capital of 2010: Pécs, Hungary?

The same town was the choice of the seventh conference organized by The Society for Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas (MESEA) at the University of Pécs. The society acts as an international forum for cooperation between cultures of Europe and the Americas in their circum-Atlantic relations from a transdisciplinary literary, historical and cultural studies perspective. The president of the society, Prof. Dorothea Fisher-Hornung from Heidelberg University, the local director Monika Fodor and their team were very efficient in organizing this remarkable international event. It gathered almost 150 papers presented by scholars from four continents, especially from North America and Europe. The nine Romanian participants represented the roots/routes dichotomy, which was the slogan of the conference, some of them coming from Romanian universities, others from abroad.

There were four keynote lectures tackling pressing issues often left unspoken. The first was offered by Prof. Richard Sharpley from the University of Central Lancashire, who explored the extent

to which community development in general and ethnic identity in particular may be enhanced by tourism. The second was delivered by Prof. Miklos Kontra from the University of Szeged. His lecture on language rights, nations and ethnic communities produced mixed reactions among the audience, which led to admit that Europe still has to learn from the postcolonial experience and that the aim should be not to obstinately preserve a language but to offer equal chances and reduce conflict. Prof. Minoo Moallem from University of California was the third keynote lecturer. She approached the symbol of the Persian carpet and the ethnic transformations it implies in a digital world, highlighting the difference between a book manuscript and a digital project, the latter offering a more complex framework for weaving our reality. The fourth lecture by the Canadian author Aritha van Herk was an essay on the subtleties of the hotel culture as a space between community and estrangement that hinges the privilege of travel and homeliness. Apart from these, the agenda included a plenary session that discussed the cooperation between the journal of *Atlantic Studies* published by Routledge and the MESEA event.



Regarding the content of the conference, the 42 panels covered themes such as: the relation between fiction and autobiography in the context of travel; traveling texts and metaphors; ethnic transitions and translations; space and the politics of identity formation and representation; anthropology as examination and introspection; transnational journeys in history and anthropology; mobility and the

politics of nationhood; the politics and poetics of diaspora; mapping transcultural geographies and genealogies; gendered ethnographies of travel and return at the margins of Europe; writings about Eastern encounters and Balkan travels; Occidentalism versus Orientalism; Africa as destination and its relationships with Europe and America; race, space, nation in the Caribbean; re-considering South America; Native American perspectives on travel and trade; from new worlds back to old homelands in Irish diaspora fiction; transnational crossings in Asian American and Asian Dutch narratives; Canadian travelogues; ecotourism; transnational ethnic migration in European film; transoceanic hip-hop; technology, media and art trade. However, no matter how large a list of themes may be and how many questions they raise, there are always still many others which remain unanswered publicly.

Among the papers presented at the conference, some of those delivered by the Romanian academics are: *A Traveling Self with No Return Address: Anca Vlasopolos* (Ioana Luca, National Taiwan Normal University), *The Travel and Translation of Ethnic Minority Discourse from the US to Romania – The Case of Roma* (Ludmila Martanovschi, Ovidius University), *Romanian Immigrant Travel Routes to America* (Mihaela Mudure, Babes-Bolyai University), *Mother Metaphors in Contemporary Caribbean British Poetry* (Monica Manolachi, University of Bucharest).

To cultivate more informal interaction, the program of the conference featured several social events such as a welcome reception with the Mayor of Pécs and an evening of readings and performances. There was also a tour to a local open air sculpture site and to the most southern Hungarian town, Siklós. Here we visited the fortress that bears the history of the Battle of Mohács (1526), when the Ottoman Empire occupied a large part of Hungary. After five centuries, the mosque and the Serbian church still in service for a few parishioners are a proof of interethnic cooperation in the region. The last evening was dedicated to a trip to Villány, a place with famous

vineyards where the conference dinner took place.

I would also like to mention that, at the site of the conference, there was a stand with books where one could buy titles in English, some of them translations of Hungarian literature, both classical and contemporary. As an undergraduate who studied Hungarian language and culture as a minor, I was happy to find a collection of short stories translated from Hungarian, *Give or Take a Day*, edited by Layos Szakolczay, and a Bloodaxe edition of modern Hungarian poetry, *The Colonnade of Teeth*, edited by George Gömöri and George Szirtes.

### ***Constructions of Identity VI: Identity and Globalization, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, October 2010***

**Mihaela Cristina Lazăr**

Ovidius University Constanța

An extremely generous theme, identity became the hot topic of debate and argument at the Department of English Language and Literature of Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca during the last days of October. Already following a well-established tradition in this particular field, The Faculty of Letters at Babes-Bolyai gathers, every two years, conferees from all corners of the country as well as from abroad. For two days, the 28-29th of October, academics strove to pinpoint different perspectives on the subject of discussion, ranging from American and British literature, to popular culture, ELT, gender, and language studies. "Identification" with the postmodern self was inevitable: postmodernity transpired from the very extensive range of the papers, their challenging outlooks and conclusions, the focus on globalisation, and from this actual „bricolage" of identities, to borrow one of the conferees' way of putting it. A celebration of difference, given the title of the conference and the variety of topics, this event covered literary, cultural, didactic, sociolinguistic and political subjects.

The conference opened on the 28th with a plenary meeting where the organizers and hosts, among whom Dr. Andrei Marga, the

Rector of the University, Dr. Corin Braga, Dean of the Faculty of Letters, and Dr. Mihai Zdrengea, Head of the Department of English Language and Literature, also Conference Chairperson, held welcoming speeches. This initial section was followed by two keynote lectures, the first of which was entitled *Young and Adult Speech – Competing Discourses in the Context of Globalization*, presented by Dr. Maria Georgieva. The second touched a more literary topic: Dr. Pia Brinzeu's lecture analyzed *Surfictional Intratextuality* in Raymond Federman's work.

The sessions were divided according to the line of research, yet, apparently, the most "crowded" and popular ones were American Literature, British and Commonwealth Literature and Cultural Studies, since they featured up to five "reprises". Other sessions were less represented, such as Language Studies, ELT, Literary Theory, Translation Studies and Gender Studies. The latter, where I participated with a paper on gender roles, entitled *The Will to Self: Masculine and Feminine Identity in Will Self's Cock and Bull* was a notably fruitful session, varying from social aspects of identity to heterogeneous literary backgrounds.

All in all, the theme of identity was subjected to close scrutiny, elaborated upon, examined in all its pulsating components, generating productive debates and interesting conclusions, and, albeit being such a complex umbrella term, it successfully managed to encompass the proposed target of the conference.

### ***Language, Literature and Cultural Policies – Centres and (Ex-)Centricities, University of Craiova, November 2010***

**Aloisia Sorop**

University of Craiova

In mid-November Craiova hosted the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference 'Language, Literature and Cultural Policies' that the local University and the Ruhr University Bochum organized. This year's topic,

'Centres and (Ex-)Centricities' appealed to specialists and doctoral students from various fields of research at home and abroad as it offered a rich range of possibilities for interpretation, metaphorization and conceptualization.

The two plenary lectures were delivered by two outstanding academic figures: Professor Brian Leonard Mott from the University of Barcelona and Professor Christian Moraru from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Professor Brian Leonard Mott has had longstanding expertise in English phonetics and phonology and his lecture posed the issue whether the actual changes in English phonetics should call for a readjustment of the teaching of English pronunciation to overseas students. Defending the theory that salient changes should not be overlooked but be taught using the symbols that current pronunciation dictionaries provide, Professor Mott suggested the introduction of such minor modifications as L-vocalization, YOD-coalescence and intrusive [r].

Professor Christian Moraru, a specialist in literary theory, 20<sup>th</sup> century American literature and the relation between globalism and culture, dealt with translation as a transnational enterprise within the context of fast globalization and its impact on the modern world. If traditional theories of translation relied mainly on the linguistic model of semantic accuracy, nowadays' model emphasizes the cultural and historical context of the work translated as well as the translation's own context and author. Professor Moraru also highlighted the need that literary/philosophical/cultural works should be retranslated every 50 years or so to provide the new generation of readers with an updated version of the respective work, one in keeping with the new cultural assets that such a long/short period of time produces.

Benefiting from the conference's generous topic the participants took all sorts of liberties and played *ad libitum* with the concepts of centre and (ex-)centricity. I am going to mention only a few papers, randomly chosen, to illustrate the scope of the conference. In the Literary/Cultural Studies section the presenters

discussed how the adaptations of existing works in opera (librettos) can affect the literary canon, its centre and periphery, they analysed the 2008 Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Hamlet* and enlarged upon 'generic eccentricity' and 'generic centre' in Henry Fielding's 'comic romances'.

In the British and Commonwealth Studies section several papers dealt with literary eccentricities whether they were called 'rewriting' (Joyce Carol Oates and Will Self), 'reworking' of old legends (Will Self's *My Idea of Fun*), poets writing prose and prose writers writing poetry (Alice Walker and Jean Toomer).

In the American Studies section the tension between centres and (ex)centres was best revealed in such papers that dealt with logocentric struggles in the academic world (David Mamet's *Oleanna*), narrative innovation (Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*), the concept of postmodern woman (Gail Godwin's *His House*)

The sections devoted to Theoretical Linguistics and Translation Studies offered the participants plenty of opportunities to discuss such issues as the functional and pragmatic approaches to clichés, English loans in Romanian and stereotypical patterns in the translation of EU legislative documents.

Interesting and reflecting the current concerns of teachers of English, the papers presented in the Section of ELT and ESP dealt with issues relating to teacher-mentors training and teaching general language versus teaching professional sub-language.

The conference held in Craiova proved both challenging and seminal as a forum for debates, exchanging opinions, verifying hypotheses, and finally endorsing the idea that both centres and (ex-)centricities are inspirational *loci* for spiritual progress.

## Academic Exchanges and Summer Schools

**Summer School at Wayne State University, Detroit, USA, May 2010**

**Costinela Dragan**

University of Bucharest

Organized by Wayne State University Department of English and the Bavarian-American Academy in Munich, the Second International Summer Academy for Doctoral Students and Junior Faculty in American Studies provided in-depth attention to Dissertation and Habilitation projects by 24 doctoral students and junior faculty, and presented a series of keynote lectures in American Studies by speakers from WSU, other American and German universities.

In keeping with the WSU mission to foster interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange across the Atlantic, the 2010 summer school lived up the expectations given the varied backgrounds of the participants and the diverse topics of research that were tackled - from Detroit and associated topics such as Fordism, social modernity, African-American culture, social space, to gender studies, food studies etc.

The boost for dialogue was given by Prof. Barrett Watten from WSU whose introductions to the Detroit urban space, the in-depth analysis of each presented project and the emphasis on the current cultural challenges, offered obvious benefits and a mind blowing experience to European students.

The 12 days of summer school, the WSU campus, the city of Detroit created a unique scholarly event. Every minute was information – presentations, plenary lectures, comments, suggestions and brainstorming, not to mention DIA, the tour at the Rouge plant and Greenwich Village, tours of the Motown Museum and urban gardens, the Heidelberg project and the downtown hoedown.

That was for me, the best way of traveling, learning and discovering the U.S.A. With a little distance now – in terms of time and space – I really think I accomplished a lot (intellectually and personally). I have loved the intellectually buzz in the new created community, the friendly atmosphere, the mixture of different personalities and the diverse perspectives and approaches to a multitude of topics.

### **Center for the Study of the Americas Summer School, Graz University, Austria, July-August 2010**

**Cristina Georgiana Voicu**

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași

Forty-five students and twelve teachers from eighteen nations participated in the third C.SAS/Utrecht Network summer school from July 18th until August 1st, 2010. In this two-week course students and teachers dedicated themselves to the interdisciplinary analysis of the Americas. My participation in the Utrecht Network Inter-American Summer School 2010 at Graz University entitled *The Americas: When One is Not Enough* was motivated by the intention of getting more profound knowledge about new conceptual approaches regarding the Americas in time of globalization, as well as by the wish of improving my academic insights into the discursive and symbolic constructions of the 'Americas' seen from the political, historical, literature and cultural viewpoints.

By attending this summer school courses/seminars, I was interested in marking a clear difference between different cultures and concepts of national identities. The study I undertook during the summer school was centred upon the construction of American identities with a focus on the shifting of identities that transcended the Americas over the past century. Transgression concepts such as 'hybridity', 'alterity', 'diaspora', 'creolization', 'transculturalization' and 'syncretism' have to an increasing extent become key concepts in various attempts at escaping the problems of suppression and

exclusion involved in the globalization process of culture. Our purpose of focusing on concepts of transgression was to try to develop conceptual spaces within which it is possible to grasp and to study cultural identity without resorting to cultural essentialism. A discussion of cultural alterity, identity, diffusion and race led on to consideration of how syncretism and hybridity seem to do duty as terms for the management of the more esoteric cultural aspects of the globalization phenomenon. My argument focused on cultural creativity – innovation and authenticity, ownership of cultural forms, and of technological modes of cultural mix. This fact links Americas' identity to more explicit political terminologies and constructs hybrid artefacts as commodities of difference in the context of culture.



Moreover, I was interested in the topic of the lectures and of the seminar modules because of the analytical perspectives and hemispheric approaches, suggesting that we sharpen our attention towards the complexities of the power in transgressions as well as in constructions of essentialist identities. We need to move beyond the limitations of both identity politics and the critique of essentialism without losing sight of the commitment to social and cultural critique. On the other hand, I argue that we should not only be concerned if one America is not enough, but also how the notions of cultural identity and alterity are applied, by whom, to what ends and articulated with which other elements. Transcending the narrow confines of national perspectives and the aspects that influence identity constructions my interest in the seminars is sustained by the different discourses and the so-called 'border thinking' Inter-American approach. Turning notions of transgression into

analytical, rather than descriptive, new concepts opened up new fields of study and new possibilities for critique.

Finally, the wish to set up cultural relationships and to widen my knowledge horizon in the university scientific framework was another reason for opting for this International Summer School. Such a rich learning experience allowed me to follow up particular interests for my PhD research, in terms of American experience. I decided to undertake Summer School 'Identities' seminar to spread out my work with my students and to have a more balanced workload across all areas of my life. I have found the International Summer School 2010: *The Americas: When one is not enough* to be challenging and stimulating and taught in a relaxed learning environment besides the flexibility to focus in a particular subject of interest. The intensive nature of study really helped me to understand the information. It was like a 'Journey into Otherness on the Road to the Americas'. During my staying at Seggau Castle, I really developed strong friendships in the smaller classes, which offered more interaction and sharing of ideas that really made it a much more enjoyable process. I also appreciated the academic staff of the University of Graz for their professional organization of the program. I am planning to go to Seggau in 2011 as well and I recommend this Summer School to anyone wishing to complete their degree quicker, and especially if there is a subject on offer they feel passionately about. For other Students' Comments about the Summer School, check:

[http://www.uni-graz.at/zas1www/zas1www\\_summer\\_school1/endorsements.htm](http://www.uni-graz.at/zas1www/zas1www_summer_school1/endorsements.htm)

### **The Eastern Generative Grammar Summer School at Ovidius University, Constanta, Romania, July-August 2010**

**Costin Valentin Oancea**

University of Bucharest

This year Romania was privileged to host the 17<sup>th</sup> Central European Summer School in Generative



Grammar, or simply the EGG, as the participants baptized it. The summer school was held at Ovidius University, Faculty of Letters, in Constanța and was organized by Professor Tobias Scheer (University of Nice, France), Professor Michal Starke (University of Tromsø, Norway) and by our local organizer, assistant professor Nicoleta Sava (Ovidius University). The EGG started on July 26<sup>th</sup> and ended on August 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, offering the egg-ers two weeks of hardcore linguistics.

In this summer school there are several things, both intellectual and social, that the organizers try to achieve: a place where it feels nice to do intensive intellectual work, a place which is cheap enough for everybody to assist, it is for medium/advanced people with or without a background in generative grammar, an extremely useful kick for beginners and a place that invites new ideas rather than the rich-and-famous established scholars. All these ideals represent the school's "manifesto".

In these two weeks the participants got acquainted with the latest developments in phonology and syntax. For the phonology courses I would like to mention the professors who gave incredible lectures: Joe Patter, Mark Van Oostendorp, Tobias Scheer and Charles Reiss. For the syntax part: Marika Lekakou, Michal Starke, Omer Preminger, Roberta D'Alessandro, Tarald Taraldsen and Lobke Aelbrecht. They are all highly respected academics and well-known linguists who came to teach, for free, at this summer school. From my point of view, as participant, it was an extremely interesting experience, this being my second EGG. You are invited to choose the courses that interest you most and all takes place in a relaxed and very friendly atmosphere, an ideal place for debates, discussions. I remember that last year, in 2009, besides syntax and phonology there had also been classes on language acquisition. Every year the focus is on different aspects of generative grammar. In the evening, parties are organized and you can enjoy a fruitful conversation at the bar with a beer/juice in front of you. This year, people really enjoyed going to the

beach, singing, telling jokes and discuss computation in phonology or nanosyntax. So, you have no excuse but to come to the EGG and quench your thirst for linguistics!

## Research Projects

### EAAS Intra-European Travel Grant, Konstanz University, Germany

Sorina Chiper

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi

In August 2010, an Intra-European travel grant from the European Association for American Studies gave me the opportunity to work on my PhD dissertation in Konstanz University. I had the privilege to conduct research in an impressive library that felt like a busy academic beehive on weekdays as well as during the weekend, during daytime as well as late at night. The recent bibliographical material that I found in the library stacks as well as the electronic resources available on campus, together with the fruitful conversations that I had with professors in the American Studies and British Studies department, have been instrumental in sharpening the focus of my dissertation. When I started my PhD program, I planned to work on American autobiography in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by combining literary studies with anthropological insights into the cultural phenomenon of life writing in the US. The purpose of my research in Konstanz was to refine the theoretical framework of my dissertation, to narrow down my path of investigation and to define my line of argument.

In contrast to Gusdorf's view of autobiography as a culture-specific genre, that has flourished in the West as an apologetics of the individual, I propose a reinvestigation of canonical American autobiographies (Henry Adams's *The Education of Henry Adams*, Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and *Everybody's Autobiography*, Norman Mailer's *Advertisements of*

*Myself* and Philip Roth's *The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography*, *Operation Shylock* and *Patrimony*) as illustrations of what Paul John Eakin calls "relational self". Drawing on findings in psychology and neurology, Eakin has built a theory of the self that takes into account the formative role of significant others in the development of the self and the relevance of the body in one's sense of self. In my analysis, I dwell on the formation and representation of relational selves in the above mentioned autobiographies, against the background of the American celebrity culture of which the four authors were part.

Celebrity culture was only in its inception in Adams's time; with Gertrude Stein, however, the publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* turned her into a celebrity figure in America, and as a result, it brought changes to her perception, representation and experience of her self, which are all expressed in *Everybody's Autobiography*. Mailer's *Advertisements of Myself* traces his conscious effort and struggle to enter the American celebrity culture, to sell himself – his literary self – and enjoy the benefits bestowed by the American cult of celebrities on the individuals who manage to succeed in the literary culture industry. Philip Roth, on the other hand, seems to deny himself the spoils, advantages, and potential for political engagement that seem to be naturally bestowed on celebrity icons. In *Operation Shylock*, his double, in Israel, legitimizes his impersonation precisely on claims that Roth himself – the "real" Philip Roth – fails to acknowledge the impact that he can have in the world of international politics to support the agenda of Israeli Jews. The ironic, meta-autobiographical and self-undermining style in which Roth writes (with the exception of *Patrimony*), as well as his multiple selves, complicate the notion of a relational self, by inviting questions on the "reality" and "fictionality" of possible selves.

I myself am a relational self and as such, I feel that I owe to express my gratitude to the academic "significant others" who have made it possible for me to spend a month in a vibrant



academic environment, and to focus exclusively on mapping the territory of my future dissertation: Prof. Stefan Avadanei, my supervisor at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iasi, Dr. Monika Reif Huelser from Konstanz University, and Dr. Stephen Mettersen, the EAAS treasurer. They have all been extremely supportive in the application process and provided valuable advice after I was awarded the grant.

## Ph.D. Theses

### **The American Cinematic Culture: Consumerism, Social Control, and Individual Freedoms**

Corina Mărculescu

University of Bucharest

This study proposes to explore strategies of social control within the postmodern American culture organized around consumption, mass-media, information and technology. The focus of my investigation is the “soft” control, subtle and insidious, through entertainment and cinematic imagination, using seduction rather than coercive measures, in a consumer and media society turned into a “society of the spectacle” (to use French media theorist Guy Debord’s famous phrase).

The cinematic culture is a culture in which the quotidian is being increasingly influenced and defined by its relationship with various visual media. My paper, therefore, understands “the cinematic” as a cultural, social and political phenomenon extending far beyond the screen, not just as a phenomenon confined to moving image media such as film and television. Reflecting the convergence of media culture, technology and consumerism, “the cinematic” concerns their role as powerful ideological tools, as instruments of seduction and (self)surveillance, as primary determinants of identity for Americans, shaping opinions and perceptions, structuring ways of

knowing, social relations, racism, class polarization.

My argument is further supported by a comparative study of the social control in Romania under Communist rule. The comparative analysis is ultimately meant to explain the efficiency of the American method of social control, of building and maintaining consent, pointing to the viability of American democracy while revealing possible causes that led to the failure of the Communist experiment in Romania.

On the other hand, the comparison also reveals problems of the American consumer culture, such as the potential of indoctrination and uniformity, the atomization of the society, as well as incoherencies of the notion of “freedom” when it is reduced to consumer choice. The collapse of the communist alternative made even more evident the shortcomings of the market-centered version of freedom, previously obscured or played down when compared to the much less alluring aspects of the totalitarian regime.

To illustrate the role of “the cinematic” in the processes of social control in the American media and consumer culture, the case studies are taken from film and literature. I also use such visual texts as documentaries (Edvins Snore’s *The Soviet Story*, 2008, and Florin Iepan’s *Born to Order – Children of the Decree*, 2004), advertisements and news images. The literary texts are represented by the novels of American writer Don DeLillo, reflecting the anxieties and uncertainties of the modern man in a culture that promises consumer happiness and freedom to choose at every turn, and the novels of the Romanian writers Marin Sorescu and Augustin Buzura, illustrating a simulacrum of civil liberties in a universe plagued by fear and duplicity. I also analyze the travel narratives of French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (*America*) and Romanian writer, journalist and political analyst Stelian Tanase (*L.A. vs N.Y. – Jurnal american*) who visited America in the ‘80s and the ‘90s, respectively. Stelian Tanase’s ‘American diary’ is a critical reflection of American realities filtered through his own

personal communist and post-communist experiences.

The cinematic works I draw upon are D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Bamboozled* (2000) directed by black filmmaker Spike Lee, and *The Business of Fancydancing* (2002), the directorial debut of American Indian writer Sherman Alexie. In these films an extremely subtle and devious type of social control is achieved, mostly through commodifying the ethnic others’ bodies and cultural products, through seducing, bamboozling them into dancing to the whites’ tune. However, Alexie’s film in particular offers as well alternatives of survival and active resistance, and of joining, on equal footing, the mainstream culture rather than becoming separate part of it.

The thesis is structured in five chapters. The first chapter, *Consumption as Social Control*, provides the theoretical framework of the analysis, addressing such concepts as “naturalized” power (Gramsci), consumerism and the manufacturing of desire, overall commodification as the cultural logic of postmodernism, of “late”, postindustrial, consumer capitalism (Jameson), media manipulation, cinematic discourse (Denzin) and surveillance culture, spectacle (Debord) and image culture, hyperreality and simulation (Baudrillard), space and its metamorphoses in relation to power and the visual, space as social production controlled by the dominant class (Lefebvre), ideology of the future, power invested in acceleration, information as a new type of social control.

The second chapter, *The Omnipresent Eye of Power*, juxtaposes structures and mechanisms of power and control in two different cultural spaces – in Romania under Communism, a country trapped in a labyrinth of ideological masquerade and police surveillance, and in the U.S. where spectacles have taken the place of surveillance yet without losing any of the Panopticon’s disciplining power. My study shows that strategies of social control like seduction, surveillance, fear, are at work in both systems but the motivations, the cultural contexts, their mechanisms and consequences, their character and

intensity are, to a great extent, different. It also shows how utopian, ambitious projects of "social engineering" and visions of a bright future turn into instruments of social control and oppression, leading to class/race/ethnic cleansing or, in the consumer ideology, to the exclusion of those who do not live up to the condition of compulsive, or at least reliable, consumers.

The third chapter, *The Definition of the Everyday by the Cinematic: Jean Baudrillard's America*, illustrates the social control through the consumption of images in Reagan's America, highlighting the convergence of the notions of "spectacle", "cinematic", "hyperreal" when defining reality for the American consumer. In Baudrillard's view, Reagan is the perfect exponent of the cinematic culture, illustrating the so-called "consensus around simulation". In Baudrillard's America, everything is commercialized, from consumer goods to politicians and lifestyles; everything turns into a spectacle, moving into the televised space, in a culture whose ideology is the entertainment.

The fourth chapter, *Media Saturation, Postmodern Anxiety, and Social Control in Don DeLillo's Novels*, illustrates what Baudrillard terms "the hyperreal" quality of American life, exposing the controlling powers of spectacle, media and technology. In DeLillo's novels the postmodern condition manifests as a kind of information overload as the protagonists move through a world increasingly submerged in marketing imagery and media stimuli, a culture of "stimulation and simulation". This omnipresent "white noise" surrounds the characters, seduces and disorients them, and ultimately frightens them. The (irrational) fear, the abandonment of critical thinking, creates the conditions for control and exploitation by powerful institutions. I also discuss in this chapter the social control exerted through the ideology of the future promoted by the ubiquitous discourses of media and technology, through the "logic of consumption", the hegemony of capital or the pressures of the network society. Much of DeLillo's work also reflects the struggle for world narration in the age of global

media; consequently, I examine the various discourses competing for the control and influence over human imagination (the totalitarian narrative and the Cold War narrative, the capital market discourse, the narrative of spectacle and dark sensationalism, the terrorist narrative). To all this, DeLillo opposes a counter-narrative of authenticity and human dimension. In fact all of DeLillo's work points to the value of forgotten quotidian things in the fast-paced contemporary world, to the "humble" everyday narrative, to deceleration and self-examination (as an individual and as a nation), to inner freedom and genuine connection. And that is actually what my own thesis ultimately pleads for.

The final chapter, *Commodifying the Other as Strategy of Social Control: The Case of Ethnic Film*, investigates the relation between the commodification of the ethnic Other and racist politics, proposing a reconsideration of the African-American and Native American identity in the larger context of American entertainment and capitalistic enterprise in which popular culture has become such a powerful ideological tool in the hands of white colonizers. The omnipresent "white noise" – the oppressive noise of white mass-produced culture that surrounds people and blurs their sense of reality – does not spare the poor yet media-saturated Indian reservation; here its role is even more complex, serving "white propaganda" while silencing all other narratives, the Indian voices, their stories, their truth. Acknowledging the power of television, film, popular culture in general, to persuade and define, American Indian filmmaker Sherman Alexie realizes that he must take advantage of today's media in order to expose the way Indians have been represented in Hollywood cinematic discourses, the "tragic simulations" of Indian identity – Indians created in American imaginations and thus much easier to control and dominate. With Alexie humor is no longer an instrument of control and oppression as in the blackface minstrelsy; on the contrary, Alexie presents humor, performance, play as powerful political tools, as

creative-subversive acts and means of cultural survival for American Indians, of making money, gaining power and political voice.

The conclusions outline the arguments which support the efficiency of the American method of building popular consent. The secret is the identification of the dominant interests with the interests of the society at large, in contrast with the communists' incapacity of "naturalizing" power. Another distinctive feature of America is the extraordinary capacity of reconciling its great ethnic, religious, socio-economic diversity. On the other hand the comparative study reveals possible excesses of the advanced capitalist system and potential abuses of power. One of the lessons that the current global economic crisis seems to be teaching is that American capitalism should no longer settle for its so far taken-for-granted superiority to Communism. There is no doubt that a flawed democracy is preferable to a totalitarian utopia. In the last analysis, democracy, flawed as it is, remains the best existing formula, the system that best guarantees individual rights. But American capitalism has to rethink, reform, reinvent itself in order to survive, to face the challenges of the future, to protect the middle class (the bedrock of the American society).

In a culture of mediating technologies and endlessly recycling images, of throw-away, replaceable commodities, in this liquid modernity where those engaged in the consumer race seem to rule and where a "profit morality" seems to no longer exist, in a world governed by "cost-benefit analysis" and by the triumph of efficiency as the ultimate standard of value, my study points to the need to recover the moral sense, and, along with it, the critical thinking as a shield against mind control and "total integration".

My paper ultimately pleads for a return to America's founding values – a genuine return, not just a resuscitation of old clichés. A self-examination, a recovery of the ethical and moral principles, a reassessment of values and priorities would be just as refreshing for each individual as for the nation as a whole. This will make it even more receptive to outside messages

and signals, and more open to dialogue, to various messages, warnings, voices, from within and from without. America will thus continue to be inspiration to people all over the world as the land where man is free to develop his genius and to be the architect of his own destiny.

*The thesis was defended in  
June 2010*

## **Space and Metropolitan Identities: Readings of New York City in the Late Twentieth Century American Novel**

**Ioana Stamatescu**

University of Bucharest

The dissertation examines the spatial framework of New York City in relation to the self – to contemporary identity and sensibility – in the fictional discourse of novels written in the late twentieth century. It explores how during a time period mostly delineated between 1980s and 2000s, novels about the city deal with a range of strategies to depict and investigate problems of subjectivity and spatiality.

Since the city and the self are mutually dependent and manifest themselves through each other, my interest lies in the various kinds of spatial and personal constructions and perceptions that arise out of this reciprocally constructive and/or deconstructive relation and the ways identity is shaped by or shapes the urban space it inhabits. The different ways the city impacts the self and the various imagery and strategies the latter uses to cope with and make sense of the urban environment give rise to alternative, personal spaces and sometimes alternative identities that the characters try to adopt as adjustment mechanisms, defense strategies or escapist projects. New York represents the spatial framework within which this imagery and these spatial perceptions arose in the novels discussed and on which my analysis is developed.

The novels included were all written by authors born and residing in New York City, with the exception

of Toni Morrison, who was born in Ohio and later moved to New York. They represent the three most prominent ethnicities in New York, as far as cultural production and number of representatives are concerned: the American-born, the African American and the Hispanic-born population (the latter being illustrated by the Cuban-American writer Oscar Hijuelos and the Puerto-Rican Ernesto Quinonez) and they also describe different areas of New York City, from the Lower East Side and Wall Street, to Harlem and the Bronx.

The period, as mentioned before, spans approximately three decades, however the novels are not organized considering their temporal precedence, but rather according to the types of cityscapes and the various identities they describe. Thus, the current arrangement suggests a shift in the way the city and the self are perceived and negotiated and in the way New York City is fictionally portrayed as a result. Hence, the first two chapters ("The City of Hypervisibility, Schizophrenia and Commodity Culture: Don DeLillo's *Great Jones Street*" and "The Mysteries of the City of 'Nowhere' and 'Anywhere' - Paul Auster's *City of Glass*") foreground a city-self dynamics centered on the anxieties of a more individualistic consciousness whose depths the texts delve into, as well as into its spatial insertion. They also explore the depths of the space the characters are or are not grounded into, with all its implications on identity construction. On the other hand, the last two chapters ("A City of 'lowercase people': Ernesto Quinonez's *Bodega Dreams*" and "Between Memory and History: Retrieving the Traces of a Layered City in Richard Price's *Lush Life*"), particularly the last one, foreground a preoccupation with the diversity of identities and scapes that compete in the city – a space that is investigated in its lateral sprawl and ramifications, as far as the various ethnoscapings are concerned, rather than in the depth of its implications regarding a single representative consciousness, like those in the first two novels analyzed. *Lush Life* puts forth different consciousnesses, each having singular relations to the space they inhabit. They all

represent different ways of spatial insertion of the self in a contemporary city that recognizes its diverse ethnoscapings, as well as the various layers of temporal reinscription of its space. Chapter four, "Between Park Avenue and Bronx: New York City and its Powerscapes in Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities*", situated in the middle, initiates the shift to a New York City that puts forth its multicultural dimension, even if in a limited, dualistic vision. The chapters that succeed it, "The (G)host City: Oscar Hijuelos's *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*" and "Erotics and Violence in the City: Toni Morrison's *Jazz*" focus on specific ethnoscapings and the decentered identities associated to them.

Beyond the multifarious responses that the city triggers in the novels examined, the *Conclusions* chapter delineates certain tropes describing the city-self dynamics which are recurrent in most novels and which paint a picture of the contemporary dimension of metropolitan sensibility that the current thesis focuses on: hyperreality and simulacra, a pedestrian rhetoric that foregrounds a contemporary form of dialogue between space and self, a state of in-betweenness that most novels put forth in various guises, a dimension of violence, the socially constructed city contrasted with a city of the imagination, where space is a pure fantasy or a projection of the characters' subjectivity. There is also an erotic dimension that the city-self coordinate makes visible in the novels discussed, interestingly foreshadowed by that of violence.

Starting from the fictional discourse to the social one and complementing the analysis with theories focusing on identity, both individual or social, and spatial, the thesis intends to show how the texts can be used for creating not only an image of the late twentieth century American urban novel, but also an image of contemporary urban sensibility, of its anxieties and means of expression.

*The thesis was defended in  
October 2010.*

## Book Reviews

### **America Today. American Studies.**

Ed. Marius Jucan

Tribuna, Cluj-Napoca, 2010

**Claudia Fizeșan**

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

The volume edited by Professor Marius Jucan comprises a wide variety of topics concerning contemporary American issues, that exert a massive impact on the entire world. Rather than arguing for the legitimacy of American studies, the concept of this volume is more practical: it simply displays their relevancy with each new chapter. We therefore have approaches of the American world and its pervasive global influence from philosophy, political science, cultural studies, literature, history, law, anthropology.

Andrei Marga reads Europe as seen through American eyes. European struggle to regain its central position is sceptically assessed by such leading figures as Tony Judt, George Weigel, Glyn Morgan, Joseph Stiglitz, Walter Laqueur, Allan Greenspan etc. Despite the euphoria, many are inclined to speak about the decline of the old continent, based on such factors as the demographic, moral, economic and civic crises.



Virgil Stanciu portrays the American 20<sup>th</sup> century novel-writing. He argues that even though the ideal of the great American novel was the prime mover of American fiction writing, it was not attained and that the excesses of postmodernism are responsible for a diminution of public interest for fiction, alongside with the image-centred and computer culture.

Liliana Mișuț compares the US and EU exceptionalisms, from a political standpoint. Both are unique structures, but the US has a long-enduring constitution, whereas EU has not been able to achieve a proper constitution. While US are a federation, EU

displays features of both a federation and a confederation. US are a presidential republic, while most European states are parliamentary republics.

Ștefan Olteanu relates the semantics of possible worlds with fictional discourse uncovering the truth incorporated in such fiction. This is applied on Henry James' novel *The Turn of the Screw* which admits of two interpretations: ghosts are real or ghosts are mere hallucinations.

Ovidiu Pecican applies Turner's frontier criterion to the birth of a civilisation, to interpret Romanian history. The settling of a nation implies much more than a political borderline, a cultural space. Romanian historians such as Hașdeu communicate with the same romantic source of Turner's conception.

Marius Jucan takes into consideration the heated topic of anti-americanism, as an alternative (negative) explanation of the American exceptionalism. Such figures as Susan Sontag or Allan Bloom converged in acknowledging the crisis of authority, education, American values and the need to re-examine tradition, but diverged as to the cause or solutions advanced: the first urged a radicalisation of the aesthetics and politics, while the latter discarded relativism, nihilism and ideologization.

Doina Micu presents the international legal provisions related to human rights and the way they must be incorporated into the domestic law. The US Constitution provides us, however, with an exception because of the Supremacy Clause. Any time there is a conflict of laws, the Constitution will take precedence over the treaties.

Georgiana Ciceo questions whether the Obama administration has really achieved a substantial shift in the US foreign policy. She argues that even though Obama has engaged into renouncing unilateralism in favour of multilateralism in order to regain US credibility in the world, the major objectives of US foreign policy were not radically altered. They were only subjected to a more principled approach.

Vlad Mureșan argues against Richard Rorty's ethics without principles, that discarding theory and principles is contradictory and impractical, in the end. An attempt to achieve liberty without truth is destined to fail, while there's no such thing as a blind liberty.

Șerban Văetiși deals with the transformations of the American urban communities during the last century. Modernization immigration, suburbanization, segregation – this are the major issues related to this historical process. But the conclusion is rather optimistic: despite such damages, urban community can and actually finds new resources in creative approaches of urban renewal. New media technologies revived public participation and civic engagement.

Gabriel Gherasim takes a look back to a century of American philosophy of art, trying to highlight its specific nature based on the continuity pervasive in different reflections (Santayana, Dewey, Morris Weitz, Stanley Cavell, Goodman and Danto). However, from idealist visions centred on the objectivity of aesthetics we have reached a theoretical crisis reconciled with a pluralist theory on the meanings of art.



Raluca Moldovan approaches the controversial representations of the Holocaust based on a case analysis of the movie *Sophie's Choice*. William Styron was criticised for appropriating the symbol of the Holocaust, transforming it into an image of universal evil, therefore weakening its irreducible Jewish specificity. The representation of the Holocaust cannot be pure aesthetics, it should fall within some historical and ethical limits.

Lucian Bogdan analyses the controversy aroused around the efficacy of Roosevelt's New Deal reforms during the Great Crisis, between mostly liberals and conservatives. The overall conclusion highlights the enduring legacy of the New Deal and its merits in safeguarding the American cultural model.

The volume ends with a group of answers provided by the professors of the American Studies Department for the university cultural magazine *Verso* (Cluj-Napoca), America at the Crossroads, debating the American exceptionalism today.

This volume is a substantial contribution in the Romanian (young) field of American Studies. The wide variety of fields and issues taken into consideration provide us with an informed and also reflected encounter with core aspects of the American way that gives us encouragement for the newly emerging community of researchers in this academic field.

### **American Visual Memoirs after the 1970s. Studies on Gender, Sexuality, and Visibility in the Post!Civil Rights Age**

Ed. Mihaela Precup

Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2010

**Dana Mihăilescu**

University of Bucharest

British art historian John Berger once wrote that "[t]he sudden anguish of missing what is no longer there is like suddenly coming upon a jar which has fallen and broken into fragments. Alone you collect the pieces, discover how to fit them together and then carefully stick them to one another, one by one. Eventually the jar is reassembled but it is not the same as it was before. It has become both flawed, and more precious" (Berger, *The Shape of a Pocket* 59). Like Berger's jar, *American Visual Memoirs after the 1970s. Studies on Gender, Sexuality, and Visibility in the Post-Civil Rights Age* is a collection of essays made up of the contributors' sustained engagement with artifacts, photos, and memories as deployed in post-1970s American visual memoirs and which have been reassembled in absentia, in full awareness of their elusiveness and complexities but also of their lingering relevance.

Edited by Mihaela Precup, Assistant Professor of English/American Studies at the University of Bucharest, and published by Bucharest University Press, this is the first book-length collection of essays entirely dedicated to the study of contemporary visual memoirs. The project grew out of the editor's 2006-2007 Fulbright grant at the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at Yale University, where she got initial support and insight from both established and emergent academics in the field,

some of whom have become contributors or advisors to the present volume.



The volume opens new provocative paths in a challenging and increasingly fertile area of creation and research situated at the intersection of (post)traumatic memory, autobiography studies, visual culture, gender and sexuality studies. More precisely, the book is structured in three parts that focus on the plural and complicated facets of identity construction and representation in different visual-related media. Part 1 looks on constructions of the personal self in film and photography; Part 2 focuses on gender configurations in visual autoethnographies; Part 3 deals with how identity engages with mourning and violence in autobiographic comics.

The essays in Part 1 use the Butlerian-Foucauldian paradigm of power fields in the attempt to reposition vulnerable bodies in less constraining frames. Three of its four essays closely configure and interrogate the rebellious discourses of queer identities in their relation with hegemonic societal claims, while the final essay destabilizes the patriarchal construction of motherhood. Emma Heaney's opening article problematizes transsexual identities in their relation with America's legally-sanctioned double discourse of intimacy and privacy. The author discloses the complex pressures entailed by the latter mainstream discourse on the trans public figure and its project of autobiography narration, but she equally discusses the pitfalls in front of rebellious documentaries—those of producing new regulatory narratives and elisions unless they allow alternative spaces to play a fundamental role in their projects. Tamsin Whitehead relevantly problematizes the early reactions of activist artists against the simplistic conflation of AIDS-sufferers with homosexual identities in the early days of the crisis from the 1970s, by offering an empowering positive representation of these people's identities as socially and politically active. The author highlights the equal pitfalls behind such activist stances in discussing two documentaries by activist Gregg Bordowitz, *Fast Trip, Long Drop* (1993) and *Habit* (2001) in which he goes on to identify the psychic effects of having to deal with fatigue, despair, or mourning on a day-to-day basis. As Whitehead rightly shows, the foregrounding of doubt in these documentaries allows for the creation of an ethical commitment to complex humanity, ranging from a temporally changing outlook developed in *Fast Trip, Long Drop* to a spatial configuration of the gaze in *Habit*,



capitalizing on the responsibility of American AIDS-sufferers to those who do not live in the West and do not benefit from the same treatment facilities. Mihaela Precup's essay starts from the same premise as the previous article—the need for activism against the conflation between homosexuality and AIDS in the 1970s and contends that the identity-related conundrum was already in the underground artists' New York community before the ACT UP movement. To prove her point, Mihaela analyzes the case of Nan Goldin's *Cookie Portfolio* (1976-1989) made up of photos she took of the AIDS-suffering members of that community as confirmation of PWA's presence in the face of imminent death. She wonderfully shows how these photos become traces of sick, grieving ghosts' presence. Most importantly, in Mihaela's reading, they stand for rehearsal of mourning (the case of the photographer) and rehearsal of death (the case of the photographed individual) which imply a fundamental shift in point of the social community, which from that moment on will forever enclose the invisible wound of losing an other and a part of oneself. The final essay in Part 1 by Celeste Ianniciello analyzes Chantal Akerman's autobiographical film-letter, *News from Home* (1976), as a reaction to the patriarchal view of motherhood by creating the image of a "mother of excess" – one whose domain is no longer the manly prescribed domestic space but the urban setting of New York, its architecture of ambiguity and indeterminism, its mobile symbols of homelessness, wandering, streetwalking.

The following three essays in Part 2 engage with complicated intersections between class, race/ethnicity and gender. Among these, Edvige Giunta's largely creative opening essay uses as point of departure *fuori/outside*, an autobiographical film by Kim Ragusa, drawn on her mixed heritage as a daughter of an African American mother and an Italian American father; this film shows the degree to which race is socially constructed and mutable, always elusive, both limited and attempting to go beyond the hegemonic politics of recognition. Yet, Kim Ragusa's film is just a framework occasioning Giunta's own relevant autobiographical pondering over her identity as a Sicilian woman and its problematic configurations in Italy where being Sicilian has been often racialized by mainstream Italians' whiteness discourse. In addition, Adriana Katzew's essay focuses on the fundamental role of Chicana artist, feminist and activist Yolanda López, whose visual art works *Three Generations: Tres Mujeres* (1976-7) and *Our Lady Guadalupe* (1978) represented the fundamental work of an artist-provocateur in the early days of the Chicano Revilimiento movement. Katzew reads López's autobiographical use of working-class women's body as a subversive device to decolonize Chicana women from the claims of patriarchy. Finally, Ruxandra Rădulescu's essay engages with the visual subversion of Indian representation in Native American memoirs by Gerald Vizener and Louis Owens. As a reaction against the early image of the essentializing "feather-and-beads Indian" other, the author shows how contemporary writers foreground relational, collective voices via a photographic gaze extended over land and community.

Finally, the essays in Part 3 discuss identity in relation to the haunting presence of mourning and violence in autobiographical comics. To that end, the first two essays deal with Holocaust-centered experiences,

while the last paper specifically focuses on women's sexuality. Thus, Efrat Bloom's essay engages with Art Spiegelman's widely-discussed *Maus*; the author offers a brilliant close reading of the artist's work as bearing the imprint of maternal loss and of the son's co-indexed "narcissistic wound." Bloom shows that by exploring the stances of the mother drawn into *Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@?!*, "Prisoner on Hell Planet" and *Maus*. In her analysis, the mother's blurring facial contours stand for Art Spiegelman's psychological wound and identity confusion, for his emotional vulnerability and, ultimately, for the "immutability and unassimilability of traumatic memory." My own essay engages with Miriam Katin's 2006 Holocaust memoir, *We Are On Our Own* which supplements Spiegelman's insight into the mother-son couple with the case of the mother-daughter relation. My paper reads the performance of gender identity in the context of constant threat and violence directed at the female body, as well as the complexities of affect in the case of trying to tell the story of a reality one can hardly remember, as a toddler during the Holocaust. Finally, J. Andrew Deman's essay proves how Phoebe Gloeckner's memoir, *A Child Life and Other Stories* (1998) is an important narrative in feminist underground projects reacting against the tendency of comics to portray women in a highly sexualized way geared by patriarchal norms. As Deman effectively demonstrates, Gloeckner complicates any potential visual pleasure in her memoir by strategically creating a contradictory tension between image and text. Deman additionally shows how Gloeckner's narrative uses distortion/enhancement of two key elements of the human anatomy, genitalia (suggesting sexuality) and the face (the locus of emotions) in order to suggest the conflict between visual pleasure and traumatizing human consequences, of male sexual fantasy and female victimization at the hands of it.

At bottom, born out of what the editor calls "ghostliness"—the haunting presence of (post)traumatic experiences as inscribed upon the gendered body—the unique power of this collection consists in each one of its essays' indefatigable ability to forever haunt the reader, to shake the self from any attempt to situate itself within the comfortable realm of life complacency. The essays continuously question any set discourse and fixing interpretation and plead for a constant, vigilant acknowledgment and assessment of the complexities, dilemmas, and conundrums of contemporary embodied paths of change born out of suffering.

## Ovid, Myth and (Literary) Exile

Ed. Adina Ciugureanu, Ludmila Martanovschi,

Nicoleta Stanca

Ovidius University Press, Constanta, 2010

Publication supported by the CNCIS-UEFISCU, Project number PNII – IDEI – 802/2009 Director: Professor Adina Ciugureanu, Ovidius University

## Remus Bejan

Ovidius University Constanța

This volume brings together thirty-one of the most significant papers originally presented by prominent academics and scholars from Romanian and a number of

European universities, at the conference held at Constanta, Romania, September 10-12, 2009, which the organizers placed under the tutelary figure of Ovidius, the Latin Poet who, two millennia ago, was unhappily exiled 'at the edge of the world', to the ancient city of Tomis (Constanta today), on the western coast of the Black Sea.

The contributions included in the book revisit not only the legacy of the great Latin poet but they also examine crucial problematics of the exilic experience and mythic journeys, as articulated across British, American and Romanian literatures, from a variety of theoretical approaches.



The book opens with Stephen Prickett's *Exile as An Existential Condition*. This complex study scrutinizes various aspects of exile (place, home, marginality, etc.), which the author sees as inherent to the creative process, as the very existential condition of the writer, in general, and thus sets the stage for subsequent contributions.

The papers grouped under the title of *Revisiting the Classical Tradition* focus on such aspects of Ovid's works as the symbolism of the ship, or the classical and Ciceronian literature of exile (Maria Stefania Montecalvo). Antonio Moniz's comparative study of Ovid's *Tristia* and Camoes' *Cancoes* and *Elegias*, both born out of painful experiences of exile, traces the Roman writer's poetic bequest and influence on the sixteenth century Portuguese poet.

The section called *Representations of Exile and Myths in British and Postcolonial Studies* brings together papers that reflect on the fictional reconstruction of Ovid's exile to Tomis in David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life* (1978), which the author, Laura Savu, sees as emblematic for the condition of the poet as a wanderer on earth pushing out beyond the limits of the known world and of his own consciousness, on the exilic dimensions of D. H. Lawrence's work (Camelia Anghel), on the use of myth as a demythologizing tool by Joyce (Gulden Hatipoglu), or on re-interpretations of ancient myths in modernist and postmodernist literature (Nicoleta Stanca, Corina Lungu, Irina Toma, Ioana Mitrea).

The section entitled *Exilic and Mythic Journeys in American Literature and Culture* explores Europe, as a place of exile, in the American imaginary (Roxana Oltean), racial and gendered representations of White, the Black-African and Native American experiences, through autobiography and fiction (Anca Peiu, Marius Juncan, Cornelia Vlaicu), as well as re-constructions of myths in

contemporary American Indian Poetry (Ludmila Martanovschi).

The articles in the *Romanian Exiles and Transfers of Myths to Romanian Culture* section delve into anti-communist cultural resistance aspects of self-imposed exile (Mihaela Paraschivescu, Mihaela Albu), while Adina Ciugureanu examines the American 'acculturation' and globalization of Dracula's myth, and the irony of its 'homeland' return, in this new guise. With Professor Rodica Mihăilă's analysis of *For a Barbarian Woman* (2009), a play Saviana Stănescu, a Romanian ex-patriate dramatist, living in New York, the thematic investigation symbolically comes full circle. Written in English, from the perspective of a newly-hyphenated American from post-communist Eastern Europe, the play, bridges history and myth to offer a fresh insight into the Ovid's exile, seem in the light of his relationships with the barbarians, while shedding a new light on the post-colonial the condition of 'in-betweenness' of the displaced writer.

The book proves to be an insightful reading and makes a remarkable contribution to the existing literature and academic debates on the Ovid's literary and cultural heritage.

## Romanian Culture in America's Mirror

Publications resulting from the CNCSIS project *Romanian Cultural Space in Transatlantic Perspective: From Post-Communism to Post-Accession* (2007-2010), Director: Professor Rodica Mihăilă, American Studies Center, University of Bucharest

**Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru**

University of Bucharest

### Cultura românească în perspectivă transatlantică.

#### Interviuri

Edited by Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru and Teodora

Șerban-Opreșcu

București: Editura Universității din București, 2009

This volume documents Romania's cultural presence in the contemporary world as reflected in America's mirror, through a series of interviews conducted by the members of the project team and a few external collaborators. The interviewees are American and Romanian-American academics belonging to, acquainted with or specializing in Romanian culture (Andrei Brezianu, Andrei Codrescu, Marcel Cornis-Pope, Domnița Dumitrescu, Constantin Eretescu, Radu Florescu, Eliza Ghil, Valentina Glăjar, Sanda Golopenția, Gary Holcomb, Ernest Latham, Norman Manea, Sorin Adam Matei, Paul E. Michelson, Christian Moraru, Barbara Nelson, Ileana Orlich, Domnica Rădulescu, Adam Sorkin, Saviana Stănescu, Alexandra Târziu, Vladimir Tismăneanu and James Welsh). As the participants in this extended transatlantic dialogue express opinions on the visibility of Romanian culture in America and the world, an impressive amount of details related to the Romanian cultural presence in the current global exchange of ideas are revealed to the reader.



The strength of the volume – based on a set of starting questions adapted to match each interviewee's individual carrier – consists mainly of the fact that it represents a database of primary material about Romanian cultural experience across the Atlantic, the reception of Romanian culture in the United States, as well as the extent to which it is currently possible to talk about a cultural dialogue between Romania and the United States. As Romania's participation in the global world has grown with NATO and EU accession, Romanian culture has become more visible. This is shown by the literature written by writers of the Romanian diaspora (such as Andrei Codrescu, Norman Manea and Domnica Rădulescu), more and more widely read in the US, by the rising popularity of new wave Romanian cinema, as well as by the multiple ways in which the Romanian diaspora across the world has been using the Internet to shorten distances and foster communication. Last, but not least, one is bound to notice the important number of academics of Romanian origin who currently hold positions in American universities, who have greatly contributed to the dialogue between Romania and the United States and who are important opinion-leaders with respect to Romania's current world image.

### **Romanian Culture in the Global Age**

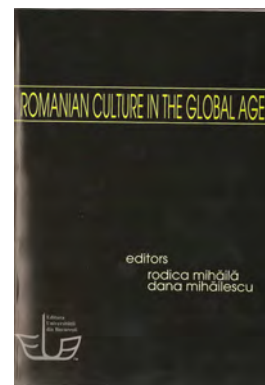
Edited by Rodica Mihăilă and Dana Mihăilescu

București: Editura Universității din București, 2010

This collection of essays is structured thematically in four parts (*Romanian Identities in the Global World: Cross-Cultural Exchanges; Portraying Romania and the Global World in Romanian Cultural Productions; Romanian Cultural Space and the Global World in the Works of Diaspora Romanians; Representations of Romania in the Global World through Western Lenses*), followed by a *Coda*, an original creative addition to a scholarly work containing a few poems by Martin Woodside, inspired by

the poet's stay in Romania and his direct experience of Romanian culture as a Fulbright lecturer.

The essays focus on the changes and challenges in Romanian culture caused by the encounter between globalization and Romania's efforts to overcome post-communist transition and become a democratic member of today's world, following E.U. accession. They tackle and attempt to answer some of the difficult questions posed by the current refashionings and redefinitions in Romania's image, as well as its ways of reconciling itself with the difficulties of its past and present and forging a new global identity. Through the impressive variety of topics and approaches, the studies gathered together in this collection offer a broad analysis of Romanian culture at home and abroad as we perceive it today. Apart from each essay's individual contribution to scholarship, one of the most visible merits of the collection as a whole is the dialogical perspective it brings on transatlantic studies.



While the model of American Studies as a plurivocal discipline is a crucial starting point, the essays in this collection share an awareness of the importance of maintaining a worldwide perspective in all definitions of cultural identity and, as the editors stress in the introduction, of projecting all criticism of "the other" in the light of responsible self-analysis. This is a lesson which Romanian Studies, a discipline on the rise in the new global guise promoted by this volume, as well as by the project to which it belongs, could and should learn from the consecrated discourse of American Studies.

# CALLS FOR PAPERS

**The Health of the Nation - The Biennial EAAS Conference**  
**Izmir, Turkey**  
**March 30 - April 2, 2012**

***"Leave all the afternoon for exercise and recreation, which are as necessary as reading. I will rather say more necessary because health is worth more than learning." (Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Garland Jefferson, June 11, 1790.)***

Over the past two years, President Obama's proposed health care reforms initiated an often bitter and sometimes divisive debate which, while focused on health provision, also asked fundamental questions (and exposed tenaciously held positions) about the state of the nation, its history and ideology. Our conference theme, the Health of the Nation, addresses these issues, where health can be both literal and metaphorical, personal and public, human and environmental.

The self-analysis involved in considering the health of the nation has always been a characteristic of Americans, and is an issue variously understood according to time, circumstance, and disciplinary approach. Health and the body also retain their metaphoric power in national self-awareness, while a heightened awareness of environmental health and risk is a topic of growing importance, as is the development of Recreation and Leisure Studies as an academic subject.

The EAAS welcomes proposals for parallel lectures and workshops investigating the Health of the Nation from all perspectives and disciplines. Topics addressed might include:

- The relation between health and wealth (Emerson said "The first wealth is health")
- The health of the individual and the health of the state; the politics and economics of health care
- The legal and constitutional dimensions of healthcare provision; the body's health in literature and film (often linked symbolically to national trauma)
- The relation between health and healing
- Illness as metaphor.
- The ideals of health communicated by the media
- Health and the environment

**The deadline for submission of workshop and parallel lecture proposals is:**  
**February 28th, 2011**

Potential workshop chairs and parallel lecturers should prepare a one-page abstract and a ½-page cv. Please do not submit proposals for individual workshop papers at this time. These should be sent to selected workshop chairs who will be announced in the May 2011 issue of the ASE newsletter.

A workshop may be chaired by one person but should preferably be chaired by two persons from different countries. No one may (co-) chair a workshop at two consecutive EAAS conferences. Chairs are required to be members of their national or joint-national associations as are all presenters accepted by chairs. This also applies to parallel lecturers. EAAS accepts presenters from the U.S. who belong to the American Studies Association or the Organization of American Historians. Other speakers from outside of Europe must also be members of their respective American Studies Associations.

Please send proposals to:

Dr. Jenel Virden  
EAAS Secretary General  
American Studies Department  
University of Hull  
Hull HU6 7RX  
United Kingdom  
E-mail: [virden@eaas.eu](mailto:virden@eaas.eu)  
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**Cultural Texts and Contexts in the English Speaking World**  
**2nd International Conference Organized by the University of Oradea**  
**Oradea, Romania**  
**17-19 March 2011**

Dear Colleagues,

The Department of English  
Faculty of Letters,  
University of Oradea (Romania)

is pleased to invite you to participate in the 2nd edition of its international biennial conference.

Papers are invited in the following conference sections:

- British and Commonwealth Literature
- American Literature
- Cultural Studies
- Gender Studies
- Film and Drama
- Language Studies
- Translation Studies
- Teaching English as a Foreign Language

All presenters will have 20 minutes to present their paper: 15 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for questions (give or take a couple of minutes). A selection of papers presented at the conference will be published in the Conference Proceedings.



**Deadline for submission of proposals:  
February 15<sup>th</sup> 2011**

To register, check your registration or keep up with conference news, you may visit our site at [www.deoradea.info](http://www.deoradea.info)

**Conference fee:**

For participants from Romania: 150 RON (early registration) / 200 RON (late registration)

For participants from abroad: 40 EURO (early registration) / 50 EURO (late registration)

The fee covers participation costs, coffee breaks, lunches on Thursday and Friday, the conference cocktail on Thursday, print programme and the publication in the conference volume.

**East-West Conference: Contact Zones in the Global World**  
**Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, Romania**  
**School of Letters and Arts**  
**6-7 May 2011**

The Department of British and American Studies at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu and the C. Peter Magrath Research Center for Cross-Cultural Studies invite you to the *CONTACT ZONES IN THE GLOBAL WORLD* international conference, to be held in Sibiu, 6-7 May 2011.

In the changing social, political, economic, and cultural global landscape, such terms as the national, the international, cosmopolitanism, globalization, and otherness, to name only a few, need to be constantly reinvented, redefined, reinterpreted, and reorganized. In this context, Ulrich Beck's unpacking of globalization and cosmopolitanism clarifies the implications of "the pluralization of borders" and "globalization from within." The latter concept, a synonym for the "cosmopolitanization of nation-state societies" (Beck 2002: 18), stands for the "dissonance in drawing of borderlines," as "borders are no longer predeterminate, they can be chosen (and interpreted), but simultaneously also have to be redrawn and legitimated anew" (Beck 2002: 19). As a result, "when cultural, political, economic and legal borders are no longer congruent, contradictions open up between the various principles of exclusion" (Beck 2002: 19).

The spaces where identities are negotiated, fraught as they are with these social, economic, political, religious, and cultural conflicts/contradictions, are also culturally fertile contact zones.

We invite you to explore these contact zones from theoretical and/or text-based interdisciplinary perspectives in individual presentations, panels, and/or workshops.

Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- global perceptions in literature, language, art, and popular culture

- interdisciplinary perspectives on history, politics, anthropology, and religion
- the global impact of media and technology on education and sociology
- changing perspectives on global migration and cultural identity

Presentations should be 20 minutes long, allowing for 10 minutes of discussion. Please send an abstract (no more than 200 words), a list of 5-7 keywords, and a short biographical note in word format. Proposals should include titles of papers/ panels, name and institutional affiliation, mailing address, phone, fax, and e-mail address.

A selection of the papers presented will be published in *East/West Cultural Passage*.

**Deadline for submission of proposals: 15 February 2011**

Please send proposals to:

Anca Iancu <[ancaian@yahoo.com](mailto:ancaian@yahoo.com)>

Ana Blanca Ciocoi-Pop

<[ana\\_blanca1006@yahoo.com](mailto:ana_blanca1006@yahoo.com)>

Participation/Conference fee: 40 Euros (to be paid upon arrival).

The participation/conference fee covers coffee-breaks, lunches and conference portfolios.

We look forward to welcoming you in Sibiu!

**Tales of War: Expressions of Conflict and Reconciliation**  
**The 13th Annual Conference of the English Department**  
**Literature and Cultural Studies Section**  
**University of Bucharest**  
**2-4 June 2011**

The English Department of the University of Bucharest invites proposals for the Literature and Cultural Studies section of its 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference: *Tales of War: Expressions of Conflict and Reconciliation*

Venue: The Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Str. Pitar Mos 7-13, Bucharest, Romania

Invited speakers will include:

Andrei Cornea (University of Bucharest)

Radu Surdulescu (University of Bucharest)

Conflict, as well as versions of antagonistic and paradoxical affinities in war-related, real and fictional situations, are at the centre of current preoccupations of critical theory, literature, visual arts, the media, historical and political discourse and at the centre of ontological concern for the contemporary world. As a phenomenological issue, as the privileged subject matter of cultural debates, historiography, theology, philosophy, interpretation strategies and anthropological research the problematic of war appears to illustrate and confirm, beyond Eliade's "terror of history" or Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion", the correlatives of



subjectivity, as well as a richly connotative “existential heritage” of the “fallable man”. As (remembered?) pastness, as the counter-possibility of freedom, as an account of empathy with the Other, as illustrative of a “limit situation”, as a set of empirical appearances or a utopian pact, as a figure of (repetitive) mortality or a marker of identity, warfare remains an issue of signification comprehensible through a series of disconcerting aporias, a category of both active and meditative attitude related to the “primordial conflict” and at the same time to the affirmation of hope for a time of both memorial and prophetic war-free “ideal history”.

The aim of the conference is to explore and highlight modalities through which expressions, representations or perceptions of “warfare”, as well as contemporary interpretative approaches to the development, resolution or effects of conflict deal with the significance of antagonism in various cultural and historical contexts and contribute to the comprehension and redefinition of the authorial message.

Suggested topics:

- Visions and connotations of warfare
- War – myths, symbolism, iconography
- War as allegory and metaphor
- Representations of conflict
- War and psychoanalysis
- War between reality and fiction
- The space of war
- War and temporality
- Wartime affinities
- War narratives
- War protagonists
- War and peace
- The political and historical discourse of war
- War and memory
- War and identity

It is anticipated that participants will adopt a variety of approaches, including examinations of individual works in various genres and media, comparative, transcultural and interdisciplinary studies, and discussions of theoretical issues.

Presentations should be in English, and will be allocated 20 minutes each, plus 10 minutes for discussion. Prospective participants are invited to submit abstracts of up to 200 words (including a list of keywords) in Word format, with an indication of their institutional affiliation, and a telephone number and e-mail address at which they can be contacted. Proposals for panel discussions (to be organized by the participant) will also be considered.

A selection of papers will be published in *University of Bucharest Review* (listed on EBSCO, CEEOL and Ulrichsweb).

Conference fee: 50 euro or equivalent in Romanian Lei

The fee is payable in cash on registration, and covers the opening reception, conference materials, and refreshments during the conference.

**Deadline for proposals: 15 February 2011.**

Please send proposals (and enquiries) to [litcultstbucharest@gmail.com](mailto:litcultstbucharest@gmail.com)

We look forward to welcoming you in Bucharest.

Prof. Irina Pană

Dr. James Brown

Conference organizers

## US Embassy Events/Notices

<http://romania.usembassy.gov/>

<http://www.facebook.com/bucharest.usembassy>

## Fulbright Scholars 2010-2011

### ROMANIAN SENIOR GRANTEES

#### Catalin Nicolae ALBU

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

Host University: University of Dayton, OH

Field: Business Administration/Managerial Accounting

#### Cristina Adela CHEVERESAN

Home University: University of the West, Timisoara

Host University: Harvard University, MA

Field: American Literature

#### Radu DUDAU

Home University: University of Bucharest

Host University: Harvard University, MA

Field: Political Sciences

#### Ludmila MARTANOVSKI

Home University: Ovidius University of Constanta

Host University: City University of New York

Field: American Studies

#### Marian MUNTEANU

Home University: Al. Ioan Cuza University of Iasi

Host University: Michigan State University, MI

Field: Mathematics

#### Radu MUTIHAC

Home University: University of Bucharest

Host University: University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

Field: Neurosciences

#### Constantin Marius PROFIRIU

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

Host University: University of Kentucky, KY  
Field: Public Administration

**Dan Eugen RATIU**

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: Northeastern University, MA  
Field: Philosophy of Arts and Cultural Policies

**Andrei Dorian SOFICARU**

Home Institution: "Dr. Francisc I. Rainer" Institute of Anthropology  
Host University: The Ohio State University, OH  
Field: Archaeology/Anthropology

**Cristian TANASESCU**

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: San Diego State University, CA  
Field: American Studies/Poetry

**ROMANIAN JUNIOR GRANTEES**

**Oana Liana ALMASAN**

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: Arizona State University, AZ  
Field: Public Policy

**Sorin DUMITRESCU**

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies  
Host University: Boston University, MA  
Field: Economics/Finance

**Mihai Bogdan IOVU**

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, NJ  
Field: Social Sciences

**Ioana Codruta MARTIAN**

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies  
Host University: Tulane University, LA  
Field: Economics/Finance

**Ioana MOLDOVAN DRECIN**

Home University: "I. L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Cinematographic Arts, Bucharest  
Host University: University of Southern California Los Angeles, CA  
Field: Film/Drama

**Catalina Andreea NAN**

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: Vanderbilt University, TN  
Field: Business Administration/Finance

**Malina Denisa OMUT**

Home University: National University of Arts, Bucharest  
Host University: Savannah College of Art & Design, GA  
Field: Graphic Design

**Ioana PAL**

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: Maxwell School of Syracuse University, NY  
Field: Political Sciences

**Zeno Reinhardt**

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: Boston University, MA  
Field: Education

**Iulian Daniel SANDU**

Home University: National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest  
Host University: University of Cincinnati, OH  
Field: Communication

**Anamaria VRABIE**

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies  
Host University: The New School for General Studies, NY  
Field: International Affairs

**Alexandru ZEGREA**

Home University: University of the West, Timisoara  
Host University: University of Washington, WA  
Field: International Affairs (Middle East)

**FULBRIGHT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Gina Cristina ADAM**

Home University: POLITEHNICA University of Bucharest  
Host University: University of California, Santa Barbara  
Field: Nanoelectronics

**HUBERT H. HUMPHREY GRANTEES**

**Oana Caludia IACOB**

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Home Institution: Presidential Administration  
Host University: University of Washington, WA  
Field: Public Policy Analysis and Public Administration

**AMERICAN SENIOR GRANTEES**

**Dr. James C. DENNISON**

Home University: McNeese State University, LA  
Host University: Bucharest Polytechnic University, Bucharest  
Field: Electronic Engineering

**Dr. Bryan Wesley HALL**

Home University: Indiana University Southeast  
 Host University: University of Bucharest  
 Field: Teaching and Research in the History and Philosophy of Science

**Dr. Dennis Lee JOHNSON**

Home University: Pennsylvania State University--Milton S. Hershey Medical Center  
 Host University: Transilvania University of Brasov  
 Field: Medicine, The Care of Children with Life-Limiting Illnesses in Romania

**Dr. Mihaela LEONIDA**

Home University: Fairleigh Dickinson University--Metropolitan Campus, NJ  
 Host University: Bucharest Polytechnic University  
 Field: Chemistry, Biochemistry

**Dr. Barbara Laud MUELLER**

Home University: Casper College, WY  
 Host University: Ovidius University, Constanta  
 Field: American Society and Culture, U.S. Minority Studies, Native American Cultures

**Dr. Dan Allen RATLIFF**

Home University: St. Mary's University, TX  
 Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
 Field: Enhancing Social Services for Children and Families in Romania

**Dr. Emmanuel Nicholas ROUSSAKIS**

Home University: Florida International University  
 Host University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Sciences  
 Field: Business Administration, International Banking

**Dr. David Christian WEINDORF**

Home University: Louisiana State University  
 Host University: University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Cluj  
 Field: Agriculture, Soil Morphology

**AMERICAN JUNIOR GRANTEES****Ms. Nguyen Thu-Trang THACH**

Home University: Yale University, CT  
 Host University: Babes Bolyai University, Cluj  
 Field: Environmental Studies

**Ms. Ruth BLIDAR**

Home University: North Park Univ., IL  
 Host University: Ovidius Univ., Constanta; Univ. of the West, Timisoara  
 Field: English Teaching Assistantship

**Ms. Staci R. DEFIBAUGH**

Home University: Ball State Univ., IN

Host University: Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu  
 Field: English Teaching Assistantship

**Ms. Laura Iris MATTES**

Home University: At-Large, California  
 Host University: University of Bucharest  
 Field: Public Health

**Mr. Jacob Charles SHULMAN-MENT**

Home University: At-Large, New York  
 Host University: Univ. of Arts G.Enescu, Iasi  
 Field: Ethnomusicology

**Ms. Aline Nicole CAUTIS**

Home University: At-Large, Illinois  
 Host University: The University of Art and Design at Cluj-Napoca  
 Field: Painting and Printmaking

**Ms. Annie Jordan PENNELL**

Home University: Arizona State Univ.  
 Host University: Al.I. Cuza University, Iasi  
 Field: English Teaching Assistantship

**FULBRIGHT HAYS GRANTEES****Mr. Bruce O'NEILL**

Home University: Stanford University, CA,  
 Host University: University of Bucharest  
 Field: Boredom as Practice: Boredom, Space and Homelessness in Post-Socialist Romania

**RAAS Officers & EAAS****RAAS**

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 <aciugureanu@univ-ovidius.ro>

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**European Association for American Studies (EAAS)** <<http://www.eaas.eu>>

## Letter from the President

### Adina Ciugureanu

President of RAAS, Professor of English and American, Dean,  
Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanța

Dear colleagues,

Since the RAAS Conference organized in Bucharest in May 2008, the Board met once in Constanța, September 11, 2009. The first point on our agenda was the establishing of the topic and dates for the next biennial national conference. After analyzing the proposals, the board decided on the topic which has already been launched to the Romanian members and those of other European associations on the RAAS and EAAS sites. Our next conference, whose subject is *The American Tradition of Descent/Dissent – The Underground, The Countercultural, the (Anti)Utopian* will be held at Ovidius University Constanța, Oct. 7-9, 2010. We are happy to announce the participation of Professor Janice Radway, Walter Dill Scott Professor of Communication Studies, Northwestern University, Illinois, who will be our key-note speaker, and of all the Fulbright scholars (senior and junior) who will participate both in the conference and in the two day training organized in Constanța at the time. Our conference will continue the tradition of the former scholarly events organized in Bucharest, namely being a joint event between the Romanian Association for American Studies and the Fulbright Commission. We also address our thanks to the American Cultural Center in Bucharest for its constant and generous support which will make the Constanța event possible.

An important issue raised at the September board meeting was the fee which the members of our association have paid yearly so far. A thorough analysis of the amount due to be a member of the RAAS and EAAS revealed the fact that the amount left after paying for our EAAS membership is so insignificant that nothing can be done with it. Many of our colleagues have wondered what other benefits they can get from the association, besides receiving a yearly newsletter and participating, if they wished, in a biennial conference. There are also young academics and graduate students who would like to become members of the RAAS, but would also be much happier if the membership brought them reciprocal benefits. To all these colleagues and prospective future members, the board brings the news that a higher fee means a reserve fund which will be used primarily to encourage young academics to do research and publish. We intend to offer awards for the best MA and/or PhD dissertation on a topic related to American Studies. It is true that at a time of economic recess, it is not easy to pay a higher fee. Yet, if we think of encouraging research in general and young academics in particular, moreover, if we think of keeping our association alive, we might then see a reason behind the enlarged fee decision. We have also decided to charge differently the members and non-members

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of our association for their participation in the biennial conference. Thus, the non-members will have to pay a much higher fee, unless they decide to become members by September 1, 2010.

The third point of the agenda was the proposal to create and publish the RAAS journal, with the title *The Romanian Journal of American*

*Studies*. In view of its editing, the board launched a call for editorial projects and topics, but has not received any response yet. We will re-discuss the matter and make decisions about it at our general meeting held at the end of the October conference. The creation and publication of an American Studies journal will not only raise academics' and graduate students' interest in our association, but will also make the RAAS much stronger and more credible at European level. Meanwhile, we are happy to announce the publication of the RAAS volume *The Sense of America (Histories into Text)* (eds. Rodica Mihăilă, Irina Grigorescu Pană, Univers Enciclopedic, 2009), containing a large number of the papers presented at the 2008 RAAS conference, held in Bucharest.

The next important event, which will probably bring some changes to the organization of EAAS as regards the delegation of responsibilities, is the European Conference for American Studies, Dublin, March 24-29, 2010. Though unfortunately Romania does not have a large representation, there are a few members whose papers have been accepted. The next newsletter will contain a presentation of this huge European event as well as the dates and topic of the 2012

conference. Our next national event is, obviously, the October conference at Ovidius University Constanta, for which we have already received some extremely interesting and challenging proposals. It is my hope that most RAAS members will attend the conference. Meanwhile, do search our site, where you will find the latest news, think of an appropriate title and a short abstract by March 15 and fill in the registration form for the RAAS Conference, Ovidius University.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Constanta,

Adina Ciugureanu

## American Studies

### American Studies at Sibiu

Ana-Karina Schneider

Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu

Lucian Blaga University has had a long tradition in fostering interest in American culture and civilisation. With a prestigious Americanist, Professor Dumitru Ciocoi-Pop, as its President after 1989, the University quickly established student and staff exchange programmes with American universities (most notably the University of Missouri at Columbia) and has hosted Fulbright lecturers since the early 1990s. In both the philology and modern languages study programmes courses in American literature, culture and civilisation feature extensively, and for a number of years in the late nineties the most popular master's programme was in modernist British and American literature. The local doctoral programme in philology has trained many of the country's Americanists, under the masterful supervision of

Professor Ciocoi-Pop. All this has been supported logistically by the existence in Sibiu of the American Library, hosting, since 1995, the American Centre that had previously functioned in Bucharest. Moreover, a number of professional associations has facilitated interaction and exchanges with specialists, nationally and internationally: Sibiu staff have been a constant presence at the events organised by the Salzburg Seminar of American Studies and were among the founding members of the Romanian Association for American Studies; the Academic Anglophone Society of Romania, founded by Professor Sever Trifu at Sibiu in 1997, has always encouraged American scholarship and included it among the fields of its international publication, *American, British and Canadian Studies*; and the C. Peter Magrath Centre for Cross-cultural Studies was set up at Lucian Blaga University in 1999. The latter in particular is devoted to promoting Romanian-American academic interaction: it has organised a number of events, of which the annual Fulbrighters' conference, "East-West Cultural Passage", has reached its eighth edition, and has also triggered the organisation of an annual Anglo-

American week comprising the students' symposium, "Cultures in Transit". A selection of the proceedings of both events are included in the two publications issued by the C. Peter Magrath Research Centre, *East-West Cultural Passage* and the students' journal, *Cultures in Transit*. The presence of Fulbright lecturers and American specialists has been a constant at LBU, our Department having hosted over the years both professors temporarily based in Sibiu and guest lecturers delivering talks and convening workshops in American literature, creative writing, political science, history and so forth. As of 2008, our Department has also become the venue of the fortnightly meetings of the American Culture Club uniting highschool and university students with an interest in American culture from across the city.

With such a rich tradition in both research and teaching, the Department of British and American Studies in Sibiu was bound to set up a programme in American Studies, and after some institutional hesitations, it finally did so in 2009. Embedded in a thorough understanding of the special requirements of the cultural studies programme, LBU's American



Studies curriculum combines efficiently the core subjects of foreign language specialist study with an interdisciplinary approach to American culture and civilisation, and the ministerially recommended subjects of the national curricular core with a creative approach to the study of America relying on local resources. The curriculum was put together by a team of specialists holding doctoral degrees and diplomas in American Studies and having extensive experience in curricular development, and it is put to good account by an academic dream team made up of no less than three Fulbright lecturers, one American professor who has been based in Sibiu for some ten years, and a number of local specialists variously holding academic degrees from American higher education institutions and impressive portfolios of publications in the field of AMS.

Among the study courses offered are: lectures and seminars in American history and cultural geography, sociology and politics, literature, visual arts, music and sports, as well as critical methods in American Studies as a scholarly discipline; and practical courses in argumentation, rhetoric, text interpretation and essay writing, based on American models and striving to train skills held in high esteem in the American education system. Furthermore, our students are given the option of studying a variety of foreign languages, including German, French, Dutch, Spanish, Italian and Chinese, are offered classes in computer science, and are warmly invited to participate in the various student clubs functioning within the Department: the American Culture Club, the Reading Group, and the Creative Writing Club.

Our curriculum is entrenched in a modern vision of American Studies as essentially an interdisciplinary study programme, and of American culture as a complex imbrication of shiny surfaces and idiosyncratic sounds, of ideologies and practices. We therefore aim not only to offer students a comprehensive overview of the United States of America as a country and a nation, but also to train critical thinking and inquisitive interest in current developments in the discipline of American Studies.

Put very simply, AMS studies American culture. There are consequently two sides to its object of study: On the one hand, the social, political, economic and cultural realities of so large a country have inevitable engendered intense debate as to what can be defined as American: who is a real American; who speaks for America; what does America stand for? On the other hand, cultural studies worldwide concerns itself with the question, what does the concept of culture encompass? Current critical interrogations of the criteria on which the canonicity of artistic works and of art forms has been established have resulted in the study of culture as a way of life, embracing all the cultural forms and practices that make our world meaningful, from literature to cinematography and television, from painting to graffiti and cartoons, from classical music through jazz and rock'n'roll to house and hip-hop, as well as the videos that accompany them, clothing, buildings, marketing etc.

This programme introduces students to many of the methods and approaches deployed by AMS scholars to interpret American culture, from the Liberal Humanism and New Criticism of the 1930s to the "post-theoretical" theories of our days. Our main focus is on the political and cultural evolution of the American nation, the relationship between people and power, as well as issues of citizenship, belonging (and unbelonging) and identity. We hope to familiarise our students with the jargon of AMS, train them to operate cogently with concepts such as multiculturalism, pluralism, tolerance, hybridity, acculturation and cultural hegemony, globalisation and glocalisation, and prepare them to continue their investigation of the American Dream and the American mystique at MA and doctoral level, either at home or abroad.

## American Corners

### American Corner Baia Mare

**Coordinators:** Adina Dorolţan and Ştefan Selele

Like all the American Corners around the world, in this case, American Corner Baia Mare was founded through a partnership between the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest and „Petre Dulfu” County Library in Baia Mare. The official opening of American Corner Baia Mare was in May 2006 and we are proud to say that our corner is one of the most active ones in Europe and maybe the best one in Romania. American Corner Baia Mare is located inside the county library, the most modern and beautiful county library in Romania.

The opening of the American cultural centre was a very good idea, taking into account that we have in town two universities which have faculties of letters with English/American studies departments. Our users' number increased each year; in 2009 we had over 13000 users and visitors. Most of them are university and high-school students, but we also have professors, teachers and professionals. Our collections consists of over 12000 books (encyclopaedias, dictionaries etc.), magazines (we have 12 annual subscriptions), DVD-s and video-cassettes containing documentaries or artistic movies.

During these three years of activity, we organised events for a large public. We had seminars, workshops, English clubs, holidays, games and quizz activities, contests, video-conferences and not last international conferences on different topics.

In May 2008, American Corner Baia Mare hosted the first edition of The Students' and Young Researchers' Conference in

American Studies: "Historical Moments in Modern Mirrors". The conference was organized along with the North University in Baia Mare.

In October 2009, American Corner Baia Mare organized along with the North University of Baia Mare, the "Edgar Allan Poe International Conference", the only event organized in Romania to celebrate the bicentennial of one of the most important American icons.

It was the perfect occasion for Poe admirers to share their knowledge and enthusiasm in the frame of a scientific and cultural event.

There were plenary lectures, 3 DVCs with important professors



from USA, art exhibitions, theatrical and musical performances, poetry recital and a trip to Maramures County.

We organized events for all kind of public, from children in kindergarten to adults, from workshops and seminars, DVCs to jazz concerts. None of these events could have been organized without the support of the American Cultural Center in Bucharest.

We also want to thank to all our collaborators, teachers, students, NGO's for their support.

More pictures can be seen at our address <http://picasaweb.google.ro/americancorner.bm>

## Conference Participation

### ***Ovid, Myth and (Literary) Exile Conference, Ovidius University, Constanta***

**Marius Jucan**

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Under Ovidius's bronze looks contemplating the sea and the local hour of our postmodernity, exile was the subject of a seminal international reunion organized by the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, the Center for Cross-cultural Studies of the Ovidius University, Constanta and the National History and Archeology Museum of the same city. Academics and researchers from Romanian universities, but also from the universities of Bologna, Bari, Rio de Janeiro, London, Glasgow, Vienna, Izmir, Nottingham, Lisbon, Salzburg, Illinois convened to debate on the meanings, images and lessons of the exile. Is exile a landmark of the past, only? What forms of exclusion are there besides the exile? Are there people still facing barriers tearing up their lives in two separated poles of existence? Key-note speakers Stephen Prickett, Sean Matthews and Irina Grigorescu Pană competed to give challenging answers to these questions.

The theme of the exile is biblical. Whether political, religious, racial or literary, the exile conveys into everyday life the tension of an irreversible rupture. At the beginning of the *Tristia*, the Roman poet conjures his book to be the ambassador of his doleful, estranged life; "Parue -- nec inuideo -- sine me, liber, ibis in urbem: / ei mihi, quod domino non licet ire tuo!" Could literature be the truest messenger of the exiled? Ovidius's drama, the unbearable constraint of surviving with the nostalgia of a forever lost country and home was conveyed into other experiences of the exile. Dante, Henry James, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Tristan

Tzara, Ernst Hemingway, Malcolm X, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Ian McEwan, Julian Barnes and others showed that being or feeling exiled is a personal journey into the wasteland of solitude, awakening human solidarity, eventually.

The exile mourns its double memory, complains over a captive life and deplores the ambiguity of living without the "original" fabric of a life. Ovidius, the poet, the courtier and Rome's lover cursed the destiny which cast him on barbarous shores. Exile cannot be imagined without the barbarity of strangers and of foreign countries and outlandish manners. Yet, after Ovidius, many exiles fled from barbarity dwelling in their very countries. Adorno, Soljenitsyn, Gombrowicz, Hannah Arendt, Mircea Eliade, Milan Kundera, Salman Rushdie, and others "representative" men, as Emerson put it, were for a long time deprived of their countries.

Exile does not belong only to representative people, writers, politicians, intellectuals, artists. Poverty, violence, corruption, tyranny have always been the very places where people felt dispossessed of their identities and future. Millions of immigrants chose another country to live in, a different culture and another imaginary where to feel free to legitimate themselves as autonomous human beings.

Exile was regarded this fall at the University of Constanta as one of the "greatest" stories about the human condition. An interesting volume will hopefully ensue the sessions, the presentations and the conversations occasioned by this remarkable event.

### **General Assembly of The University Network of the European Capitals of Culture, Vilnius, Lithuania**

**Silvia Florea and Lucia Pavelescu**

Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu

Representatives of *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu recently participated in a General Assembly of The University Network of the European Capitals of Culture (UneECC). Rodica Miclea, Vice-

Rector for International Relations and Associate Professors, Lucia Pavelescu and Silvia Florea represented the university at the October 2009 international conference, held in Vilnius, Lithuania, this year's wonderful European Cultural Capital.

The assembly was the Network's third annual conference on creativity, innovations and culture issues. Vilnius Gediminas Technical and Mykolas Romeris Universities played host to the international event. Representatives from well over 50 different European higher education institutions convened to share international experience on university culture, creativity and innovation, to help academic communities grow and develop within the creative spaces in higher education, and to explore ways to enhance higher education institutional development. Among many notable attendees, a large number of delegates responsible for culture policy in Europe participated. To mention just two, these included Prof. Edward de Bono, EU Ambassador for the Year of Creativity, 2009 and Patrizia Baralli, Policy Officer of European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture. Their contributions underscored the importance of academic environment and the benefits of implementing such values as creativity, innovation, science and culture. "These values are completely inseparable and it is also a new approach for the academic community, to be creative, progressive, innovative and cultivating culture," emphasized Romualdas Ginevičius, Rector of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. "We should not just talk about the culture in the university, we should live with it to encourage today's 'engines' - creativity and innovation," he added.

The University Network of the European Capitals of Culture (UNeECC) is an international non-profit association founded in December 2006 in Pécs, Hungary. The association brings together 48 universities from 32 European cities. Presentations and papers at the Vilnius conference were delivered on a number of topics, including: Cultural diversity as basis

for creativity and Innovation; Creativity and Innovation and European capitals of Culture; Creativity and Innovation in University Culture; Didactic Innovation and the University; and The Impact of Innovation and Creativity on Culture.

Dr. Florea spoke about the bridge between knowledge of, and accessibility to, research. In doing so, she detailed the Lucian Blaga University/industry collaboration within the Conference Track 2 - Creativity and Innovation in University Culture. During a session on Didactic Innovation and the University, Dr. Pavelescu explored the innovative aspects involved in accessing a teaching career in our country. Both presentations by the Lucian Blaga professors were visually accompanied by power point highlights. The well received presentations once again evidenced the excellence of research in Romanian universities. They spoke about the on-going research efforts that encourage culture and innovation in the Romanian academic community and substantially contribute to the knowledge economy and society-building progress. In different ways, both presentations underscored the promotion of a new way of thinking and a favorable environment as very valuable criteria in assuring quality in Romanian higher education.

The conference also incorporated discussions of the students' point of view, brought to the fore by the student representatives from Network universities. Their contributions offered more proof of UNeECC's initiative to merge into one network, fostering closer links between academic communities in different countries, while at the same time providing incentive for a completely new, progressive and beneficial approach towards the science, education and life of university communities.

## **Expressions of the Self: Autobiography and Its Avatars Conference, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi**

**Odette Blumenfeld and Sorina Chiper**

"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi

The conference "*Expressions of the Self: Autobiography and Its Avatars*," organized by the English Department of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași between September 24-26, focused on the current theories and practices of autobiography – a genre of contested and shifting terminological and multi-modal boundaries. The dynamism of the genre and of its wide range of critical approaches stimulated rich discussions among the participants, who relished the academic coziness of a conference that brought together a select group of Romanian and foreign scholars. The presentations addressed topics as diverse as: authorship, selfhood, identity, cultural representation, the distinction between fact and fiction, memory, subjectivity, morality, intentionality, etc.

Thus, the keynote speeches provided thorough theoretical, historical and cross-cultural perspectives to the genre. Prof. Monika Reif-Huesler from Konstanz University offered a "tour de force" survey of the field, with a few landmarks such as Michel de Montaigne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mahatma Gandhi, Paul de Man and James M. Coetzee, and gave rich insights into links between the flourishing of the genre and periods of social and political unrest. Similarly rich and intellectually engaging were the plenary sessions which featured Dr. Virgil Stanciu's *Reviewing Family History: Recent Irish Fiction and the Avatars of Memory*, and Dr. Marius Jucan's *Autobiography and the Emotion of Playing with the Ego*.

Papers presented in sessions were grouped together under broader topics such as ethnic autobiography (sessions moderated by Prof. Stefan Avadanei and Prof. Odette Blumenfeld), American literature and popular culture

(session moderated by Prof. Dumitru DorobăȚ), women and autobiography (session moderated by Prof. Virgil Stanciu), history and autobiography (session moderated by Prof. Remus Bejan), linguistic expressions of the self (session moderated by Prof. Adrian Poruciuc), expressions of the self in British literature (session moderated by Prof. Codrin Liviu Cuițaru) and autobiography in Europe (session moderated by Prof. Ștefan Colibaba). As far as papers in the field of American Studies were concerned, they dwelt on salient features of the autobiographical work of authors such as Henry Adams, Sylvia Plath, Ralph Ellison, Maxine Hong Kingston, Eugene O'Neill, Gertrude Stein, Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller and so on.

A strong point of the conference was its opening to other media, except from the purely literary ones. Thus, Prof. Odette Blumenfeld and Assistant Professor Mihaela Precup tackled autobiography in comics form. The former retraced Art Spiegelman's experience of growing up as a child of Holocaust survivors in his "Maus", and the latter discussed family photography and detective work in graphic memoirs by Alison Bechdel and C.S. Tyler. Prof. Rodica Albu drew on her experience of working on an autobiography-based oral history research project, and Lecturer Claudia Doroholschi looked at Stanley Kubrick's "Full Metal Jacket" as an auteur film.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity for Romanian, German, Spanish and British scholars to share their literary, linguistic and cultural interest in autobiography, and discuss future projects. It was a successful event, well orchestrated by Prof. Odette Blumenfeld and the other two organizers, Lecturer Sorina Chipur and Instructor Tereza Nitisor, that showed the high-currency value of ideas and debates around topics of identity, sites of memory, and expressions of the self.

## Academic Exchanges and Summer Schools

**Visiting Fulbright Scholar Report, June 13 – July 26, 2009, New York**

**Anda Ștefanovici**

"Petru Maior" University Târgu-Mureș

As a Fulbright scholar I spent six weeks (June 13 – July 26, 2009) at the NYU Steinhardt Multinational Institute of American Studies. FY-09 Study of the U.S. Institute (SUSI) for American Civilization is an intensive summer post-graduate level academic program with integrated study tours. Its purpose was to provide foreign university faculty and other scholars the opportunity to deepen their understanding of American society, culture and institutions. The program also aimed at strengthening curricula and improving the quality of teaching about the U.S.A. in academic institutions abroad. The professor who initiated this project many years ago, Dr. Phil Hosey, Director of International Education at New York University, displays a rare combination of professional, social and human skills. A great organizer, teacher and scholar, Dr. Hosey impressed us as a most decent, modest and humane person.

The multinational group included eighteen scholars from eighteen different cultures: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Libya, Madagascar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia and Tunisia; a diverse group from which I undoubtedly learned as much as from the program.

The complexity and heterogeneous nature of American society, as well as the institutions and values that have enabled the nation to accommodate that diversity was the main focus of the program "The Reconciliation of American Diversity with National Unity". The program, through its

presentations, debates, and panel discussions, examined some of the critical historical epochs, movements, issues, and conflicts that have influenced the development of the US nation and its people. It also included a strong contemporary component, exploring some principal issues underlying some of the most pressing contemporary political, social, and economic debates in the US.



We were expected to participate fully in the program (lectures, organized activities, integrated study tours, and substantial reading assignments for active participation in seminars and panel discussions) which at times was, understandably, overwhelming.

It has been, nonetheless, an invaluable experience, the professional and personal benefits of which cannot be measured in words. For six weeks I was most fruitful and productive. We were offered to explore American culture and values through the first-hand experiences of people portrayed in their history, literature, politics, art, and other enduring forms of cultural expression. The program aimed to foster critical thinking through deep and wide readings on cultural criticism, history and social analysis works. New York was the perfect location to explore the extent to which the US has succeeded in reconciling diversity and national unity, while the demanding interdisciplinary program made possible the participation as guest speakers of leading figures on the New York, Washington, and Boston political and cultural scenes. It is unusual to experience such a continuously impressive level of organization, debate and discussion.

We were exposed to all facets of American culture (religion, gender issues, home and foreign



policy, mass media, visual and performing arts, ethnicity and race, economy, postmodernism). The daily coursework was a beneficial combination of individual speaker presentations and panel discussions. Prominent academicians, politicians, business and labor leaders, journalists and government advisers all contributed essentially to the success of the program by introducing us to broad academic themes related to local autonomy and pluralism in America, individual liberty and the American creed, cultural and social heterogeneity, and last but not least, to national unity- social and cultural integration.

Besides being exposed to the American educational system through seminars, discussions and debates, cultural events and field trips helped us challenge and deconstruct other stereotypical perceptions about the American people and their culture. One of the guest speakers stated towards the end of the program: "You saw in six weeks more than most of us could dream of 'seeing' in a lifetime". And she was right. I could not think of a better program (although I have been on other scholarships as well) that enables the participants to attend such a full list of cultural events and to get into direct contact with the most important cultural communities in America. From theatre, opera, musical, concerts, films, museums, to author presentations, gay parade, baseball (practice and game) – cultural diversity and experimentation – all of America was included in the program.

In addition, the cultural image of America was completed by the field trips we made. The New York tours (Ground Zero, Times Square, Queens, Harlem, Chinatown, Ellis Island, etc.) focused on the impact of technology on city planning, on the diverse communities that make up neighborhoods in the United States, on the tension between the process of assimilation and the formation of an Asian American ethnic identity, etc.

We also went on longer field trips to New England to study the character of a New England community, to New Mexico to see patterns of ethnic confrontation and assimilation on the Western frontier,

and to Washington DC to explore the nature of the democratic process in America, and to learn how it differs from democratic practices in other countries. Hardly could one think of a more complete cultural portrayal.

The luncheons and parties organized also helped us experience American traditions (food traditions, Native American dances, baseball as a national sport, etc.). Contact with other international groups, such as the British group, was also made possible on these occasions.

And this is not all. Despite this strenuous 'journey' into the American culture, we still had time to work on individual projects, to do library research at Bobst Library and to catch up on reading, shopping, or resting. My American experience enabled my access to library and computer resources to collect huge amounts of data and make audio recordings of the guest speakers. Also, I have made a lot of professional contacts throughout the United States.

The gains I have from this scholarship are multiple. I am strongly motivated to continue my work in this direction. The Fulbright experience has helped me broaden my professional and personal horizons and see things from an international perspective, and I can now say wholeheartedly that all my expectations were exceeded.

At this moment I would like to offer warm thanks to all of the NYU staff for making me feel so welcome. The staff included Prof. Phil Hosey (Director of International Education) and six advanced doctoral students in this International Education Program: Elly (the Administrative Director of the Institute), Ashley, Amy, Karleigh, Ally, Rachel (all Program Officers) and Nick (a Program Associate). The staff assisted us in all our endeavors and offered precious support in all situations (not only during the program, but after we left New York as well). They were the best organizers and the nicest people I have ever met.

I am also grateful to the people I met there. I am proud to have been part of such a group. We not only developed and shared our professional expertise but I had the feeling we had met before and we

were already old friends. I could have never dreamed of being so close to people coming from such different cultures. Among other, this program fostered enduring relationships and provided us with opportunities to increase our subject knowledge and understand its relevance in the greater context of the world. The opportunity to reach out and touch lives in these new circumstances also gave me insights into the American educational mechanism. That will help me a lot in introducing my American experience in my courses.

However, we should not neglect one important outcome of this unique experience: the chance we have to develop an international partnership that would open professional and reflective dialogue. These exchanges between international scholars usually generate international research networks and collaborative writing projects. And we have already embraced the chance of a joint venture project – editing a volume in which all of us, the eighteen participants and the American staff, will contribute our 'personal' reflections on the American experience.

The knowledge and experiences that I gained from this scholarship have been invaluable and will no doubt impact on my future academic teaching work, on my research and also on my personal life. It enabled me to establish professional and personal dialogue with teachers, colleagues and staff and I hope this will be maintained over the coming years.

I regard myself as privileged to have had the occasion to experience such a hothouse of intense intellectual exchange. I would invite any colleague to seize this exclusive prospect.



**First International Summer  
Academy for Doctoral  
Students in American Studies,  
May 9:23, 2009, Munich**

**Costinela Dragan**

University of Bucharest

Munich was the venue of The First International Summer Academy for Doctoral Students in American Studies, *American Studies in a Transatlantic Perspective: Cultural Mobility and Intercultural Exchange*, which sought to address current issues in American history, culture, and literature. The program was supported by German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Bavarian-American Academy (BAA), Friedrich Alexander-Universität, Erlangen-Nürnberg, the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, Wayne State University, Detroit, and the University of Southern Denmark, Odense.

The two weeks of the summer school featured key-note lectures on crucial issues of cultural mobility and transatlantic exchange delivered by Prof. Dr. Heike Paul (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg): "Cultural Mobility"; Prof. Dr. Klaus Benesch (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, Munich): "Mobility and Rootedness"; Prof. Dr. David Nye (University of Southern Denmark, Odense): "Mobility, Technology, and the Production of Difference"; Prof. Dr. Barrett Watten (Wayne State University, Detroit): "Mobility and Poetics"; Prof. Dr. Udo Hebel (University of Regensburg): "Transatlantic Cultures of Memory"; Prof. Dr. Rudolf Freiburg (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg): "Transatlantic Discourses on Religion and Atheism"; Werner Sollors (Harvard University): "Transatlantic Encounters". Prof. Dr. Carla Harryman (Eastern Michigan University) offered us an unforgettable moment of grace with her reading from her new book *Adorno's Noise*.

This summer school gave doctoral students working in the field of American Studies the opportunity to discuss seminal scholarly texts in the field and to

present their Ph.D. projects. The academic program was full of interesting events: a reception at the Amerika Haus, excursions to Dachau, Neuschwanstein, visits to museums and places of interest in Munich.

**Creative Writing Summer  
Course, July 6 – 19, 2009,  
Ovidius University, Constanța  
Guest Instructor: John Quinn,  
University of Nevada, Las  
Vegas, USA**

**Ludmila Martanovschi**

Ovidius University, Constanța

Due to the financial support of the US Embassy, the Creative Writing Summer Course at Ovidius University, Constanța had a new edition last summer, thus confirming a tradition that has taken shape over the last ten years. Professor and poet John Quinn, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA, led a new challenging and exciting course in which fifteen undergraduate students majoring in American Studies and English A were involved in writing personal essays, poetry and short fiction and were helped to improve their composition skills and develop their creative abilities. The course also focused on important American writers while students engaged in the analysis of 20<sup>th</sup> century writings and enriched their knowledge of American literature and culture. The course also deepened the students' knowledge of American issues from a variety of fields as discussions tackled contemporary reality in the United States. As a long term result, this joint program strengthened the cooperation between the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA and Ovidius University, Constanța, Romania and paved the way for future projects. Among the project activities, some of the most notable are: the opening of the course at the American Corner, Constanța on July 6th, creative writing exercises and workshops on the margins of the students' work, lectures on writing, group discussions on contemporary American and Romanian writers, and readings by the guest instructor, poet John

Quinn. For the second time in the history of this summer course, students from Bulgaria joined their Romanian colleagues in an interesting and fruitful cultural exchange. We were happy to meet four Bulgarian students from the University of Plovdiv and to invite Professor Rodica Mihăilă to join one of the workshops. This year's summer course was successfully organized and it was beneficial to the participating students who acquired and improved their analysis and writing skills, which will help them in their studies and subsequent careers. As a result of the students' successful completion of the course assignments, they were better prepared to meet the course requirements that involve writing and to receive higher grades throughout the present academic year.

## Research Projects

**"Spaces of Seclusion, Spaces  
of Freedom in the City in  
Contemporary American  
Literature" Research Project,  
Gent University**

**Anamaria Schwab**

University of Bucharest, Romania

The 2008 Intra European Grant that EAAS had the generosity to offer me proved of invaluable help to the progress of my Ph.D. thesis. During my October-November 2008 stay with Gent University, Belgium, I was granted unrestricted access to the library of Gent Urban Studies Team (GUST) that is dedicated mostly to the domain of urban studies in America. I also had the chance to meet some of the professors who are GUST members and specialists in my field of doctoral research, namely the city in contemporary American literature.

I carried out research mostly with GUST very pleasant library and also with the Library of the English Department and a number of other libraries at Gent University. As a result, I managed to study about

sixty essential books and articles dealing with my topic, especially theoretical books and contemporary novels which I had been unable to reach in Romania. Not to mention the elegant bike that Gent Urban Studies Team were so kind to rent for me and that I fully enjoyed riding for a whole month.

In what concerns the theoretical part of my dissertation, after reading especially Edward Soja's *Third Space*, *Postmetropolis* and *Imagining Cities* where he accounts for the constantly restructuring, incessantly growing urban sprawls of today that defy comprehension, I detailed my analysis of the way in which literature attempts to capture a city that is fragmentary and simulated to such an extent that it becomes ultimately absent. In doing so, I was asking myself if contemporary American literature is capable to 'radically rethink and perhaps deeply restructure ... our inherited forms of urban analysis to meet the practical, political and theoretical challenges presented by the post-metropolis', as Soja puts it in *Imagining Cities*.

Novels such as Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn*, Toni Morrison's *Jazz* or E. L. Doctorow's *Lives of the Poets* account for a variety of marginal voices and their different perceptions of the city. They helped me deepen and nuance my perspective on literature's understanding of urban space. I had a view of the city as a fortress and a suffocating presence but due to discussions with the researchers there and the books they recommended me I realized that such a space is also one that helps unleash individuals' inventiveness and freedom, often through the creation of small communities that reinstitute difference at the very heart of big cities.

The conclusion that I have reached is that contemporary literature tends to employ nineteenth century realism in a refashioned manner which 'corrects' it and implicitly criticizes it, while still benefitting from its accessibility and popularity. No longer omniscient, and having renounced the totalizing, all encompassing perspective upon the city that characterized it at the beginning of modernism, realism

has become aware of multiplicity and of the various differences of class, race and gender that define contemporary America. Simultaneously, the same realism is capable to dissolve reality, rendering the city's endless play of surfaces, the simulacrum it has come to represent (as in Paul Auster's *City of Glass*).

A novel like Toni Morrison's *Jazz* for example helped me expand a chapter in my dissertation that is dedicated to inner spaces in the city and their relationship to everydayness. In reading *Jazz*, one becomes fully aware of the intricacy and denseness of destinies that can be compressed between a flat's four walls and of the extent of drama that is confined to the small, anonymous, domestic spaces of the city.

I must admit that without the access to information made possible through the grant and without the invaluable help that I received from the GUST professors, I would not have been able to discover essential primary as well as secondary sources that perfectly fit the scope of my dissertation. This way I succeeded to make significant and substantial progress in my thesis.

### **The Sixth Framework International Research Project: "Society and Lifestyles. Towards Enhancing Social Harmonization through Knowledge of Subcultural Communities"**

**Michaela Praisler**

"Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați

From 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2008, the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania has been involved in an international research project entitled "Society and Lifestyles. Towards Enhancing Social Harmonization through Knowledge of Subcultural Communities", alongside thirteen other academic teams from: The University of Central Lancashire – Great Britain, University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava –

Slovakia, Tallin University – Estonia, Daugavpils University – Latvia, University of Pecs – Hungary, Warsaw Agricultural University – Poland, The Institute of Lithuanian Scientific Society – Lithuania, Europarama – Lithuania, The University of Warwick – Great Britain, The University of Salford – Great Britain, Centre for Analytic Studies and Development – Russia, Scientific Research Centre Region – Russia, Centre of Sociological, Political and Psychological Analysis – Moldova.

Coordinated by Vytautas Magnus University – Lithuania and funded by the European Commission, the project presupposed research collaboration, fieldwork, data processing, disseminating findings and formulating policy recommendations (see project website: [www.sal.vdu.lt](http://www.sal.vdu.lt)).

The strategic objectives envisaged and met via the interdisciplinary approach to the main research fields (New Religious Movements, Ethnic/Religious "Fringers" and "Taste" Subcultures) were: the analysis of differences with social subgroups in post-communist societies, the study of social differentiation processes, the investigation of the way in which social structures and processes vary from one post-communist society to another, their comparison with Western models. In other words, the activities and work packages of the project were oriented towards:

- analysing the role played by different cultural communities within contemporary European societies; studying dominant values, beliefs, ideals and the way they are communicated; understanding the concepts of freedom and lifestyle with different social groups (under focus were the historical perspective and the emergence of new resistance patterns in Eastern European communities during the period of Soviet domination, together with the modifications of religions and cultural traditions under the influence of Western culture);

- understanding the perception of individual identity by cultural community members in different European regions in view of identifying the meanings they

attach to the values of their own identity;

- exploring the impact of counter-cultural values on the individual identity of different group members from the standpoint of gender studies;

- studying the level of tolerance/intolerance within counter-cultural communities, the predominant attitudes towards them in institutional spheres (the media, organisations for leisure activities, schools and workplaces) and the modes of expressing solidarity with and opposition to ethnic and cultural minorities;

- investigating the role of symbols used by counter-cultural community members and their subsequent transformations;

- examining the dominant processes which lead to the division of the contemporary European Community into individual social groups with different socio-cultural identities;

- identifying the social power structures which stimulate the emergence of new cultural groups in the region (the concept of power being used to imply ability, authority and coercion) through the analysis of oppositional cultural groups;

- signalling the main reasons for the opposition which has given rise to numerous groups and movements in Eastern Europe (identifiable in religion, ideology, ethnicity, identity, lifestyle, gender and traditions).

The GalaŃ team (coordinated by Michaela Praisler, with Daniela Őorcaru and Isabela Merilă as main researchers and Floriana Popescu as representative in steering committee meetings), together with the specialists in history, sociology, ethnology and cultural anthropology they have collaborated with, spent 2970 hours working on the project's research, innovation, demonstrative and managerial activities dedicated to the study of urban culture and its dynamics, of interculturality and the Easternisation of the West, with emphasis on the particular case of Romanian hip-hop, under its many aspects: the discourse of violence and the violence of discourse, rooted in and influencing the social milieu; its counter-cultural manifestations as an alternative to mainstream culture; its

representatives, their expression of identity and the law.

The results were posted on the internet, disseminated at academic conferences (including the one organised on the project at the University of GalaŃ – 2-3 November 2007, whose proceedings were published a year later in the volume *Culture, Subculture, Counterculture* GalaŃ Europlus) and included in articles accepted by prestigious periodicals: Isabela Merilă and Michaela Praisler – 'Textually Constructing Identity and Otherness: Mediating the Hip-Hop Message'; Daniela Őorcaru and Floriana Popescu – 'On Linguistic Politics: The Stylistic Testimonies of Romanian Hip-Hop', in *Subcultures and New Religious Movements in Russia and East-Central Europe*, Cultural Identity Series (CIS), 2009, ed. G. McKay, C. Williams, M. Goddard, N. Foxlee, E. Ramanauskaite, Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing.

### **Ishmael Reed's Poetics of Multiculturalism in *Mumbo Jumbo***

**Daniela Angelica Dorobantu**

University of Craiova

This study explores the way Ishmael Reed promotes a new discourse; I mean one which reassesses the social experience of diversity and differences. The close analysis of his fiction will prompt us to enhance what it means to be part of a "diasporic" and "creolized" or "postcolonial" world, where boundaries and borders are always redefined. For black Americans this process has been shaped by a distinctive history-Africa, slavery, the South, Emancipation, Reconstruction, post-Reconstruction.

We shall see that for Reed, "blackness" is "a dimension of a larger cultural process of formation that he sometimes identifies as multiculturalism". In *Mumbo Jumbo*, his third and perhaps, best novel, Reed demonstrates how in order to fight the forces of colonialism and monoculturalism, post-colonial artists must artistically return to their roots or tap into their pre-

slavery/pre-colonial indigenous traditional cultures.

Set in Harlem, during the 1920s, the novel ingeniously employs cinematic techniques to juxtapose fact and fiction, ancient and modern history. It follows the cyclical path of HooDoo detectives PaPaLaBas and Black Herman in tracking down the Western conspiracy to destroy the creative spirit and vitality of man which Reed calls Jes Grew and to replace it with the imitative and repressive aesthetic order of Western civilizations whose museums are Centers of Art Detention for treasures from Africa, Asia and South America.

Since learning the Yoruba language, Reed has been able to reassess the character of Pa PaLaBas presenting him as a North American version of the West African Legba. He is the one who sets the action into motion and interconnects the parts.

In a more direct way, *Mumbo Jumbo* is Reed's dissertation about the manifested aspects of Voodoo and Hoodoo and the role of Africa and Haiti in the origin of African American culture. Voodoo represents the countercultural moment within Reed's work, including its refusal to Western aesthetic norms. As a postmodernist, Reed uses voodoo as an antidote to the master narratives of Western cultures.

The book opens with a prologue, situated in New Orleans and we can see the authorities getting worried and trying to stop the strange phenomenon called in the beginning a "*Creeping Thing*". All the reports describe the first manifestations of this one. The people were doing "*stupid sensual things*" were in a state of "*uncontrollable frenzy*". This entire phenomenon is called Jes Grew and seems to resemble another phenomenon -Voodoo- that erupted in the 1890s in Place Congo or Congo Square in Haiti. The authorities see Jes Grew as a disease that may become pandemic which it could be equivalent to the End of Civilization. The worst is that nobody can explain or solve this mystery.

All the infected persons seem to breathe the air of Africa, to feel like being in Kongo and dancing a

tribal dance. They could hear the music of shank bones, jew's harpes, bagpipes, flutes, conch horns, drums, banjos, kazoos, all the traditional African instruments as if the writer tried to orchestrate our feelings into a great symphony of the African Spirit.

The novel is obvious a refashioning of the New World and the first indication of this one starts with the title "Mumbo Jumbo" which may have different meanings. At the end of the prologue part, Reed provides a dictionary definition of "Mumbo Jumbo" and suggests that it is an English corruption of "ma-ma-gyo-mbo", a Mandingo phrase that designates "a magician who makes the troubled spirits of ancestors go away".

The key figures in the action of the plot are the Atonist Path and its military wing, the Wallflower Order, on the one hand and the Neo-HooDoo detectives and its military wing, the *Mu'tafikah*, on the other hand. Reed satirizes the mission of the Atons, their army and their crusading agents from the Teutronics, Knights Templars to Hinckle von Vampton, the Templars' librarian. The Wallflower Order launched the war against Haiti hoping to fight against Jes Grew's symptoms by attacking their miasmatic source and using a Talking Android.

For Reed and his characters in *Mumbo Jumbo*, Haiti is the symbol of political freedom from foreign oppressors, of awareness of cultural identity and of aesthetic freedom. By aesthetic freedom one has to understand the freedom to write or create art from a syncretic or multicultural point of view. It is stated in the novel that when an artist discovers new forms, he exclaims: "I Have Reached My Haiti!" Throughout *Mumbo Jumbo*, the interest in Haiti stems from the idea that since Haitians are closer to Africa than are African Americans, it is normal that they provide a cultural base for North America.

The *Mu'tafikah*, in addition to compounding the discourse of post-colonial resistance in *Mumbo Jumbo*, represents Reed's multicultural poetics at best, which includes a multitude of characters with different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and different

ideologies under one umbrella and lets them sort out their differences. Although the members of the *Mu'tafikah* share the same post-colonial vision of returning the "plundered art" to the countries where it was looted from, there is evidence of occasional mistrust and racial tensions among them.

At the end of the novel, PaPa LaBas and Black Herman capture Hinckle Von Vampton, but Jes Grew goes underground only to rise once more, we learn in the epilogue, in the 1970s.

So, Reed's aim is not simply to assert "the blackness of blackness" or an Afrocentric aesthetic in the manner of Amiri Baraka, Molefi Asante and others, but that his writing goes beyond the reconnection to African spirituality in order to create a multicultural space for all cultures and modes of being and thinking.

## Research Projects

### **Visible Invisibility: Literacy Practices of Non:English: Speaking:European:American Immigrant Women (1835: 1930)**

Anca-Luminita Iancu

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

This dissertation examines the intricate connections between literacy and acculturation by looking at individual literacy practices of first-generation non-English-speaking European-American immigrant women between 1835 and 1930. Based partly on archival research, the dissertation explores the various contexts in which women acquired, developed, and used literacy in their first languages and in English by employing a comparative method: geographical regions (rural vs. urban) and historical periods (mid-nineteenth-to early twentieth century). While during the nineteenth century literacy functioned as a powerful social, ideological, and political tool of Americanization in the public

spaces of the American environment, in the private and domestic spaces inhabited by first-generation immigrant women, it functioned as a catalyst that helped them negotiate the practical and emotional aspects of the acculturation process. In general, for the women in this study, literacy promoted acculturation, at a more accelerated or at a slower pace, depending on the time period when they emigrated, on the areas of settlement, and on the impact of ethnic communities and American contexts on immigrants.

Individual literacy practices, in their first languages or in English, informed by a number of variables, such as ethnicity and social class, allowed first-generation women to create cultural, ethnic, and generational bridges between the old world and the new and between themselves and their descendants. Immigrant women used their literacy practices (of reading and writing) for various purposes, such as maintaining the comfort zone of the first language, preserving the ethnic culture, gaining social prestige and status in various communities, facilitating the absorption of the new culture, and/or leaving a written cultural legacy for family members. Thus, this study explores a number of literacy practices experienced by first-generation immigrant women from different ethnic groups, such as German, Norwegian, Swiss, Jewish, and Italian. The materials researched come from published collections of letters, diaries, memoirs/autobiographies, and from unpublished manuscripts from American archives, such as The Filson Historical Society in Louisville, KY, the Historical Society of Cincinnati, OH, and the American-Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, OH.

The dissertation has five chapters. Chapter I offers an overview of the main immigration issues between 1830 and 1930, with particular emphasis on immigrant women's literacy. At the same time, this chapter discusses the most relevant literature regarding historical studies of literacy, sponsorship, and women's immigration experiences. Chapter II examines the European and American contexts navigated by the first-generation women in this study,



mentioning their individual reasons for emigration and their levels of education in Europe. This chapter also points to various practical, emotional, and linguistic challenges that immigrant women encountered during their acculturation processes in America. Chapter III looks at specific instances of practical (domestic) literacy, individual literacy practices, and sponsorship (of acculturation and literacy) of first-generation immigrant women who settled in rural areas in the nineteenth century. The reading and writing practices of first-generation women are analyzed in conjunction with social class (their husbands' occupation) and ethnicity (particularly the role and impact of ethnic communities on individual literacy practices). From a comparative perspective, Chapter IV examines similar issues of acculturation, work patterns, literacy practices, and sponsorship of urban immigrant women, particularly in the late 1800s and early 1900s. One of the significant differences in the acculturation patterns of first-generation rural and urban women resides in the amount of contact they had with American-born citizens. Sometimes, more contact with them encouraged women to learn English faster or to acquire more than basic linguistic skills in English in order not only to communicate but also to sustain

more advanced conversations. More knowledge of English most likely fostered a desire to acculturate at a more rapid pace and to adapt not only to the practical American ways but also to the cultural ones. While on the one hand urban areas offered more opportunities for Americanization, on the other hand, the pressure to Americanize was also higher than in the rural areas in the mid-nineteenth century, for example, because of the economic, social, and political conditions around the turn into the twentieth century (strong anti-immigrant sentiments and a sweeping Americanization movement). In addition, influenced by the perceptions of American-born citizens concerning immigrants in different decades of the 1800s and early 1900s, first-generation women from rural and urban areas responded differently to various sponsors of acculturation and literacy.

Finally, Chapter V draws conclusions about literacy use in different contexts and languages and makes connections with experiences of first-generation immigrant women in the twenty-first century. As this study demonstrates, literacy has played an important role during the acculturation processes of first-generation immigrant women. Acquiring, developing, and using

literacy in one's first language and in English is still a complex process for first-generation immigrant women. Among many elements that have influenced individual literacy practices and acculturation, personal acceptance and acceptance from the members of the host country are essential. Furthermore, individual contexts and choices have determined the degrees to which first-generation immigrant women are prepared to acculturate (by acquiescing, resisting, and/or accepting the American ways), as well as the degrees to which they choose to develop and use their literacies (in both languages) in order to facilitate or impede successful acculturation.

*The thesis was defended at the University of Louisville, KY, USA, in May 2009.*

## Book Reviews

### **The Sense of America. Histories into Text.**

Eds. Rodica Mihăilă and Irina Grigorescu Pană  
Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 2009.

### **Transatlantic Dialogues. Eastern Europe, the U.S. and Post-Cold War Cultural Spaces.**

Eds. Rodica Mihăilă and Roxana Oltean  
Bucharest University Press, Bucharest, 2009.

### **Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru**

University of Bucharest

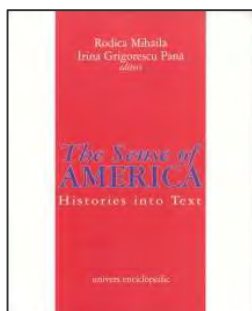
On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2009, the Galateca Gallery of the Bucharest University Library hosted a double book launch

organized by the Center for American Studies, the University of Bucharest, in the presence of distinguished guests from the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest, Patricia Guy, Counselor for Public Affairs and Julie O'Reagan, Cultural Attaché. Romanian literary and cultural critic, prof. Ion Bogdan Lefter presented the volumes in question: *The Sense of America. Histories into Text*, edited by Rodica Mihăilă and Irina Grigorescu Pană (Univers Enciclopedic, 2009) and *Transatlantic Dialogues. Eastern Europe, the U.S. and Post-Cold War Cultural Spaces*, edited by Rodica Mihăilă and Roxana Oltean (Bucharest University Press, 2009). The two volumes draw together the newest work of American Studies scholars from university centers all over Romania, but also from the United States, Europe, including neighboring countries, and contribute to the international debate about the new representations and narrations of America in the world, and the multiple vistas opened by transatlantic dialogue.

The volume *The Sense of America* is a collection of essays selected from the fifth conference of the Romanian Association for American Studies held at the University of Bucharest, Romania, May 22-24, 2008; it reflects the remarkable growth of the discipline in this country, with



contributors from major university centers in Romania, and it also testifies the insertion of the work carried out by these scholars in the international academic context.



The volume addresses multiple facets of America as a historical and cultural construct, from the narrations that constitute the ethical, post-traumatic or global foundations of the nation (in the section *Histories in Narration*) or narratives foregrounding the techniques of cross-cultural interchange and strategies of mediation in the construction of U.S. narratives, explored in *The U.S. in Perspective*, to the material dimensions of American mythologies, revealed in the section on *New World Cartographies*. Two further sections (*Marginality and Empowerment* and *Sites of Conflict*) focus more extensively on the tensions lying at the heart of American political, cultural, racial and ethnic constructs.

The second volume launched on the occasion, ***Transatlantic Dialogues***, is based on a workshop with the same name, held on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008 within the framework of a team project carried entitled *Romanian Cultural Space in Transatlantic Perspective. From Post-Communism to Post-Accession*, carried out at the Center for American Studies, led by prof. dr. Rodica Mihăilă and funded by CNCSIS. Working towards the final goal of the project, which is to chart a theoretical map for Romanian post-communist cultural identity in the global context, and to provide an analysis of Romanian and Eastern European cultural identities in their interaction with the transatlantic perspective, the present volume of papers is devoted to rich cultural and political interchanges between Eastern Europe and the U.S. The volume comprises theoretical analyses of the insertion of local (Romanian, Eastern European voices) in the global/U.S. context in the section *Exploring Transatlantic Spaces*, which highlights these issues through the prism of culture wars, post-imperialist models, literary or economic discourses. A special mode of circulating cultural models in a global age is the mass media, and the mechanisms of this two-way transatlantic negotiation of imagological narrations are explored in a special section devoted to the topic, *Media Cultures and Transatlantic Reflections*, which interrogates areas of culture from rap music and film to digital communities and the printed press. The last section of the volume, *Identity Politics in Transatlantic Perspective* illustrates the hybrid

and palimpsestic nature of identity in an inevitably transatlanticized world, in which permeable boundaries dissolve Cold-War polarities and reinstate, perhaps, new models of transatlantic contrast and communion.

As the distinguished guests and speakers highlighted on the occasion of the book launch, the question of America's role on the world stage is a story about reinvention, and the two volumes testify to the fine attunement of local and global voices in the production of convincing narratives.

## Bernard Malamud and the Type Figure of the Schlemiel

Eniko Maior

Partium Christian University, Oradea

In writing my book on the type figure of the schlemiel and its treatment in the works of Bernard Malamud my main objective was to contribute to a better understanding of the American literary culture through a detailed study of the type figure of the schlemiel. The book attempts to offer a complex analysis of a type figure which migrated from its East-European Yiddish cultural and regional origins to penetrate and influence a particular ethnic mode of New World expressiveness. The task of this work is to prove the existing similarities between the European and the American variants of the *schlemiel*. It is not a hero in the general sense of the word, a hero who we envy for his greatness and for his power, but rather a product of centuries' long oppressions and pogroms. It is a character that accepts life's hardships and does not try to fight with the inhuman condition in which he finds himself, but rather tries to survive somehow. In this specific sense the figure of the *schlemiel* is a building block and a cultural component. However it is also a safety valve and the product of a saving transaction. The East European Jewry was locked in a paradoxical relationship and could solve this only through indirections. They could find a few moments of peace and comfort against the surrounding repressive world.

The ethnicized Eastern European *schlemiel* came to be universalized in America. The first and second generation of Jewish-American writers found themselves in a new world and had to reformulate their positions in the Golden Land. The type figure in Europe was used to mock at the confines of their European lives through their bitter-sweet irony and predilection for satire. In America, it had to stand for the relatively wider margin of freedom. The American type figure takes on the so much vaunted American pluralism, freedom of speech and thought, and as well as individualism. Finally, it becomes an active hero formerly unknown.

# CALLS FOR PAPERS

**The 2010 RAAS – Fulbright Conference**  
**The American Tradition of Descent/Dissent:**  
**The Underground, the Countercultural, the (Anti)Utopian**

**Ovidius University, Constanța, Romania**  
**October 7-9, 2010**

The topic of this conference aims at reflecting the contemporary atmosphere of dissent in the United States at a time when the economic, the social, the political and the cultural give rise to underground, countercultural and (anti)utopian movements and positions in the United States of America in perfect correlation with the tradition that has marked their descent from the colonial period to the present. Dissent often emerges from reinvestigating, reanalyzing and descending into the intricacies of fundamental issues that have long been left untouched. The conference offers space for papers and debates on the broader repercussions of the American tradition of descent/dissent in all the acceptations of these terms from an interdisciplinary perspective (literature, literary theory, history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, imagology, the history of ideas, cultural studies, geography, political sciences, film studies and other associated fields and disciplines).

We invite proposals for papers and panel discussions on the following topics:

- transnationalism as dissent from inherited national identity;
- deconstructive readings as dissenting analyses;
- postcolonialism/postimperialism as dissent from the Metropolis/the Empire;
- minority matters - descent into the Other/the politics of dissent;
- feminism and the dissent from patriarchal discourses and practices;
- autobiography and life writing as investigating descent;
- productions outside the establishment e.g. the avant-garde;
- the unconscious as a site of descent/dissent;
- the descent into the underworld;
- (anti)utopian societies, groups, communities;
- mystery/secret/sacredness and the underground;
- private and public dissent;
- countercultures: dissent from the mainstream/descent into the self;
- environmentalism as dissent from ecosystem destruction;

*We are pleased to announce that*

Dr. Janice A. Radway, Walter Dill Scott Professor of Communication Studies, Northwestern University, Illinois,

*has already confirmed our invitation to participate in the conference as a key-note speaker.*

Proposals for 20-minute papers should be submitted by March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in the form of an abstract of 150-200 words. As each paper will be followed by 10-minute discussions, participants are kindly asked to limit the presentation to their time-slot. Those interested in proposing a panel discussion should submit the title and the names of at least three other academics who will participate in the talk.

If you are interested in participating, please fill in the registration form that you can obtain from the conference e-mail address [raas.conference@yahoo.com](mailto:raas.conference@yahoo.com) and return it to Ludmila Martanovschi, RAAS Secretary, Ileana Jitaru, RAAS Treasurer, and Nicoleta Stanca at the same e-mail address.

**International Whitman Week 2010**  
**Seminar and Symposium**

**Università di Macerata, Macerata, Italy**  
**June 14-20, 2010**

The *Transatlantic Walt Whitman Association (TWWA)*, founded in Paris in 2007, invites students, researchers, and Whitman enthusiasts to participate in its third annual Whitman Week, consisting of a seminar for advanced students interested in Whitman and Whitman's poetry, and a symposium bringing together international scholars and graduate students.

**International Whitman Seminar: *Walt Whitman's Poetry in the 21st Century***

Walt Whitman's poetry, written in the nineteenth century, continues to have a strong impact on literatures and cultures worldwide. Every year new editions of Whitman's work are published in a variety of languages; an ever-expanding group of poets "reply" to him in their poetry; his poems are set to music and are quoted in films; he is invoked in the discussion of political and cultural issues as well as of gender and sexuality; and he continues to be a huge presence in college and university curricula globally. In order to respond adequately to this international phenomenon *The Transatlantic Walt Whitman Association* sponsors a series of *International Whitman Seminars*, where students from different countries come together for intensive, credit-bearing classes taught by an international team of Whitman specialists.

The first seminar was held in Dortmund, Germany, in June 2008. The second took place in Tours, France, in June 2009. The third will take place in Macerata, Italy, on 14-20 June 2010. In the regular classes, focusing on some of Whitman's major poems, students will have an opportunity confront Whitman's books, share their readings of key poems and clusters, and discuss Whitman's attempts at a

multilingual English, his cohesive representation of human relations, and his work's international significance in the twenty-first century. In addition, there will be special presentations on the reception of Whitman in various countries and languages as well as other topics. This year's instructors will be Éric Athenot (Université François-Rabelais, Tours), translator of the 1855 *Leaves* and author of *Walt Whitman, poète-cosmos*; Betsy Erkkila (Northwestern University), author of *Walt Whitman among the French* and *Walt Whitman the Political Poet*; Kenneth M. Price (University of Nebraska, Lincoln), co-founder and editor of the *Walt Whitman Archive*, author of *To Walt Whitman, America*; and Andrew Lawson (Leeds Metropolitan University), author of *Walt Whitman and the Class Struggle*.

Students will also participate in the symposium held at the end of the week and featuring Whitman scholars from various countries.

Credits will be issued by the *Università di Macerata*. International visiting students will live with their Italian counterparts, thus keeping expenses as low as possible and creating opportunities for a meaningful intercultural dialogue. In addition to class work on Whitman and the symposium, students will visit Giacomo Leopardi's house in Recanati, and will be shown some of the artistic and architectural treasures of the area. Macerata is a historic city of 42,000 people in the Marche region of Italy set on the hills sloping down to the Adriatic Sea. The university, located in the beautiful original walled city, owns some of the most interesting historical buildings, including Palazzo Ugoni-- the first Neoclassical palace in Macerata, designed by the famous architect Valadier-- where the Seminar and Symposium will be held.

**Application:** 15 non-Italian international students will be accepted to the Week. Applications should include a curriculum-vitae, a one-page statement of interest in the seminar, and a short letter of support by an instructor who knows the applicant. Applications should be sent to [camboni@unimc.it](mailto:camboni@unimc.it) by 4 April 2010 at the latest.

**International Whitman Symposium: "In Paths Untrodden": The 1860 *Leaves of Grass*"**

**Università di Macerata, Macerata, Italy  
June 18-19, 2010**

This year's symposium will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Leaves of Grass* 1860. It will be devoted to the body of the 1860 *Leaves* with a particular focus on the many new paths Whitman opened with it. Papers are invited to cover a wide range of approaches to Whitman's poems: his experimenting with multilingualism and textual construction, his focus on the cohesive and energizing power of human relationships and attachments, his belief in the creative force of love, language and poetry, his anxieties about the impending civil war. Papers focusing on international responses to the poems in the 1860 *Leaves*, including translations into other languages, are also strongly encouraged.

One-page *abstracts* should be sent to Marina Camboni, Università di Macerata ([camboni@unimc.it](mailto:camboni@unimc.it)), Ed Folsom

([ed-folsom@uiowa.edu](mailto:ed-folsom@uiowa.edu)), and Jay Grossman ([j-grossman@northwestern.edu](mailto:j-grossman@northwestern.edu)) by 21 April, 2010.

**An Interdisciplinary Humanities and Social Sciences Conference:  
TEXTING OBAMA: politics/poetics/popular culture**

**Manchester Metropolitan University, UK  
September 7-10, 2010**

Hosted by English Research Institute, the MMU Writing School and The Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences Research

Confirmed keynote speakers: Simon Gikandi, David Theo Goldberg, Bonnie Greer, Ato Quayson.

Readings from Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay and others

Barack Obama's presidency is widely seen as the beginning of a new era, not only in world politics but also in global culture, with the present increasingly glossed as the 'Age of Obama'. Our conference will ask what the terms of this naming might mean by addressing the diverse range of representational forms attached to Obama in contemporary world culture – as a person, icon and phenomenon. The conference will map and explore the specific historical, political and cultural climates in which Obama's texts operate. It will interrogate the signifiers, signs and processes that circulate around Barack Obama, and explore his own contributions and interventions across diverse media.

Proposals are invited for papers or panels that engage with these diverse textualities. Questions might include: In what ways do Obama texts 'travel' and under what conditions? How might travelling theory or diaspora theory engage with Obama texts? In what ways might attention to Obama texts interrogate or develop extant or emerging frameworks at work in postcolonial, globalisation, media and cultural studies? How might a focus on transnational Obamas include or obscure local or national politics and expressions of black activism? How ought we to theorise pronouncements of a 'post-racial' America or/and a 'post-Katrina' America?

Possible streams might include: Postcolonial Obama: Kenya and Indonesia, Globalisation and Cosmopolitanism, Aloha Obama! Negotiating Hawaii, Obama and African-America, Rhetoric/Orature /Life writing, The Obama Families, Screening Obama, Obama and Hospitality, Black and Bi-Racial Masculinities, Race & Racial Politics, Obama in Europe, Publishing/Merchandising Obama, Ghosting Kennedy, Race and Fatherhood, Obama's 100 days, Obama in the Academy, Law and Civil Rights, Black Activism, Obama's Blackberry: New Technologies/Media and Race, Obama and Popular Culture: Watching *The Wire*, Obama and pedagogy.

Proposals should be emailed to [textingobama@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:textingobama@mmu.ac.uk) by no later than 26 March 2010.

Organising Committee: Dr. Ellie Byrne, Dr. Julie Mullaney, Prof. Berthold Schoene, Department of English, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.

**International Conference**  
***Separateness and Kinship: Transatlantic Exchanges***  
***between New England and Britain 1600-1900***

**The University of Plymouth, UK**  
**July 14-17, 2010**

Here you will find information about the conference schedule, events, registration and fees, accommodation and travel:

<http://plymouth.ac.uk/pages/view.asp?page=28015>

Any additional queries should be addressed to the Project Officer, Viv Minton at [vivien.minton@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:vivien.minton@plymouth.ac.uk)

*Conference theme*

This three day conference will explore issues arising from the relationship between Britain and New England in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the light of recent developments in the reading of transatlantic connections. In the run up to the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower, and in the context of new critical perspectives on transatlantic studies, such as post colonial theory with its emphasis on the whole Atlantic rim, feminism, discussions of displacement and debates about national identity, what does it now mean in the early twenty-first century to revisit with an interdisciplinary perspective the cultural and ideological exchanges between Britain and New England 1600-1900? The conference will include contributions from literary scholars, art historians and specialists in the history of architecture and material culture.

Keynote addresses will be delivered by Lawrence Buell, Powell M. Cabot Professor of American Literature at Harvard University and Susan Manning, Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Grierson Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.

*Submission of abstracts*

Applicants may submit proposals for panels or individual papers. Proposals for entire sessions should include: (1) a paragraph describing the session as a whole; (2) a one page abstract of each paper; (3) a one page CV for each participant. The conference prefers four presenters per session, excluding the chair, although submissions for panels of three will be considered. Proposals for individual papers should include a 300 word abstract, a one page cv and a 100-word bio. Each presenter will be allotted 20 minutes; 15 minutes to present and 5 minutes for questions.

All submissions should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to Project Officer, [Vivien Minton \(vivien.minton@plymouth.ac.uk\)](mailto:vivien.minton@plymouth.ac.uk) Deadline: 1 March, 2010

## **US Embassy Events/Notices**

<http://romania.usembassy.gov/resources/irc.html>

[http://romania.usembassy.gov/resources/educational\\_exchange.html](http://romania.usembassy.gov/resources/educational_exchange.html)

## **Fulbright Scholars 2009-2010**

### **ROMANIAN SENIOR GRANTEES 2009-2010**

**Mihaela Marilena ALBU**

Home University: Politehnica University of Bucharest  
Host University: Arizona State University, Department of Electrical Engineering  
Field: Power Engineering

**Adalbert BALOG**

Home University: Sapientia University, Tg. Mures  
Host University: Yale University, Greeley Memorial Lab  
Field: Biological Sciences

**Eveline CIOFLEC**

Home University: New Europe College Institute of Advanced Studies, Bucharest  
Host University: Bard College, Hannah Arendt Center for Ethical and Political Thinking  
Field: Philosophy

**Virgil-Florin DUMA**

Home University: Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad  
Host University: University of Rochester, The Institute of Optics  
Field: Optical Engineering

**Gabriel LEANCA**

Home University: Al. Ioan Cuza University of Iasi  
Host University: Columbia University in the City of New York, Department of History  
Field: History

**Miruna MAZURENCU MARINESCU**

Home University: University of Economics, Bucharest  
Host University: The University of Akron, College of Business Administration  
Field: Economics

**Andrei Cristian MIU**

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: Stanford University, Department of Psychology  
Field: Psychology

**Levente SALAT-ZAKARIAS**

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: University of Maryland, Center for International Development and Conflict Management  
Field: Political Science



## ROMANIAN JUNIOR GRANTEES 2009-2010

### **Ovidiu Constantin COCIERU**

Home University: Al. Ioan Cuza University of Iasi  
Host University: University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA  
Field: Sports Management

### **Emil Alexandru DINU-POPA**

Home University: Ion Mincu University of Architecture  
Host University: Carnegie Mellon University, PA  
Field: Architecture

### **Ciprian DOMNISORU**

Home University: Bucharest University of Economics and National School of Political and Administrative Studies  
Host University: Duke University, NC  
Field: Public Policy

### **Eliza Rodica GHEORGHE**

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service, Washington DC  
Field: International Relations

### **Cristiana Niculina GRIGORE**

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: Vanderbilt University, Peabody College of Education & Human Development, TN  
Field: Education

### **Alexandru Ioan MIHAIL**

Home University: National University of Theatre and Cinematography, Bucharest  
Host University: Yale University, CT  
Field: Film and Theatre Directing

### **Alexandra Melania MIHALE**

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: Ohio University, OH  
Field: Photojournalism

### **Marta NYESO**

Home University: Romanian-American University, Bucharest  
Host University: University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, NY  
Field: Business Management

### **Andreea Laura SAVU**

Home University: National School of Political and Administrative Studies  
Host University: University of Florida, FL  
Field: Public Relations

### **Raluca SOREANU**

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Host University: New York University, NY  
Field: International Relations

### **Monica STANCU**

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Host University: Sarah Lawrence College, NY  
Field: Gender Studies

### **Anca-Maria TOPLICEANU**

Home University: National School of Political and Administrative Studies  
Host University: Ball State University, IN  
Field: Public Relations

## HUBERT H. HUMPHREY GRANTEES

### **Cristina ADAM**

Home University: University of Bucharest  
Home Institution: Save the Children Romania  
Host University: Pennsylvania State University, PA  
Field: Educational Administration, Planning and Policy

## AMERICAN SENIOR GRANTEES 2009-2010

### **Mr. Ioan Sherban LUPU**

Home University: University of Illinois  
Host University: Academy of Music G.Dima, Cluj, University of Arts G.Enescu, Iasi  
Field: Music The Mastery of Violin Playing; The Folk Music of Romania for Virtuoso Violin

### **Dr. Paul S. SUM**

Home University: University of North Dakota--Grand Forks  
Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
Field: Comparative Politics; Democratization; Civil Society; Political Participation; Ethnic Relations

### **Dr. John M. POLIMENI**

Home Institution: Albany College of Pharmacy, NY  
Host University: Bucharest University of Economics  
Field: Ecological Economics, Agricultural Economics, Energy Economics, Economic Development

### **Dr. Alina Marina CLEJ**

Home University: University of Michigan-Ann Arbor  
Host University: Ovidius University, Constanta  
Field: Romanians in Paris: Their Contribution to Literary and Artistic Modernity

### **Mr. David Darius BRUBECK**

Home University: independent, unaffiliated  
Host University: Academy of Music G.Dima, Cluj  
Field: Jazz

### **Dr. Matthew H. CISCEL**

Home University: Central Connecticut State University  
Host University: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu  
Field: English in America, Romania, and the World; Language Learning Attitudes and Practices



**Dr. Jane S. LOPUS**

Home University: California State University--East Bay  
 Host University: Bucharest University of Economics  
 Field: Economic Education: Active Learning Strategies and Evaluation of Teacher Training

**Dr. Shari Lynn MUNCH**

Home University: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey--New Brunswick  
 Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
 Field: Social Work Practice in Cluj, Romania: An Opportunity for Teaching and Learning

**AMERICAN JUNIOR GRANTEES 2009-2010****Ms. Lauren J. HERMELE**

Home University: At-Large, New Mexico  
 Host University: University of Arts and Design, Cluj  
 Field: Photography: Is European Union Membership Jeopardizing Village and Agrarian Communities in Romania?

**Ms. Elyssa FORD**

Home University: Arizona State University  
 Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
 Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

**Mr. Martin WOODSIDE**

Home University: San Diego State University  
 Host University: University of Bucharest  
 Field: U.S. Culture and Modern Romanian Poetry

**Mr. Wyatt Eugene HARPER**

Home University: University of the South, TN  
 Host University: University of Bucharest  
 Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising; Education Curriculums and Economic Development in Romania

**Ms. Diana GLIGA**

Home University: East Carolina University, NC  
 Host University: University of Oradea  
 Field: Medicine: Ocular health behaviors and the influencing socio-economic factors

**Ms. Jennifer GABLE**

Home University: Ohio State Univ., Undergraduates, OH  
 Host University: Transylvania University, Brasov  
 Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

**Ms. Hannah HALDER**

Home University: Beloit College, WI  
 Host University: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu  
 Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

**Ms. Iris POSTELNICU**

Home University: University of Arizona  
 Host University: University of Bucharest  
 Field: Anthropology: The Changing Culture of a Romanian Village Since the Fall of Communism: Customs and Values

**Silvia LOICA-MERSA**

Home University: Stanford University  
 Host University: University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Timisoara  
 Field: Public Health and Private Organizations: The Role of NGOs in Romania's Healthcare System

**Mr. Charles HARRIS**

Home University: Southern Illinois University, Carbondale  
 Host University: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu  
 Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

**RAAS Officers & EAAS****RAAS**

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**European Association for American Studies (EAAS)** <<http://www.eaas.eu>>

## Letter from the outgoing President

**Rodica Mihaila**

Outgoing RAAS President, Director of Center for American Studies  
University of Bucharest

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Almost a decade has passed since a group of enthusiastic and dedicated Americanists from across the country took the initiative of founding the Romanian Association for American Studies. Back in 1990, a similar initiative had failed because American Studies was a field hardly represented in the Romanian universities under the communist regime.

By the end of the 1990s, the American Studies graduate programs and the Centers for American studies founded in Bucharest, Cluj and Jassy, the American Studies minor launched by the University of Bucharest and the endeavors of several other universities to engage in American Studies indicated that it was high time for the creation of an autonomous Association of Americanists to promote American Studies in Romania and to help build up an active community of scholars and intellectuals involved in the American-Romanian relations at home and abroad. The membership grew from a nucleus of 42 founding members in 1999 to more than 150 members in 2008. With members based in various academic disciplines coming from 14 cities across Romania, with various academic centers represented on the Board (Bucharest, Cluj, Constanta, Craiova, Jassy, Sibiu) and with a high percentage of young faculty and graduate students, the RAAS has managed to cut across not only geographical but also disciplinary and generational lines.

In 2000, shortly after it was chartered, the RAAS was admitted as the 20th member of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS)—the sixth ex-communist country to join that prestigious federation of national and joint national associations established more than half a century ago. RAAS is now the largest of the national associations founded in the post-Cold War era. As EAAS members we have benefited from the EAAS' efforts to make the European contributions to American Studies better known across national borders and to provide opportunities for fruitful relations among European Americanists through its publications, such as *The European Journal of American Studies* and the Newsletter "*American Studies in Europe*"; its website, hosting "International Networks" and "The Postgraduate Forum", its travel grants and biennial conferences. Many RAAS members have taken advantage of these opportunities, fostering a growing international awareness of the Romanian contribution to American Studies.

At home, the diversification and expansion of American Studies have been fueled up by such activities and events as the five Biennial International Conferences organized together with the Fulbright Commission, the RAAS publications, including the Newsletter *American Studies in Romania*, and the volumes of essays based on conference proceedings, the creation of an website and an e-network to keep the members informed nationally and internationally about developments in the field, to bring to their attention opportunities to publish articles and reviews, to apply for various grants and

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programs and to attend national and international conferences. By 2004, the endeavors of the RAAS members to obtain the official recognition of American Studies as a field of academic specialization and to expand the institutionalization of American Studies at both the graduate and the undergraduate level had borne fruit. Several universities in various parts of Romania launched American Studies programs or added new programs to the already existing ones.

There is no doubt that without the RAAS and the concentrated efforts of its members, the rise and institutionalization of American Studies in Romania would not have been possible or it would have been a much slower process. I am convinced that the new RAAS President, Professor Adina Ciugureanu, well known for her scholarly expertise and inspiring leadership, and the new RAAS Board including distinguished Americanists from various parts of the country, will continue to work toward consolidating and energizing the Association, making it more useful to its members and to Romanian culture and enhancing its visibility in the national and international community of scholars. I wish them wholeheartedly success in their future enterprise.

There is no doubt either that all along we have received a steady and efficient support from the Fulbright Commission, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy and the American Cultural Center. They offered guidance, grants and a challenging meeting ground for US and Romanian Americanists and American Studies students. Having come to the end of my two terms in office, I wish to thank them again for their invaluable help and encouragement.

We have come a long way from the days when we founded the RAAS. I kindly thank my RAAS friends and colleagues, officers and board members, for making the journey so enjoyable and rewarding. It was a great opportunity and honor for me to serve as President of the RAAS during such exciting times of change and growth. It was a privilege for which I thank you all.

## Letter from the incoming President

### Adina Ciugureanu

Incoming President of RAAS, Professor of English and American, Dean,  
Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanța

Dear colleagues,

I feel honored and privileged to serve as president of RAAS for the following term. I am fully aware of the responsibilities involved, a feeling which is undoubtedly shared by the other newly elected officers of our association.

There is definitely a lot to live up to, considering the recent history of RAAS, in which the former president played a decisive role. It is obvious to everyone that Professor Rodica Mihaila, as well as the entire team deserve our appreciation for having kept alive, through the organization of biennial conferences and the publication of conference volumes, a keen interest in America and its culture which led to the founding of the RAAS in the first place.

Our task as the new officers and members of the board is, therefore, exceptionally hard. On the one hand, it is our mission is to continue the excellent work of the Bucharest team; on the other, I think, we should consider new ways of exploring the United States at academic level, of enriching its study and enhancing research. Our agenda will naturally include the organization of the biennial conference, the publication of the best articles and essays in the conference volume, the participation in the EAAS conference and other international events concerning American Studies. We will obviously continue to support and develop undergraduate and graduate university programs, to publish the newsletter and, generally, to make Romanian academic research known in Europe and the US.

Yet, at a time when "change" has become the leitmotif in America, I feel we need to revise some of the weak points which the association has had so far as regards communication among its members, determination to meet

deadlines and willingness to come out with suggestions about improving the officers' and the board's work from which the entire association will benefit. We will therefore start by developing a better, electronically-based network between the members of the association, which, I hope, will enable us to find out about our interests, research areas and results. The RAAS is not only an association that collects the fee yearly, edits a newsletter, sends messages, and posts conference announcements. It is mainly and most importantly a living association which cannot exist without the contribution of each of its members. It is only through our collective voice that we can be heard and make a difference in the larger EAAS family. I invite each of you to come with proposals, suggestions, comments and criticism concerning our work. I also invite you to advertise yourself, your work and your research in the newsletter and on the web-site.

It is our intention to strengthen the connection between the officers and the board members of the regional branches. It is extremely important for the association as an academic body to have board members who play an active part in the life of the association and who encourage their colleagues to pursue American Studies. Each board member and, by extension, each member of the association is highly valuable for the building up of a strong American Studies community. We are looking forward to your individual contribution to the collective synergy.

We would also like to set up an e-journal, for which we obviously need your full intellectual and academic support. Our intention is to have it indexed in the Thomson-Reuters data base by 2012. This will not only boost our research in American Studies, but will also provide a well-deserved international dimension to the Romanian academe. An important component of this desideratum is the encouragement of the graduate students to join us in our research programs. Looking towards the younger academics as well as towards prospective academics is, I think, one of our priorities as Americanists and as university teachers.

Last but not least, we will continue our so-far very fruitful cooperation with the Fulbright Commission, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy and the American Cultural Center. It is obvious to everyone that these institutions have been, and, hopefully, will be, playing a decisive role in the good functioning and further development of American Studies. The Fulbright grantees in our universities, the American Corners and, more recently, the library enhancement grants have definitely contributed to the emergence and growth of American Studies in Romania.

Wishing you all a wonderful(ly active) academic year, I look forward to working with you in the field of American Studies, to harvesting the results together and to enthusiastically and energetically moving forward the RAAS in the next three years.

## Letter from Julie O'Reagan

Cultural Attache, US Embassy, Bucharest

Writing for the RAAS Newsletter has a particularly significance for me: this past August this year, I returned to Romania for my 3-year term as Cultural Officer at the US Embassy; also last summer Professor Adina Ciugureanu and her team took over the management of the Romanian Association for American Studies. This has certainly been a year of many new transitions both for Romania and the United States!

RAAS and the U.S. Embassy have strong and rewarding ties: ever since the Association's founding, we have worked together to tell young people the story of America.

I appreciate the enthusiasm and hard work that the promoters of American Studies, scholars and students from the major universities around Romania, have put into this endeavor – having American Studies recognized and taught as an academic subject in itself. Today, there are undergraduate, MA and doctoral programs in American Studies at several universities around Romania, and the number of students enrolled in these programs is growing. For this outstanding success, I would like to thank Professor Rodica

Mihaila, the former President of RAAS, and her team, who put their time and energy into this nationwide project; I also thank the scholars from eight Romanian universities for their interest in discussing American issues, disseminating knowledge about America, and promoting Romanian-American dialogue.

The Embassy will continue to support the Romanian Association for American Studies, as well as American Studies departments and individual academics. Our support over the years has included book donations; grants for library collection development, individual travel to international American Studies conferences, and RAAS conferences in Romania; as well as support for the publication of conference volumes. We look forward to receiving further proposals from the American Studies community for this academic year, and we look forward to seeing more American Studies scholars applying for Fulbright programs. So many Fulbright alumni at universities all over Romania teach American Studies, and their contribution to the study of America is substantial. We also encourage American Studies departments to continue to organize student conferences; three years ago, we initiated a spring student conference program in cooperation

with the Center for American Studies in Bucharest: the program has expanded and last year a series of four student conferences was organized, in Bucharest, Iasi, Constanta and Alba Iulia.

As RAAS members know, the U.S. Embassy has established American Corners in seven cities outside Bucharest: Bacau, Baia Mare, Cluj, Constanta, Craiova, Iasi and Timisoara. We invite you to visit them, discover their collection of print and electronic publications, enjoy their programs and contribute ideas for new programs.

Once again, I congratulate the RAAS for their effort, resourcefulness and dedication, and I wish the new President and her team the best of luck; I know we will continue to be proud of our work together.

# American Studies

## American Studies at Al. I. Cuza University - Iasi: The BA Program

### Odette Blumenfeld

Director of the American Studies Program, Al. I. Cuza University – Iasi

The program, set up in 2004, was seen from the beginning as a necessity, to give American Studies its rightful place within a university with a long philological tradition. This was even more so as many members of the English Department had channeled their energies towards studying American literature and culture. In devising it we relied on an already accepted idea that American Studies all over the world has developed in the direction of a more “decentralized model”. We took into account the amount of information on the United States that Romanian high school students already have by the time they enter university – oftentimes incomplete and artificially constructed by the popular American culture importations – and decided to offer them courses that rely both on the

so-called “old” paradigm (history and literature), and on the “new” paradigm addressing such issues as multiculturalism, cultural hybridity, postcolonialism and subject positions determined by ethnicity, race, gender, and class.

Our aim so far has been to ensure that students

- Acquire skills in critical thinking and operate with fundamental concepts in various disciplines such as history, literature, critical theory, linguistics, religion, philosophy, arts, economics, political science, journalism, and popular culture.
- Develop communication and social interaction skills in view of tolerance and mutual respect, of openness to diversity and new ideas.
- Understand social processes (historical evolution, political institutions), power relations and ideology (class, race, ethnicity, gender, nation / nationality, language), processes of identity formation (mentalities, norms, values, social roles) in a multicultural United States.
- Understand the process of cultural and linguistic hybridization through literary and linguistic analyses.
- Participate in similar parallel programs in Romania and abroad.

In short, our major aim is to help our students grow into "organic intellectuals" well equipped for the high competition on the job market.

The curriculum for the first year introduces the students to the basic knowledge provided by the traditional approaches, focusing on history, civilization, and early American literature, foregrounding thus some of the main features of American identity and social organization that are unique national characteristics. Gradually, the curriculum turns towards the presentation of the United States as the epitome of multiculturalism, the students being acquainted with different ethnic cultures in the best tradition of liberal pluralism. Thus, our American Studies program focuses on different cultural backgrounds and influences in the shaping of the different literary and cultural practices of African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos/as, Asian Americans and others. Beginning with the second year of study, we offer courses in critical theory and gender studies, enabling students to understand why and how traditional interpretations of canonical texts have been replaced by revisionary ones in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taking into account that American Studies is multi- and interdisciplinary, we also provide our students with courses in American philosophy, religion, the history of mentalities, political institutions, economics, the mass media and visual arts, some of them being taught by specialists in the respective disciplines from other departments. Last but not least, the program offers courses in popular culture and film, inviting students to share their personal experience of American culture and guiding them towards a more profound understanding of the dynamics of contemporary American culture, so influential on European and Romanian cultures today.

Although the program is still "young" and it was only in 2008 that we had our first American Cultural Studies graduates, we are confident in its future, especially after receiving such comments from our former students:

*It was something new, different and promising, and being a challenge-lover I decided to go for it. I can say it was a good option. I loved the possibility of communicating and the free flow of ideas between students and professors, and among students in our group (smaller, but more flexible and united), the open-mindedness with which most professors approached the subjects taught, the opportunity to study with American lecturers 6 of the 8 semesters total, and the "backstage" access we were given to a culture widely known, but less understood at a deeper level. (Alina Anton)*

*I think one of the most obvious advantages of the American Studies program comes from its ability to provide multiple perspectives on a diversity of subjects. In my opinion, learning to freshly approach a subject or a text from a completely different angle (be it cultural, political, economic, literary or even cinematic) forces us to keep an open mind and restrains us from falling into easy traps such as prejudice, superficial categorizations or fixed ideas. Moreover, the diversity of subjects covered by the curricula (ranging from Early American History to the most recent events of the moment and leaping across various fields such as Literature, Cultural Studies, Economics, Politics, History, Gender Studies, Art,*

*Language etc) creates a sense of variety and flexibility and rules out any possibility of monotony or boredom. (...) Therefore, in my view, the key-words which I would use to define the American Studies program are freshness, flexibility, open-mindedness, diversity and originality. Looking in retrospect, as a graduate, I think the most important gain of choosing American Studies as a major is having learned how to think, analyze and process information in a new way, rather than being stuffed with an endless baggage of information and knowledge. This reminds me of a quote which I think perfectly expresses the American Studies experience: **Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire** (William Butler Yeats). So, the fact that the undergraduate level in American Studies has "lit a fire" instead of "filling a pail" has made me enroll in the MA program in American Studies and look forward to continuing the experience started three years ago. (Lorelei Caraman)*

### **American Studies at Ovidius University - Constanța Corina Mihăescu**

American Studies, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, Ovidius University - Constanța

Decisions can have a great impact upon our lives; they can have an immediate effect or a long-term influence. Making the right choice is crucial and picking the most suitable college is a milestone in every high school graduate's life.

During my school years, I had already made up my mind. The Faculty of Letters was what I thought I needed to quench my thirst for English. But as time passed by, I became more self-aware; my strengths and weaknesses were clearer. I was striving for an ideal as far as my personality and attitude were concerned. What I needed in order to get closer to my goal was flexible thinking, open-mindedness, a more holistic kind of thinking, an ability to analyze people's reactions more thoroughly. So, when I found out about American Studies, I just knew it was what I needed to get all that.

Here I am now, in my third year of studies, with no regrets regarding my choice. The variety of subjects studied has definitely got me closer to my ideal. The American Literature made me more aware of the different writing styles that emerged in America. The course which triggered my open-mindedness was Ethnic Studies, which offered me a deeper understanding of America's ethnic diversity due to the emergence of so many ethnic groups. American Institutions and American Constitution were also great courses that made me better understand the political reality of the U.S. There are so many other subjects that drew my attention that I could write a whole book about my experience.

In spite of all these advantages, I do have one regret. Not having any American professor was definitely a problem for me as I really wanted someone with first-hand experience that could depict the current reality in the States. However, I did come into contact with people who had lived in the U.S. and who had a great impact on me; I still remember the meetings with Mark Taplin who talked about the present political situation in the U.S. and Andrew Reilly from whom I learnt many things about the history of American film, but also ways of creating a screenplay. Due



to these wonderful people, American Corner has gradually become the place I like most in the whole University.

I am sure that my third year will be a blast! I really hope that after graduation, I will make it to the U.S. so that I can combine the already acquired knowledge with practical existence in this so controversial space.

### **Corina Lungu**

Anglo-American Studies, MA student, Ovidius University - Constanța

When I enrolled in the American Studies program in 2005, I had no idea what I was getting into. In fact, it was only my "back-up plan", since I had decided about a year before that I would study English and Italian. However, when I was forced by circumstances to decide between the more traditional major and the brand new one, the promise of novelty and the idea of "Cultural Studies" were tempting.

I assumed that I would find out as much as possible about the culture of the United States, about their history and politics, but I was not ready for the changes brought upon my way of thinking. I believe that the first major surprise was listening to Jimmi Hendrix's distorted version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" during the Ethnic Studies course, in the first semester. Then everything came tumbling down upon us, in a sort of snowball effect. For those of us who were familiar with the Disney version of the Pocahontas story, where the young "savage" princess falls in love with Captain John Smith, her own "prince charming", the Introduction to American Studies made things a bit more clear. We learned about the context in which the not-so-romantic encounter had taken place, and during the Gender Studies course in the second year the myth of the "prince charming" was also shattered.

It was finally time for us to understand that prejudice exists at so many levels and that every concept and situation has to be analyzed from more than one perspective. The Popular Culture course revealed the fact that even fictional superheroes represent complex socio-cultural and political issues in a nutshell, rather than just a bunch of strong guys fighting evil while wearing tights. Every course, from American Literature to History to Cultural Geography helped us gain a better understanding of the U.S.A. The American lecturers we have met also provided us with an "inside" view of the culture we were so interested in and made us see the things which we usually consider trivial, such as food consumption, from a different perspective.

All in all, I'd say it was an experience which changed our mentality and our perception of the world around us, provided that we were ready to get rid of our prejudice and see beyond the stereotypes we are constantly being served on a platter. I cannot speak (or rather write) on behalf of all of my colleagues, but were I offered the chance to choose my major again, I would not take any different path.

### **Adelina Vartolomei**

Anglo-American Studies, MA student, Ovidius University - Constanța

Even though high school is said to be the best period in one's life, I prefer to repress it and nostalgically remember the years at the university because it was in university that

I felt free and independent from an intellectual point of view and one can barely imagine where the limits of such intellectual freedom might exist. I only have my professors to thank for that because they encouraged me to be creative and original and, most importantly and perhaps most dangerously, they taught me how to think for myself.

When I graduated from high school, I decided to turn to American Studies because I looked up to the country and the people living in it. Most probable, I admired their wealth, fame and power and wished it for my own country; or for myself. I had a very limited understanding of life and I assumed that those were the qualities that made the world go round and matter. However, I managed to control my enthusiasm after the introduction I received and after I studied their history. As I moved on, I became rather arrogant and looked down on the United States of America. Finally I learned that the two approaches I had were both wrong and that I had to be less judgmental and look upon people with fresh eyes. Even though culture can influence somebody's character in some ways and even though there are so many cultures on this earth, I now find it childish to create a hierarchy. Now I know that they all come with their advantages and disadvantages and saying things like "Of course horrible things should happen here; this is Romania" or "let's take out the good china, the Americans are coming" is simply shallow.

Seeing that the population is so diverse, I've come to learn a lot about people who are incredibly different from one another. One can hardly find moments of boredom while constantly discovering new aspects of North America and it's practically impossible not to find something to like. Through Ethnic Studies, for example, I got different perspectives about race and discovered talent that has not been as promoted as that of those that are part of the white male canon, such as Louise Erdrich, Maya Angelou or Alice Walker. Gender Studies is another course that opened my eyes and made me realize that Simone de Beauvoir is just as good as Sartre or even better. These are few examples since it would be too difficult to cover even half of what one gains access to: Philosophy, Literature, Geography, History, Film Studies, Globalization, Theater, Popular Culture, Religion and Art. This only goes to prove that American Studies promotes diversity and tolerance; at least in my case.

## **American Corners**

### **A window to America: American Corner Iasi**

#### **Kathleen Kavalec**

Former Cultural Affairs Officer

American Corner Iasi is one of the first corners opened in Romania and, we are proud to say, one of the most active ones. Like all the American Corners around the world, American Corner Iasi was founded through a partnership between the U.S. Embassy and a public library, in our case « Gh. Asachi » County Library in Iasi. The opening of

an American Corner inside the library, in June 2005, was a pleasant surprise for the entire city; we were happy to find out that, for a significant number of users, the opening of such a cultural center was an event they were really waiting for. Except for the books included in the public and university libraries collections, our city did not have, at that moment, an American library. That is why, for those interested in finding such books, American Corner Iasi became an important spot. In the very core of an old, important city, a window to America was finally opened. Step by step, with an increasing number of users every day (thanks to a permanent marketing and promotion activity), we managed to become more and more popular amongst students, teachers and other categories of users. We are fortunate to be part of the city's public library, whose central location and numerous public are great advantages for the corner.



#### Partnerships, a key to successful programming

None of the successful projects we achieved would have been possible without the constant support of the American Cultural Center in Bucharest. Since the very beginning of our activity, they helped us coorganize lectures, workshops and presentations, by inviting to Iasi valuable professionals from various field. The grants given to the corner by the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest proved to be extremely useful in our day-to-day activity as well as in motivating the participants at our events.

Most importantly, what makes our corner work is the enthusiasm of our public, as well as our efforts in meeting our readers' interests and educational needs. The first activities organized by the American Corners Iasi were lectures and presentations (Education Week), as well as holiday theme events (a huge Halloween party) that proved to be a great success. Shortly after that, highschool teachers began to come to the corner and present us their projects and ideas for various activities and programs. Due to the specific of our profile, as a public library, the highschool teachers and students are, to these days, our most active and reliable partners. We have signed (and renewed, every year) several partnership agreements with local highschools; together we organize most of our activities: workshops, holiday theme events, contests, presentations.

We also have the duty to mention (and thank to) other partners, such as the Fulbright Commission in Bucharest, professors from the "Al. I. Cuza" University Iasi, the enthusiastic people from the National Anti-Drug Agency and Save the Children Romania.

#### Why are our programs popular?

What makes our users enjoy coming here and looking forward for new programs? Here are some of the most popular programs we organized over the years:

In June 2006, the awarding ceremony for the Holocaust Essay Contest, addressing highschool students

from Iasi, benefited by the presence of the U.S. Ambassador in Romania, Mr. Nicholas Taubman.



The American Corner Caravan, in May 2007 was a big promotion campaign, reaching no less than 11 schools and highschools from the Iasi county. More than 400 students, teachers and school librarians benefited from the presentations and the materials offered by the AC Iasi staff.

Letter to Santa Claus Contest, in December 2007 perhaps the most popular holiday theme event, was a great hit among secondary school students: the funniest or most original letters were rewarded and published in a small book, with the support of a local publishing house.

Happy Easter for All the Kids donation campaign 2007 and 2008 was a different kind of activity, developed with the support of the students for the benefit of socially disfavored children.

Some of our programs are held on a monthly basis – English Class at the American Corner, Meeting Uncle Sam, American Holidays. Others are occasioned by special events or initiated by the presence of special guests. But you can find more about us and our activity on the US Embassy website: [http://www.usembassy.ro/American\\_Corners/Iasi/Events.html](http://www.usembassy.ro/American_Corners/Iasi/Events.html).

#### Keeping in touch

Beginning with February 2008 American Corner Iasi has its own monthly newsletter, *Your Link to America*, a publication that is entirely edited and designed by the American Corner staff. Every issue reflects the corner's activity during the past month; we also included some permanent columns dedicated to American life and culture, presenting every month's holidays and events. The printed edition is distributed to our local partners, while the online edition reaches about 400 contacts, including many AC coordinators from all over the world. Therefore, the newsletter allows us to get a good feedback of our programs and keep in touch with all our

partners. The newsletter is also available on the library's website: <http://bjiasi.ro/ro/newsletter/52>

### **A corner that feels like home**

Throughout the years, we have gathered around us a great number of frequent users, highschool and university students, teachers, scholars, Peace Corps volunteers and NGOs. Working together with our users and partners we have developed great projects and gained a lot of new users and, most importantly, a lot of new friends of the corner. We are happy to see that, after more than 3 years of existence, the corner is not a cold public reading room, but a place that most of the readers came to like, a place that feels like home.

„The activity of American Corner Iasi is a formula of success. American Corner Iasi became an integrated part of the „Gh. Asachi” County Library's activity, because it is located in the main building, which makes it easily and directly accessible to the interested public, and also because of the professionalism of the librarians and of the dedicated management.”

American Corner Iasi Staff: Ioana Damian, Diana Ghiorghe, Adriana Maftai

## **The biennial EAAS Conference: Oslo, Norway, 9–12 May 2008**

**"E Pluribus Unum" or "E Pluribus Plura"? - Oslo, Norway, 9–12 May 2008**

**Dana Mihăilescu**

University of Bucharest

Oslo was the venue of this year's EAAS conference which focused on a really challenging topic, "E Pluribus Unum" or "E Pluribus Plura"? , in other words the interplay between unity and diversity in analyzing the United States.

As usual, the conference started with the board meeting in which Romania was represented by Professor Rodica Mihăilă and in which EAAS elected its new president, Prof. Hans-Jürgen Grabbe, from Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg as well as its new treasurer, W. Anthony Emmerson, School of History and International Affairs, University of Ulster.

The four days of the conference featured three plenary lectures delivered by Prof. Jonathan Moses, Prof. Winfried Fluck and Prof. Joan Richardson, covering stimulating topics on migration policies, America and idealism and varieties of American experiences, to which were added nine parallel lectures and twenty-seven workshops dealing with various aspects related to history, literature, ethnicity, race and gender. With around 200 speakers covering all these relevant fields, the conference was a particularly intense forum of thought

and debate and undoubtedly this year's major event in the life of the American Studies community in Europe.

Moreover, in order to vitalize the work of EAAS, there was also a journal editors' shoptalk in which our Romanian representative, Roxana Oltean, participated as one of the editors of the *European Journal of American Studies*; the meeting focused on attempts to provide regular special issues dedicated to important events in American life.

To my delight, the conference also included a number of shoptalks on literature, history and American Studies which provided informal, engaged exchanges about the different institutionalization practices and strategies implemented in different European universities. This proved an excellent opportunity for getting acquainted with various teaching approaches, not to mention that it was a helpful springboard for possible improvements of existing programs.

All in all, cross-disciplinary and intercultural exchange was the great benefit from the seminal presentations and debates of the conference. I really enjoyed the occasion of such a comprehensive experience!

## **The 2008 RAAS - Fulbright Conference: Bucharest, 22- 24 May 2008**

**"The Sense of America: Histories  
into Text" - Bucharest, 22- 24 May  
2008**

**Roxana Oltean**

University of Bucharest

The biannual conference of the Romanian Association for American Studies, entitled "The Sense of America. Histories into Text" was held in Bucharest, May 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, the University of Bucharest, and was co-organized with the Fulbright Commission. The conference was a remarkable international event, gathering together almost 150 papers from Romania, the United States – including 30 Fulbright specialists – as well as Spain, Poland, Albania, the Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, the conference also reflected the wide national representation of the Association, the Romanian participants themselves representing 16 universities from all over the country.

The conference took off on a sophisticated note at the elegant Galateca Gallery, Bucharest University Library, where the opening ceremony was held in the company of distinguished guest speakers such as His Excellency Nicholas Taubman, U.S. Ambassador to Romania, prof. Ioan Panzaru, the Rector of The University of Bucharest București, prof. Barbara Nelson, then Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission and prof. Rodica Mihăilă, outgoing RAAS president. The opening was followed by the most-awaited event, the keynote paper delivered by prof. Werner Sollors (Harvard University), entitled "Americans All: "Of Plymouth Rock and Jamestown and Ellis Island," and which addressed the question of foundation myths in the history of U.S. immigration. Thus Plymouth



Rock, Jamestown or Ellis Island become places where origins are projected, reinvented or contested in a patchwork of individual and collective identities.

Two more highlights of the conference were the plenary lectures offered by prof. Michael Kammen, Cornell University, and prof. Christian Moraru, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Prof. Kammen's lecture, "Art Controversies in American Culture, Historically Considered," highlighted the modes in which artistic value is negotiated and reinvented in public space through a series of artistic, ethical and economic perspectives. Prof. Moraru, in his lecture "Global, 'Globalization,' 'Americanization': Grammar Politics in the 'Post-Ideological' Era" nuanced and analyzed the oft-used, yet still misunderstood terms of today's cultural theorists.

The theme of the conference attracted papers which reflected the breadth of American Studies as practiced in the international academic community, and which exemplified the inherently interdisciplinary approach of the field. The fourteen thematic sessions around which the conference topics were grouped illustrate the generous range of topics included in the "sense of America". Thus the session devoted to "The U.S. In Perspective" and "Envisioning America" coalesced around philosophical, ethical and anthropological approaches that give a sense of cohesion to American literature and culture, while the session on "(Re)locations of Identity," "Spaces of the Borderland" and "Sites of Conflict" explored the shifting boundaries of selfhood, and the pressures to which it is subjected. With a slightly different focus, "Marginality and Empowerment," "Reflections of otherness" and "Histories of otherness" reflected on the racial, gender, ethical tensions written within the American text.

The sessions on "Histories in Narration," "Textualizing the New World" and "The Rhetoric of the New World" testified to the powerful interest in the interchange between history and text in the shaping of the New World, from proto-American dreams to the post-9/11 ethos, while "Cultural Histories" and

"Representations of Culture" placed America and its narratives in wider, global contexts. A persistent field of interest was reflected in the session on "Society and Education: Codes and Ethics," which addressed the interface between cultural theories and practice.

Three workshops were also organized within the framework of the conference: *Transatlantic Dialogues. Eastern Europe, the U.S. and Post-Cold War Cultural Spaces*; *The Challenge of Race: Towards an African-American Literary Canon* and *Research Webs: Working Together at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The workshop on *Transatlantic Dialogues*, chaired by prof. Rodica Mihaila (The University of Bucharest), prof. Ileana Orlich (Arizona State University) and dr. Roxana Oltean (The University of Bucharest) focussed on the dialogue between Eastern Europe and the United States, and drew on instances of cultural translation or misappropriation in literature, film, cultural theory, mass media, society. *The Challenge of Race*, chaired by prof. Emil Sarbulescu (University of Craiova) investigated the notion of alterity as a possible basis for building an alternative canon, while *Research Webs*, chaired by Christian Moraru (University of North Carolina at Greensboro) engaged perspectives from scholars involved in constructing and consolidating webs of knowledge or in promoting cultural exchange.

As has been the case with all past RAAS conferences, a selection of papers will be published in volume form at Univers Enciclopedic Publishing House in Bucharest. The collection will be edited by Rodica Mihaila and Irina Grigorescu Pana.

The conference also featured a series of social events which contributed to the overall success, while giving flavor to informal academic debates: a reception at the chic cafe nestled within the building of the National Museum of Geology, a memorable music and poetry evening hosted by the American Cultural Center, with performances by Alina Bottez (soprano), Ieronim Buga (piano), Cristian Tănăsescu (poetry), Christopher Bakken (poetry). A

theatrical reading at "Teatrul foarte mic" with a play by Fulbright Fellow Cristina Bejan rounded off the three-day academic and social tour-de-force. The site of many an impassioned debate about the sense of America and about the nature of its histories and texts, the 2008 RAAS-Fulbright conference turned out to be an example of the ability of American Studies to unite academic communities on both – and all – sides of the Atlantic.



## Conference Participation

**BAAS 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference, The University of Edinburgh (27-30 March 2008)**

**Corina Anghel-Crișu**  
University of Bucharest

How many questions can be answered at a conference? How many of them are left unanswered, while new ideas spring out of nowhere and grow in the ethereal air filtered by so many minds... By proposing new issues, the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual conference of the *British Association for American Studies*



(BAAS) brought a breath of fresh academic air in the field of American Studies.

Nestled under the dramatic peak of Arthur's Seat, at Pollock Halls of Residence, at the end of a windy, but sunny Scottish month of March – the conference reunited about 300 delegates (most of them coming from British or American universities). The papers discussing a broad range of topics, from history and politics, to art and literature, were organized in various sessions focused on: *Art, Innovation, and Interactivity, American Culture and the World, Writing Native American Experience, Forms of Twentieth-Century African-American Culture, Modern American Women's Poetry, Investigations of the Bush Presidency and Contemporary Conservatism, Sex and American Literary Adolescence, Sources of Women's Reform Movements, Rethinking Film and Film Studies, New Perspectives on the 100-year-old FBI, Chicana and Latina Identities, A Transatlantic American Renaissance*, etc.

The Cambridge University Press/Journal of American Studies lecture was given by Byron E. Shafer of the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Entitled "Where are We in History? Political Orders and Political Eras in the Postwar United States," Shafer's lecture placed the politics of the 2008 campaign within the long-term consequences of post-World War II history. Another plenary lecture was delivered by Brenda Gayle Plummer, also of the University of Wisconsin – Madison (her lecture, "Peace Was the Glue: Europe and African American Freedom," is in print now in *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, 10:2 (2008): 103-22).

Social events also played an important role at the conference, from the reception at the Scottish Parliament on the first evening (presided by Alex Salmond, Scotland's First Prime Minister), to the reception at Pollock Halls on the last evening (presided by the US Ambassador, Robert Tuttle).

Looking back, the BAAS conference can be seen as an extremely rewarding experience, a moment of grace, when new illuminating answers shape more challenging questions.

### Conference Participation Report: ESSE-9, Aarhus, August 2008

**Smaranda Ștefanovici**

Petru Maior University - Tg. Mures

Motto: "I will feel lost, unhappy and at home" (Seamus Heaney, poet)

"I will not feel lost, I will feel happy and at home"

(Dominic Rainsford, organizer)

ESSE Conferences aim to reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of Europe and its institutions. They bring together higher education teachers, scholars and writers who research and teach English languages, literatures and cultures, with the common purpose of enhancing their academic exchanges and collaboration, and fostering research networks.

The 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE-9) was held at University of Aarhus, Denmark, between 22-26 August 2008.

The program, although a bit too tight, was full of interesting events and presentations, but allowed space for organized excursions to places of historic, legendary and literary interest as well. One cannot remain insensitive to the beauty of Aarhus and its surroundings. Aarhus is the second largest city and the principal port of Denmark. The location of the conference was Aarhus University with its yellow-brick and red-brick buildings, splendid rooms and conference halls and a very attractive campus. A friendly and hospitable town with a beautiful campus made the ESSE-9 Conference a wonderful occasion to enhance our academic exchanges and intellectual cooperation.

It is not possible to give a comprehensive account of the 5 (five) plenary sessions, 10 (ten) round tables, 47 (forty-seven) panels, panel discussions, poster sessions, book exhibition, author readings, concert, and finally trips to the Old City and Hamlet's supposed

grave. The 452 participants from 47 countries covered a wide range of topics and fields of research, among which I would mention a few: *The Reception of English Literature in 20<sup>th</sup> c Europe; Translation and Scottish Literature; The Lure of the Occult and its Cultural Representations; Politeness and Interaction, Metaphors and Economic Thinking; Literary and Cultural Representations of the Child; Modern English Syntax: Historical and Comparative Approaches; Ethics and Trauma in British Fiction since the 1960s; Film Studies, Reading and Trust in Managed Learning Systems; American Little Magazines; The Intersection of English Education Practices and Workplace Needs*, etc.

The conference offered me a great opportunity to interact with prestigious researchers in the field, from Europe and elsewhere. This is one of the great advantages of international events.

The academic program included 5 plenary speakers. There were several distinguished key speakers at Aarhus, covering a wide range of the disciplinary interests of ESSE members. I heard three of them: Steven Connor (Birbeck College) who lectured on *Thinking Things*, Nigel Fabb (University of Strathclyde) on *What is a Line of Verse* and Toril Moi (Duke University) on *History/Realism/Modernism*.

*Rethinking Literary History of How Modernism Emerged*. Steven Connor tried to convince the audience that "the subject is born of the object": 'to think' is made of 'things', he said, thus arguing in favor of the materiality of things.

A conference highlight for me was Toril Moi, professor of Literature and Romance Studies at Duke University, whose works on feminist theory and women's writing I was familiar with, hence my special interest for her. I was fascinated by her original incursion into the history of modernism in connection with idealism and realism. "Look and See", Toril Moi told us, and magically, she made me rethink the intersections of literature, philosophy and aesthetics in a new light.

As a conference participant I presented a paper on "Paule

Marshall's "Brooklyn" within Seminar 16: *Wholeness, Healing, and Spirituality: African American Women's Revisions of the Historical and Spiritual Past*. I focused on the journey back to the historical sources of the black community that is dominant in writings by black women in general, and Marshall in particular.

The panel presenters from culturally diverse intellectual backgrounds (Spain, Greece, Finland, Romania, and Czech Republic) invited critical responses to African American Women writers' contributions to the revisionism of US history, namely from the perspectives of wholeness, spirituality, and healing. Suzan-Lori Park, Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, Octavia Butler, Gloria Naylor are some of the Afro-American women writers discussed, whose commitment needs to be understood within the context of the postcolonial condition of the contemporary United States where 'internal colonization' has become their dominant experience.

Among the issues related to black women's fiction that were raised at Seminar 16, the following drew my special attention: 'the ancestral grand mother as a timeless figure' (Inmaculada Pineda Hernández: University of Malaga, Spain); 'w(hole) of history in Suzan-Lori Parks's plays' (Kostantinos Blatanis: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece); 'history haunts, hurts, possesses you, can rape you, is encoded in our bodies, is engraved in our bodies' (Karla Simciková: University of Ostrava, Czech Republic); 'revision of good relationships between men and women in the Diaspora; strength and power comes from union "all o' we one!" between women and men as well as from the "African descendants on Triunion and the harmonious combination of colors, languages, and cultures in one same society"' (Silvia Castro: University of Malaga, Spain).

The small number of papers presented within each two-hour seminar session allowed the two conveners (Karla Simcikova from University of Ostrava, Czech Republic, and Silvia Castro from University of Malaga, Spain) to encourage professional discussions

between the speakers and with the audience in a friendly atmosphere.



The social program included a welcome reception at City Hall, a Conference Dinner on the University Campus, mini-excursions to the Old City and Hamlet's grave (which helped the scholars glide into the Danish world of beauty, legend, and art), a visit to the Art Museum, and a poetry recital (Linton Kwesi Johnson, a Reggae poet).

My special thanks go to Dominic Rainsford, principal local organizer, and to his efficient team of teachers and students who managed to find suitable solutions to all the problems that were inherent in the organization of such a conference. Congratulations!



I should not end my brief report without mentioning the 9 (nine) publishers exhibiting at ESSE-9. They were: Continuum, Edinburgh University Press, Manchester University Press, Oxford University Press, Palgrave-Macmillan, Rodopi, Routledge, Scottish Writing, and Aarhus University Press. All of them displayed many books, old and new, from all humanistic fields of research, luring us with discount prices that we, the participants, can benefit from for up to three months after the conference.

ESSE-9 was my first contact with such a large-scale conference in general and ESSE in particular. I shall look forward to meeting many of the scholars in Torino in two years' time. Meanwhile, I will try to take full advantage of the contacts and experience I have acquired at this conference.

Dominic Rainsford in his opening speech quoted from Seamus Heaney's "The Tollund Man". The Nobel Prize winner speaks in the poem about his intention to go to Aarhus where: "I will feel lost, unhappy and at home". Dominic hoped that at the end of the conference, we, the participants "would *not* feel lost, would feel *happy* and at home". And he was right. The Esse-9 Conference was both a successful and enjoyable event.

## Academic Exchanges and Summer Schools

### My American Experience

Iulian Cananau

University of Bucharest

Over the years, I have enjoyed the charming and witty accounts of my friends and fellow RAAS members who, upon their return from the States, generously shared their experience as Fulbright scholars in the pages of our newsletter. Last year I became a Fulbrighter myself and, believe it or not, one of the first things that crossed my mind when I found out that I was one of the grantees was the quasi-obligatory report that I knew the newsletter editors, following a commendable tradition, would ask me to contribute after the conclusion of my American experience. When all this is over, what new and exciting information could I add to what has already been said by my colleagues? At that time, I quickly dismissed the thought out of superstition; after all, one doesn't want to have too interesting a story to tell about a 10-month stay in a hurricane-exposed, firearm-

loving, poverty-ridden part of the U.S.

But here I am now drawing the line and trying to assess my American experience. I was fortunate to have my project on the history of nineteenth century American literature accepted by one of the academics I had contacted before submitting the Fulbright application form. My advisor happened to be a professor of American literature at the English Department of Louisiana State University, and this is how I got to spend my grant period in Baton Rouge, the capital city of Louisiana. I had a wonderful time there.

The LSU campus is officially one of the most beautiful in the country, with its stately live oaks, scented magnolias, and fully blossomed crape myrtles that contrast pleasantly with the Italian Renaissance-style buildings. I miss my walks through that campus and the occasional coffee breaks I took, sitting on a bench in the Quad, watching students and squirrels, and thinking of my family back home. I took advantage of my "full borrowing privileges" and I borrowed tons of books from the three-million volume library and spent countless hours in its spacious halls reading, taking notes, and scanning hundreds of pages. I also gorged myself on the vast network of research databases. In short, I plead guilty to having indulged in almost all scholarly pleasures known to man.

I was no hermit. I audited classes, I met people, I had my accruing Ph.D. dissertation proofread and discussed many times over lunch with my advisor and other faculty as well. I made a lot of friends, I visited homes (and one historic plantation), I went to Walmart on the community bus or in a friend's car, I went out for dinner (not as often as I would have liked to), I got fifty pounds of beads at Mardi Gras (most of which I had to leave behind on my departure day), I went to church and to quite a few symphonic concerts.

I was impressed with the young Americans' mobility. I met a guy who was born and raised in Iowa, moved with his parents to Kentucky, graduated from high school there, went alone to Tennessee to study piano, then to LSU for a master's

degree, which is where I found him. Last week I learned that he is already in Texas for his Ph.D. I was touched by the warmth and generosity with which many of the people I met (academics, students, neighbors) treated me. I'm grateful to all of them and I miss them. It was during the recent Gustav hurricane crisis (the most damaging storm that has hit Baton Rouge in thirty years) that I realized how strongly I had become attached to my friends there and to those places which, for a while, were my second home.

Anything new or unexpected? Probably not...



The LSU Quad

## **"Religious Pluralism in the United States" 2008**

**Estella Antoaneta Ciobanu**

Ovidius University - Constanța

One of the eight Studies of the United States Institutes (SUSI) currently run by the U.S. Department of State, "Religious Pluralism in the United States" is a six-week academic program for a group of eighteen scholars – academics, researchers, religious leaders – from around the world. The Institute has been hosted from its inception in 2001 by the Religious Studies Department of the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), and includes two components: an intensive academic residency and an integrated educational tour, both accompanied by cultural activities and religious community visits intended to increase the participants' understanding of the integration and role of religion in American society.

Significantly titled this year "Religion in the U.S.: Pluralism and Public Presence," the Institute was held between June 21 and August 4 and offered a broad perspective on the religious features of the United

States at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A host of mainly UCSB-based experts on the history, sociology, and anthropology of religion organized lectures and seminars on topical issues, such as diversity versus pluralism in religion, the demography and sociology of American religion, civil religion, representations of religious groups in the media, and the blend of the religious and the ethnic/racial, from the Native Americans to Afro-Americans, Jews, and Muslims. It is indeed hard to tell whether my keen sense of intellectual accomplishment after the four-week academic training was due to the lectures and follow-up discussions we had, where all participants shared valuable insights into the religious experience in their home countries, to the extensive and high quality reading we had to catch up with, and which, to the credit of our host university, had been thoughtfully provided and was already awaiting us in our dorm rooms, or to the very immersion in an environment – southern California – hospitable to a variety of religious experiences and experiments. To be fair, it is certainly a blend of all these factors, though felt as significant in different ratios from individual to individual and from day to day.

Sprinkled throughout the week were visits to local churches, the mosque, the Reform synagogue, and Vedanta Temple, to attend religious service and/or to meet members of the religious communities. It felt nearly like in a children's nursery rhyme: if it's Friday noon, it's mosque prayer, if it's Friday evening, it's Shabbat prayer in the synagogue, and if it's Sunday morning, it's Mass – or any other name – in Calvary Mega-Church, Santa Barbara, or Goleta Presbyterian church, or, optionally because next to campus, the Orthodox church in Isla Vista.

Last but not least, the magnificent location of our host campus – on the coast of the Pacific and thus recalling home to me – and the sheer awesomeness of visiting its library on a daily basis to leave it with a pile of loan books for midnight reading, contributed to a one-off experience of intensive study and enjoyment.

Little could we envisage then, while still studying on campus, the experience just ahead of us. Positioned like in an afterthought within the four weeks of campus residency, the four-day study tour of Los Angeles gave us a foretaste of the visits to come no less than exposing us to the hustle and bustle of LA and the mirage of Hollywood. We rode on scorching mornings to the Hindu Temple, or to a downtown appointment with the leaders of the LA group of interfaith dialog based at the Islamic Center of Southern California, or to attend Mass in the postmodernist-looking Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels; we relished seeing UCLA Fowler Museum's exhibition, "Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diaspora," and lingered by the memorabilia displayed in the Japanese American Museum in Little Tokyo to commemorate the American Japanese equivalent of the Holocaust, an experience that foreshadowed the bitterness of our visit to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

The first stop after leaving UCSB for good was Salt Lake City, in Utah, where we were to experience, as the schedule humorously put it, "being non-Mormon in a Mormon country." And experience we did: after a thorough immersion in the peculiar architecture of SLC, an introductory meeting with two leading experts on Mormonism, one of them a Methodist in fact, the 24<sup>th</sup> of July Parade (the Mormon equivalent of July 4<sup>th</sup>), and a tour of the LDS Humanitarian Center, we communed with Protestant priests in their respective churches to learn about the Christian experience amid Mormons, only to crown our own experience by attending the Tabernacle Choir Concert celebrating July 24<sup>th</sup>.

The Atlanta tour – guided by staff from the Religious Studies Department of Georgia State University – included visits to the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation ("The Temple"), the Al Farooq Masjid (the mosque of Atlanta), and Carter Museum. We attended Sunday service at New Ebenezer Baptist Church, the historic church Martin Luther King, Jr., and toured his home and the MLK museum. Atlanta turned out to be another

unsettling experience, from getting the feel of a Baptist service in a historically black church to witnessing an instance of civil religion at its most pious: the long line of visitor-pilgrims, mostly black and visibly tearful, doing homage to Martin Luther King, Jr. as they moved from one picture of his life to another.

Washington, D.C., the *terminus ad quem* in the SUSI program, unfolded a series of memorable visits and events intended to give us a better understanding of American *civil religion*. Quite appropriately, our tour of the capital started with the National Cathedral, continued with the Capitol (we *did* watch the Congress in session!), the Religion and Policy Center, and ended with visits to Arlington National Cemetery, the Holocaust Museum, and optionally, to the plethora of museums in the vicinity of the Capitol.

Looking back at this account of my SUSI experience, I now realize the shift in tone, from a very formal academic report – as it was originally intended – to something for which I lack a name, neither a diary entry nor a journalist's report. I can feel its emotional surges, at times barely restrained, as the memories brought me back in time to re-live some of the experiences I'm now trying to share with you. So I've decided not to smooth out the jolts, but rather let my discourse flow at its own wayward pace, possibly the very pace I lived in the scorching summer of 2008 miles away from home.

## **A Romanian Pilgrim's Progress**

**Gabriela Laslau**

Colegiul National "Ferdinand I", Bacău

21<sup>st</sup> June

I remember the feeling of shame at Bradley Airport in Hartford, Connecticut, seeing my small black suitcase (I had decided against taking too much luggage) tied with white rope. I don't know who did it, all I know was that at the first step was made by the customs officer at Otopeni Airport in Bucharest, who managed to take the handle off my suitcase with just one (too hard) pull. Probably the others did the rest.

The trip to Amherst took about an hour. Allie (sweet Allie) was driving the van packed with about ten of us, and in the meantime I was overhearing the conversation between Anita (Norway) and Francesca (Italy) about the many cultural opportunities Bologna (Francesca's city) has to offer and fell asleep in the middle of it.

Newport dormitory was the place where I was going to stay for the next seven weeks of my life. It looked like a mansion built in colonial style, three floors and only 4 restrooms for 29 people (3 at first, the fourth one was going to be built in the following days, but it took almost 2 weeks – those American workers were nice, relaxed, loud guys, who did their best to finish the job but couldn't because they were so relaxed; they didn't care too much we were after a very long plane journey and listened to loud music while they were doing overtime at 11 pm). I found a pile of books on the desk in my room (the *Norton Anthology*, two volumes of *For the Record* and the *Western Reader*, plus a collection of documents), on top of which was a nice red juicy apple. And a Dove bar of soap.

William (Ecuador) was the first smiling face I saw. He had arrived earlier and already knew the surroundings, had explored the town and was an invaluable guide to our first dining night in Amherst. We went to Judie's, a restaurant Julie Hooks Davies recommended, I ordered something vegetarian, but didn't get much to eat, just a huge plate of absolutely tasteless green stuff and couscous; the two things came together; I was lucky with the white wine, which wasn't too bad.

I slept like a log that night – like a rolling one. I woke up several times without knowing where I was. The town was absolutely peaceful and quiet. A lot of green space around the house – I could hear the crickets at night if I opened the window, which was not at all what I had expected America to be. Amherst is, as they say, a bubble of civilization, but I didn't know that at that time. A small, elegant town, situated in the scenic Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts, where the college campus occupies most of the land and is, anyway, the focus of attention. It's one of the



most expensive colleges in the States, and the tuition fees can get higher than \$40,000. It's within driving distance from Boston (2 hrs) and New York (4 hrs).

The first Sunday I spent in Amherst was dedicated to spiritual matters (I went to church – a Catholic church) and very earthly ones (we got ITD money, to put it bluntly). I didn't expect it because I hadn't read the orientation manual attentively – with the end of school and all that – so I was pleasantly surprised to receive a very generous sum (about three times my Romanian salary), and this was the first installment. I also got to know my colleagues – 29 people from 27 countries – we introduced ourselves during this ceremony, who we were and what our positions were in the system – Frank Couvares (the academic director) and Julie Hooks Davies (the executive director of the program). The first two ones (Victor from Cameroun and Dorothee from Congo) spoke extensively, passionately. I also remember Suhad's strong reaction to the Israeli flag: "I am Israeli Arab. I'm not Jewish." At which Frank offered to find a Palestinian flag to replace the Israeli one. I don't think he did it until we left.

I still feel that specific warmth and glow inside when I think of them all – it's what you have when you are with someone you respect very much. I still have that.

June 23<sup>rd</sup>

Frank began his first lecture about "American Democracy" with a memorable sentence I will never forget: "America is a big elephant." By this he meant that the other countries being smaller and more fragile and delicate, they should watch out their steps, moves, ideas and attitudes, because, you know, the elephant sometimes – being so big – doesn't pay too much attention to where he's stepping, so collateral damages are excusable but also avoidable. I thought he would go on like that throughout the entire lecturing program, but no, he was too good to do that. Anyway, all this series of lectures on history was "just scratching the surface," give a general idea of what American history is, but in a very critical way, "warts and all." ...

Frost Library, impressive as it is in terms of architecture, space, good taste, money invested, well-trained personnel, IT, computer access to the database etc- is a total failure when it comes to practical things like finding a book on the shelf. Because it's never there, and I tried it several times. The good thing is that you can find many similar books, directed at the same subject. But not the book you're looking for. They know that, of course, but they're so proud of their computerized access that they don't really care.

June 30<sup>th</sup>

After Christopher Pyle finished speaking, I said to myself "Oh, my God, this guy would be long dead in my country or in any other Eastern European, African or Asian country." Dr. Pyle was, on the contrary, very alive, lively and feeling good about his own person. He's a living legend for anyone who searches the internet. He was trained as a lawyer, an infantry officer and a counterintelligence agent. He taught at the Army intelligence School and worked for two Senate committees investigating intelligence abuses by the FBI and the CIA. He is one of the initiators of the Watergate affair because he exposed military surveillance of anti-war activists in 1970. He wrote about the unlawful interrogations at the Guantanamo Bay prison. He is going to publish a book called *Disgracing America: The War crimes of the Bush Administration*. But his main theme that day was education, because we were all teachers, education that should encourage freedom of speech and civil discourse, that deals with ideas that really matter, that move the discussion in a constructive and moral direction. Those who engage in this should be polite and civil-minded, although being too polite or "letting off too much steam" can be an enemy of the civil discourse. He went on to tell us (as a matter of fact read, not tell – why do these people read when they have so much to say?) about how he taught his son to stand up for his rights while in school and admonished for wearing a T-shirt with an antisocial/sexist logo. His T-shirt was bought by the child's mother, and the admonishing

teacher was lesbian. The Pyle family sued the school, and after 3 years of trials, bravely endured by the boy (who skipped classes in the meantime-it must have been very unpleasant for him to do that – but got ready to learn how to fight for his civil liberties), the school had to pay \$ 80,000 to the Pyles as legal damages.

He warned us against the greatest threat of all, which does not come from terrorism or the Bush administration, but from the computer technologies of surveillance (there are 16 federal intelligence agencies nowadays). Which is more serious, the government granted the torturers immunity from prosecution, and the President can issue a blank pardon to anyone. There have been 900,000 names investigated by the FBI on terrorism, so national security is a big problem, because the more the American people expect to be protected, the greater the danger is.

July 5<sup>th</sup>

We went to Boston, but we visited Mayflower and Plymouth Plantation. These people turn everything into a monument. The rock the Mayflower hit upon, which made the Pilgrim Fathers settle in Massachusetts and not elsewhere, is now exhibited in a sort of Greek temple-like huge construction, all pillars. The small town is a living (commercial tribute) to the first European settlers.

The Plymouth Plantation is part of the same story, an attempt at recreating time and space. We walked through the village of Wampanoag, the Indians who helped the Pilgrims accommodate – hence Thanksgiving. The Indians were trained actors who adopted a certain position of noble resignation, were offended if called Indians and scolded you if you trespassed their territory.

The Pilgrim village (a replica of the one settled in 1627) is even more interesting, because the other actors try to speak old English, which is so fun! Friendly as both the Indians and the Pilgrims may have been with each other, the special wooden house sheltering canons (of English production, 1601) proves otherwise. I liked the crowd of cheering children, mediievally

dressed, playing with a ball of string and the nice voice of a man singing hymns in the garden, seated on a bench, next to his "wife".

Boston is huge, great! It's my favorite! It's such a nice, posh, expensive city! I don't remember the name of the hotel where I slept or where I ate that night, or if I did. All I remember was the exhausting march that day and the fact that the moment we arrived in the city, we went on another march, to the highest building in Boston (it was the 31<sup>st</sup> floor) and marveled at the beauty of the panorama. After we came down, I crossed the central park – it was beautiful at 11 pm, so quiet, I wasn't afraid at all. Unlike New York and Salt Lake City, which are structured in such a way that you can't get lost, no matter how hard you try (SLC is like a beehive, for instance, with perfectly symmetrical streets), Boston is an architectural whim – maybe that's why I prefer it.

### **Avatars of Neoliberalism: Intellectual Camping at the Clinton Institute, University College Dublin: July 13-19, 2008**

**Catalina Neculai**

University of Warwick, UK

The second edition of the school in American Studies at the Clinton Institute was the kind of summer camping that a junior academic can only wish for: a productive and exciting intellectual enterprise. Proverbially, when school starts on the 13<sup>th</sup>, one would expect ill omen to flood in, from setting foot on the Ryan Air Taxi to discovering the location of University College Dublin which has found an outlandish, yet picturesque, ex-urban home for itself. However, the 13<sup>th</sup> of July augured well for an entire and extremely intense week of workshops, plenary lectures, readings, informal exchanges of ideas, and a one-day symposium to boot.

The school started with a talk by Professor Stanley Fish on the 'Future of the Humanities' which pleaded overtly for a political discoloring of academics in the

teaching of their subjects and curricula. Unwittingly perhaps, the three workshops and the number of keynote lectures that followed in the course of the week proved Professor Fish's thesis controversial, and to a degree, hard to sustain in the actual discourse and practice of American and Trans-Atlantic Studies. The overarching themes can only speak for themselves: 'American Studies and the Question of Exceptionalism' lead by Professor Donald Pease, Dartmouth College, 'Historical Geographies of the Neoliberal Present, 1973-2008' conducted by Professor Cindi Katz, City University of New York, 'Enduring Freedom: Ideology and US Foreign Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' run by Professor Liam Kennedy, UCD Clinton Institute, and Professor Scott Lucas, University of Birmingham. All the three workshops sought to highlight the inescapable and emancipatory role of the political sphere in all intellectual – ergo, academic – engagement, its methodological instrumentality as the obligatory basis of all interrogation.

Perched on the frontier between literary studies and geography (a fairly extreme intellectual sport), I found delight in the daily sessions of the workshop on the 'Historical Geographies of the Neoliberal Present' with Cindi Katz, and a challenging team of young scholars from both sides of the Pond: Duke, Texas at Austin, Milan, Edinburgh, Dublin and Cambridge. The seminar followed two routes of debate. On the one hand, we brought to the table the meanings and actual implications of a neoliberal ideological, spatial, socio-economic, cultural and political agenda starting from a generous array of readings about a multi-faceted and sparsely questioned neoliberalism. On the other hand, each participant presented their own work, feeding into the narratives of (anti-) neoliberalism. The interdisciplinary character and high-quality of the workshop were also its greatest attraction. The thematic of the talks covered a range of research interests that proved utterly stimulating and is hard to contain in a few synthetic words: the effects of political classificatory regimes, the formation of the neoliberal subject

and the disciplining of citizenship, the powerful social and aesthetic consequences of neoliberal economic practice, the literary reifications of a cultural transnationalism, the production of residual spaces and the aesthetic representation of vacancy, the advent of neoliberal urbanism, the global ecological movement and the (ab)use of animal totem figures.

The lectures that took place each evening reinforced the theoretical, social, cultural and political frameworks set by the workshop(s). The issue of security and insecurity, coupled with the (Bushian) politics of domestic surveillance and imperialist interventionism in the aftermath of 9/11, featured in most of the lectures given by Cindi Katz, Scott Lucas, Donald Pease, Donatella Izzo (University of Naples) and Hamilton Carroll (University of Leeds). While Cindi Katz was concerned with parental over-protectionism as the correlative to a nationalist obsession with security, Scott Lucas with the dreary globalising war agenda of the Bush administration and Donald Pease with 'undoing the Bush biopolitical settlement', Donatella Izzo and Hamilton Carroll explored their cultural and literary ramifications in best selling narratives of war and the 'domestic melodramas' of September 11. Furthermore, Eric Lott (University of Virginia) underscored the factionalisms and contradictions facing the intellectual on the left in the neoliberal age, or in his own phrase, 'the cold wars of the mind'. The lectures took a prominent aesthetic and historical turn with Liam Kennedy's photographic exploration of the Vietnam War, Werner Sollors (Harvard)'s genealogical incursion into the photography of the Holocaust, Ruth Barton (Trinity College)'s critique of the Irish ethnic body in Hollywood films and Jonathan Auerbach (Maryland University)'s analysis of film noir and its 'un-Americanness'.

In the vein of the complexity and diversification of research angles sketched above, the pinnacle of the school was a one-day symposium where each of us presented revised versions of the work that had benefited from feedback during the workshops. In

spite of the brevity of each presentation, the symposium allowed us to liaise and establish a dialogue beyond the boundaries of one's own workshop, which made the school more inclusive. The welcoming spirit, hospitality and affability of our hosts, Professor Liam Kennedy and Dr. Hamilton Carroll, the directors of the school, and Catherine Carey, manager of the Clinton Institute, were indispensable and ensured the smooth running of events. The garden barbeque in the last evening was the most enjoyable finale to a replenishing and rewarding week.

## **Principles and Practices of U.S. Elections, Summer Institute, Ukraine**

**Raluca Rogoveanu**

Ovidius University - Constanța

The 9<sup>th</sup> Summer Institute "Principles and Practices of U.S. Elections" took place in Ukraine, June 1-7<sup>th</sup>, 2008, and was organized by Chernivtsi National University and the Public affairs Section of the United States in Ukraine.

The one week event, meant to examine the relation between emergent and residual practices of U.S. Elections, attracted more than 30 participants from countries like Ukraine, Belarus, Moldavia, Georgia and Romania.

Influential scholars in the field of American studies organized daily courses and workshops designed to provide a shared space of critical inquiry pertaining to American presidential elections. Andrew Busch's complex presentations offered an insightful glimpse into the mechanics of the U.S. elections, with their multiple overlapping and crosscutting dynamics. They referred to the manner in which popular concerns are expressed by electoral expressions and specific voting behaviors and how candidates and campaigns mobilize on behalf of their preferred issues and interpretations. Daniel Belgrad's lectures on the separation of powers within the American Federal Government focused on the manifold aspects of the checks and balance principle and on the potential intrusion of the executive into the prerogatives of the

legislative and the judicial. Janet Demiray's seminars identified key principles of the U.S. foreign policy as reflected by different presidential administrations and prefigured by the next President's agenda. Linda Gray's interesting lectures on "Grassroots organizing" considered the necessity of contemporary politics to mobilize an effective majority vector out of disparate and idiosyncratic forces and interests that operate within networks of groups and regions. Raul Tovaresh's "Broadcast regulations and federal elections" identified the impact of mass media upon shaping people's concerns and expectations. Lisa Harshbarger's presentation "U.S. immigration and its impact on American schools," by focusing on how current presidential candidates discuss this issue with prospective voters.

The topics foregrounded key elements in the process of U.S. elections such as the political programs of former presidents, the social and economic framework in which the process of election takes place and the ideological rhetoric of such campaigns as mirrored by mass media trusts. The lectures occasioned lively exchanges of opinion during and after presentations.

The Summer Institute felicitously coincided with the opening of the American Studies Center at Chernivtsi National University, event marked by William Taylor's address, the U.S. Ambassador in Ukraine.

The event was hosted by the National University of Chernivtsi, a picturesque city of Northern Bukovina. The social program included a trip to Khotyn and Kamyanyets – Podilsky fortresses, wonderful occasions for all the participants to admire the landscape and get acquainted with the history of the region.

The 9<sup>th</sup> American Studies Summer Institute represented a notable academic event that contributed to fostering deeper understanding of the U.S. in its diversity and its impact on world politics and culture.

## **Research Projects**

### **On the Starting Point of My Research Project**

Silvia Florea

Lucian Blaga University - Sibiu

My research project compares the multi-cultured Transylvanian (Romanian) experience with the multi-ethnic region of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the United States, trying to explore access and equity issues in Romanian Higher Education by comparing it to the American Higher Education System and their experience in addressing specific barriers faced and in promoting engagement and success in higher education and beyond. Both the city of Philadelphia and Sibiu have many colleges and universities, including some that have historically favored certain ethnic groups or socio-economic constituencies and both have had to provide, advance and support a wider range of student access to higher education in their rich history of educational access.

However, in the following, I will not explore the content of that research project subject matter as such. Instead, I will try to offer a sharper analytic mode on its starting point background, to describe what has prompted the topic as a subject worthy of a condensed data analysis of facts, and finally, will articulate what, to me, has qualified the topic for a larger area of comparative thematic interest.

Questions of what makes a project a good research project have been haunting Romanian researchers in the last couple of years, particularly since in the most recent (and more modern) academic environments and settings, what will basically define the seriousness and caliber of an academe's activity will be their research, updating, learning and cross training skills, skills of a person who has evinced enthusiasm for professional research activities (publications, conference and seminar papers) as well as for the development and submissions of project-based applications for different research programs. In this context, ever more declared areas of interest have been defined as starting points for a stronger bonding with both the

research community and with communities of policy and practice about the best ways to focus their work. Within these ever broader areas of inter-, cross- and trans-disciplinary inquiries more focused and serious sustained programs of research and improvement, undertaken in the spirit of partnership with our colleagues in the worlds of scholarship and educational practice have called for a better focus, clearer articulation of objectives and further specificity in the approach description of any type of research projects and applications.

At the outset, it is important to underscore that the general starting point of my research centers on the value of Higher Education, a core effort committed to teaching, learning and scholarship; all of these activities nurture ethical, creative, and informed citizens dedicated to the common good. As do all educators, higher education educators contribute to strengthening integrity, diversity, social justice, and civic responsibility in higher education and the wider society. But, on closer examination, there is a lot more to it than these worthwhile results. Educational researchers in major research Romanian universities attempting to explore their topics in an academic environment of intense criticism (particularly after 1989) have understandably sought investigations that would satisfy their own goals, their colleagues' concerns or a much broader range, hoping they would offer alternatives and solutions to various educational policies at work or on the way. Indeed so, various constituencies bring their own epistemologies to the table and what constitutes evidence of success to one may not be convincing at all to another; even when we know that such-and-such an educational program or policy has "worked" somewhere, we may not understand its operations well enough to help it work somewhere else, partly because the measurement metrics involved are ill-specified or in dispute, or simply because we cannot state, nor are yet prepared to understand, the contribution of any particular factor to the more general scheme of schooling at different levels across cities, regions and states. Thus,

questions about context and process tend to get pushed to the side. From all I have read on education and higher education issues so far, a certain sense of incompleteness has characterized the survey of the system of education we have been all trying hard to understand; it is an atypical system, placed at the intersection of South Eastern European cultures which has begun to be decentralized and reformed at a fast pace since 1989 and which showed indication at the time that any attempt to reform it would not go smoothly, for it would have had to yield positive results in a short space of time in order to close the gap between the Romanian and larger European situation. The post-communist transition in Romanian higher education fortunately coincided with the Bologna process; however, this meant that the system faced a double pressure: making up for almost 50 years of communism, and building at the same time a foundation on which future reforms could be based. Not surprisingly, it seems to me that the leading Romanian educational research during the past two decades has been somewhat too out-of-context, deliberately, or by inadvertence, (dis) or mis-placed outside the civictown/regional matrix and therefore failed to take most of its empowering steam that could be generated from issues of greater public concern, such as: bi or multilingualism, disabilities, gender, ethnicity and poverty. It looked to me more like a collection of discrete educational research projects focused on reforming and reformed institutions with separable effects, it's true, but which sort of invites you to consider only the more minor effects and the more trivial research. Present circumstances, however, challenge these priorities. New research, I tend to think, needs to explore the realities of educational practice in specific contexts, how it works and why it works the way it does, more deeply. For most Romanian policy makers, the non-authoritative character of much recent educational research is an obvious problem, partly because of the narrow conceptualization of issues, partly because of poor study design, partly because of the sharply

ideological character of the discussion, stripped of any regional specificity dimension. Much of the more committed work I believe in comes from projects made up of teams of researchers, often place-based, representing a variety of disciplines and methodologies, making a long-term commitment to understanding the larger problem, rather than doing little studies of their own, while hoping that one day all the little studies will add up to something. To varying degrees, I think the "town and gown" research on access issues in higher education that I am shaping tends to do multi-method, attempting longitudinal studies with much stronger-than-usual grounds for causal inference and applicability.

To zoom in a little: in devising my strategy for my educational research project, I thought that reversing the focus and asking myself what education is affected by, is however, a lot more reasonable. I believe education changes all the time, and it varies widely, both in its character and in its apparent effectiveness, across nations and these changes and differences are primarily attributed to historical, demographic, economic, social, and political contexts. Education is affected by each and every such factor and there are unseen and, often times, imperceptible tiers and ties between all these components. It is such a direct association that I wanted to make between the town and the university, between education on the one hand and the social and spatial dimensions of the city on the other, using my own city as a source of study.

The city of Sibiu (Hermannstadt) has many cross-cultural currents and this multiethnic and multi-symbolic societal structure is undoubtedly reflected in the educational offering of its most emblematic institution, "Lucian Blaga" University. In this context it seems to me that a new structure, concept and image of the town have gradually emerged, alongside a new political strategy based on different forms of collective representation. In order to understand this process, my research project sets out to study everyday perceptions and practices of ethnicity, on the one hand, and the educational offer at



the tertiary level, on the other. In more concrete terms, it aims to explore a geographical matrix where different cultures (Romanian, Saxon, Hungarian) meet and blend in significant ethnic difference and sameness and then to examine how these can be experienced, represented and facilitated in the town's higher education system, all the while being swept away by the cross currents of globalization.

Such a town will have undoubtedly had to access education differently, according to its groups' own patterns of culture. This enterprise will dictate acts of discovery, occurring through the exploration of lived reality, of new and appropriate ontologies, and, by extension, new and appropriate epistemologies. Sibiu is thus seen as too textured and contradictory a city to entrap itself into a mono-dimensional framework. An important premise for my research is that our university, as an agency of higher learning and of creative discovery, has a real responsibility to sustain the constant redefinition of this town by pointing to and exploring new directions of continuing educational development.

It is against such a background that a university like "Lucian Blaga" has emerged as a powerful institution in the shaping and sustenance of the multi-ethnic urban sphere and society, aware that it benefits most when the feeder sources for its undergraduate population are themselves enriched by traditions of exercise of the creative imagination. This institution is definitely one that speaks back to a totality of meaningful articulations of environmental and educational diversity, strategically placed at the bifurcation of culture into knowledge and knowledge into science. Perhaps it is culture that really counts in this millenium in the important pursuit of education defined on traditional lines, yet so adaptable to the changed and changing circumstances of the enlarged Europe. "Lucian Blaga" University is an institution of learning that is working to produce a self-reliant, self-respecting, tolerant, enterprising and productive community of souls. All these

considerations should inform an educational project that will explore access within a multi-ethnic township space. Working back from education change or differences was still not the starting point in my research I was any willing to consider, as research impact formulations may often take you down the wrong path in a more fundamental way. As long as we think we have to justify specific research by its contribution to measurable social goals, I believe researchers will create such justifications. The process may have some claim to usefulness and desire for affecting practice, yet social goals should remain as admirable occasional side effects, not primary objectives. The tensions of exploring education in general, higher education in particular, have been somewhat pressing academia in new directions, causing many changes in the system of scholarly communication which it utilizes. The break taking alacrity of the post 1989 governments and other elites which have managed to fundamentally alter the prevailing social 'common sense' about the role and place of the market in our lives represents, in my view, one such tension. Though globalization is all too often discussed in terms of economic inevitability, it is also appropriately the name for an especially effective discursive formation, the last grand narrative, which has translated capitalism in Romania into fate in only the space of less than two decades. Within cultural studies (non)justifiable attention has been paid to the broad sweep of consumer and commodity culture and to the individual and social identities produced, effected and articulated within it. In my project the same kind of attention needs to be devoted to the sites and forces that are capable of creating a healthy, steady, coherent and undiscriminating higher education system; to do so, it is important to fully explore the complex ways in which a variety of symbolic forms--cultural codes and symbols--work in conjunction in this town with economic and educational categories to produce a culturally diverse society, perpetually stratified by various enriching forms of cultural representation. The current conditions of intellectual

labour in our country seem to have still placed growing limitations on our ability to work together towards effective collective and common goals. All good research can do is give us a hint at the limitless possibilities that can arise if we address ourselves collectively to these new days.

## PhD Theses

### Visual and Verbal Reality in Modernist American Poetry

(Gertrude Stein, Wallace

Stevens, W.C. Williams, e.e.

cummings, George Oppen,

Louis Zukofsky)

Eleonora Băcă-Dragomir

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Our purpose in the present paper is to bring a personal contribution to the approach of the literary text and thus prove that, the visual and verbal features of modernist texts mingle and give birth to a new universe, in which they lead an autonomous existence. The thesis consists of seven chapters. The internal approach of our study tries to demonstrate the particular set-ups of modernist poems, and consequently pays close attention to the theoretical premises of rhetorical figures such as metaphors, metonymies and symbols which feature crucially in them.

Ezra Pound's influential emphasis on an "economy of words" and a "direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective", as well as his claim that "the natural object is always the adequate symbol", articulated the style of a generation. Ultimately, American Modernist poets (foremost among them, being the so-called Objectivists) took upon themselves the task of creating a

kind of poetry that would replace "ideas" with "things", concepts with objects, abstractions with facts, principles with actions. "Things are because of interrelations and interactions", stated Stevens in one of his "Adagia". No thing is the "thing" itself, it is the result of its interactions and interrelations with other environments. In our case, fascinated by visual arts, the poet assumes the role of the painter in an attempt to paint the thing itself. Therefore, the visual and verbal features of modernist texts mingle and give birth to a new universe. Our investigation starts with Gertrude Stein, as one of the initiators of this poetic trend and finds an ending point in the Objectivist group of poets who took upon themselves the task of creating a kind of poetry that would replace "ideas" with "things".

Modernist poets strove to emphasize the peculiar, dense, concreteness of the word. No longer merely a sign that stands for something else and engages thought, the word's physical (alphabetical, typographical, iconic) and sonorous characteristics, as well as its etymological and historical layers of (all but "transparent") meanings needed to be both anatomized and celebrated. According to William Carlos Williams: "It's the words we need to get back to, words washed clean". All writers selected share a number of common features and visions of society and the world, which determined their selection. They are all committed to developing alternatives. These alternatives are represented to a considerable extent by means of formal innovation, both large and small scale. All of them reflect this duality of forms, on strategy and on the critique of strategy, on large social issues and on details of syntax. Despite their social, historical and political divergent positions, they were all involved in a common enterprise- a struggle, not merely a struggle to make new poems, but to transform their culture and society.

*The thesis was defended in March 2008.*

## Topological Adaptations: From Text to Film, from Film to Text

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A complex enterprise, the filmmaking process demands multiple exposures to analysis and critique, and invites a multitude of approaches, part of which are the focal point of this study, *Topological adaptations: from text to film, from film to text*. Owing to a continuing popularity of novel adaptations to screen, this research is an attempt to explain not reasons of this popularity, but to identify the technical specificities of the process, as well as to deconstruct the constant critical denigration of the general phenomenon of adaptation. The focal interest is mainly adaptations of fiction and non-fiction (novels and historical events), as well as the reverse process which concerns the transition from screen text to novel text.

Concerning the status acquired by adaptation as a final product, Linda Hutcheon defensively noted "to be second is not to be secondary or inferior", while to be first does not entail originality or authority, either (*Theory of Adaptation* 4). Nevertheless, there are quite a large number of dismissive opinions concerning the possibility of adaptation to reach high artistic standards, and, despite the larger number of defenders of adaptation, such defaming opinions on adaptation as a secondary tardy mode still continue. Consequently, one of the aims of the present study is to challenge this denigration, to plead against the charge of 'infidelity' of adaptation, and to prove that adaptations should be no longer greeted as minor or subsidiary or never as good as the 'original'. Moreover, part of the present concern will be to prove that, as different as these media may be, both can successfully handle elements such as focalization and time, irony and ambiguity, metaphors, imagery and symbols, silences and absences.

Despite the variety of sources, and types of adaptations, despite

their differing supporting media (videogames, theme parks, web sites, graphic novels, song covers, operas, musicals, ballets, radio and stage plays), the concern of this study will consist in the more commonly discussed novels and films.

Once this purpose of this investigation has been set, Chapter 1 - *Basics of film adaptation theory*- opens with basic assumptions of adaptation studies (merits and blames, the 'musts', or rather 'needn'ts' in relation to the trope of fidelity associated with screen versions), primary theoretical concepts (adaptation between intertextuality and hypertextuality, within Gerard Genette's transtextual classes), taxonomies of adaptations, and the concept of "political correctness", which recent debates on adaptations have induced. Several medium-specificity enquiries of earlier and current theories of adaptation are considered and identified in a number of films, in order to balance both the limitations and advantages of this hybrid genre that borders literary and film studies.

Starting from the grounds that narrative/narration are fundamentals of this 'structural intertextuality' that literature and film share, Chapter 2 - *The narrative of fiction and film*- revisits the medium specificity of both novel and film from a narratological stance. Considering elements of fiction narrative and filmic narrative in a comparative and contrastive applicability, the chapter also includes equivalences between a poetics of fiction narrative and a poetics of film. The deep structure of novel / film narratives is approached at three theoretical levels: a) narratology of fiction b) narrative semiotics and c) film semiotics.

This semiotic investigation of filmic narrative marks the transition toward Chapter 3 - *The semiotics of film*- which is dedicated to the semiotics of film. Adaptation is this time discussed in terms of an intersemiotic translation which encompasses several stages, deploying the transformation of the linguistic signs into corresponding filmic

equivalences. By the same semiotic token, chapter 3 revisits Christian Metz's eight cinematic syntagmas (*Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, 1974), a semiotic alternative to the concepts of editing in classic film theory. Investigating the language of film, the last section operates an applied identification of the main taxonomies of film techniques (mise en scene, cinematography, editing, sound), and their validation is performed against a rich corpus of filmic texts.

Once the theoretical frame has been consolidated in the first part of the paper (Chapter 1-3), the second part (Chapters 4-6) substantiates several case studies. Though the initial intention of the present research was two-fold, namely, the transitions from novel to screen and back to novel text, a challenging type of films includes adaptations of historical events to films, a case study added as a Coda.

In this practical inquest, Chapter 4 - *From page to screen*- focuses on adaptations of novels to screen. The composition of films entails decomposing the narratives of novel sources by the film adapters, who will further operate subsequent various strategies of addition, reduction, actualization, augmentation, concretization, etc. The choice for the corpus in this chapter has relied on films that stand within the American cinematic canon in various ways. These are remarkable cinematic counterparts (*The Godfather*, dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1974) of novels of a lesser writerly and intellectual pose, which appeal to a mass audience (*The Godfather*, Mario Puzo, 1969). Further on, this research expands to two more novel-film dyads of equal critical value in the American literary and filmic canon which were offered equally remarkable cinematic versions: *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Ken Kesey, 1962 and Milos Forman, 1975), and *The Color Purple* (Alice Walker, 1982 and Steven Spielberg, 1985).

Since the novelization of films is a sub-genre in this area of film studies, Chapter 5 - *From screen to page*: *Jane Campion* → *Kate Pullinger*. *The Piano*: re-writing reversals of cinema- reciprocates a 'reverse' focus on transitions from film to page. Jane Campion's film

*The Piano* (1993), and its accompanying novel of the same title (Jane Campion and Kate Pullinger, 1994) open to decomposition a rare and typical case of reverse adaptation.

As a Coda to this enterprise, Chapter 6 - *From history to television to screen: Rewriting history on screen*: > *McCarthy and Murrow* → *George Clooney's Good Night, and Good Luck*.- looks into a different type of adaptation that regards the on-screen transposition of a moment in American history, and American journalism, pivotal to both democratic and journalistic values. George Clooney's 2005 film *Good Night, and Good Luck*. initiates a cinematic reminder to the collective memory about the practices of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and about Edward Murrow's journalistic involvement in the age. Within the multiplicity of cinematic testimonies to historical truthfulness, George Clooney's 2005 Academy Award nominated *Good Night, and Good Luck*. proves its significance as a filmic document of what is called 'the McCarthy years' in the history of the United States.

If this research was kindled by a personal desire to cross the border of 'the ivory tower' too often claimed by literature and literary studies, the gap is closed by the conclusions of this enterprise which might validate the verdict concerning the chances that the cinema in general, and adaptations in particular stand in reaching and adding art value to literature.

*The thesis was defended in March 2008.*

## **The Discourse of the Marginalized Self in Contemporary Native**

### **American Poetry**

**Ludmila Martanovschi**

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This study explores memory, language and cultural experience as the coordinates of the marginalized self's discourse. Focusing on these particular dimensions of identity and tracing their intricate ramifications in

the works of Simon J. Ortiz, Joy Harjo and N. Scott Momaday represents the novelty of the analysis, which hopes to enlighten the essence of these powerful poetic voices in American Indian literature today. A distinction between a biographical or "historical" identity and a textual or "literary" one is made. The objects of analysis are the literary self as defined by Samuel Maio as well as the sense of ethnicity that is created in the work of the contemporary American Indian poets. The consciousness of speaking for a whole community and of representing a tribal point of view as well as the ethical issues attached to it are addressed by the poets and the consequent analysis. Memory, language and cultural experience point to the self's rootedness in a tribal context and are intrinsically connected between themselves.

Besides establishing these coordinates, the first chapter, *Decolonizing the Self*, also encompasses discussions on decolonization as a theoretical approach and a series of critical perspectives on contemporary Native American poetry. Developed by American Indian Studies scholars such as Jack Forbes and Devon Mihesuah, the project of decolonization provides a broad framework for significant perspectives emerging from literary critics, especially Craig Womack and P. Jane Hafen. The tribally-based theoretical approach of this study embraces all aspects of the writer's culture viewed holistically and emphasizes issues of resistance, survival, self-determination and sovereignty. The survey of anthologies, critical articles as well as book-length studies that have appeared on Native American poetry throughout the nineties and since the turn of the century offers a starting point for the discussion of the four poets chosen. While describing the position of this poetry in the context of American literature at large, which translates in an incipient effort to allot minority poets a place in the canon, the presentation insists on the critical perspectives which discuss Native American poetry exclusively, among which two book-length studies that achieve very different portraits of

contemporary Native American poetry - Robin Riley Fast's and Norma Wilson's. Most valuably, *Speak to Me Words: Essays on Contemporary Indian Poetry* (2003) edited by Dean Rader and Janice Gould brings together influential voices, balancing Native and non-Native contributions on contemporary American Indian poets.

The second chapter, "*We Have to Keep Believing in Ourselves: The Continuance of the Self in Simon Ortiz's Poetry*", analyzes all Ortiz's volumes of poetry, from *Woven Stone* to *Out There Somewhere* and makes use of recent critical insights offered in the special issue of *Studies in American Indian Literatures* dedicated to Ortiz. Within this chapter, "Memory - Reconnecting People, Land and History", points to the ways in which Ortiz uses memory in order to affirm the American Indian nations' strong connection to the land and urgent need to reclaim their history. In his early volumes the poet introduces his readership to the Acoma Pueblo worldview revisiting his people's origin myth, identification with the land and respect for the wholeness in nature. In later volumes he relies on crucial moments in the past such as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and the Sand Creek massacre of 1864 to expose acts of exploitation and colonization that still occur in the present, telling the story of America from a native perspective and engendering change for the generations to come. "Language - from Forming Words to Storytelling and Writing Poetry" explores Ortiz's art as storyteller as Ortiz's work contains numerous and diverse references to language: reflections on the mystery of an infant's sounds, explanations of the importance of storytelling in traditional cultures and in his own writing, metaphors for the art of poetry and considerations on the power of language to (de)construct reality. "Cultural Experience - Traditions and Contemporary Readjustments" discusses Ortiz's treatment of ancient practices that survive today. In his texts the poet points out that Native American cultures have evolved from the time of the encounter with European cultures and have developed their

own ways of integrating outside influences and strategies of survival. Thus the speaker in his poems strives for deconstructing stereotypes and for being recognized for who he is.

The third chapter, "*I Should Be Writing Poems to Change the World: The Revolutionary Self in Joy Harjo's Poetry*", discusses Harjo as a strong poetic voice, relying on Craig Womack's approach that illuminates the Muscogee tribal stratum of her work. The revolutionary impulse of Harjo's work is deeply grounded in personal motivation as she relates to the past, present and future from the position of a feminine self that seeks to overcome destruction and ensure survival for the next generation especially in her most celebrated volumes *She Had Some Horses*, *In Mad Love and War* and *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*. In "Memory - Spiraling in Time and Space" the central concept of Harjo's work is discussed. Her explorations of memory translate into poems that center around various aspects of remembering and reveal the complexity of the Muscogee identity. By relating to memory as a spiraling process that leads her back in time and space to the origins of her people, Harjo represents episodes of Muscogee history and discusses Oklahoma as defining for the self in her poems. Integrating tribal reliance on the other beings in the world such as the deer as well as incorporating pan-tribal myths such as the woman who fell from the sky, the poet ultimately presents contemporary life in terms of ancient American Indian beliefs that continue to be remembered. "Language - Empowerment through Writing" shows that the preoccupation with language evolves in Harjo's work from reflecting traditional approaches consistent with Pueblo and Diné worldviews, which the poet is familiar with, to expressing trust in and doubt about the power of words. Her texts that refer to poetry writing continue this wavering which tends to be settled into the favor of writing as empowerment. Storytelling and the similarity between writing and painting also feature in her *ars poetica*. Several poems and affirmations from her essays

problematize the use of English by the native people of America and disclose the intricacies of this situation for the Muscogee poet. "Cultural Experience - The Urban Native Woman's Approach to Survival" discusses the self's guises as Noni Daylight, a "dangerous" traveler to Oraibi or Anchorage, a mother hanging from the thirteenth floor or an American citizen empathizing with immigrants to the United States. The urban woman in Harjo's poetry affirms her native heritage and epitomizes survival even in life-threatening situations. The poet also uses the image of the horses to represent the universally recognizable feminine experience today in an interlocking relationship self-other, turning this image into the trademark of her entire work.

The fourth chapter, "*I Am Alive: Strategies of Self-Definition in N. Scott Momaday's Poetry*" refers to Momaday as a poet who defines a powerful American Indian identity in a range of texts from the volumes *The Gourd Dancer* and *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991*. Some critical insights on his novels prove revelatory for the discussion of his poetry. "Memory - Recovering Myths and Rituals" shows that, throughout his poetry, Momaday shapes self-definitions in relation to land, nature and Kiowa myths. Memory has the power to make the connection between the "I" in the text and the world of the Kiowa creation myth, when the people came into the world through a hollow log, or to the myth of the bear transformation. While knowledge of present day Southwestern views informs the feeling of connectedness to the land, the tribal self asserts its American Indianness through participation to traditional dances and rituals, remembered and enacted in the present. "Language - The Restorative Power of Words" points to the ways in which language as creative and restorative power for the individual and the communal self is documented in a couple of "New Poems", following the tradition of native thought according to which ritualistic expression can heal. When addressing the Wounded Knee Massacre, the poem has the capacity to represent the victims



reverting the terrible death, life and survival being posited beyond tragedy. "Cultural Experience – from Personal Stance to Heritage Emblems" looks at experiences of the self in *The Gourd Dancer*, which encompasses the very personal stance of the loner in a foreign land as well as of the poet in search of connectedness with other artists. Culturally speaking, the reinterpretations of heritage developed in *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991* are much more relevant. On the one hand, the self is envisaged as a partner of Billy the Kid, an emblem of the West, and on the other hand, the self appears as a fighter with a shield, a richly symbolical object of the Plains tribes.

As the attention paid to Simon Ortiz, Joy Harjo and N. Scott Momaday in Europe is still scarce, this contribution, which has reconsidered some of their much anthologized and often celebrated texts as well as occasioned the discovery of texts that have never been included in volumes of selected poems or in major critical publications, hopes to add to the discussion and increase the acknowledgement these poets should receive. As volumes of poetry and other artistic projects signed by the three poets will continue to be released, the project will include further illustrations of their creative power.

*The thesis was defended in April 2008.*

## Popular Culture and Border Transgression in Contemporary American Poetry. The Case of Rock Poetry

Chris Tănăsescu

University of Bucharest

This study tries to focus on the intersections and interactions between two major phenomena of our time – rock culture and contemporary poetry. Rock has always been an integral part of popular culture, even when its refinement and elaboration seemed to recommend it as a possible

surprise member of a high culture family of musical genres. At the same time, modern and contemporary American poetry has gradually come closer and closer in time to popular culture as the latter in its turn attained vertiginously to a status of universal language and all-engulfing medium for modern life. Poetry has tried consistently to account for that medium and even to speak that language, just as rock music and lyrics have so often managed to bear testimony of contemporary society and culture.

The close analysis of such interactions and mutually reinforcing exchanges will prompt us to enhance the concept of rock poetry to much more than just rock lyrics, which does not mean that we shall treat the latter as scanty or negligible in any respect. Two other acceptations of the term will therefore be advanced: the first: rock poetry in the sense of poetry written by professional mainstream poets on rock, as inspired by rock, or in a style that may be read as rock (this latter aspect will involve a more general thematic and technical discussion on a possible poetical style and aesthetic category called 'rock'); and the second: poetry written and published by rock poets as 'literary' poetry, and not as lyrics to be sung or performed on stage.

Therefore, we shall start with a general approach to the relationship between the two concepts – rock poetry (in its generally accepted sense – lyrics) and what has been called formal/ linear/ mainstream/ (and what I prefer to term) literary poetry. We shall see how people on both sides have tried to cross the border and what were the reactions they inevitably triggered. The analysis will show how the attempts of certain rock artists to make a break into the world of letters has met with quite skeptical reception in certain typical cases, and how even a sacred monster like Bob Dylan has been seen by most important rock critics not as so much an important writer but rather the harbinger of certain new artistic modes or even of a completely new art. But the recent book by famous academic and critic Christopher Ricks on Bob Dylan will invite us to have a closer look into the latter's relationship with English letters in

general and with contemporary American poetry in particular, with excursions on mathematical versus mathematics poetry and more significantly, Dylan's closely biographical and fruitfully artistic relationship to Ginsberg.

The wider issue of rock artists/ lyrics writers in general as potentially weight-carrying poets, inducted by the fabulous example of Bob Dylan shall lead us to the most noteworthy attempt to establish (certain specific parts of) the huge corpus of rock lyrics as 'serious' enduring poetry – Richard Goldstein's and Homer Hogan's rock anthologies of the 1960s and the 1970s. We shall see there the daring parallels drawn by these two authors between the lyrics of some important rock artists of the moment (and as later confirmed, of popular music history) and the poetry of certain established contemporary (and in some cases not only contemporary) mainstream poets. The lack of any significant followers to the projects of the two abovementioned critics – on a corpus or anthology scale – shall be given special consideration and shall occasion a parallel to nowadays concerns regarding the impact and audience of poetry and the possible ways out, most remarkably poet and critic Danna Gioia's approach to the issue.

These latter questions will give the cue to analyzing the cases of poets and critics concerned with (or even jealous of) the wide popularity and impact of rock as compared to contemporary poetry, especially the studies of Kathleen Rooney, Stephen Burt, and most notably, the ones of former US Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky. In this context it shall be most relevant to analyze a rare success story like the one of David Berman, who started off as an indie rock artist but also managed, as an MFA graduate to be both acclaimed by literary critics for his first collection of poems and at the same time sell amazing poetry print-runs.

By the half of this chapter we shall therefore, in the context of substantial and relevant interferences between the realms of poetry and poetry criticism on the one hand and the one of rock culture on the other take the due opportunity to present the reader with our own triadic definition of the

term "rock poetry" and to focus during the remainder of the chapter on the part of rock poetry defined as poetry written by established poets on rock, hence literary poetry inspired by rock music very much in the way in which jazz related experiences inspire jazz poetry. It will be the right place to analyze Jim Elledge's anthologies of rock in contemporary poetry and launch into a close analysis of the poetries of David Wojahn, Robert Wrigley, Richard Speakes, David St. John, the case of Wojahn's rock sonnets requiring an analysis of possible relationships between rock and poetic forms with parallels to classics like the Shakespearian sonnets and to contemporary poetry subjects involving Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell. The amplitude which rock poetry is thus seen able to implicate shall take us to a discussion of a possible general quality called 'rock' that may be encountered in poetries of various cultures and times, as the seminal study of Sharon Hamilton on John Ashbery and Led Zeppelin should urge us to speculate, but by moving the area of discussion even beyond the boundaries of contemporary American poetry. A discussion involving again Shakespeare, Blake and Rimbaud, Clark Coolidge, Wojahn and Elledge again, even a few Romanian poets and most specifically and conclusively Gregory Corso (among other benefits, for the one involving differentiating accurately between rock and jazz poetry) shall help us move towards a definition of an aesthetic category of rock poetry involving thematically and technically circumscribed as well as attitude-related typical elements.

The third chapter shall correspond to the part of our definition regarding poetry written / published 'as poetry' by rock artists. I have chosen to focus on Morrison's poetry (the two thin collections published in his life time and, mainly, his bulky posthumous works) rather than his lyrics because the latter have been written about before (in literary criticism) and they are obviously more popular than the former. Besides, my opinion – which I shall also try to back up with academic arguments in this chapter – is that his major contribution to

contemporary poetry is in those writings (although there are also great accomplishments in his lyrics as well, and our analysis shall once in a while also switch to that part of his works) and I therefore find an excellent example and opportunity to make my point regarding the importance of such (unfortunately rather neglected) writings in contemporary poetry. Jim Morrison is also a very convenient example for this study since it is not only that his poetry brought him credit even with the literary world, but unlike Bob Dylan whose fame and stature as a poet are founded decisively on his lyrics, in the case of Morrison one can talk – and this chapter will hopefully prove it – about his world famous lyrics but at the same time and even more righteously about his great literary poetry, his poetry written as literature and not as rock performance destined wordings.

The cultural critique in *The Lords* shall lead us to an analysis of the social and segregational issues in Morrison and a number of close-reading parallels to an important contemporary poet – Baron Wormser – who shares such themes and in whose writings one can come across technical prosodic concerns (especially certain aspects related to the use of para-rhymes) that Morrison's posthumous poetry is also very rich in. Such close attention to technique shall also lead us to see how certain recurrent themes and motifs in Morrison's poetry are disseminated and rendered effective on the levels of diction and meter, mostly subjects related to shamanism, orphism and dionysism, elements of romanticism and early European modernism, form as both prosodic concern and poetical motif, and the poetic paradigm of the body / self / map / country / desert / and cosmos. Morrison's romantic seascapes shall be compared to the postmodernist ones of Jack Spicer, Nathaniel Tarn, and Gustaf Sobin. In terms of romanticism as such we shall draw a detailed parallel to *the* self-declared consistent romantic of contemporary poetry, Robert Duncan and draw a few conclusions about the poetries of both, underscoring the singularity of their stances and the specific way in which Morrison bypasses American poetic traditions Duncan was more

than fond of. Morrison's shamanism shall also implicate a discussion of Gary Snyder and Jerome Rothenberg which will have to clarify to what extent the bio-regionalist shamanism of Snyder and the "perfect translations" in Rothenberg's ethnopoetics are consonant or not to the ecstatically oracular, performance triggered and modernistically shaped shamanism of Morrison.

The Frank Zappa section shall correspond to the lyrics part of our triad, in which I want to depart from the ubiquitous 'Bob Dylan – the Beatles' obligatory material in writing on lyrics (so much the more as I will have treated them in the general view rock poetry chapter) and focus on a gigantesque-stature non-conformist in 20<sup>th</sup> century music and lyrics. I shall try to prove there how in the case of such a great artist, the 'modest' business of writing lyrics not only begets amazing pieces of poetry but actually puts forth an overwhelming oeuvre in which verse every now and then spontaneously flows into prose and even theater, thus proving how a 'minor' genre (rock lyrics) can cross the boundary to 'real' poetry as well as the boundaries between literary genres in general and hence considerably enrich the possibilities of contemporary poetry as such.

The hyperreality issue shall invite the one of self-referentiality and reflexivity in Zappa's lyrics and thus occasion some parallels to certain established contemporary poets such as Mark Strand, or, after tracing down the differentiating note of edgy critique in Zappa, West Coast poets like Kenneth Rexroth and Gary Snyder, the comparison to the latter occasioning a discussion of the social and political dimension in the poetries of them both in the wider context of politically strained verse in contemporary American letters. The harsh humor we shall find on the table of distinctive notes between Zappa and Snyder and other politically vocal poets shall require another discussion implicating salient figures in contemporary pinch-of-(at-times-grim)humor verse – Billy Collins, Charles Simic, Ronald Wallace, and Matthew Rohrer.

The conclusion of this chapter shall argue that although more

renowned, until now, for his extremely complex music and non-conformist attitudes, Zappa's lyrics are more than the absurdly funny words that have been enchanting and mesmerizing audiences for almost a half of a century, but an

amazing corpus of poetry and theater that establishes ways of expression and perspectives that would not be present in American verse and letters if it were not for him and his songs.

So it all started in the music, but then the muse smiled upon the poem.

*The thesis was defended in March 2008.*

## Book Review

### *New / Old Worlds: Spaces of Transition (A Collection of Essays)*

Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 2007.

Rodica Mihailă and Irina Grigorescu Pană, editors

**Remus Bejan**

Ovidius University – Constanța

As the French observer Alexis de Tocqueville in his famous book *Democracy in America* (1835) proposed, we study America “because it is America, and because it is more than America.” Firstly, because America has shown us much that we need to understand about modern or post-modern ideas processes, experience, the workings of modern society and history. Secondly, and this is another important reason for the growing interest in the United States, the strength and vigour of American culture. It was always a highly expressive and articulate culture. So was the hunger for self-definition, the exploration of sensations, ideals, principles, and American dreams. This process has become an object of attention and fascination. This is a nation in flux, remarkably mixed in peoples, culturally assimilative and plural and socially of huge variety. It is within such a context that Rodica Mihailă and Irina Grigorescu-Pană, the editors of the volume *New/Old Worlds: Spaces of Transition* (Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 2007), place the discussion of the forms in which the “New World” space communicates with the culturally fixed alterity of the “old World”.

The focus of the sections of this volume *Mapping Theory, New; Old World itineraries, Technologies of Representation, Negotiating Identities, Transitional Geographies, Romanian / America: Modes of Interchange* reflects the nuanced positioning of “America” as an articulate “Other” in relation to an Old World itself marked by a continuous process of redefinition.

Framed by diverse post-cold war spaces, the theories informing American cultural studies engage a constructive dialogue intensely intellectual and emotional (Rodica Mihailă). Exceptionalism and critical thinking (Jucan, Avădanei) could arguably be re-read in the contemporary globalized world as experiences of regeneration, while metaphors and modes of cultural hybridity alternately become the poles of an interior itinerary experienced by authors critics alike (Ciugureanu, Cuñtătru, Canănu), constructing postmodernist and feminist transnational transgressions (Vasilescu, Nicolaescu). America's place in the process of enchantment /deception played out against the European perception of world conquest (Ivana) is itself marked by inescapable doublings (Irimia). For all this, America remained a model for constitutional rights and personal freedom (Danko), a utopia responding to religious and moral values for the contemporary traveler in search of salvation (Paraschivescu). America also embodies versions of alienation, verging on the surreal future of waste, artifice and hypertrophied evolution (Stroe). America's self-perception after 9/11 demands authoritative new interlocutors and interrogates modes of resistance and subversion (Csernatoni).

The essays in the next section focus on the technologies of representation through which the New World is read or prophesized. Thus dystopian New and Old worlds are indicative of a space that traps contemporary subjects in new cyber-cultural models (Ardelean). The terms of identity are too interactive to protect a fixed sense of selfhood from the celebration of the virtual nomad performing the world scene as a changing, chameleonic website (Mihalache), attempts to escape the gaze and the power of media and ritualized cultures (Dragan, Rogoveanu), or from the violence and error that inscribe the void of a decentered authority (Visan & Visan). Other cultural frames interrogate modes of stability played out by the South set against the city (Dumbrava) and generate a post memory ethically marked by the rigors of a double consciousness (Precup). Complex transition from the religious to the secular generates fresh expectations in the “New Canaan” on the part of the Jewish immigrants (Mîndra), while modes of surviving marginality in a mainstream culture forge new identities at the intersection of race, history and memory (Mitrea, Maior). New transitional geographies become working notions for reading palimpsestically the new/old world margin that has absorbed and regenerated exemplary tales of migration (Tănăsescu) and which surfaces as a cosmopolitan Orient-Occident for which cosmopolitics outlive monologism (Spyra). Dominant contemporary American narratives waver between dissemination as an affirmation of polyphonic voices (Luca) and dispersion as a loss of New World dream imagery (Rădulescu). Reconfigurations of displacement



entail a “dissolution” (Schwab) that becomes an essential mode through which to plot journeying across/ old margins in an attempt to infinitely defer stagnation and to eventually restore in the imaginative register the initial American dream of wilderness (Mitocaru).

The essays in the last section foreground the ways in which concepts of America have inscribed Romanian culture, engaging a reflection on personal and national representation. The process is traced through representations of O'Neill's plays on Romanian stages (Bulz), the acts of reading and translating American poetry (Florea), or through Bellow's vision of the world behind the Iron Curtain (Olteanu).

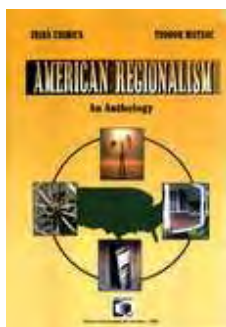
*New / Old Worlds: Spaces of Transition* bears testimony to the need of a continuous dialogue with America; it opens up a subject of great interest with more application and understanding than it has heretofore received here and presents a stimulating “Romanian face of America” that is worth reading with close attention and reflecting on.

## American Literature Regionally Reloaded

**Ioana Cistelean**

University of Oradea

Since the concept of generation, as far as literary movements are concerned, has already raised so many furious debates and controversies among writers and specialists all around, the *regional dimension* in organizing a literary anthology comes in handy and proves to be both necessary and trendy, with its refreshing and substantial perspectives on the dynamics of the literature nowadays. That's why the volume *American Regionalism: An Anthology* (Oradea: Editura Universităţii din Oradea, 2006), the vision of two articulate voices: Irina Chirica and Teodor Mateoc, is a solid material for the seminar activities, for all the interested students, but most of all an exigent and consistent re-evaluation of both notorious and less notorious American writers and their works.



Structured in four major chapters, each summing up four authors belonging to the region in question: *the WEST, the MIDWEST, NEW ENGLAND, and the SOUTH*, the book has a completely circular form and a rewarding proportion. The *Introduction* elaborates on the multiple connotations of the central term of the anthology, the region; the authors' inner strategy for their volume, the concept is clarified from the very beginning, starting with its basic denotative sense and adding progressively new meanings to it, all permanently related to the essence of the volume: the literary phenomenon. Thus, from geography through history and finally to literature, which is the very object of

the anthology, we are given the impression that everything is mentioned for a reason, that the progression is fluent and believable for the reader. The *Introduction* is most definitely linking various collateral geographic, historical and aesthetic elements to the issue of *regionalism*, transcending the word far beyond its initially supposed pretext value, into its rightful place, that of a living organism, applicable to the authors' strategy; it specifies the exact reasons for the present selection and it offers the background seen in its intrinsic dynamic and also the consequences of the stated generous approach.

*America has always been a land of diverse regions. At first, these were defined by natural barriers and boundaries, particularly massive mountain chains in East and West and vast prairies in the midland. To a degree, natural history inevitably shapes human history. (...)*

*Regional realism, as a literary movement, is sometimes designated "local color". (...)*

*Regional realism in the post-Civil War era, though sectional in focus, not only reflected national reunification but also contributed to it. That is, it reshaped the image of national identity by engendering a pride in unity by emphasizing regional diversity. [p. 7; 8; 9; 14]*

The strategy of introducing and presenting the chosen writer and his or her literary work is clearly-cut and only apparently obvious or soft, because under the umbrella of the so-called evident information regarding the writers and their stories, one can detect the well-hidden the mixture of both scholar/ academic texture and personal, original touch given to the discourse. The departure point in the selected writers' portrayals would be either the irony of their situation, or the immediate well-known aesthetic detail, but their depictions are always pointing out to the recurrent themes, the ups and downs and the paradoxes associated with their names and literary works. Both Irina Chirica and Teodor Mateoc seem to possess a certain taste for the controversial topics, for the misunderstandings implying the writers and their writings, both of them inspiringly trying to de-mystify, to re-invigorate, to re-dimension their figures in the fresh minds of their readers: "Aware as he was of his audience's expectations and interests, he couldn't help noticing, however, the evils that took root in the newly colonized territory. One constant theme is the denunciation of the influence civilization was having on the West" [p. 17]. Each story is accompanied by extended "hints" concerning its publication, its critical reception in time, the natural result being a coherent text-interpretation opened to further suggestions and future debates, in the spirit of the fashionable post-modernist spirit. The literary analyses proceed from identifying the obvious and end up in revealing the hidden, the obscure. That's why, once again, the anthology is a success and a valid construction. It's a pity that its two authors have not signed their names on the exact pages they wrote, but we forgive them for their rare sense of modesty.

**Norman Manea. Înaintea despărţirii: Convorbire cu Saul Bellow – Un proiect Words & Images. Trad. Nadina Vişan, Iaşi: Polirom, 2008.**

**Roxana Mihaela Mihele**

Babes-Bolyai University - Cluj-Napoca

This book represents a written transcript, initially published in the *Salmagundi* magazine, of an interview with Saul Bellow taken by Norman Manea in the larger framework of a series of interviews with various writers of Jewish extraction. These spiritual encounters, grouped under the heading of "Words & Images: the Jerusalem Literary Project," are meant to underline the multiple links between these writers' work and their Jewish identity. The designation of Norman Manea as the interviewer in Bellow's case stems both from the author's desire to have family. This represents for the writer the starting point of his integration into the American scene, his special concern with the sometimes conflicting, yet mutually enriching conditions of being both a Jew and an American.

The hardships of the immigrant life, stances of anti-Semitism, the rapidly moving acculturation process that Saul Bellow underwent represent the fertile sources of his literary work. His desire to be Americanized, his encounter with the American books, with various trends in world politics and culture (from Freud to Trotsky, from Kafka to Eliade), his friendship with the Partisan Review group, with Philip Roth, Delmore Schwartz, Isaac Rosenfeld, Ralph Ellison, and Allan Bloom will give Bellow's fiction that special taste of highly intellectual debates mixed with strikingly sensitive artistic descriptions of our contemporary society.

Triggered by Norman Manea's questions, Saul Bellow ponders on his special connections with his favorite books and characters (Augie March functions as a fictional alter-ego of his youth), on his choice between two possible ways of perceiving the world – that of Herzog, the intellectual, and that of Humboldt, the artist; on the fate of Europe torn apart by fascism and then by communism. The writer states his point of view on the fate of the state of Israel, on the difficulty of dealing with the Holocaust in his work, on the reception of his books (including the Nobel Prize he earned), on the way he faced aging and death.

Throughout the interview the reader is able to witness the story of a young Jewish boy who made America and writing his true home, who knew that choosing art in a very pragmatic society meant going against the grain, and who knew that in this battle his victory would be a small one. Just how small it was remains to be decided by each reader through the lecture of Bellow's books. Manea's interview just provides the reader with the portrait of the American author.

this kind of conversation with his friend and from N. Manea's interest in Bellow's life and work.

The topics discussed vary from Bellow's relationship with his family (parents and brothers) which reveals a man deeply concerned with his Jewish immigrant roots, to the influence that various U.S. cities and numerous friends from the American intellectual and artistic scene had on his work. Bellow's encounter as a lonely child on a hospital bed with the Christian Gospels is depicted against the background of his early Jewish education given by his

background of his early Jewish education given by his

## **CALLS FOR PAPERS**

### **"Ovid, Myth and (Literary) Exile"**

**Ovidius University - Constanța, Romania, September 10-12, 2009.**

For details, please contact Ludmila Martanovschi:  
[raas\\_list2008@yahoo.com](mailto:raas_list2008@yahoo.com)

### **"Forever Young? The Changing Images of America" (the biennial EAAS Conference)**

**UCD Clinton Institute for American Studies, Dublin, Ireland, March 26-29, 2010.**

<http://www.eaas.eu/newsletter/EAAS%20ASE%2061min.pdf>  
>, p.27

**January 31, 2009:** Deadline for submission of workshop and parallel lecture proposals to include a one-page abstract and a half-page c.v. of potential workshop chairs and parallel lecturers – with little or no formatting. Workshop chairs from the 2008 Oslo conference cannot be workshop chairs in Dublin. Please do not submit proposals for individual workshop papers at this time. Such propositions may be sent to the selected workshop chairs who will be announced in the May 2009 issue of the ASE Newsletter.

Please send all information via e-mail to the EAAS Secretary General, Jenel Virden, at <[virden@eaas.eu](mailto:virden@eaas.eu)>.

## **US Embassy Events/Notices**

**Anca Brezean**

Reference Specialist

U.S. Embassy - Information Resource Center - Bucharest, Romania

**BEST WEBSITES OF THE MONTH**



<p>1. <b>OFFSTATS: Official Statistics on the Web</b> URL: <a href="http://www.offstats.auckland.ac.nz/">http://www.offstats.auckland.ac.nz/</a> This site offers an invaluable, centralized collection of links to free, official statistics resources. Statistics sites abound, but none are as comprehensive, useful, and well maintained as the <b>University of Auckland Library's OFFSTATS</b>. The site arranges statistics sources alphabetically in three sections – by country, region, and subject – with pull-down boxes for easy selection. Presentation is very simple, with a set of sources listed for each country, region, or topic, including the publisher name or acronym when relevant. The site's true value is evident not in the links to standard NGO sources, such as the <b>UN's InfoNation database</b>, but in the local and subject-oriented links, which represent sometimes obscure sources and include even small countries. These sources often provide much deeper information than do the large database aggregators. As a listing of genuinely authoritative statistics sources, <b>OFFSTATS</b> has no parallel. It is essential for all levels.</p>	<p>2. <b>UsingEnglish.com: Resources for English as a Second Language</b> URL: <a href="http://www.usingenglish.com/">http://www.usingenglish.com/</a> Started in 2002, this highly developed Web site devoted to ESL teaching and learning includes several varieties of English, but British English dominates. Users have the option of registering (for free), but lots of information is available without registering. The site includes a reference section – offering grammar, idioms, and phrasal and irregular verbs – and hundreds of good online ESL quizzes and worksheets. Other content includes games, word lists, forums, and a text content analysis tool that analyzes composition pieces up to 500 KB. This site can be used by self-motivated students for additional language practice or by teachers searching for additional teaching resources. One of the most developed ESL Web sites available today, this site surpasses costly ESL products that are on the market. It is recommended for users at all level.</p>	
<p>3. <b>InteliHealth</b> URL: <a href="http://www.intelihealth.com/">http://www.intelihealth.com/</a> <b>Aetna's InteliHealth</b>, established in 1996, has partnered with the <b>Harvard Medical School</b> and the <b>Columbia University College of Dental Medicine</b> to provide quality consumer health information. The site contains no advertisements for medical products, devices, or services. An editorial board of medical professionals reviews all material added to the site, and sources of information are clearly marked. Articles on health topics are updated at least once every two years, and the revision date is displayed. Special features include health news updates, free e-mail subscriptions on health issues, interactive tools, commentaries on a variety of health topics, and an <b>Ask the Expert</b> option that gives consumers the opportunity to submit health questions to be answered by health professionals. This excellent site is comparable to others that provide authoritative consumer health information. It is highly recommended for all levels.</p>	<p>4. <b>EduHound: Everything for Education K-12</b> URL: <a href="http://www.eduhound.com/">http://www.eduhound.com/</a> <b>EduHound</b> is valuable for students, teachers, parents, and anyone interested in a comprehensive menu of educational resources. President and creator Judith Rajala is a former K-12 educator, and she mines the Internet for classroom resources and tools to enhance learning. The site includes links to resources for most subjects taught in the K-12 curriculum and also provides links to community resources, grants and funding, and professional sites for teachers. Users can browse by subject categories, by lesson plans, or "by site sets", which are targeted resource collections on specific topics. Other resources available on this site include a collection of free clip art, worksheets, and other classroom design resources. Users are encouraged to submit links to resources they have found worthwhile. He site is highly recommended for anyone interested in k-12 educational resources.</p>	<p>5. <b>American Women through Time</b> URL: <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/~kmiddlet/history/women/wh-timeline.html">http://www.mtsu.edu/~kmiddlet/history/women/wh-timeline.html</a> This useful Internet resource, free to the public on <b>Middle Tennessee State University's</b> Internet server, is divided into four main components: Beginnings, 19<sup>th</sup> Century, 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and Other Timelines. The Web site primarily serves undergraduate students, though it is an outstanding resource for elementary through high school teachers and their students. The site itself predominantly connects researchers with other Web sites. Each section contains a useful bibliography of print publications. The comprehensive design is well thought out, and although some sections are stronger than others, the merit of this site as a source for historical research is notable. Overall, the organization is quite logical. Additionally, this Internet resource is easy to navigate, and its search engine is most efficient. The site is highly recommended for all libraries and levels.</p>

## 2008 / 2009 Fulbright Scholars

### 1. Dr. Duncan MCDUGALL

Arrival: October 08 – 9 months

Topic: Global Business

Romanian University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj

Home University: Plymouth State College of the University System of New Hampshire

### 2. Dr. Liliana MITROVICI

Arrival: October 08 – 9 months

Topic: Saints Cosma & Damian in Romanian Folk Literature and Painting

Romanian University: Ovidius University, Constanta

Home University: independent scholar

### 3. Mr. Kerry GLAMSCH

Arrival: October 08 – 9 months

Topic: American Culture and Film

Romanian University: University of Craiova, Craiova

Home Institution: University of South Florida, Tampa

### 4. Dr. Reza NEKOVEI

Arrival: October 08 – 9 months

Topic: Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

Romanian University: Bucharest Polytechnic University, Bucharest

Home University: Texas A&M University--Kingsville

### 5. Dr. Nancy SHERMAN

Arrival: September 2008 – 5 months

Topic: Education, career counseling

Romanian University: University of Oradea, Oradea  
Home University: Bradley University, IL

6. Dr. Adalbert GRUNFELD  
Arrival: February 09 – 5 months  
Topic: U.S. Social and Political History  
Romanian University: University of the West, Timisoara  
Home University: SUNY-Empire State College, NY

7. Dr. Anthony O'KEEFFE  
Arrival: February 2009 – 5 months  
Topic: American Literature, Identity, Self and Culture  
Romanian University: University of the West, Timisoara  
Home University: Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY

8. Dr. Alan LORD  
Arrival: February 2009 – 5 months  
Topic: Information Systems Auditing and Control: Auditor  
Independence Issues  
Romanian University: Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest  
Home University: Bowling Green State Univ., OH

9. Dr. Kathryn OBENCHAIN  
Arrival: February 2009 – 5 months  
Topic: Education, Democratic citizenship education  
Romanian University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
Home University: University of Nevada--Reno

#### **2008/09 FULBRIGHT JUNIORS**

– as a rule, arrivals in late September, for a total of 9 months –

1. Ms. Laura NUGENT  
Topic: Theology & Religion  
Romanian University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj  
Home University: Washington and Lee Univ., VA

2. Mr. Charles HARRIS  
Topic: Teaching English as a Foreign Language & Advising  
Romanian University: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu  
Home University: Southern Illinois Univ., Carbondale

3. Mr. Jeremy HAWKINS  
Topic: Teaching English as A Foreign Language & Advising  
Romanian University: Transylvania University, Brasov  
Home University: Univ. of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL

4. Ms. Ana CONSTANTINESCU  
Topic: Art and Architectural History  
Romanian University: University of Bucharest, Bucharest  
Home University: Lake Forest College, IL

5. Ms. Rachel RENZ  
Topic: History, Cultural and Intellectual  
Romanian University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca  
Home University: Oglethorpe University, GA

6. Mr. Andrew GUESS  
Arrival: January 2009, 9 months  
Topic: Political Science, Misc. (journalism)  
Romanian University: University of Bucharest  
Home University: Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY

7. Ms. Kimberly GITTLESON  
Topic: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising  
Romanian University: A.I.I. Cuza University of Iasi  
Home University: Harvard University, MA, Undergraduate

8. Ms. Emily DARRELL  
Topic: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising  
Romanian University: University of Bucharest, American Studies  
Home University: University of Montana

9. Mr. Joshua LIPKOWITZ  
Arrival: September 08 – 7 months  
Topic: Ecology  
Romanian University: University of Bucharest  
Home University: Pitzer College, CA

10. Dr. David BANVILLE  
Topic: Education  
Romanian University: A.I.I. Cuza University, Iasi  
Home University: American University, Washington, DC

#### **FULBRIGHT HAYS:**

Mr. Michael THORNE  
Arrival: January 2009  
Topic: History (Roma, Holocaust)  
Romanian University: University of Bucharest  
Home University: Indiana University, Bloomington

## **RAAS Officers & EAAS**

### **RAAS**

President: **Adina Ciugureanu**, Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanta, Aleea Universitatii 1, Campus, Constanta; <aciugureanu@univ-ovidius.ro>

Vice President: **Roxana Oltean**, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of English, University of Bucharest, 7-13 Pitar Mos Street, 70151 Bucharest; <roxana.oltean@txmail.ro>

Secretary: **Ileana Marin**, Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanta, Aleea Universitatii 1, Campus, Constanta; <solonmarin@hotmail.com>

Treasurer: **Ludmila Martanovschi**, Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanta, Aleea Universitatii 1, Campus, Constanta; <ludmila\_martan@yahoo.com>

Newsletter editor: **Ileana Chiru-Jitaru**, Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanta, Aleea Universitatii 1, Campus, Constanta; <ileanajitaru@gmail.com>

### **European Association for American Studies (EAAS)**

<<http://www.eaas.eu>>

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#### EAAS Board

**Dear Colleagues,**

**With the biennial RAAS Conference due to take place in 2008, our forum hasn't met this year. Yet, through the RAAS publications and especially through the e-network, the RAAS Board tried to keep you all informed about our members' activities and initiatives and to bring to your attention opportunities to publish articles and reviews, to apply for various grants and programs and to attend national and international conferences.**

This issue of the Newsletter will hopefully give you an idea about current activities in various parts of Romania. Within the framework provided by the Association, a challenging exchange of ideas and

In other words, we should use all the avenues opened to us by the Association so as to maximize our American Studies activities and at the same time make them/us known nationally and internationally.

As in the past, the RAAS has received constant and generous support from the U.S. Embassy and the Fulbright Commission, for which we are extremely grateful.

We expect a large number of our members to participate in the biennial RAAS-Fulbright Conference "The Sense of America: Histories into Text" (May 22-24, 2008). Though May is a very busy month as far as conferences go, the date was selected in view of a wide attendance by both Romanian and American scholars. As in the past, the association will try to

# Letter from the President

experiences between American Studies programs across the country, has proved instrumental in the elaboration of new two-year graduate programs. Among other achievements I want to stress the initiative of the American Cultural Center and our Bucharest branch to organize student conferences on American topics. Two such conferences were hosted by the American Cultural Center in Bucharest ("Benjamin Franklin", March 2006; "400 Years of New World-Old World Exchanges", April 2007). Taking the lead, it is possible to organize similar conferences at the American Corners opened now in all the main cities of Romania. Since I've mentioned the American Corners I want to remind you of the rich and up-to-date resources of most of these centers. The American Corner in Cluj, for instance, has a remarkable collection of contemporary literature and recent cultural studies. We should take full advantage of such resources and the possibility of making suggestions for future book orders. Similarly, our members should try to benefit from the invitations sent to RAAS, asking for contributions to such international journals as The Journal of Transatlantic Studies, The European Journal of American Studies, AMERICANA- E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary.

make participation an affordable and enjoyable cultural and scholarly event.

The other important American Studies event of the next year is the EAAS biennial Conference in Oslo, 9-12 May, 2008. The Conference program has been published in the May issue of the online ASE Newsletter. Don't hesitate to submit paper proposals and don't be discouraged by the difficulty of getting funded – it's good to remember that six RAAS members participated in the previous EAAS Conference in Nicosia! I am glad to inform you that our colleague, Michaela Mudure, will co-chair one of the sessions; her proposal was selected from among a great number of proposals.

The last set of issues I want to share with you have been raised at the EAAS Board meeting in Wittenberg, 12-15 April, 2007. The EAAS has diversified and intensified its efforts of making the European contributions to American Studies better known across national borders and of providing better opportunities for establishing productive relations among European Americanists. The online EJAS (European Journal of American Studies) and the EAAS Book Reviews Section welcome more contributions from EAAS members. The EAAS website hosts "International Networks"

*continued in p. 3*

## 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: the American Studies

**Do you consider yourself prejudiced? Well, everyone is prejudiced, to a certain extent and from a certain point of view. I myself was prejudiced against America and Americans and this happened merely because media sold me stereotypes, big, fat stereotypes of people and not real humans. Usually non-American people tend to glide between two stereotypical perspectives of America: either the sunny, glamorous land of all possibilities, where anyone can fulfill his/her rags-to-riches dream, or the place without any cultural background, with a bloody and miserable history, the place where everything produced is superficial and worthless and the place where people are heavily manipulated under the rule of a challengeable president. The truth is obviously somewhere in between and none of the above, as all truths are somewhat elusive.**

As a freshman a student in the American Studies Program at the School of Foreign Languages in Bucharest, I have begun to grasp certain notions of Americanism in such a way that their ideologies are much clearer to me now. I have learned that for every result there is a cause, that people are such multi-faceted entities, that a country has so much to offer if you open your eyes and take everything in with a clear mind. What I have grown to see as most important about Americans is their diversity. There are surely negative examples, media excess, manipulation etc., but then, did you have a good look at those people who fight against the regime, the preconceptions, the discrimination and the racism? Did you listen to people like Martin Luther King, jazz music or read authors like Kurt Vonnegut, because, if you didn't, you don't know everything about America.

The reason why I applied for the American Studies Department was that my English teacher advised me that the professors are much more open-minded here and the courses are much more diverse than in any other place. I knew nothing about the program, about the curriculum or the teachers. The truth is that I wanted to study British literature. And there I was, in the application room, with a huge list in front of me and asked to select the languages I wanted to study. So I ticked American Studies more out of instinct. After one year of study, it turns out that the professors are indeed more open-minded, having so many ideas to share with us, eager to materialize so many initiatives, and, after all, eager to listen to us and exchange thoughts with us. Then, the curriculum at American Studies is much more diverse than I expected, with courses ranging from politics, common law, literature, art (film, visual arts, etc.), anthropology and many more. This curriculum is constructed in order to create a full perspective of the American society and the American way of life. Taking into consideration the fact that The United States have set important trends in many social areas for a century now, I believe that to understand American institutions and American social entities means to understand many American

imports in any country of the world, such as the concept of corporation, the Hollywood industry, pop culture and so on.

Being a part of this "American" group, I was rather shocked to notice that my ideas really matter for someone, that people are there to listen to you and to hold a conversation inter pares. The papers, when presented, were fully read, discussed upon later and marked appropriately. This may be no reason of wonder for many foreign students, but it is to me, because I was usually part of automatic and superficial systems of education. Moreover, our professors have always offered us such a rich material for discussion, ranging from films, to articles, to books, not to mention that we were granted access to an American library that holds a multitude of titles. Being given such a range of opportunities and feedback, we obviously responded with a positive reaction, even those of us who feel no special calling for humanistic studies.

When it comes to extra-curricular activities, we were almost bombed with so many conferences, parties and exhibits that we barely kept pace with them. Maybe the most flabbergasting was our conference with Francis Ford Coppola, who turned out to be a very normal man, with a normal family and a normal life, but such an open man for his widely acknowledged fame as a director. Then, we had a student conference, where, after hearing a Native American professor speak, many of us 1st year students held our first public presentation, a very special and frightening experience. We've also had videoconferences with Dr. Henrietta Mann, a Native American Professor at Montana State University. All these were hosted by the American Cultural Center that acted like our surrogate mother each time it organized some American-based project. Furthermore, each American or international celebration had a party of its own, with theme-based food and drinks and films. I also won't forget to mention an exhibit of our own with Native American poetry and posters designed by us. Last but not least, our professors came up with the idea to organize an Earth Day action recently, when students and teachers tried to collect the garbage that adorns our lovely parks.

But, hey! Let's forget about everything, all the studies, all the extra-curricular activities, all the stuff that will one day add up in our CVs, all the things we were taught, all the knowledge we acquired. This should not turn into a propaganda article for the American Studies Department, although all the praise is deserved. The fact is that what still keeps me standing here is that I am treated with interest, that I am understood and helped and praised as well. Maybe what I feel is just a selfish like for this group. But the best part is that I've noticed in one of our meetings, that the professors felt as happy and as fulfilled for our success as we did. And it was a sincere happiness, which made me proud to have them as my professors. Maybe this is what still keeps me standing here: pure human connections.

*Alexandra Magearu  
(1st year student)*

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

# Department in Bucharest

**I don't think any of us knew what to expect of our American Studies minor in the fall of 2003. At least, I didn't. I applied here because it seemed to be the most appealing of all the other options for a minor. Sure, we all had to decide whether to choose American Studies over the possibility of taking a second language, but I think what attracted us here was the "promise" of it.**

To be honest, in one way or another we all wanted to be a part of something special, and I think that defined us as freshmen. Which is not to say that, in retrospect, we would envision ourselves as the ideal, eager students that every teacher could hope for. I mean, we could say that, but let's not embarrass ourselves, our reputation precedes us. Someone once said there's a reason why it's called the student body – because the head is now here to be found. We wanted to stand out of the crowd, for sure, but like any freshmen "freshly" discharged from the battle of admission, we couldn't wait to find a cozy little spot where we could put our feet up and enjoy the ride. We would soon find out, of course, that room 4 was not that place. Not for lack of coziness, but because, from my point of view, you missed out on a lot of good stuff that made for a very fun ride, one that lasted for four enjoyable years.

Of course, like I said, it wasn't what we expected. The film studies class wasn't exactly popcorn and HD. Instead we learned to actually think deeper into films and understand cinema as an art form that expresses as much through technique as it does through content. It was a heck of a start, while also opening the way for new vistas that were broader than we had imagined in terms of understanding and exposure to culture through education. I know that this is what education is mainly supposed to do, but... we've all been there. It was the passion and the inspiration of our young teachers, and I'm referring to all of them now because I believe

youth has little to do with biology, that brought so much fun and interest into the classroom. Even the grueling subject of American politics was patiently spoon-fed even to the most bohemian in our ranks, describing in detail how judicial cases can make for the one of the most interesting approaches to understanding the stages of a nation's history, and making a particular political history teacher's courses to be the most sought after by my colleagues come fourth year.

The Visual Arts course that we literally crashed into in our second semester had all the impact of a happening and all the deliciousness of an installation, while the African-American course that followed shined through our exposure to the underrated beauty of a Langston Hughes poem or the elegance of a turn of the phrase by Maya Angelou.

Cultural Anthropology was, honestly speaking, an arduous undertaking, that was nevertheless worth going through, for the worth of its information and the engaging presentation which, although painfully rigorous at times, was exceedingly worthy of receiving a big bunch of yams come semester's end. I am of course assured that every anthropologically astute colleague of mine will know what I'm talking about.

Though covering every course we took is not possible here, they all contributed to a greater degree of understanding so much more about the mechanisms and particularities of the American presence and influence that we are all aware of in our everyday lives. The benefit of lectures from American teachers was of course a very welcomed endeavor in that sense, as was the increasingly well stocked library and welcoming atmosphere in the American Studies Reading Room.

By the end of the fourth year I would have to say it really wasn't like school at all. It was, simply put, a great, useful, enjoyable experience. And there was not a single moment that it was not totally cool.

*Eliza Ghibulescu  
(4th year)*

*continued from p. 1*

such as "American Studies Network" and "The Postgraduate Forum", which encourage links between various national associations and joint national doctoral caucuses, respectively. (The RAAS representative in the Postgraduate Forum is Dana Mihailescu, [dmihailes@yahoo.com](mailto:dmihailes@yahoo.com)).

The growth of American Studies in Europe, especially in the former communist countries, has been confirmed once more by the unanimous vote of the EAAS Board in favor of Bulgaria's application for membership. Thus the Bulgarian American Studies Association (BASA) has become the 23rd national/regional member of the EAAS.

BASA's membership has reactivated an older debate over the need for more regional, joint associations within EAAS after the model offered by the Scandinavian Association for American Studies, the Spanish and Portuguese Association and the Czech and Slovak Association. These joint associations are represented on the EAAS board by one member, each national association taking turns.

Pointing out that the question of joint associations is a structural issue that has to be addressed sooner or later, EAAS president, Marc Chenetier, suggested that Romania and Bulgaria, as countries accepted in the EU together, form such a joint association, but the suggestion was dropped for the time being, when the board decided that each national association should first ask its members' opinion about the best solution for the future of EAAS membership. The question of joint/regional associations will be raised again in the next EAAS board meeting in Oslo. In the meantime, the RAAS board will circulate a questionnaire on this subject which needs to be answered by all our members.

The EAAS board also chose Dublin and Halle to be the Conference venues for 2010 and 2012.

Urging you again to send us your updated addresses so as to benefit from all the announcements and the information we share with all our members, on behalf of our board I wish you all a well deserved summer vacation after the ordeal of the exams is over.

*Warm regards,  
Rodica Mibăilă,  
RAAS President*



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

# U.S. Embassy Events



## U.S. Embassy Black History Month, February 2007

Originally established as Negro History Week in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson, a noted African-American author and scholar, this event evolved into the establishment of February as "Black History Month" in 1976. The goal of Black History Month is to increase awareness of the terrible consequences of discrimination and acknowledge the strength and character of the black Americans who overcame those obstacles in order to accomplish great things.

During Black History Month, the struggles and accomplishments of black Americans are recognized and special attention is given to their remarkable contributions to American history and culture.

The American Embassy celebrated Black History Month with a number of public lectures and other programs, including a week-long film festival for over 300 students from local high schools. After a brief introduction, the students participated in a lively discussion on the parallels between the treatment of African-Americans and the treatment of Roma. Students then watched a film, selected by their teachers, that illustrates the spirit of Black History Month. The films shown during the week were *Glory*, *Finding Forrester*, *Mississippi Burning*, and *The Color Purple*.

## The Opening of American Corner, Bucharest, March 2007

Under an agreement with the U.S. Embassy in Romania, the Pedagogical Library has set aside one of its beautiful rooms to house a collection of books, videos, CDs and DVDs and other materials about the United States donated by the Embassy. The donation also includes furniture, computers and other audiovisual equipment.

This collection will be managed by a professional librarian provided by the Library, and will be accessible to the public during regular business hours. A wide variety of materials is made available here, states Ambassador Taubman in his opening speech, "from basic reference collections to great works of American literature, from books about baseball to documentaries about American jazz. There is, we hope, something here for every interest."

This agreement, His Excellency added, is part of an important new library program. "Starting in 2005, we began establishing partnerships with libraries around Romania to set aside rooms for American Corners collections of American materials and audiovisual equipment. Since then, we have opened Corners in Bacau, Baia Mare, Cluj-Napoca, Constanta, Craiova, Iasi and Timisoara. Each of these Corners have become important centers for American culture, hosting programs and providing information to interested Romanians of all ages."

Bucharest is the eighth Corner, completing a plan to make American library resources available throughout the country. America, concluded Ambassador



Taubman, "stands ready to continue to help Romania, one of our closest friends and partners. This is why we are here today. We are here to help invest in Romania's future, by investing in its people through one of its most democratic institutions, the public library."

## Landmarks of New York Exhibit

Bucharest City Museum,  
March 20, 2007



The exhibit Landmarks of New York was one of a series of cultural events dedicated to celebrating New York in Bucharest. Ambassador Nicholas Taubman, opening this event, stated that New York - as "America's most important city, its cultural capital, an economic giant and the first stop for many foreigners who come to the United States" - also "offers a lesson on historic preservation, one that perhaps has some meaning for Bucharest". This exhibit was organized "to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the enactment of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Law. Since its passage in 1965, New York has been in the forefront of what has become an established worldwide historic preservation movement. In New York, this law protects nearly 23,000 structures - from parks and individual trees, to piers and bridges, cemeteries and archeological sites, as well as theatres, factories, museums and forts", added His Excellency Ambassador Nicholas Taubman, emphasizing that the exhibition is meant to celebrate the strong ties between Bucharest and New York, be they through family, business, education or culture.

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

## 2007/08 FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS

### 1. Dr. Robert Eugene ROEMER

**Arrival:** October 07 – 9 months

**Topic:** Education, Multiculturalism, and Democracy

**Romanian University:** University of Bucharest

**Home University:** Loyola University Chicago, IL

### 2. Dr. Domnica Vera-Maria RADULESCU

**Arrival:** October 07 – 5 months

**Topic:** Theater and Gender - Theoretical, Performative, and Historical Perspectives; Women in Contemporary Romanian Theater

**Romanian University:** Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj

**Home University:** Washington and Lee University, VA

### 3. Ms. Rhoda Leslie LIPTON

**Arrival:** February 08 – 5 months

**Topic:** Broadcast Journalism: Reporting, Images, Free Press & Curriculum Development

**Romanian University:** Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj

**Home Institution:** Columbia University, NY

### 4. Dr. Carolyn Marcia KEELER

**Arrival:** February 08 – 5 months

**Topic:** Cultural Issues in Teaching and Learning: Teaching methods, curriculum, and assessment that promote an inclusive, culturally responsive environment; Leadership in Romanian and American schools: A cross-cultural view

**Romanian University:** University Ovidius of Constanta

**Home University:** University of Idaho

### 5. Dr. George Martin IZZO

**Arrival:** October 2007 – 9 months

**Topic:** Experiential Marketing: Enhancing Romanian Students Learning Experience; A Comparative Assessment

of Marketing

Curricula in Romania and the United States

**Romanian University:** Al.I Cuza University of Iasi

**Home University:** North Georgia College and State University

### 6. Dr. Robert Todd IVES

**Arrival:** February 2008 – 5 months

**Topic:** Special Education (SPED) teaching and research methods; SPED development in Romania

**Romanian University:** Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj

**Home University:** University of Nevada – Reno

### 7. Dr. Sanda CLEJAN

**Arrival:** Oct. 2007 – 5 months

**Topic:** Design, Promotion, Implementation and Management of Grants and Technology Transfer

**Romanian University:** Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest

**Home University:** Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

### 8. Dr. Mark Christopher ALLISTER

**Arrival:** February 2008 – 5 months

**Topic:** Teaching American Studies in Romania: environmental literature, autobiography, American popular culture

**Romanian University:** University of Bucharest

**Home University:** St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN

### 9. Dr. Christopher Scot BAKKEN

**Arrival:** February 2008 – 5 months

**Topic:** Modern Poetry; Poetry in Translation; American Literature; Caribbean Literature

**Romanian University:** University of Bucharest

**Home University:** Allegheny College, Meadville, PA

## 2007/08 FULBRIGHT JUNIORS

*arrivals in late September, for a total of 9 months*

### 1. Ms Noushan NOUREDDINI

**Topic:** Political Science, Misc.

**Romanian University:** Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj

**Home University:** University of Nebraska, Lincoln

### 3. Mr. David Perry JESSE

**Topic:** Sociology, Misc.

**Romanian University:** University of Bucharest

**Home University:** Iowa State University

### 5. Ms Meghan A. MYERS

**Topic:** Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

**Romanian University:** unassigned  
**Home University:** George Washington University graduate

### 2. Ms Cristina BEJAN

**Topic:** Cultural/Intellectual History

**Romanian University:** University of Bucharest

**Home University:** Northwestern University

### 4. Ms Neah L. MONTEIRO

**Topic:** Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

**Romanian University:** unassigned  
**Home University:** College of William & Mary, VA

### 6. Ms. Alyssa B. CWANGER

**Topic:** Photography

**Romanian University:** University of Bucharest

**Home University:** University of Pittsburgh, PA

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

## American Corner

**CONSTANȚA –  
SPRING 2007**

The American Studies Program at Ovidius University – Constanța has benefited from the support of the American Corner on campus since the center was inaugurated over a year ago. The spring joint programs including lectures, screenings and concerts offered American Studies students as well as other participants the chance to broaden their knowledge of the United States.

The diversity of topics and insights which the attendees had access to is illustrated by some of the most notable speakers: Robert Tate, Vice Consul of the U.S. Embassy, who presented the most significant trends in American music and played several tunes on his guitar in March or Emery P. Dalesio, journalist and Fulbright professor, who introduced the audience to the latest news by giving a talk entitled "Changes Confronting American Politics, Businesses and Media in 2007" in April.

During the same spring semester, the "Literature and Cinema" screenings at the American Corner included films based on classics by John Steinbeck or Tennessee Williams and directed by Elia Kazan or John Ford. The second year students in American Studies who studied the texts for their Twentieth Century Literature course and developed film analyses under my guidance confirmed that the dialogue between literature and cinema is as enlightening as the dialogue between the American culture and its Romanian reception.

The interest in old films was surpassed by the warmth with which the academic community and the wider audience alike received the American Corner concerts scheduled in Constanța in May. Both the music of the United States Army Europe Band conducted by Major Andrew J. Esch and the interactive art performance of the ICIA Ensemble directed by composer Dinu Ghezzo represented initiations into the American experience. Whether listening to a Dixieland selection by the former or a sequence combining music, video art and

dance improvisations by the latter, the participant was exposed to genuinely American traditions and experiments.

Beyond promoting such events, the American Corner provides all those involved in American Studies with a most valuable permanent book collection that has been substantially increased this spring. A friend and collaborator of the English Department at Ovidius University for a long time, John Quinn generously donated over 2600 volumes that glow on the shelves awaiting their readers. One can only hope that the former owner of these books will as generously lend some of his unremitting love for literature to the American Corner's visitors.



On the occasion of the American Corner's first anniversary on May 17th the center's coordinators, graduate students Senia Babaiani and Anca Vasiliu, screened a filmed interview with Francis Ford Coppola. As the director talked about his coming to Romania to film Mircea Eliade's "Youth without Youth", he unveiled the most surprising circumstances that advanced transatlantic relations in his case and seemed to inadvertently prophesize most surprising transatlantic relations that the American Studies Program will initiate at the American Corner Constanța in the future.

Ludmila Martanovschi

**Marius Jucan.**  
**"Măștile libertății. America**  
**în scrisorile lui Thomas**  
**Jefferson"**

**Cluj: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2007.**

The volume is not attempting a biography of Thomas Jefferson; although a biographical thread can be read between the lines; the interpretation of Thomas Jefferson's letters



focuses on a portrait of America in its beginnings, from the perspective of one of its "authors", whose renown has never stopped being admired, contested, but constantly researched. Thomas Jefferson's letters belong to a time that is unique through its aspirations and contradictions, the 18th century, the constant witness to the question of liberty. By emphasizing the connection with, and departure from Tradition that the Enlightenment brings about, Marius Jucan considered that the term "mask" might better underline the pragmatic understanding of freedom, thus suggesting the metamorphoses of religious, political, economical identity, not least the individual's racial identity and that of the American community at a given time. Without attempting a definitive biography of Jefferson's life and activities, without attempting to exploit the romantic aura of an exceptional personality in relation to the "exceptional" destiny of a nation, Marius Jucan is in fact looking for new "windows" into a plurivalent experience of modernity, the birth of a society which incorporated the symbols of liberalism and democracy. *Măștile libertății* brings proof of a serious and well-argued reading of the essential contribution by one of the founders of the American cultural model.

*Marius Jucan is Programs Director with the American Studies Department at "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj. He is the author of numerous articles and books.*

## 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 Participation



## The Lure of a Heidelberg Spring, May 16-20 2007

Organized by the Center for American Studies at the University of Heidelberg, the 4th HCA Spring Academy well deserves the title of this year's major event for young scholars in the field; all this because it was an intense academic forum for 19 international PhD candidates meeting to discuss their dissertation projects in diverse areas of American Studies.

In keeping with the HCA official mission, to foster interdisciplinarity and intercultural exchange across the Atlantic, the 2007 conference lived up to the expectations given the varied backgrounds of the participants (representing 11 countries – Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Germany, Poland, Romania, Tunisia, the UK, the US) and the diverse topics of research that were broached, ranging from US history and administration policies to politics, literary, ethnic, race and gender studies.

The five days of the conference comprised 10 panels, 4 lectures and outside informal meetings to wind it up. Henceforth sprang the unique character of the scholarly event – plenty of time for in-depth analysis of each presented project by contrast to the usual squeezed schedule of most conferences. You could certainly feel that considering the limited number of participants and the generous time allotted to each speaker – 20 min-

utes for presenting the project and 40 minutes for follow-up discussions and questions.

The initial boost for dialogue was given by "Ms. Spring Academy", Professor Dorothea Fischer-Hornung whose inaugural lecture, "What Is/Are American Studies?", was a survey of the field's history with emphasis on its current challenges. Then, our specific interests were spiced with Professor Nancy Bunge's inspiring lecture about "Writing the American Dream" – an analysis of the patterns behind creative writing programs in the U.S. that suggest a link between American writing and culture. Moving from literature to the field of history, Professor Mary O. Furner from the University of California at Santa Barbara ("the Professional" as we have named her) offered a fascinating talk on the role played by the failure of expectations throughout American history. Finally, Professor Jemerli Suri from the University of Wisconsin honored us with a preview of his new book, scheduled for publication on June 1, 2007 and entitled *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*.

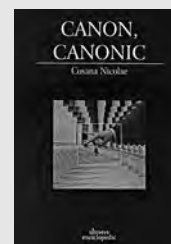
The obvious benefit of these seminal presentations, comments and brainstorming was cross-disciplinary and intercultural exchange. At the end of our stay, we all decided to create a network for young researchers in which learning from the others is to become the keyword.

To be added, the venue of the conference also had a major contribution to its complete success: the Old City of Heidelberg is simply superb and the visit to Heidelberg Castle practically left us speechless. I could not end without mentioning the unexpected role of the sponsor in creating a very closely-knit community among us all as "Deere Friends" (sic!). I really enjoyed my stay in Heidelberg and sincerely hope that other RAAS PhD candidates in American Studies will send their applications for the 2008 Spring Academy and get the chance to feel the Heidelberg experience.

Dana Mihăilescu,  
University of Bucharest

**Cosana Nicolae.**  
**"Canon, canonic. Mutații  
valorice în literatura  
americană contemporană"**  
București: Univers Enciclopedic, 2006

Winner of the Debut Award of Romania Liberă and one of the five nominees for the Observatorul Cultural Awards, *Canon, Canonic* is an



extensive critical analysis of the concept, evolution, usage and use of these terms. Starting with a history of the terms and on to their evolution, into the present-day usage of the term "canon" in American academia, Cosana Nicolae's book moves quickly into a discussion of the social, political and cultural context underlying the formation of an American canon, especially in the second part of the 20th century. The third part of the book probes into the conflict between a monocanonical conservative American right and the anti-canonical left, then the author opens the doors to the most interesting chapter of the book. This fourth chapter debates the undermining of the dominant canon in various ways and shapes, from the multicultural to the feminist canon, from the ethnic canon to the homocanon, deriving from the theoretical issue of minor vs. major literature, where maybe one of the most interesting topics of the book is touched upon: what makes minor literature minor?

*Canon, canonic* closes with a chapter discussing the academic canon, and concludes that the American canon has moved from an "author-centered" to an "issue-centered" canon, whose investigation is fundamental to understanding the intellectual chronotopes and politics of the United States. The book is an extremely useful and intelligent tool, supplying immense quantities of information as well as a well structured and supported argumentation, a critical endeavor that is bound to leave an impression.

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

# Calls for Papers

## EAAS 2008 Conference Theme

**"E Pluribus Unum"  
or "E Pluribus Plura"?**

**Oslo, Norway, 9-12 May 2008**

The motto "E Pluribus Unum" mostly assumes an institutional and political will. But, from all historical data and possibly even more from contemporary dissensions, it appears that the social and cultural realities of America might well illustrate the possibility for an "E Pluribus Plura" version of the formula. How does the United States negotiate the inner tensions that, because of its constitutive diversity, might threaten its unity? How do traditions (political, artistic, literary...), modes of consensus building (from myth to national icons and patriotic assertions of exceptionalism), the feeling of a wished-for common good counteract potential strife and the tensions of particular interests and particular groups, make up for the aporias of nationhood and communitarian feeling, of ideological consensus and a tradition of dissent? Could it be that there are indeed several "Americas"? Is being an American necessarily being in many ways double? Can the politically unifying, centripetal power of the State, hidden under the neutral Unum, accommodate the centrifugal forces that might generate a societal and cultural "plura" out of the hallowed political and territorial "pluribus"? Do diversities imply, for their survival and development, a "middle ground", a "mainstream", a "tradition" – some kind of American norm? Seen in light of the various subdisciplines of our fields, these are some of the questions that might generate the wished-for contributions to this Conference.

### Deadlines:

January 31, 2007: Deadline for submission of proposals and one-page abstracts for parallel lectures and workshop sessions, to include a 1/2 page c.v. of workshop chairs and individual lecturers. You may

download the workshop guidelines here: [www.eaas.eu/downloads/Workshops.doc](http://www.eaas.eu/downloads/Workshops.doc) Please do not submit proposals for individual workshop papers at this time.

These will be sent to selected workshop chairs who will be announced in the May 2007 issue of ASE.

**September 1, 2007:** Workshop paper proposals (with 150-200 word abstract) to be sent to Workshop Chairs.

**September 15, 2007:** Deadline for sending the tentative list of speakers and titles of workshop papers to be included in the October 2007 issue of ASE.

**December 1, 2007:** Deadline for submitting FINAL titles of papers and names and addresses of speakers.

**January 10, 2008:** Deadline for information to be included in the 2008 biennial conference program.

*Please send all information via e-mail to the EAAS Secretary General, Jenel Virden, at [virden@eaas.info](mailto:virden@eaas.info)*

## Call for Manuscripts: Contraband in the Americas

We invite chapter proposals for an edited volume that will focus on the representation of contraband in the Americas. We are primarily interested in the illegal movement of goods across borders or other frontiers, and how this contraband economy changes the way the Americas are imagined. At the same time, this volume proposes a broad historical scope: from colonial discussions concerning the mercantile system, to 18th- and 19th-century debates on the free market, to more contemporary representations of the trafficking of music, drugs, humans, organs, and sex in and throughout the Americas. We are therefore interested in different forms of contraband and welcome a variety of approaches and methodologies. Possible themes include, but are not limited to: Literary and cultural representations of contraband; The figure of the

contrabandist, the pirate, the privateer, the filibusterer; Contraband and the imagined community; Smuggling as gendered space; Contraband and race; Contraband and the commodification of the human; Writing as a form of contraband; Contraband as a model for political storytelling. *Send inquiries, 2-page abstracts, or completed essays by November 15, 2007 to Jeremy Paden, [jpaden@gsu.edu](mailto:jpaden@gsu.edu), or David Kelman, [dkelman@learnlink.emory.edu](mailto:dkelman@learnlink.emory.edu).*

## Perceptions of Space and the American Experience

**American Studies Association  
of Turkey - 32nd Annual American  
Studies Conference**

**November 7 - 9, 2007,  
Hacettepe University, Ankara**

This conference seeks to fill the scholarly vacuum that continues to exist with respect to space by removing it from the domain of the sacred, questioning its conceptualization, and exposing its manifestations within American Studies. The American Studies Association of Turkey invites proposals that consider space, broadly conceived. We particularly encourage proposals which incorporate transdisciplinary explorations of space, and welcome proposals from any field of study. Possible themes include, but are not limited to: Sites/Countersites/Utopias/Heterotopias; Subversive/Resistive Space; Space and the Body/Gendered Space; Racial/Ethnic/Political Space; Imaginary/Imagined Spaces/Geographies; Museums/Ethnographic/Indigenous Space; Modern/Postmodern Spaces; Mythic/Sacred/Symbolic/Religious Spaces; Expansionism/Manifest Destiny/Imperialism

The time allowance for all presentations is 20 minutes. An additional 10 minutes will be provided for discussion. We also invite submissions for an undergraduate student panel.

*Proposals for papers, panels, performances, exhibits, and other modes of creative expression should be sent to Tanfer Emin Tunc ([asat2007@gmail.com](mailto:asat2007@gmail.com)) and Bilge Muthuay Cetintas ([muthuay@hacettepe.edu.tr](mailto:muthuay@hacettepe.edu.tr)) and should consist of a 250-300 word abstract in English, as well as a 1 - 2 paragraph c.v./biographical description for each participant. Deadline for submission of proposals: July 15, 2007. Notification for acceptance of proposals: September 1, 2007.*



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

**Terrorism and Migration**

**A Two-Day Interdisciplinary Conference  
at the School of Humanities,  
University of Southampton, UK.  
November 17 - 18, 2007**

Contemporary anxieties about terrorism in the mainstream media and politics have clearly articulated the war against terrorism and the struggle for global security to the control of immigration, as well as the criminalisation of Islam. In response to the conflation of discourses of counter-terrorism, global security and the control of migration, this conference invites papers from any area of the humanities and the social sciences that are related to the following topics:

- Terrorism and Migration in Literature, Film, Visual Art and Music;
- Histories of migration, immigration law and political sovereignty;
- Migration, Terrorism and the State of Emergency;
- Ethnographies of migration and terrorism;
- Terrorism, Migration and the Public Sphere;
- Asylum, Imperialism and War

*Please submit a 200-300 word abstract via email or post to the address below by September 1st, 2007:*

*Sandy White, English, School of  
Humanities, University of Southampton  
Southampton, SO17 1B7  
E-mail: sw17@soton.ac.uk*

**"Nationalism, East and  
West: Civic and Ethnic  
Conceptions of Nationhood"**

**The Association for the Study of  
Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN)  
18th Annual Conference  
April 15-16, 2008,  
London School of Economics.**

The conference will include keynote addresses from leading scholars in the field, along with opportunities for scholars from various disciplines to examine the relevance of ethnic and civic conceptions of nationhood in a series of panel sessions. Suggested themes include: Civic and Ethnic Aspects of Nation Formation, Is Nationalism a European Phenomenon?, Alternatives to Civic and Ethnic Nationalism, Experiences of Historical Migrant Nations, Citizenship and Immigration, Multiculturalism

The application is open to any researcher who is interested in the study of nationalism and/or ethnicity, and PhD students and young scholars are particularly encouraged to apply. The abstracts of the proposed papers should not exceed 500 words and are expected by November 1, 2007. The Committee will notify applicants by November 30,

2007. Please see the ASEN website ([www.lse.ac.uk/collections/ASEN/](http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/ASEN/)) for more information and to submit your proposal.

Suggestions for panels and additional themes are also welcome. Papers submitted to the conference will be considered for publication in a special issue of *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism (SEN)*. *Please note that ASEN cannot cover travel and accommodation costs. Presenters are expected to register for the conference. Further enquiries are welcome* [asen@lse.ac.uk](mailto:asen@lse.ac.uk).

**Fulbright Awards**

**Senior (Postdoctoral) Awards To the U.S., 2008-2009**

Grant duration: between 3-8 months.  
Closing: Nov.5th.

**Fulbright Teacher and Administrator  
Award to the U.S. 2008-2009**

Please see website below for more information and application.  
[www.fulbright.ro](http://www.fulbright.ro)  
(click on News in upper right corner)

**Richard Wright:  
The Centenary Celebration**

The American University of Paris announces the International Richard Wright Centennial Conference. It will be held 19-20 June 2008 at The American University of Paris and at the Musée des années trente (Museum of the Nineteen Thirties), in Boulogne-Billancourt. The Conference will encourage broad international and interdisciplinary explorations of Wright's life and writing. *Paper/presentation proposals should include A brief (250-300 word) abstract and a brief (1-2pp.) vita. Deadline 15. 01. 2008. Submit abstracts to Alice Craven at [Alice.Craven@aup.fr](mailto:Alice.Craven@aup.fr) or William Dow at [William.Dow@wanadoo.fr](mailto:William.Dow@wanadoo.fr)*

**The Sense of America:  
Histories into Text**

**The 2008 RAAS - Fulbright Conference  
Bucharest, 22 - 24 May, 2008**

The fifth conference of the Romanian Association for American Studies will be held at the University of Bucharest, Romania, May 22-24, 2008.

The program committee invites proposals from all practitioners of American culture or related disciplines. The Conference theme, The Sense of America: Histories into Text invites participants to explore the many meanings of "America" from the perspectives of both "new" world and "old" world narratives and narrations of life histories that have been translated and transmuted into various registers of fictional and factual text and representation. Touching on the concept of an "America" as a transcultural space shaped by globalization and modes of dislocation, the organizers encourage conference presentations that articulate, nuance, expand and challenge redefinitions of the "sense of America" beyond and across boundaries and to engage in debates about the place of the United States in the cultural dynamics of Europe and the world. The conference focus is on questions of complex identity in a world marked by September 11th – as well as on visions and responses to history issues and individual "histories" in and beyond America, shaped by interpretation, public and private memory from the colonial borderlands to the present.

The committee invites papers, proposals for panels, round tables and performances onsite and offsite and from all disciplinary and interdisciplinary specializations representing the full diversity of RAAS membership. *Proposals must be submitted by January 31, 2008 to Roxana Oltean, Ilinca Anghelescu, Mihaela Precup at: [raas\\_fulbright\\_conference@yahoo.com](mailto:raas_fulbright_conference@yahoo.com) [raas.fulbright.conference@gmail.com](mailto:raas.fulbright.conference@gmail.com) All proposals must include:*

- a complete mailing address, email, phone number and affiliation
- an abstract of no more than 300 words
- a vita cf. no more than 300 words for each participant

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

# Academic Exchanges

## Such Is Yale

Mihaela Precup

A few years ago, a friend and colleague who had just returned from a year abroad on a Fulbright scholarship told me that it was a mind-blowing experience that placed her forever in a state of limbo. It was one of those statements that you recklessly hope will one day apply to you.

After nine months at Yale on a Fulbright scholarship, her words now have a very true ring to them. The initial feeling that I must have landed on a movie set has never left me, only now I'm a quirky viewer who has already seen the movie dozens of times. It might have something to do with the collegiate gothic architecture which still gives me visual seizures when students clad in work-out clothes emerge from a building which looks like an over-size cathedral but which the map says is a gym. It may also have something to do with finding out that Sterling Library, another gothic revival building, was finished no earlier than 1930. It has to do with entering Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library on a sunny day. And it also has to do with the mind-boggling contrasts within New Haven, a small town around a large rich university, where most of the non-academic part of the population is obviously struggling with poverty and its curses.

At Yale, most of the undergraduates are paying tuition fees, but none of the graduate students do. Every graduate student here is on a very generous scholarship from Yale, which covers everything, and maybe more Romanian students should consider this option.

Yale has more prestigious scholars and visitors than you can possibly keep up with. And I have loved the intellectual buzz in this community. I have loved seeing Art Spiegelman chain-smoking in a pristine event room while going through the whole history of comics in an hour or so of stand-up comedy. And I was a bit staggered to hear Alan Trachtenberg, Susan Gubar, Peggy Phelan, Juliet Mitchel and so many others. I loved watching 35 mm films every Friday at the coquettish Whitney movie theater, and hearing an entire audience roar with laughter during Kiss Me Deadly. I loved hearing people thinking out loud. I loved seeing one of the best music graduate students give a piano recital and put her hand inside the piano to move the keys, Tom-and-Jerry fashion.

Such is Yale. A small sunny place full of students from literally everywhere in the world, where you can find at least one person who shares your exact same interests, no matter how eccentric. Like perhaps any large American university, it offers ample opportunity for many shocks of both recognition and disidentification. And it was somewhere between the WGSS program, the American Studies Department, the Photographic Memory Workshop, the Women's Studies Colloquium and several dozens events where I always saw the same people, who became my friends, that I made my home. It was these fantastic people that made the Yale movie set my own, and who included me in the picture.

## Experiencing Deep America

Mihai A. Stroe

To have the experience of Yale University in the framework of the Fulbright Advanced Research Programme is to have the chance to enter an academic and human labyrinth of mythic proportions, in which you can easily gain the feeling of being a lilliputian inexorably trapped in a giant horse race, taking place not in a hippodrome, but in an 'infodrome' echoing with virtually all the languages of the world, old and new, sacred and profane, poetic and scientific and religious.

My Yale experience started from my establishing a friendly relationship with a professor whose academic status is as controversial as it is prodigious: Professor Harold Bloom has kindly accepted my Fulbright advanced research project entitled "Towards a Science of Paradigms: Paradigm Shifts in Literature and Science from the Romantic to the Postmodern Age". This project has been conceived of as a contribution for establishing paradigmology as metascience in its own right, based on Heisenberg's and Koestler's concept of a 'Pendulum of History'. Also, one of my major interests has been the further extension of Thomas Kuhn's theory about scientific revolutions as paradigm shifts to the field of literature, each revolution being decoded in this perspective as a swing of the historical pendulum. However, Professor Bloom not having a department at Yale anymore (for the past 30 years or so), I had to ask for support from another remarkable Yale personality, Professor Paul Fry, whose works excel in the study of Wordsworth, Coleridge, romanticism in general, and literary theory.

Several things were particularly fascinating for me at Yale: 1. the labyrinthine courses of Harold Bloom, who is a genuine master of the labyrinth of literature and the humanities, being the perfect guide (although he modestly does not consider himself such) for the students who thus get initiated into the endless intricacies of meanings of texts in their revisionary state of total immersion in endless chains of contexts within contexts within contexts, for ever. 2. Sterling Memorial Library, a monumental establishment of culture and civilization (with over 6 million volumes), hosting Yale students and scholars who come here to study from the remotest places of the world, just to have a chance to experience the great variety of sources of documentation.

I had great experiences as visitor of courses of lectures or discussion groups: Professor Paul Fry's course on literary theory, delivered in a perfectly beautiful and friendly lecture room located in Linsley Chittenden Hall, was often a dizzying adventure into the fundamental critical thought; two courses-seminars of Professor Bloom's, one on Shakespeare's tragedies, one on modern poetry.

In an academic context of this magnitude, which, however, is not completely without imperfections (I could, to my regret, meet such in a discussion group), the idea of a deep America thus clears up dramatically from the coalescence of all melting pot elements, including the native American: the sense of the labyrinthine 'infodrome', which is the vast American experience, is to understand ourselves, intellectually, religiously, psychologically, philosophically, scientifically, emotionally, myhtopoetically, etc, and our universe, as the uncanny and for ever mysterious receptacles of the ancient languages of reality.

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

## Ph.D. Theses

**Subversion and Surrender:  
A Cultural and Literary Study of Beat Prose**  
**Raluca Rogoveanu**

Unlike most studies dealing with the Beat generation which focused exclusively either on the dimension of rebellion or on the consumerist values which the Beat art unconsciously contains, this thesis aims to offer a prismatic reading of the Beat text, which simultaneously displays the sense of subversion and the process of surrender as necessary aspects embedded in Beat prose. The elements of novelty propounded by this thesis refer to the difference between the alleged revolutionary spirit of the Beat Generation and their surrender to the standards of popular culture, which parallels the act of renouncing the precepts of subversiveness under the burden of commercial success. The focus of this thesis goes on fiction texts, memoirs, letters and essays of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, the artists forming the nucleus of the Beat generation.

Rather than labeling the Beat phenomenon either as frighteningly subversive or quietly complacent of the domineering system, and instead of looking for essentialist or totalizing explanations, this reading insists on understanding the ambivalent nature of this cultural structure. The thesis pays particular attention to the mobility, dynamics and change of the Beat group, as well as to the different, diverse and multidimensional relations which they establish with the mainstream America. The Beat phenomenon can be described as a channel for collective action and interaction, a structure of relatively common interests and modes of constructing meaning. Consequently, after demonstrating the way in which the Beat text offers a persuasive critique of the capitalist ideology, the thesis identifies structures and ways in which this critique is undermined by the fascination of the text with the particular ideology which it attempts to destabilize. The overt ideological intention of the Beat generation-of undermining the principles of the "Molochian" regime is suppressed by the ambivalence of the text and the ambiguity of the binary oppositions underlain by the ideological intention: rebellion/acceptance, Buddhism/Christianity, idealism/consumerism.

*\* The thesis was defended in May 2007.*

**Existentialist Dimensions of Space and Time  
in William Faulkner's Fiction**  
**Rodica Diana Cherciu**

The research of this thesis tries to essentialize the connotations of existence, space and time articulated by the contrastive realities of both modernist and postmodern Faulkner's Yokna-

patawpha meant to become reflexive of truth, a notion always put as a contingent affair. Thinking of these opposite, yet continuous universes of modernism and postmodernism, my study calls into attention the narrator's ability to join metaphysics with ontology in loci of difference induced by the construction and deconstruction of Yoknapatawpha mythical space and time. Herein from the very term "negation", a natural consequence of the change, which does not fragment the literary currents, but reorients the meaning towards depth, diversity, flexibility and connotative openness against the background of paradox. With Faulkner, contradiction does not only dislocate, but restores and harmonizes significance through sudden breaks of meaning that enable the switch of a perspective to another, the move from the space of action to a space of reflection, from one addressee, difficult to spot: the listener, the reader, or simply the narrator's thought to another.

My thesis draws attention on the narrator's art of turning life in Yoknapatawpha as a subjective construct of reality and a replica meant to expose the unlimited multiplicity of existence in spatial and temporal loci where it is manifest as factuality, sign, vision, restoration absence and fulfillment of desire. Born under the perspective of ambivalence, space and time prove to channelize the connotations of being and of the existential anchorage. In the Faulknerian text the paradigm of these two existentialist dimensions has to be analyzed from the subset of significance constantly put under rearticulation through intertextual associations, analogies and the differentiations put forth by the excessive intertextuality and the trans-textuality of the spatial and temporal sign that dominate the narrative. The discourse of space can be read in the mythical, cultural, philosophical and aesthetic inflections that emerge from an ambivalent and indeterminate dialectics of deconstruction and reconstruction through which the repertoire of connotations represents an extensive demonstration of Gabriel Marcel's and Setha Low's theories. Along with the sacred and ritualistic empowerment suggested or expressed in the process of symbolization, the modern representations of space rewrite being in imaginary structures that engender the metaphysical power to rise against mortality. The tragic accents of death panic dislocate the former meanings of the existentialist space and reshape them through imagination as new potentialities of life. To its last variant, the postmodern one, where the artificial space casts doubt on the human existence, the significance stays open, ambiguous, uncertain, able to take in new meanings.

Textuality turns into the tragic script of the agonizing need for a formula of "to be", of the self's reaction to it and of its effort to create its being, irrespective of the parodic, ironical or serious reflection. In this respect, Faulkner himself projected the fictional existence like the great dramas of antiquity since what he revealed was not the tragic fall of existence but its sublime. Without hesitating he turns its story into a legend, and so did the narrator with the concept of being in Yoknapatawpha. He transfigured it into an object of art to which the perspective put forth in this thesis tries to reveal the ontological and metaphysical relevance in aesthetic inflections.

*\* The thesis was defended in June 2007*

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Dear Colleagues,

The year that passed since the publication of our last Newsletter has been marked by several important events, at least three of which deserve special mention, even though they are further discussed in the pages of this Newsletter. I refer to the publication of a collection of essays by RAAS members, *Our America: People, Places, Times* (Univers Enciclopedic, 2005) in November last year, to the fourth RAAS Biennial Conference "New/Old Worlds. Spaces of Transition" held in February 2006 and to the EAAS Biennial Conference "Conformism, Non-conformism and Anti-conformism" in Nicosia, Cyprus, in April 2006, where Romania was particularly well represented.

possible by a grant awarded to the Association by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, for which we are extremely grateful. Free copies were given to contributors and to various university libraries.

The Fourth RAAS Biennial Conference "New/Old Worlds. Spaces of Transition" (1-3 February, 2006) organized, as in the past, together with the Fulbright Commission, was hosted by the Center for American Studies at the University of Bucharest and brought together participants from Bucharest, Cluj, Iași, Constanța, Craiova, Timișoara, Sibiu, Oradea, Baia Mare, Târgu Mureș, Alba Iulia, Ploiești, Brașov and Galați, from the U.S., Canada, Israel and Hungary, as well as the U.S. Fulbright

# Letter from the President



The publication of *Our America: People, Places, Times*, the third in a series edited by Rodica Mihăilă and Irina Grigorescu Pană, having at its origins contributions to the third RAAS Biennial Conference held in 2004, was launched at the "Noi" bookstore by the literary critic I.B. Lefter and received favorable TV, radio and press coverage. Present at the event were Mark Wentworth, Councilor for Public Affairs, and Kathy Kavalec, cultural attaché, from the U.S. Embassy, RAAS members, American Studies faculty and students. The publication was made

grantees who were teaching or doing research in Romania. We were privileged to have as our keynote speaker Professor John Carlos Rowe from the University of Southern California, whose re-conceptualization of American Studies has already inspired our curriculum. The Conference gave a measure of our progress in consolidating an active community of scholars and intellectuals involved in American-Romanian relations at home and abroad, being not only a forum for scholarly discussion but also a venue for Romanian,

*continued in p. 17*



## 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: the American Studies

## Starting (a)fresh and looking at things in a different way

Alexandra Vasile

1st Year American Studies

"The best things in life are disguised as hard work." I kept telling myself this as I was nervously trying to do some last-minute cramming for one of my exams. And it worked. I aced it. And the next day I decided to change majors. Life shouldn't be about fervently looking for the up among a bundle of downs. It was time came for me to redefine my priorities and find something I truly liked, instead studying something which didn't represent me in the least. The prospect of finding a new major, one that I actually loved was exhilarating. I was full of energy. I was thrilled. I was stumped. I just couldn't decide: will it be literature, philosophy or history? Looking back at those moments, I can truly say that the most difficult part of this reassessing and reevaluating phase I went through was choosing the right major for me. I knew I wanted a diverse liberal arts education, but I also knew I wanted something with structure and coherence. My heart finally settled on American Studies because it felt like I was majoring in everything; I could study what I like without cutting anything out.

The program has an interdisciplinary approach to study, combining courses in literature, history, politics, anthropology and various audio-visual media by means of small-group seminars. I would say it's perfect for those whose academic interests do not fit within the boundaries of traditional humanities departments. It reassesses traditional views about cultural studies by integrating a multicultural, transnational understanding of America. The aim is to make us challenge century-old traditions of perceiving "different" as "bad".

I love most of my courses, a wonderful cross-section of classes from various disciplines, which helped me be aware that studying America is not just about studying history or politics, but rather history and politics and literature and film and...life as a whole. Some of the topics that have been offered so far are "Native American Culture", "Film Studies", "Visual Arts", "The US Constitution from a Historical Perspective" and "American Civilization". The small-group system allows students to examine how each teacher deals with a specific subject, and by the end of the term they can discover for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of each approach (be it in-class presentations, discussions of texts, essays or group projects)

Given the melting-pot, salad-bowl that the US is today, ques-

tions such as "What is America?" cannot possibly receive a single reply, because there is not clear-cut answer (or clear-cut America, for that matter). And this is especially why the program is structured as broad mixture of disciplines. I find it only natural to be in such in way: life, after all, can't be boiled down to single subject. More than that, the topics discussed in the courses are something I can be really passionate about. That, after all, is the point of a liberal arts education: finding a bit of something that you love among everything that is offered. And once you've done that, the rest will just come.

I think this different approach to studying America helped me immensely from the very beginning because I learned to trust myself more, to actually think and articulate my thoughts into

actual sentences (easier said than done - at least where I'm concerned). I think that now, for the first time, I'm taking myself seriously. Even without my realizing it, I learned not to accept easy answers or compromises. In class, as in life, success means that you can't be just a do-er, you need to be a think-er, too.

I've been taught to use primary resources such as diaries, letters, various articles,

etc, to determine what was happening and what influences or pressures were made on a certain community or region during a certain period of time. Using these primary resources instead of critical notes on the subject made me realize I had forgotten the old saying that there's no single best answer to anything and taught me the importance of thinking for myself and questioning everything.

I feel that a background in American Studies helps me see the connections between various areas of study - how each one is a window overlooking the bigger picture of cultural analysis. Every step of the way I'm learning not to get lost in the maze of smaller pictures, to look for the bottom line, the common ground and to think about the sometimes-not-so-obvious implications of certain events.

As opposed to what we've been doing so far (in high school and everywhere else for that matter), it's a refreshing perspective to take the knowledge you've gained and try to understand the reasons behind many of the landmark decisions that have been made along the years in the US. And, once you know the bigger picture, and not just your immediate surroundings, you also understand better where you fit in the scheme of things.

A program is not interdisciplinary simply because it offers courses spread over several academic areas. It needs to integrate various theoretical approaches to certain topics or subjects. But, unless there clear objectives are set from the very beginning by



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

# Department in Bucharest

those who design the curriculum, the courses can become a form of dabbling in the humanities that leads to superficial knowledge of many fields without actually knowing how they relate to one another and where they fit in the bigger picture.

I understand that the Faculty tries to eliminate this problem by offering its majors a coherent and mandatory plan of study. My opinion, however, is that they should also trust the students enough to let them create individual frames within the larger frames set out by the regular course of study. That is, the program coordinators could introduce a series of elective classes. These electives could have a preset limit of students, allowing the instructor to pursue the subject in ways not possible with an entire class. Lively discussions, presentations, a different approach to the topic, and constant student participation are some options that could be integrated.

But any wonderful academic experience does not, paradoxically, rely on academics alone. I believe that the American Studies freshmen group is somewhat like a miniature community. Because we all attend the same seminars (except for the ones we take up as a requirement for our various minors), we have come to form a remarkably cohesive group. Through various events organized by



Francis Ford Coppola and the American Studies Undergraduates

the department, students and faculty members have an opportunity to know one another in a way that is often not possible by simply attending a course. I'm thrilled to have discovered yet another thing: that students can use "cool" in the same sentence with "teacher"; in other words, that it is actually possible to attend classes because you love being there, not just because you're supposed to.

I wish I could end on an 'all in all' or 'in conclusion' note, but I read somewhere that the best endings make way for middles and beginnings. Although I don't know what I'll be doing in three years' time (or even a month's time, at that), in the words of a great actress, "All I know I have a contribution to make. I'm not just taking up space in this life. I'm not sure where I'll be going from here, but I'm always open to suggestions."

One of the great things about the American Studies graduate program is that there is something in it for everyone... even if it's only a bad grade at the end of an uneventful semester. Kidding...

What do we say almost a year later? A dozen different people, with a million different expectations and interests, getting together to discover the zillion things they - still - don't know about America, Americans, and maybe themselves.

A huge amount of information available and so little time to take it all in, let alone allow it to settle down and yield educated opinions. From the Declaration of

## The Indefatigable Joys of an M.A. in American Studies

Independence and the Constitution to Schwarzenegger, from the difference between cultural pluralism and multiculturalism to *Bamboozled*, from intelligent design to Malinowski, from Derrida to Malamud, and from Oprah to Toni Morrison, we get whirled into the intricacies of public and foreign policy, into the subtleties of the Civil War, the essays of Emerson, the wisdom of Thoreau, the crazy times of Joe McCarthy, or the pain of Vietnam. We fly into cyberspace, and discover the world of contemporary visual art. We jump from the realm of postmodernism into the realities of globalization.

As we sit through class after class, we realize how much more there is to know. Furthermore, we take possession of a small part of our now familiar Room 4, and we start calling a chair our own. We look down on undergrads (as if we were any smarter at that time!), and we look up to a small, but select group of professors who do a tremendous job with scarce resources, and in the face of resistance from those who still claim that there is no such thing as American culture.

Some of us at least will be looking back with regret at a year that just went by too fast - we could have used one more - and remember it fondly. It's a part of our lives, and hopefully only a small step in an ongoing quest for excellence. Whether we managed to leave a small imprint on the program or not remains to be seen, but we have learned a great deal of valuable lessons, and have learned to appreciate and understand America even more, with all of its greatness and shortfalls.

We may not have climbed Mt. McKinley yet, but we are starting to get the right gear, and things are looking up. We might still do it yet, as we are now catching a distant glimpse of the summit.

And, just in case you're wondering, we are Adriana, Alina, Agnesa, Aurelia, Diana, Laura, Mihaela, Monica, Roxana, Dragoș, and Freddie, Class of 2006?

*Freddie Fusman, M. A. Student*

## AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

## Conference participation

**The EAAS Biennial Conference**

**"Conformism, Non-conformism and Anti-conformism in the Culture of the United States", April 7-10, 2006, Nicosia, Cyprus**

**Dan Popescu,  
University of Oradea**

As workshop chair at the EAAS Biennial Conference in Cyprus, I was revealed 'the other side of the moon' by sending hundreds of e-mails, connecting with academics from all over the world, meeting deadlines, accepting some of the proposals, rejecting others, redirecting those valuable though not fitted with our project, mine and my Slovakian colleague, Jaroslav Kusnir from the University of Presov.

Not all of us could make it to Cyprus, the bitter lemons of which were celebrated in a rather strangely beautiful book by Lawrence Durrell, a writer whom I could find no trace of among the research interests of the people at the university there. Not all of us could taste the dark red wines, enjoy the coffee breaks and the company of the major experts in the field of American Studies, or put up with the puzzling neighbourhood, for the university is in the very close vicinity of the prison and of the Hilton Cyprus hotel. For those who made it, the conference and its workshops, lectures and shoptalks were a true reward. I remember entering the room where the Women's Shoptalk was going on – I had to, since I teach feminism – and the way I was welcomed by the ladies engaged in an exciting argument over the importance and the significance of their position within EAAS. Luckily, I was later joined by Paul Lauter, and we both could share their ideas and their feeling of frustration. It is a real one.

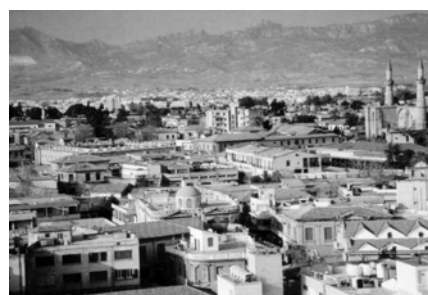
As for the workshop I ran together with Jaro, From the Melting Pot of 'Entropy' to a 'Crack-Potting' Ecriture, it sought to explore various aspects in the poetics of contemporary, crack-pot realist authors, meant to reconsider, re-write or creative-

ly extend the poetics of the earlier, postmodern, generation.

Based on the bedrock of feminism, the first paper, that of Pi-hua Ni, from National Chiayi University, Taiwan, Father (Dis)Figured in Donald Barthelme's Fiction, aimed at arguing that Barthelme is one of the rare male postmodernists who inscribes, consciously or not, feminist undermining of gender patriarchy in his postmodern revision of literary patriarchy.

An ethical dilemma was raised by Susan Rohr, from J. F. Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, in her Crackpot Realism at Its Most Radical: Melvin Jules Bukiet's Holocaust Comedy "After". Her paper dealt with the term coined by Slavoj Žižek to designate a new form of representing the Holocaust under comic parameters, and applied it to the dynamics involved in the so-called process "The Americanization of the Holocaust".

What Stipe Grgas, from the University of Zagreb, Croatia, tried to prove, in Conformism and New Regionalism in



American Fiction, when analyzing Annie Proulx's focus upon a particular place, her turn to a new spatiality, was how such an approach has been used to blaze a pathway out of the paralyzing influence of the great postmodernist texts. Boris Vejdovsky, from Lausanne University, Switzerland, revealed the drama of the end of certain narrative modes, in his The Performance and Counter-Performance of the U.S. Melting Pot in Tony Kushner's Angels in America. In this respect, Kushner's play and its cinematographic adaptation may be read

as a critique of the postmodern narrative strategies that have sought to recompose the world after the dissolution of its stabilizing dichotomies after 1989.

We experienced, through the papers and the debates generated by the various approaches, a strong sense of the moral and intellectual values usually brought to the front during such meetings. We exchanged information on books and technologies, we developed new projects, we envisaged new strategies for marketing our academic products, and we eventually bonded like in an interpretative community. For us, the 'bitter lemons of Cyprus' were sweet.

**Mihai A. Stroe,  
University of Bucharest**

The Biennial Conference organized by EAAS and hosted this year by the University of Cyprus was in many essential ways remarkable and unique. The challenge that the conference issued for the participants has been established by title from the very beginning: an incentive to the "hypermulticultural" dialogue (cf. Marc Chénétier's expression). One of the confessed goals was to promote solutions to what in American Studies, especially in the United States, becomes yet another increasingly more evident crisis of identity concerning the American realities. The advantage – particularly emphasized by President Marc Chénétier – that the European Americanists have in this respect is precisely the distance, and so the detachment from this new crisis, a detachment that might well facilitate the finding of solutions to thorny identity problems. In this general context, choosing Cyprus as a place for the organization of this conference was at least an act of sheer inspiration, since for several decades similar identity issues have been the bitter anguish of this exceptionally rich island. The University of Cyprus distinguished itself also by an excellent organization, managed by both professors and students who provided direct support to the conference participants who thus could feel like truly privileged guests.

The Conference Opening was greeted by a large and extremely enthusiastic audience (over 200 participants). Especially remarkable through his native humor was Michael Zampelas, Mayor of



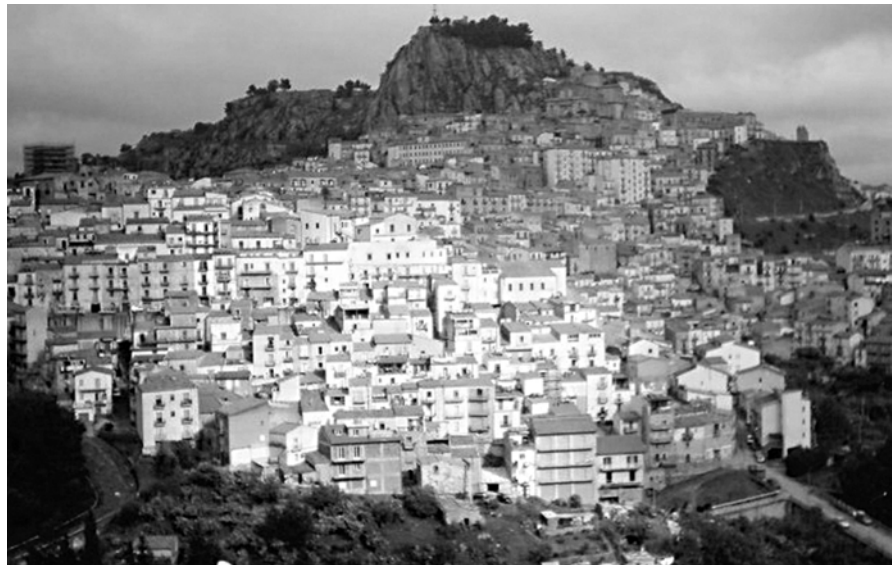
# A M E R I C A N   S T U D I E S   I N   R O M A N I A

Nicosia, but so were all the other speakers who distinguished themselves by intelligent and intellectually challenging discourses. For instance, Ilya Prigogine's opinions have been called forth regarding the deep nature of the space-time reality characterized by the advance by symmetry breaks, by ontic and cognitive leaps which lead to more complex structures, a fact that has been considered as being fundamental for the works of the EAAS Conference itself, aimed precisely at understanding the increasingly more complex evolution of human thought and of the history of culture, an understanding that can be better enabled only by engaging in the perpetual intercultural, interdisciplinary dialogue. Afterwards, Prof. Peter Loizos (Intercollege, Cyprus/London School of Economics) talked about the question of conformism as an inhibiting factor of perception in the works of Saul Bellow and Philip Roth. Then, the reception that was supposed to take place at the Embassy of the United States in Nicosia was cancelled, and the participants were invited for dinner in the hospitable Campus of the University of Cyprus.

The debates in workshop format began the second day of the EAAS Conference, among which could be mentioned Franca Bellarsi, Université Libre de Bruxelles: "Allen Ginsberg and Michael McClure: Physical Embodiment as Textual Constraint"; Olivier Brossard, Université de Paris VII, "Too Hip for the Squares and too Square for the Hips: Frank O'Hara's Poetry"; Carmen Mendez, Universidad Complutense, Spain: "The Angel Out of the House: the Non-Conformist Women of the Beat Generation"; Polina MacKay, Birkbeck College, "Outlaws and Canon Formation: The Influence of William S. Burroughs".

Also, the presence of many scholars from Romania could be witnessed at this EAAS Conference: Rodica Mihăilă (University of Bucharest), with the paper "Voices of Dissent: Questioning the American Studies Critique of Post-Cold War US Democracy"; Adina Ciugreanu (Ovidius University, Constanța), with the paper "From Domestic Conformism to Radical Feminism: The Case of Adrienne Rich"; Mihaela Precup (University of Bucharest), with the paper "New York is Burning, or: Several Ways of Painting the City Red"; Dan Horațiu Popescu

(University of Oradea), co-chair of Workshop 2: From the Melting Pot of 'Entropy' to a 'Crack-Potting' Ecriture; Iulian Cănanău (University of Bucharest), with the paper "The Americanness of Multicultural Canon"; and Mihai A. Stroe



(Bucharest University), with the paper "Ginsberg versus Blake: Romantic Theory and the Poetics of (Trans)Revolution in Scientific Context".

The themes that have been approached in the workshop discussions were many and extremely complex in nature, starting from the construction of a (trans)national history in Barlow and Freneau in the context of the Columbiad, the topos of the forest in the frontier novels of J.F. Cooper, the ideology of unconventional narrative forms in romantic comedies, the "doors of perception" as a psychology of revealing alternative identities, the memorial of Vietnam veterans, the question of postmodernism in the context of terrorism, the rhetoric of surveillance technologies in the war against terrorism, the question concerning the American foundational myths in the context of contemporary Hollywood, and up to matters regarding the existence of religion in cyberspace, or regarding the status of reading and writing in the age of digital technologies, known also by the name of the "Global Digital Age", etc.

Undoubtedly, the climax in the conference program was the Poetry Reading "Conformism, Non-Conformism and Anti-Conformism in Cyprus and the World", organized at Ledra Palace Hotel, coordi-

nated by Stephanos Stephanides, Dean of School of Humanities, University of Cyprus, and Gür Genç, poet.

Several shoptalks took place, on various themes (history, literature, American studies, etc.). Particularly noteworthy was

the section entitled "Young European Americanists' Shoptalk", chaired by Prof. Thomas Claviez, Free University of Berlin, and in which the organizers proposed the initiation of a project in the framework of EAAS structures (in the format of colloquy, seminar, symposium, etc.), which is to be presided by Prof. Thomas Claviez. Thus, as a result thereof, a group of young Americanists has been constituted who are affiliated to a number of over eight Universities in Europe, and who will negotiate the affiliation of their home institutions to this project, with a view to organizing by turns the works of this EAAS colloquy/ seminar/ symposium, which is thus intended to take place once or twice a year, the desired participation being of around 30-40 members pro session.

On the last day of the conference, Prof. Donald Pease, Dartmouth College, presented the plenary lecture "American Studies after US Exceptionalism?", this being the last in a series of three plenary lectures. The conference was closed by Prof. Marc Chénétier, President of EAAS, with a closing speech in which he expressed his gratitude for the wonderful cooperation of both organizers and conference participants, and settled the EAAS members' next meeting place and time: Oslo 2008.

## AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

# Conference participation

## The RAAS-Fulbright Conference "New/Old Worlds: Spaces in Transition"

The Center for American Studies  
Faculty of Foreign Languages and  
Literatures, University of Bucharest  
2-3 February, 2006

Ruxandra Rădulescu,  
University of Bucharest

The 4th edition of the conference of the Romanian Association for American Studies, organized in partnership with the Fulbright Commission in Bucharest, brought together a large number of participants from a vast array of university centers in Romania (Bucharest, Cluj, Constanța, Iași, Oradea, Petroșani, Ploiești, Sibiu, Timișoara) and abroad (Louisiana State University, Colorado State University, University of Massachusetts, University of Arkansas, University of Montana and several other centers in Israel, Hungary and Canada). The conference opened with remarks by the hosts, organizers, partners, and friends of the conference, followed by a thought-provoking plenary address.

This year's distinguished keynote speaker was John Carlos Rowe, whose fundamental contribution to the configuration of the New American Studies in its international dimension has had an impact on American Studies programs all over the world. An American Studies scholar with a very keen critical eye, Professor Rowe proposed a fascinating and overtly progressive reading of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi, by relocating its politics within the American academe's reaction to neoconservative pressures.

The stimulating level of discussion and critical impetus imprinted by the keynote speech soon became obvious in the workshops to come. Titled „Remapping Theory. Decentering and Recycling Old Worlds“, the first workshop questioned assumptions made and gaps revealed by certain theoretical strategies in the practice of American Studies (Rodica Mihăilă's chal-

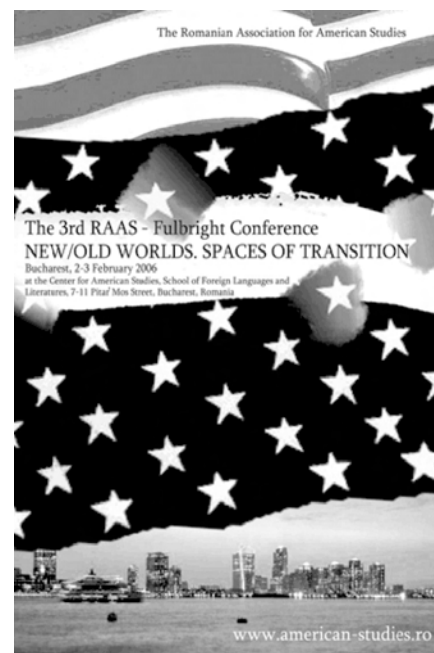
lenge to the "post-Cold War reconceptualization of America"), as well as exploring a multi-faceted response to American exceptionalism in our times (Marius Jucan), engaging in a Heideggerian meditation on critical thinking and/versus poetry and art (Ștefan Avădanei), and looking at representational practices for the metaphors of cultural hybridity in the New World in a time of globalization (Adina Ciugureanu).

The ensuing workshops were thematically grouped into four major directions - Old/New Mythologies, Transitional Geographies, The Politics of Identity, Cartographies of Exile - aiming to establish a common thread and critical space for the impressive number of papers delivered at this year's edition of the RAAS - Fulbright conference. Organized as concurrent panels, they provided a critical arena for presentations and debates engaging Romanian and international academics, graduate students and researchers. In addition, the general RAAS meeting on the first day of the conference, followed by a lovely reception at Terasa Amsterdam concluded a day of intense participation.

Day two was set to witness an influx of participants (with 6 to 7 participants per panel), organized in two series of three workshops each. Maintaining the cutting-edge tone and intent of most workshops, the final event of the 2006 RAAS-Fulbright conference was a special performance by Margento, the Winners of the Fringiest Event Award at Buxton Fringe Festival 2005, who thrilled the audience with an avant-garde poetry performance/action painting/rock extravaganza, only fit to boost the understandably waning energy level following two full days of passionate scholarly debates.

Eric Gilder,  
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

Romania, the European Space and America all were subjects of involved and insightful discussions at the Romanian Association of American Studies (RAAS)-



Fulbright Bi-Annual Conference held at the Center for American Studies at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, the University of Bucharest, 2-3 February, 2006. Opening remarks by Prof. Dr. Rodica Mihăilă, RAAS President; US Ambassador to Romania, H. E. Nicholas Taubman; Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Valentin Naumescu; Director of the Romanian Diplomatic Institute and Dean of Faculty of History (University of Bucharest), Prof. Dr. Vlad Nistor; Secretary of State, Ministry of Education and Research, Prof. Dr. Dumitru Miron; Manager, Saatchi & Saatchi, Radu Florescu, and Executive Director of the U.S.-Romanian Fulbright Commission, Prof. Dr. Barbara Nelson outlined the vital role of the meeting in articulating and prospecting the growing integration of Romania with the forces of humane globalization and internationalization. Participants (which included American Fulbright grantees to Romania for the academic year 2005-2006) hailed from all parts of Romania (from both public and private universities), from Hungary, from Israel, and from the USA.

Keynote speaker Prof. Dr. John Carlos Rowe of the University of Southern California began the academic sections of the meeting with a detailed critique "Reading *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* in Idaho." Dr. Rowe provided an extensive background on the author, Azar Nafisi, and questioned



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

whether the writer's professed "aesthetic radicalism" provided intellectual cover for her committed neo-conservative "Pax Americana" foreign policy stance. Following this challenging opening, a comprehensive roundtable on "re-mapping" the theory of American Studies by Rodica Mihăilă ("Post-Cold War Spaces of Transition in the Reconceptualization of America"); Marius Jucan ("Questioning Today's Perspectives on American Exceptionalism"); Ștefan Avădanei ("Critical Thinking/Literary Theory") and Adina Ciugureanu ("Cultural 'Hybrids' or Old Metaphors for New Worlds") set the nuanced tone for the remainder of the multiple, sequenced workshop sessions covering the themes "Old/New Mythologies," "Transitional Geographies," "Technologies of Representation," "Cartographies of Exile" and "The Politics of Identity." While this participant could not possibly have attended all the sessions (numbering thirteen, with over seventy individual presentations), the ones he did attend and/or participate were marked by papers of a uniform high quality and discussions of depth on the various intersecting themes of the meeting. The extensive academic sessions were well complemented by the social program, which included a cocktail at the newly established Terasa Amsterdam, and an integrated avant grade performance by "Margento" (led by American Studies Ph.D. candidate Christian Tănăsescu) at the new, expanded site of the American Cultural Center.

The organizers were keen to point out the vital role of their sponsors (the U.S.-Romanian Fulbright Commission, the Public Diplomacy Office of the U.S. Embassy, Saatchi & Saatchi (Romania), the University of Bucharest, the "Margento" Foundation and the Sitka-Alaska Foreign Book Center) in sustaining the meeting. In summation, this participant can say with assurance that American Studies is "alive and well" in Romania, and has a definitely bright future, whatever challenges (social, political or cultural) the exemplar of "the West" faces in the beginning of the 21st century, given the steadfast, yet critically thoughtful identification of Romania and its intellectual space with the American (post)modernity "project."

## "Constructions of Identity"

**The Biennial Conference  
Department of English  
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj  
6-8 April, 2006**

**Adrian Radu,  
Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj**

The Department of English Language and Literature of the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca ("Babeș-Bolyai" University) organised the fourth edition of the now traditional biennial conference on "Constructions of Identity" between 6-8 April 2006. This year's edition was a very special event since it was also a jubilee: the 50th anniversary of the department since its reorganisation on a modern basis by Professor Petre Grimm. More than 130 distinguished academics from university centres in all corners of the country but also from Hungary and the United States were present in Cluj to take part in this prestigious intellectual manifestation.

The conference started with two plenaries in the morning of 7 April 2006 in Room 'Shakespeare' of the Faculty of Letters, a room decorated with a portrait of Professor Grimm. The first plenary was more official and started with the addresses of the University Rector's Office brought to the conference participants by Professor Ștefan Oltean, vice-rector of the University, and continued with the introductory words of Professor Mircea Muthu, the Dean of the Faculty. These were followed by Professor Virgil Stanciu, the Head of the Department's speech on "English in Transylvania", a very interesting essay about, among other things, how the Department appeared and developed and about Professor Petre Grimm's fundamental contribution to the reorganization on a modern basis of the Department of English Language and Literature. This plenary ended with the moving words transmitted on the occasion of the department jubilee to the scholars of Cluj by their colleagues in the Department of English of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iasi.

The second plenary was more professional and contained some very interesting presentations, such as: "Russel's 'On Denoting', a Hundred Years Later", by Professor Alexandra Cornilescu (from the University of Bucharest); "Translating the Body", by Professor Hortensia Pârlog

(from the University of the West, Timisoara), "The Subversive Voices of Two Hispanic-American Playwrights", by Professor's Odette Blumenfeld (from "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iasi); "Fusty Old Fogies, Ageless Struggle, Young Quiet Kin", by Professor Ștefan Avădanei (from "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iasi) and "Modal Language, Identity and Referential Terms", by Professor Ștefan Oltean (from "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca).

In the afternoon of this day and the morning of the following (8 April) about 130 remarkable papers were presented and discussed in such sections as: English Literature, American Literature, Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, ELT, British Cultural Studies, American Studies, Translation Studies, Literary Theory, Drama and Film, Gendered Identities, Irish Studies, Canadian and Commonwealth Studies. These papers are to be collected in the conference volume to be published later on. Most of the presentations were followed by workshop-like discussions and talks, exchanges of opinions and experience. But not only that: the participants met old colleagues, learned about academic life in other university centres and discovered new colleagues and friends and established networks.



In parallel two exhibitions were organised: one contained volumes published by the members of the Department whereas the other offered for sale recent books published by the prestigious Longman Publishing House.

When the conference came to an end, the participants did not leave Cluj before expressing their wish to come again in the 2008 edition of this conference.

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

# The American Corner

## Library and Program Incubator

Almost all countries that have US Embassies have American Corners. And those that don't yet, have plans on the drawing board for at least one. That's because one of the purposes of American public diplomacy is to bring "a bit of America" where there is interest in it.

With the expansion of American studies beyond the boundaries of the academic research community, and with so many alumni of various programs in the US, whether or not sponsored by the US government, America is "at home" in many places. The State Department wanted to maintain and develop contact with as many people interested in the US as possible, and so the American Corners Program was initiated, to respond demand, further stimulate intercultural dialogue, and foster mutual understanding.

Many Romanians – professors, teachers, former students, and the large public in general – remember the American Library. Many recollect themselves looking behind and around a few times when they entered the American Library before '89. As many miss it. As many have nice memories of the of film screenings, book launches, and concerts it used to host.

The good news is that the Cultural Center of the US Embassy still hosts such events, and the Information and Resource Center, which provides a reference collection and research assistance, is open to the public. The reference collection includes encyclopedias, handbooks, yearbooks, and US government documents. There are also periodicals available (40 titles), specialized CD-ROM and online databases, and a resource research service – the IRC staff will search for resources available on a given topic, based on requests via telephone or e-mail.

Better news is that the US Embassy is now bringing events closer to the interested audiences and is working with them to shape activities that aim to meet their cultural interests.

The American Corners Program promotes the concept of library for the community, which combines the library and info center function with a platform for programming.

Some of the key words that describe an American Corners are accessibility, accuracy, interactivity, flexibility, openness and diversity.

The US Embassy has so far worked successfully on the American Corners Program with libraries in all regions of Romania. There are up and running Corners at the: Gh. Asachi County Library in Iași, Timiș County Library in Timișoara, Aman County Library in Craiova, and at the Teacher-Training Center in Bacău. By the end of May, two new American Corners will have opened, at the Petre Dulfu County Library in Baia Mare and at Ovidius University in Constanța. Another American Corner, at the O. Goga County Library in Cluj is being put together and

will most probably open to the public by the end of the year.

Working with these libraries is as inspiring as it is enjoyable. Creating an American Corner was a mutual understanding process in itself: both partners learned things, engaged together in a long-term project with a shared goal, and lasting friendships took roots.

Hosted in a library, the American Corner has this primary function: to provide classical library services in a modern way. The Corner Collection is composed of books on topics ranging from American history, geography, politics and government, visual and performing arts, and sports, to journalism, cultural diversity, current issues in public health and education. English teaching materials, for both teachers and learners of all levels, form an important share of the collection. Students of American literature will find the Library of America collection of American literary classics in authoritative and unabridged editions and contemporary literature titles by award-winning authors – these will soon, if not already, be part of academic bibliographies.

For those interested in studying in the US, there is a large educational advising module, which can help in making the right choice of a university, writing a successful application, taking the TOEFL, GRE and other tests necessary for enrolment, learning what to expect when accepted to a US university, and how to adjust to the US in general and find the right path through the American academic system. There is also a reference collection of dictionaries and encyclopedias available for consultation. Last but not least, there is a young reader's collection, which includes, but is not limited to, biographies, short stories, books about important places and events, cultural diversity and democratic values. The books are organized in a primary English and a secondary English set, according to how demanding it is to read them in terms of age and language proficiency.

Besides books, the American Corner collection includes audio tapes for the English courses, feature movies and documentaries on DVD and CD-Rom, as well as American music.

The host libraries offered generous space for the American Corners. We were, therefore, able to provide a few computers with Internet connection for the visitors' use. The US Embassy website has a special American Corners section [http://bucharest.usembassy.gov/American\\_Corners/index.html](http://bucharest.usembassy.gov/American_Corners/index.html). This is where each Corner has its own site, and a number of useful links to the US federal government institutions, the Library of Congress, the American Studies Association, and others. There is also a list of electronic journals on a wide array of topics – history, politics, arts, education, law, business, contemporary society, globalization, etc – accessible free. Teachers of English will find an on-line version of the English Teaching Forum. A young reader's e-Corner provides a bunch of links to resource websites that have information on all topics,

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lessons, interactive games and educational short movies. There's also a link to the HI! International Webzine for teenagers, to which youth are invited to contribute articles or ideas for online dialogue.

Accuracy, diversity, interactivity – the keywords on which the American Corner collection of print and e-documents is designed. Also openness, because all suggestions are considered. A professor of English teaching at the University in Iași complained that some books she needed for her courses were hard to find; some time later, the books were available not only at the Corner in Iași, they were ordered for all the others. A small example maybe, but one that will encourage others to say what they would like to find at the Corner. Though resources are in no way unlimited, there is a lot of attention for all needs the public may express.

Would a professor like to teach one or a series of classes at the Corner? Does a Fulbright scholar want to offer a lecture? Is there a Peace Corps volunteer who wants to teach a group how to, for instance, write successful grant applications? Has someone recently returned from studies in the US and is willing to share the experience with colleagues or future students to American universities? Does a group of high school students have an idea and want to develop a project? Is a student doing research for a dissertation? Or do you simply want your child to learn English or read a story? There's something for each of these at the American Corners. Just tell the librarian what you need, and he/she will help make arrangements for an event or activity, and will provide as much technical support as possible; and will also come up with suggestions. Though there are library rules in place, there are also solutions and the librarian is there to help. Actually, thanks to the commitment of our hosts and partner libraries, there are two librarians at each Corner, which allows for longer business hours and more flexibility and support in coordinating activities.

No wonder that, with so many and diverse "human resources" involved – library and Embassy staff, colleagues from Fulbright advising centers, program alumni, university and high school staff and students, press, local authorities and virtually the whole community, the American Corners are vibrant "bits of America". A few examples say it all: the American Corner in Iași hosted a lecture on George Enescu offered by John Sorensen, director of the Enescu Project in New York; a creative writing program for university students was conducted at the American Corner in Timișoara by Rebecca Janson, the English Language Fellow based at the University of the West; Dorian Branea of the same university, alumnus of a program in the US, initiated and helped organize a lecture tour by Professor Charles King, well-known expert in international relations in the Black Sea region; the Corners in Iași and Bacău organized activities with university and high school students in celebration of Martin Luther King Jr., Black American History Month, Earth Day, Arbor Day – the list can go on and on, and includes even a Halloween party at the Corner in Iași.

There is a good reason for anyone interested to visit the American Corners. And everyone is invited.

*Cornelia Vlaicu*

## 2006/07 FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS IN ROMANIA

### **Dr. Ileana A. ORLICH**

Arrival: October 06 – 8 months

Topic: Literature: A Feminist Epistemology: Translating Papadat-Bengescu's Trilogy  
Romanian University: University of Bucharest  
Home University: Arizona State University

### **Mr. Aram Asher SCHVEY**

Arrival: September 06 – 5 months

Topic: Roma Rights, Human Rights and Comparative Constitutional Law  
Romanian University: University of Bucharest  
Home University: Fordham Univ., Lincoln Center, NY

### **Dr. Lynn Davis PATTERSON**

Arrival: October 06 – 4 months

Topic: Anthropology: Bringing Professional Experience to a New Anthropology Department  
Romanian University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
Home University: Evergreen State University, WA

### **Dr. Lou Ann LANGE**

Arrival: October 2006 – 9 months

Topic: American Studies - 19th Cent.American History  
Romanian University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj; ALI. Cuza University, Iasi  
Home University: Clarkson Univ., Potsdam, NY

### **Mr. Menelaos TRIANTAFILLOU**

Arrival: October 06 – 4 months

Topic: Architecture, Urbanism: Urban Redevelopment Approach and the Training of Professionals  
Romanian University: Technical University, Cluj  
Home University: University of Cincinnati, OH

### **Dr. Michael WATERS**

Arrival: February 2007 – 5 months

Topic: Communication Arts: American Studies - Contemporary American Literature  
Romanian University: ALI.Cuza University, Iasi  
Home University: Salisbury Univ., MD

### **Mr. Emery P. DALESIO**

Arrival: October 06 – 9 months

Topic: Coaching Business Journalism in Romania  
Romanian University: University of Bucharest & Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj  
Home Institution: The Associated Press, Raleigh, NC

### **Dr. Seyed Mahmoud MEHDIAN**

Arrival: Oct. 2006 – 9 months

Phone, e-mail: seyed@umich.edu  
Topic: Business Administration - Transition toward a market economy  
Romanian University: Home University: University of Michigan, Flint, MI

### **Dr. Jack Ranger FRIEDMAN**

Arrival: October 06 – 9 months

Topic: Culture, Mental Illness and Mental Health in Romania  
Romanian University: University of the West, University of Petrosani  
Home University: University of Chicago, IL

### **Dr. Frederick JACOBS**

Arrival: February 2006 – 5 months

Phone, e-mail: fjacobsdc@aol.com  
Topic: Education - Case Studies of Romanian Postsecondary Institutions: Challenges and Opportunities  
Romanian University: ALI. Cuza Univ., Iasi  
Home University: American University, DC

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

## Calls for Papers

### 1. British Association for American Studies Annual Conference 2007 Centre for American Studies, University of Leicester, United Kingdom

The BAAS Annual Conference for the year 2007 will be hosted by the Centre for American Studies at the University of Leicester, from 19-22 April 2007.

2007 marks the tenth birthday of the Centre for American Studies at the University of Leicester so we are particularly pleased to host the conference this year. It also promises to be a very interesting year for reflecting on American history and culture given that it will be 400 years after the founding of Jamestown, Virginia and 50 years since Little Rock and Sputnik. There is no overarching theme for the conference and we would encourage papers across as wide a range of disciplines as possible, on any American Studies topic broadly defined. At the 2007 conference we would like to showcase Leicester as one of the most diverse and multicultural of cities in the United Kingdom by inviting papers that deal with ethnicity and/or cultural diversity. We would, though, encourage panel proposals on any theme, roundtable discussions, and innovative ideas for sessions that we might incorporate into the schedule. Proposals for 20-minute papers should be a maximum of 250 words with a provisional title. These will be arranged into panel groups. Panel proposals and roundtable discussions by two or more people, sharing a common theme, are also invited. We would like to include papers across the spectrum of higher education: from postgraduates to senior scholars. Proposals for BAAS 2007 at the University of Leicester should be submitted by 31 October 2006, preferably by email attachment, to:

**Dr George Lewis**  
**BAAS Conference Secretary**  
**Email: gdgl1@le.ac.uk**

Any other comments or suggestions about BAAS 2007 are also welcome to:

**Professor Martin Halliwell**  
**Email: mrh17@le.ac.uk**

### 2. Correspondences: The Theory and Practice of American Letters, 1620-1860

Essays taking a wide variety of approaches to letters are welcome, including those examining the formal and material aspects of the genre; the aesthetics of the letter; the social, political, and historical contexts out of which letters emerge and within which they intervene; the ways that letters negotiate and mediate race, class, and gender relationships and national identities; challenges or opportunities letters pose to theorists of autobiography or scholars working in the fields of

cultural, women's, or critical race studies; editorial, composition, or revision practices; reception; subgenres of letters (e.g. the familiar letter, letters to the editor, letters embedded in other genres, etc.). Essays may focus on a particular writer's letters or an exchange between multiple correspondents or may consider issues across authors and eras.

Essays of 25 pages (maximum) are due by Nov. 1, 2006.

Inquiries are welcome.

**Send an email attachment and a hard copy to each editor:**  
**Sharon M. Harris (Dept. of English, U of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-4025; sharon.harris@uconn.edu) and Theresa Strouth Gaul (TCU Box 297270, Fort Worth, TX 76129; t.gaul@tcu.edu).**

### 3. Race, Memory and Reclamation: "There are years that ask questions and years that answer." (Zora Neale Hurston).

The school of American studies at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK, is holding a two-day international conference entitled, "Race, Memory and Reclamation" from September 07-09, 2007.

All sorts of questions are raised by this anniversary of the formal ending of the transatlantic slave trade within the United States – How important is this commemoration given that slavery continued within the interior of the United States until 1865? Have African-American communities been able to reclaim the history of enslavement for themselves and in what ways? And to what extent can the legacies of slavery ever be done justice to? The conference will be reflecting on questions regarding the commemoration of various histories within the United States and will consider issues such as:

- How have the histories of subaltern groups been commemorated within these specific communities?
  - How has the nature of the ways in which various peoples have scripted their remembrances of these pasts changed over time?
  - Can the remembrances of these histories in their various forms be regarded as a form of cultural resistance and/or resurrection?
  - What are the implications of commemorative history to both dominant and subaltern groups within American society?
- Papers are invited from various disciplines including, (but not exclusive to), history, literature, gender studies, cultural studies, and folklore.

**For more information or to submit proposals please contact Dr Rebecca Griffin (becky.griffin@uea.ac.uk) or Dr Malcolm McLaughlin (m.mclaughlin@uea.ac.uk) in the school of American studies at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK. Proposal deadline: 1st August 2006.**

### 4. Revisiting Slave Narratives II « Les Carnets du Cerpac » Paul Valéry University, Montpellier III

An international colloquium was organized by the Cerpac and



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held at Paul Valéry University in April 2003 that focused not only on the African-American neo-slave novels published in the 1960s but also on the more recent neo-slave narratives written in the 1980s and 1990s by, African, African-American and Caribbean writers such as Fred D'Aguiar, David Dabydeen, Charles Johnson, Caryl Phillips among others. After the success of the colloquium and its proceedings (2005), a second volume of papers entitled « Revisiting Slave Narratives II » is going to be published to cover some of the many writers not included in the first. Details of the authors and works examined in the first volume can be found on the Cerpac website: <http://recherche.univ-montp3.fr/cerpac>.

Priority will be given to papers examining new authors. The following names may serve as a starting point although not as a limit: Elizabeth Alexander, David Bradley, André Brink, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Michelle Cliff, J. California Cooper, David Anthony Durham, Beryl Gilroy, John Hearne, Manu Herbstein, Lawrence Hill, Paule Marshall, Valerie Martin, Robbie Mc Cauley, Susan Lori Parks, Lawrence Scott, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Lalita Tademy...

Contributions about visual artists like Renée Green, David Hammons, Isaac Julien, Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Adrian Piper, Yinka Shonibare, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker are also welcome. This publication should interest all those working in the Caribbean field, anglophone or francophone, as well as the African and African-American/Canadian field, in Literature, Cultural Studies or the Visual Arts.

**Please submit a 500-word abstract with a short bio by June 15, 2006 to Judith Misrahi-Barak**

**[judith.misrahi-barak@univ-montp3.fr](mailto:judith.misrahi-barak@univ-montp3.fr)**

**An answer will be given by July 15. The final deadline to send the completed paper is January 31, 2007.**

## **5. Ex-centric Narratives, Identity and Multivocality in Anglo-American Cultures March 15-18, 2007; Hellenic Association for American Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**

The Hellenic Association for American Studies, and the Department of American Literature and Culture of the School of English of Aristotle University aim to bring together Greek and foreign graduate students (MA & PhD) as well as young scholars at the start of their careers from various fields and disciplines to a conference which is organized at the Aristotle University Campus. The conference, which is the first of its kind to be held in Greece, invites papers that address the concepts of de-centrism and ex-centrism within a globalized context where borders between the canonical and the other are being contested. To investigate the newly created political and socio-cultural reality as well as the literary and artistic aesthetics, prospective participants are encouraged to contribute paper proposals relating to the conference theme, in the fields of literature, history,

film, language, pedagogy, psychology, music, art, politics, economics, and law. Ex-centricity, identity and multivocality may be examined in relation to one of the suggested topics below, the list not being exhaustive.

■ Personal Boundaries in the Negotiation of Identity ■ Locality and Belonging ■ Place and Identity ■ Contested Landscapes/Contested Narratives ■ Local v/s transnational politics ■ Setting boundaries / Transcending Boundaries; Spatial and Social Organization ■ Ethnic Groups-Minorities- Immigration / Alienation / Exile ■ Local vs. Global: Shifting Borders and Hybrid Identities ■ Doppelganger metaphor /Otherness ■ Polyphony vs. Authorial voices in politics/history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, journalism/law. ■ Gender / Racial identity ■ New Novels / Old Narratives ■ Multileveledness / Politext - Hypertexts ■ Intertextuality ■ Peripheral/Marginal ■ Postcolonial Narratives ■ Cultural Preservations and Electronic Technologies ■ Embodiment / Disembodiment ■ World English ■ Semantics

**Selected papers will be published in electronic and hard copy format.**

**Please submit a 250-300 word abstract, for a 20 minute presentation and a short bio to the address below by October 31, 2006.**

**E-mail to: [excentric@enl.auth.gr](mailto:excentric@enl.auth.gr)**

## **6. EJAS Special Issue: Reading/Misreading 'America'**

As part of its goal to broaden American Studies and to foster a transEuropean 'academic space' for discussing the United States, EJAS would like to devote an issue to investigating the many representations of 'America', and how and why they are used in particular contexts.

EJAS invites articles from all disciplines and approaches to examine the causes and consequences of these readings/interpretations of America:

- How have narratives and images of the USA been used in Europe in support of particular (political/cultural/social) causes, including US foreign policy itself?
- How have Americans mis-read their own country - and themselves?
- Why are certain readings of 'America' particularly attractive in particular European countries, and what are the consequences?
- Is it possible to 'misread' America when its identities are so fluid and multifaceted?
- Translating America: How have cultural preferences in Europe affected the adoption / translation of particular US literary canons and specific authors?

**Deadline for submission is October 1. All necessary additional information (modalities of submission, format, address of the editors in the respective fields of study, etc) can be found on the site of the Journal : <http://ejas.revues.org>, under one of the rubrics in the left-hand column of the screen.**



## AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

# Book Reviews

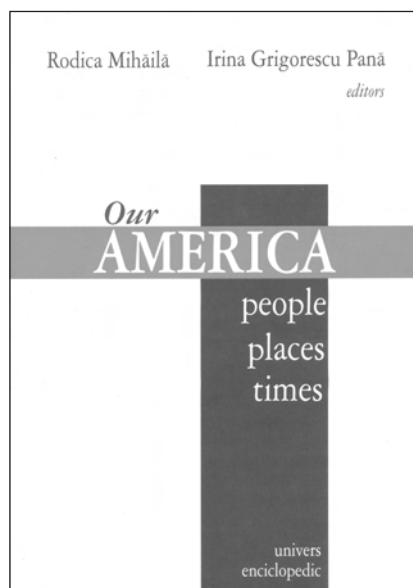
## "What's in a Name? That Which We Call America"

Shakespeare's distorted verse points, not by way of already established clichés, to the current background of America and, implicitly, of American Studies, or Americanness, as seen in and from Romania. "That which we call America", to subtly allude to the very title of the recently issued volume, should be read as both a native and, particularly, a non-native view of the New World, as a series of imagological studies carefully selected by Prof. Rodica Mihăilă and Prof. Irina Grigorescu Pană in an effort to remap the relationship between what America should be or might be (our Romanian perspective) and what America really is.

The common denominator of the present volume, the result of the 2004 RAAS – Fulbright Conference held in Bucharest and hosted by the American Studies Center of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, is the updated cultural, theoretical and political agenda which dominates American Studies and mirrors all the manifestations of American life.

The first section entitled Cultural Paradigms: Theory and Practice brings forth a deep-seated interdisciplinary way of questioning problems like the Puritan Conspiracy paradigm (Rodica Mihăilă), referentiality from Frege to Chomsky (Alexandra Cornilescu), the work as an embodiment of theory (Fabio Durão), the entrepreneurial tradition in the American higher education (Liviu Andreescu), hegemonic democracy and liberal isolationism after 9/11 (Marius Jucan) and, last but not least, the "Manifest Destiny" between a New Expansionist frontier and an Electronic one (Adrian Mihalache).

America Refigured: Modes and Canons, the subtitle of the second section, is a successful blend of cultural



theory and literary practice which underlines the textual performance of America: the 19th-century American market cultural commodities such as the "Gibson Girl" feminist manifesto (Mihaela Precup), foundations of American cultural identity (Sorina Chiper), New York as a stance of eclecticism (Cristina Chevereșan), context and contiguity in Ezra Pound's Ripostes (Silvia Florea), Sylvia Plath's confessional poetry (Eduard Vlad), the involvement of American writers in the Spanish Civil War (Radu Surdulescu), moral and psychological challenges filtered through John Steinbeck's work (Luchen Li).

Appropriating the Other is the theme of the next section in which Iulian Cănanău, Corina Anghel Crișu, Iulia Blănuță, Ileana Cristea, Teodor Mateoc, Ioana Luca and Mihai Mîndra analyze race and ethnicity with critical acumen at work, insisting on the tenuous dimension of America as well as on a historical-literary analyses ranging from the Cold War, Harriet Jacob's Incidents, Flannery O'Connor to Alice Walker, William Styron, Jamaica Kincaid, the Holocaust and the

Holocaust.

"Cultural Icons: Mediation and Translation" is the last but one section dealing with a challenging analysis of war translation (Dana Ionescu and Roxana Petcu), the theory of proper names (Mihaela Dogaru), film studies (Nadina Vișan and Ruxandra Vișan), icons of female liberation (Adina Ciugureanu), the American Dream (Simona Mitocaru, Maria Cap-Bun) and Canadian rewritings (Ana Olos).

The closing section brings into discussion the dual relation local-global, minutely dealt with by Mădălina Nicolaescu, representation and interpretation of the American Dream in Europe (Codrin Liviu Cuțitaru), cultural contrasts between the Old and the New World reflected from Kafka to Vonnegut (Dan Popescu) and, finally, the global perspective and cosmopolitanism of Henry James approached by Roxana Oltean.

This brief presentation, due to space constraints, aims at merely outlining the diversity of critical approaches and topics discussed by Romanian scholars in American Studies. They are tightly related to the American Weltanschauung which is, now more than ever, a floating signifier whose signified is translated as representation, simulacrum, narrative, remapping, reconfiguration of a name meant to (re)define unity within variety: America.

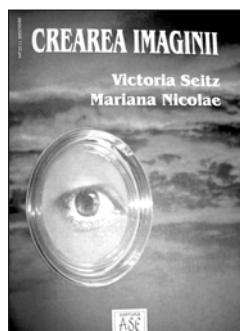
*Dragoș Ivana, University of Bucharest*

**Our America: People, Places, Times. A Collection of Essays, Rodica Mihăilă, Irina Grigorescu Pană (eds), Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic Publishing House, 2005**

## Thank you RAAS!

I have met Dr. Victoria Seitz, professor of marketing at the California State University of San Bernardino, in Iași during a conference organized by the A.I.Cuza University in 2003. Besides admiring the discipline of an American professor trying to cope with Romanian "conference culture" I never thought again of the meeting until a few months

# AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA



later when Dr. Seitz was invited to the University of Bucharest to lecture on advertising. And so we met again and I asked Dr. Seitz to teach a

course in International Marketing for the Master in International Business program in my own university, the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. This is when I became acquainted with the Romanian Association for American Studies and met again, after too many years, professor Rodica Mihăilă, the president of RAAS. It was a happy meeting in which I discovered the projects and activities taking place in my own Alma Mater with which I have lost contact over the years. It is for me a never ending source of amazement of how we need a foreign catalyst in order to get to know Romanian realities that are within walking distance from our own office. I am therefore grateful to Dr. Seitz and the Fulbright Commission in Bucharest for reconnecting me with my university roots, and to Dr. Rodica Mihăilă for further facilitating a program that led, as a secondary outcome, to the publishing of a book co-authored by Dr. Victoria Seitz and myself.

*Image Making* under its Romanian title of *Crearea imaginii* was published at the ASE Publishing House and was launched at the Sibiu Gaudeamus Book Fair on 30th March 2006, in the presence of its two authors and of a large public.

*Crearea imaginii* is targeted at business people, entrepreneurs from the private sector, managers of public institutions, young professionals needing to carefully prepare their career path, even authors who need to have their books published, offering realistic solutions for (self) promotion in their respective professional field. *Crearea imaginii* presents both American and Romanian realities of image building at the same time underlying the cultural differences that do not allow ready-made solutions that had worked in the US to be exported to Romania. Besides being a practical guide,

written in an entertaining style, the book offers a clear explanation of marketing terminology discriminating between terms that have been borrowed from English (advertising, publicity, public relations) and are used irrelevantly in Romanian. Best practices as well as updated professional vocabulary, including a brief glossary, are presented for the benefit of the book's Romanian audience.

The project for writing and publishing *Crearea imaginii* is interesting under many aspects, but mostly because it was incredibly fast and was completed with the cooperation of many people from various organizations to whom the authors are really thankful: the ASE Publishing House, the Faculty of International Business and Economics (REI), the Fulbright Commission, the Marketing Department of CSUSB, the Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. And RAAS who facilitated contacts and networking and without whose existence this project would probably have never happened! Thank you, Dr. Mihăilă and also thanks to your supportive colleagues!

Mariana Nicolae,

*The Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest*

## Crearea imaginii

Victoria Seitz, Mariana Nicolae

Bucharest: ASE Publishing House 2006

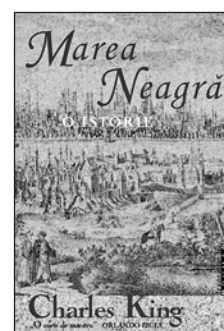
## Charles King in Romania

One of the prominent events organized by the American Cultural Center of the American Embassy in Bucharest in 2005 was Professor Charles King's visit to Romania, one of the countries which inspired his 2004 comprehensive history of The Black Sea. Charles King, Associate Professor in the school of Foreign Service and the Department of Government at Georgetown University, Ion Rațiu Chair of Romanian Studies, conducted his lecture tour between December 12th and 16th, focusing on The Black Sea and Its Role in U.S.-Romanian Relations and conducting a series of meetings with top intellectuals, journalists, members of the academia and students from three major university centers: Bucharest, Cluj and Timișoara. Welcomed by Ambassador Nicholas

Taubman and CAO Kathy Kavalec on his arrival in the Romanian capital, the reputed specialist was a notable presence in various events: either as keynote speaker at The New Romania on the Black Sea conference or as TV-shows guest, he managed to engage all types of audiences.

The catalyst of Charles King's Romanian itinerary was, however, of a purely cultural nature: the Romanian Cultural Institute in Bucharest and the Humanitas „Joc Secund” bookstore in Timișoara hosted the official launch of The Black Sea's Romanian edition. Followed by Q/A sessions and book signings, the events focused the general public's attention upon an alternative way of writing history, which blends erudition and style, encyclopedic knowledge of the studied issues and narrative alertness, scientific arguments and literary elegance.

Pontus Euxinus, Mare Maggiore, Kara Deniz, Chernoe More, Black Sea are the five main chapters which outline the main chronological stages in the development of a much-disputed, politically and economically strategic geographic area. The polyglot writer uses the names under which the Sea was known at various moments in time so as to accurately capture its surrounding atmosphere not only in socio-political terms, but also in what



the languages, customs and beliefs of its various communities are concerned. Acting as an enlightening guide to an intricate web of interstate relationships, the

book offers generous insight into the cultural heritage of a vast territory, placed so close to the Romanians' hearts and yet so far from common knowledge. A History of the Black Sea is the captivating work of a skilful writer and researcher, a true story fascinatingly told.

Cristina Chevereșan,

*Timișoara University of the West*

**Marea Neagră, O istorie. Charles King. Timișoara: Brumar Publishing House, 2006. Translated by Cristina Chevereșan and Dorian Branea.**

# AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

# Doctoral Theses

## Iustin Sfâriac:

**The Quest for Accomplishment in Melville's Novels**  
 "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca

*The Quest for Accomplishment in Melville's Novels* is a study inspired by the most urgent needs and concerns of our time. Research indicates that the greatest sources of concern in modern man are the feelings of alienation, of emptiness and the impossibility of communication. Tracing them back to the seventeenth century and the advent of modernity, the study shows that they gradually acquired a literary expression and their representation in Western literature is especially conspicuous in the latter half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the first signs of these spiritual diseases of modern man had been visible ever since the dawn of modernity and nineteenth-century American novelist Herman Melville is among the first Western authors to grant them a literary embodiment.

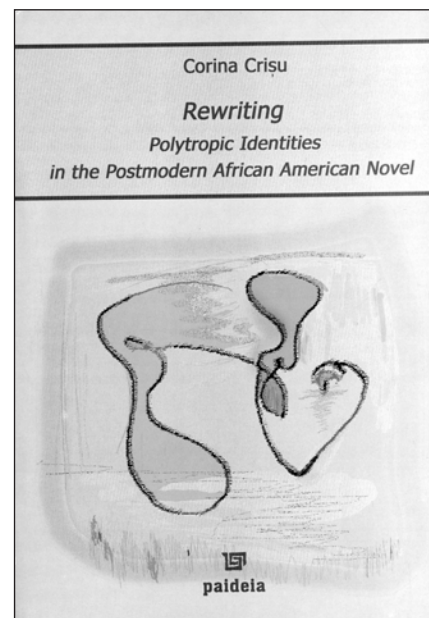
Taking into consideration the relevance of these issues to present-day academic discourse dealing with the relationship between individual and society and taking advantage of the stock-taking moment we have arrived at in Melvillean studies, *The Quest for Accomplishment in Melville's Novels* proposes a unifying vision meant to bridge the gap between radical interpretations of Melville's work. The study addresses the controversial issue of otherness examining the relationship between self and the Other, either similar or different in terms of race, sex or culture. The study is divided into four chapters and an appendix: the first chapter is a brief discourse on the method; the second focuses on the quest of the white male; the third deals with the quest of the non-white; the fourth analyzes the quest of woman; finally, the appendix examines the reception of Melville's work in Romania and its relevance to present-day literary and non-literary discourse. *The Quest for*

*Accomplishment in Melville's Novels* uses the latest results of criticism in various fields of Melvillean studies—race, feminism, new historicism, ethnographical analysis—in an attempt to ascertain the way in which individual Melvillean characters relate to others and deal with differences of race, sex or culture. In order to more accurately pinpoint the nature of these characters' quest, our study enlists the help of one of the most seminal critical methods, existential analysis. Elaborated by Viktor Frankl in the 1930s and 1940s and widely developed by the Gesellschaft für Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse (GLE) in Vienna and in particular by Alfred Längle, existential analysis starts from the premise that the most important motivation that lies behind each human act is not the principle of pleasure, as Freud claimed, nor the will to power, as Nietzsche or Adler believed. The most important human motivation is—according to existential analysis—the quest for meaning, the inescapable desire of each human being to attach meaning to his or her life, usually by placing an individual existence within a larger social and/or cultural context. Building upon this premise, existential analysis uncovers the requisites for a fulfilled existence, the four fundamental motivations that form the cornerstones of human existence. It is precisely these four fundamental motivations that give us the scientific basis for explaining such elusive characters as Captain Ahab or Captain Vere and allow us to acknowledge the relevance of Melvillean studies to present-day academic discourse.

## Corina Anghel Crişu:

**Rewriting Polytypic Identities in the Postmodern African American Novel**  
 University of Bucharest

Wide-ranging in scope and highly theoretical in terms of analysis, *Rewriting:*



*Polytypic Identities in the Postmodern African American Novel* engages in an intertextual dialogue between black and white texts of the past and the present. By making use of African American studies, postcolonial theory, New Historicism, feminism and gender studies, the thesis examines a range of representative postmodern novels by Charles Johnson, Toni Morrison, Ishmael Reed, Alice Walker, Ernest Gaines and Ntozake Shange. Corina Crişu cogently argues that the novels discussed bring their major contribution to redefining black identity by producing significant rewritings of both black and white canonical authors: Conrad, Douglass, Dumas, Ellison, Equiano, Fauset, Harper, Hurston, Jacobs, Melville, Stowe, Wright and others. Crişu's original argument explores how this form of rewriting reconsiders prior notions of identity and initiates polytypic reconfigurations of the black character whose flexible trajectory towards self-awakening and assertion eludes physical and mental fixation. The story of the polytypic heroes is retraced in relation to their social and political context for the abiding goal of charting a map of the key events in African American history from the Middle Passage to the Civil Right Movement. Rewriting thus demonstrates that contemporary black authors do not simply reproduce the past, but they instill a change in the reader's way of perceiving it and reveal that previous racial representations must be revisited through endless intertextual efforts. (The thesis



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was published by Paideia Publishing House, 2006, 307 pp.; it can be accessed online at: <http://www.e-scoala.ro/biblioteca/corinacrisu.html>).

## **Bogdan Barbu:**

**Vin americanii! Prezența simbolică a Statelor Unite în România Războiului Rece, 1945-1971**

**University of Bucharest**

Although in recent years, the post-1989 American presence in the country has become a frequently debated topic in the Romanian public space, its history has remained largely neglected. Far from being just a post-1989 phenomenon, the US presence in the Romanian public and private life is in fact part of a long-term process covering the whole twentieth century. Although it placed Eastern Bloc countries and the United States into opposite camps, and obstructed the US direct presence in the region, the descent of the Iron Curtain

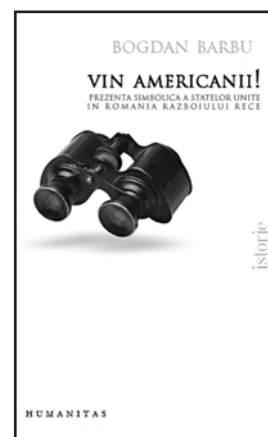
did not stop this process.

The book discusses the "arrival of the Americans" collective psychology phenomenon, the widespread hope that the United States would liberate the country, an idea repeated obsessively at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. It also looks at a wide range of other forms of the US presence in Romania during the first half of the Cold War period. It discusses the nature of this presence and it analyses the ways in which it shaped Romanians' understanding of the United States. It looks at the mechanisms through which knowledge about the United States was created, disseminated, and received under the rule of the Communist party regime.

The book argues that, unlike Cold War Western Europe, where the US presence was a highly tangible and visible mainstream one, in Romania, like elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc, this presence was merely symbolic. It has manifested itself mainly as a set of official and public

opinion attitudes, media discourses, cultural propaganda efforts and cultural consumption patterns in which "America" appeared as the main signifier of "the West", of the opposite political, economic, cultural and ideological camp.

In this complex Cold War environment, Romanians' understanding of "America" was permanently negotiated and reshaped at the intersection between official constructs coming from both sides of the Iron Curtain and knowledge about the US made available through various unofficial channels. The thesis was published by Humanitas PH, 2006.



## **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/ACLS Early Career Fellowships**



The American Council of Learned Societies (the American Studies Association has been a constituent member of the ACLS since 1958) announces a significant new fellowship program providing support for young scholars to complete their dissertation and, later, to advance their research after being awarded the Ph.D. The

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/ACLS Early Career Fellowship Program will award fellowships in two categories: Dissertation Completion Fellowships and Fellowships for Recent Doctoral Recipients. A grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation supports this program.

The first competition for Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowships will take place in 2006-07 and be open to graduate students writing dissertations in the humanities and related social sciences. This program aims to encourage timely completion of the Ph.D. Applicants must be prepared to complete their dissertations within

the period of their fellowship tenure or shortly thereafter. ACLS will award 65 Fellowships in this competition. Each Fellowship will carry a stipend and benefits up to a total of \$33,000.

The first competition for Mellon/ACLS Fellowships for Recent Doctoral Recipients will take place in 2007-08. Eligibility for these 25 Fellowships will be limited to scholars who held Dissertation Completion Fellowships (or were highly ranked in that fellowship competition) and who completed their dissertations within the period specified in their first fellowship application. Also eligible will be scholars who held other national dissertation fellowships—such as the Whiting Fellowships—and who completed their dissertations within the period specified in their first application. These Fellowships will carry stipends of \$30,000 to allow the Fellow to devote an academic year to research. Awardees will have up to two years from the date of the award to take up Fellowship tenure. We expect that some awardees may use their Fellowship to take leave from a faculty position; those without a full-time position may choose to affiliate with a humanities research center or conduct research independently.

**Further information about the competition will be available by June 20 at [www.acls.org/ecf.htm](http://www.acls.org/ecf.htm)**

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

# Academic Exchanges

## Ten Months in Romania

Where is the global etiquette book that tells the poor foreigner what not to do: do not offer a Chinese person a clock as a present, because the Chinese word for 'clock' is the same syllable but on a different tone as the word for 'death'; do not give a Russian shoes as a present, because it implies you wish the person to leave (dă-i papucii!), and do not offer a Romanian an even number of flowers, because even numbers are for the dead, not the living? Such a book would be very helpful. Other items associated with death for Romanians seem to be towels and candles, so that bringing as a housewarming present a set of kitchen towels (a perfectly reasonable gift item in the U.S., since such a set would be practical for a new homeowner) might be unwelcome, along with offering, say, a scented candle as a hostess gift or even fancy soaps, since the latter imply that the hostess might actually be in need such. For Americans, soaps and candles – simple, usable objects – are perfectly good alternatives to candy and flowers, if you're trying to come up with something other than candy and flowers, just for a change.

What guidebooks and orientations tell the foreigner coming to Romania has little use "on the ground," especially if the person, like a Fulbrighter, is going to be interacting with "real" Romanians on an ongoing basis. That is, I am inclined to think that Fulbrighters coming to Romania today are not really going to need to be told to watch out for and not fall for the "passport control" scam that might be perpetrated upon them in the streets. Rather, what they should be taught is how to say, if confronted with such a scam, the Romanian equivalent of: "Guys, this jig is up. You've got to find a new line of work." And, the world over, there are taxi drivers who will try to fleece the foreigner. It's inevitable. Within a week or two of my arrival in Bucharest, a taxi driver tried to

convince me at the end of the ride that the meter ran in euros not lei. Fortunately, I had enough Romanian to say, "E o glumă?" Now, the foreigner probably should be told to read the door panel of the taxi before getting in, because the prices are posted, and they can vary widely. Rider beware! It's not the driver's fault if you get in a taxi that charges ten times more than another one.

But interactions with taxi drivers and possible street scammers is not where the interest of life is here. It is, as I say, in ongoing relationships with students, fellow faculty and friends. It is in knowing how many and what kind of flowers to offer. It has been endlessly fascinating for me to discover – sometimes with chagrin – that what I would consider "normal" behavior could be interpreted as "rude." I have become somewhat allergic to generalizations of the type: Americans are such-

*What I do know is that Romania is a tough place  
to try to learn to speak Romanian. Very tough.  
Not impossible but requiring a militant refusal  
on a daily basis to speak English.*

and-such; Romanians are such-and-such, because these statements usually say almost nothing that is worth knowing. However, I have found that Americans are probably "nosier" than Romanians when they first meet someone. For us, it is normal, even polite, to ask the person you have just met a lot of personal questions (but only of a certain sort – not, for instance, how much money they make) that would be considered intrusive to a Romanian. I have heard it said that the U.S. is a "low context society," meaning that we cannot take much for granted about the background of a fellow citizen, so we ask all those questions. It could be that Romania is a "high context society," meaning that asking a lot of personal

questions of a person you have just met is unnecessary and, then, even impolite. I don't really know.

What I do know is that Romania is a tough place to try to learn to speak Romanian. Very tough. Not impossible but requiring a militant refusal on a daily basis to speak English and a need to establish myself in certain restaurants, shops and so forth where they will only speak Romanian to me, to avoid going places where English is spoken, which is practically everywhere, meaning that the "safest" place for me in my effort to learn Romanian is in my own home, reading the newspaper, doing my exercises, writing my compositions for my meditații, and watching television with my remote, such that every time English comes on the tube (which is fairly often), I can zap it. In public, I open my mouth with Romanian words coming out ... and someone is sure to respond in English. Interestingly enough, my friends in the English Department are the most interested to encourage me in my effort to speak Romanian, most likely because they are good teachers at heart, get a kick out of seeing me try, and are already secure in their English.

Here's an entry for the global etiquette book, for all shopkeepers, waiters, and

people on the street: When a foreigner is in your country speaking your language, do not respond in another language, unless the foreigner either asks for help or finally needs it. And do not give me any noise about it being "a sign of respect" to speak the other's language. All you want is practice in English. And all you're doing is insulting the foreigner who is, after all, in Romania trying to speak Romanian.

**Julie Tetel is Professor of Linguistics at Duke University, as well as a well-known author. For the past year, she has been a Fulbright Scholar, teaching at the American Studies Department, University of Bucharest.**



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

*continued from p. 1*

European and American interchanges and mutual perceptions. A U.S. grant for the publication of a volume of essays generated from the conference presentations will further the major objectives of the Conference. In his inspiring address to the participants, U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Taubman, present for the first time at the opening of a RAAS biennial, reassured us about the U.S. Embassy's full support of our endeavors to expand the institutionalization of American Studies and to develop American Studies in Romania. We are grateful, to this effect, for the grant which made possible the publication and distribution of this Newsletter.

As in the past, with the help of the Fulbright Commission and of such generous sponsors as the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, Saatchi & Saatchi, the University of Bucharest, the Margento Project and Sitka-Alaska Foreign Books, RAAS was able to cover the conference expenses for its members, which largely accounted for nation-wide participation at a time when attending a conference outside their city becomes financially prohibitive for many Romanians, especially for graduate students and young faculty members. The Margento Project and Saatchi & Saatchi, for the fourth time our sponsor, offered us in addition some moments of entertainment: an avant-garde poetry/painting/rock show (the Margento Project) and a splendid reception at the Amsterdam Terrace (Saatchi & Saatchi). We are grateful to all our sponsors.

The RAAS General Meeting, held on the first day of the Conference, included on its agenda reports by the president, the treasurer and the Newsletter editor. The discussions brought to members' attention such issues as the format and desirable reforms of the next biennial, the readjustment of the dues, updating the (e)-mail list, the RAAS website, contributions to the Newsletter, participation of Board members in the operation of the association, circulation of information, relations with the EAAS and access to the EAAS website. All members were

kindly asked to pay their dues in time, to update their mailing and e-mail addresses, to send contributions to the Newsletter and to other RAAS and EAAS publications, to make RAAS activities known to their colleagues and graduate students and, if possible, to recruit new members.

Shortly after the Conference, six of our RAAS members attended the EAAS Biennial Conference "Conformism, Non-conformism and Anti-conformism" in Nicosia, Cyprus. It was the first time that Romania was so well represented at an EAAS biennial, and this was due to the higher number of proposals submitted by Romanians and also due to the support of the U.S. Embassy in offering travel grants. You can read more about the Nicosia Conference in the pages of this Newsletter.

Two of our members complained to the EAAS board about the number of sessions and about the process of selection, which, in some cases, led to admittedly very good proposals being left out. Based on such complaints, the board meeting preceding the Conference discussed several possible reforms and changes in the future format of the biennials. The Board's crowded agenda at the meeting also included current business, the EAAS Articles, the next two biennial conferences, financial policies, fund-raising, the EAAS Conference Proceedings, the Young EAAS Scholars project, the Archives and History project, the online European Journal of American Studies and other web projects, and future policy regarding applications for membership. In connection with this last item, considering the growing number of national associations applying for membership and their representation on the EAAS Board, President Marc Chénétier recommended "regional associations" of two or more countries after the model of the "Nordic Association for American Studies" which includes Finland (FASA), Iceland (IAAS), Norway (ASANOR) and Sweden (SAAS). The issue was brought up in relation with Bulgaria's intention to apply, but, given the delicate nature of the issue, the discussion was postponed. The Board

elected a new Vice-President, Martin Heusser (Switzerland), to replace Gülriz Büken, and a new Secretary General, Jenel Virden (U.K.), to replace Ole Moen, who had both come to the end of their term. The 2008 Biennial Conference will be held in Oslo with the theme "E Pluribus Unum or E Pluribus Plures". Ireland offered to host the 2010 Biennial.

The last issue I want to bring to your attention is the *European Journal of American Studies*, a fully accredited, peer-reviewed electronic journal, the first issue of which has already appeared on the host site <http://ejas.revues.org>. At its Nicosia meeting, the EAAS board appointed two chief co-editors and an editorial committee which includes a Romanian member, Roxana Oltean (Bucharest). The editorial committee, together with the director of the publication, Marc Chénétier, met in Middelburg to discuss the journal's policy and internal organization, and launched the invitation to all European scholars of American studies, whether young researchers or confirmed scholars, to send materials for their yearly accretive and thematic issues. I would like to urge our members to take advantage of this opportunity for quick publication in a prestigious venue and to respond to the CFP's launched by the EJPAS. Please check the journal website for more details.

I close this letter by reminding you that it is our Association's purpose to keep you posted about all the possibilities for publication, conference participation, grants and scholarships, and I invite you to use this information to the full benefit of your own professional growth, of your students and colleagues, and, of course, to the benefit of our American Studies network.

Hoping that everyone is managing to survive the end of another strenuous academic year, and wishing you a productive and enjoyable summer,

I send you warm regards,  
Rodica Mibăilă  
RAAS President

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

# EAAS Statute

## Articles of the European Association for American Studies (amended at Cambridge, UK, April 15, 2005)

### 1. Name and Character

The name of the organization is "The European Association for American Studies" (EAAS). It is a federation of constituent national or joint-national associations, a non-profit organization conformable with the European Union regulations of such organizations and compatible with Book One, Section 1, Title 2, Subtitle 1, Chapters 1 and 2 (§ 21 to 79) of the German Civil Code (Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch), last amended on January 2, 2002.

### 2. Address

The seat of the organization is in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany.

### 3. Objects

The European Association for American Studies encourages the study of and research in all areas of American culture and society. It promotes cooperation and intercommunication between European students of the United States of America, contributes to the emergence and definition of specific European viewpoints on the society and culture of the United States, favors the integration of young academics and researchers in the profession and facilitates contacts and the circulation of relevant information among its members. To this end, it arranges regular biennial and, if desirable, special or regional conferences, publishes an electronic journal, a newsletter, books, and papers. It promotes arrangements for the travel of European scholars within Europe and to America. It develops links with other organizations concerned with the study of America. It maintains an archive of its activities, available to all scholars. The European Association for American Studies has no ambitions other than the development, enrichment and diffusion of knowledge concerning the United States, endorses no political agenda and is not accountable for the various opinions of its members. It encourages debate and endeavors to assure fair representation of the diverse options and intellectual activities of its membership.

### 4. Constituent and Affiliate Membership

- a. National or joint-national American Studies Associations in Europe can apply for full membership of the EAAS. The rights and duties of full membership as described in the EAAS Articles apply only to such associations. These associations are the constituent members of the EAAS.
- b. Affiliate membership of the EAAS is open to national or joint-national American Studies Associations in Europe or elsewhere. Such associations will not be represented on the EAAS Board. They will not have the right to vote, nor will their members have the right to participate in the General Meeting other than as observers. Affiliate members of EAAS in Europe, and only in Europe, shall have the

option of becoming full members of the EAAS. Following an application to the Board of EAAS, the association must be accepted by a two-thirds majority of the full Board. The definition of the term "Europe" is for the Board to make, in keeping with common geographic, linguistic, and political usage.

- c. Constituent Associations shall pay an annual due, proportionate to their membership, set by the Board. Associations that fail to pay their dues will cease to be members in good standing and thus will not be able to send a representative to the EAAS Board. Due warning will normally be issued if an Association does not forward its dues within three months of a request issued by the Treasurer of EAAS. The Board Meeting following the non-compliance will determine the measures to be taken.

### 5. Individual Membership

Only scholars from countries without constituent or affiliate Association can acquire individual affiliate membership of the Association. Such persons should apply to the Secretary General for a decision to be made by the Board with a two-thirds majority.

### 6. Governing Body

- a. The governing body of the Association shall be a Board consisting of representatives of its constituent associations.
- b. Each of the constituent associations shall elect one member of the Board to serve for no more than two consecutive mandates. Constituent associations may send substitutes for their representatives.
- c. Each Board member shall have one vote. The President shall also have a casting vote.

### 7. The Powers and Duties of the Board

- a. The Board is the supreme governing body of the association. It shall make policy, authorize spending, amend the EAAS Articles as needed, adopt new members of the Association, make whatever decisions it deems necessary to further the goals of the Association, and oversee the actions and transactions of the Executive Officers.
- b. The Board may establish advisory panels of members, which can be consulted according to needs.
- c. The Board shall meet at least every year. An extraordinary Board meeting may be called at the discretion of the President or at the request of any Board member on obtaining the consent of at least one third of the Board members. A quorum shall consist of not less than one half of the Board members.
- d. The Board shall elect a three-member Nominating Committee, which shall propose candidates for executive positions up for election in due time before the election. Members of the nominating committee are not barred from nomination.
- e. The Board shall oversee the EAAS budget and ensure that the financial records are maintained in accordance with generally accepted business practices and certified by an authorized public auditor.
- f. The Board may authorize the Officers to entrust members of the Board or willing, regular members of the Association with the execution of some of its decisions.

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

**g.** The Board cannot deliberate on items which do not appear on the agenda of its meetings. At the beginning of a meeting the board can add items to the agenda only if the majority of the Board agrees.

**h.** The Board will make all decisions pertaining to the academic content of its biennial conferences, in cooperation with the local organizers where necessary.

## 8. Officers and Elections

**a.** The Board shall elect from among its members four officers - a President, Vice-President, Secretary General, and Treasurer - each for a period of four years.

**b.** A meeting to formalize the handover of duties from outgoing officers to incoming officers shall be held no later than June 30 following the Board Meeting at which the new officers were elected.

**c.** In the event that an officer of the Association ceases to be the representative of his/her association before the completion of the term of office, it shall be within the competence of the Board to authorize that officer to complete the term of office, in an individual capacity, but without a vote, except in the case of the President, who shall retain a casting vote only. In order to preserve continuity, the Board shall make provisions to ensure that not all terms of office expire at the same time.

**d.** In the event the President becomes unable to serve, the Vice-President will assume the position of President pro tempore until such time as the President is able to resume his duties, or (if he/she wishes to retire) a new president is elected by the Board at its next meeting.

**e.** When appropriate, the President may conduct a postal ballot. The President may also act on behalf of the Board in case of urgent need.

## 9. The Powers and Duties of Officers

**a.** The Officers shall discharge the business of the Association

between Board meetings, plan and arrange the meetings of the Board, and implement decisions made by the Board.

**b.** The Officers shall inform the membership regarding matters pertaining to the Association, organize the practical arrangements of the academic program of conferences and events in collaboration with the local organizers, and represent the Association between conferences in relation to external institutions and the media.

## 10. Liability

The Association is liable for its debts with its own assets. Personal liability of members, both corporate and individual, is excluded. Board members are not personally liable for debts incurred by the association, except in cases of clear wrongdoing or fraud, in which case general criminal law in the appropriate country will obtain.

## 11. Funds, Gifts, Legacies, etc.

The Association may accept gifts, bequests, and legacies to promote and facilitate its objectives and may establish special endowments or funds named for deserving persons, including generous donors.

## 12. General Meeting

At every biennial conference a general meeting shall be held at which members of constituent associations may put questions to the officers and Board members. The meeting shall have the right to pass resolutions, which the Board is required to consider and on which it shall report. The minutes of the general meeting are to be recorded and included in the EAAS files.

## 13. Procedure for Amendment

These articles may be amended with the consent of a two-thirds majority of the full Board. Members of the Board must be informed about proposed amendments at least six weeks before the meeting at which they are to be considered.

## The Politics of American Studies – Call for Contributions

The editors solicit submissions for vol. XXIII of *The Americanist: Warsaw Journal for the Study of the United States*. We are particularly interested in articles that explore the theme of politics in relation to American studies as a field. Specifically, we are looking for essays that examine different dimensions of politics. We welcome contributions that bring the interdisciplinary approach of American studies to an analysis of American political life and culture. Second, we hope to examine, from a variety of international perspectives, the ongoing debate concerning the politics (or politicization) of American studies themselves. Is the field inevitably political, and what are its politics?

How have they evolved, especially since the end of the Cold War? In what terms is the purpose of American Studies debated in the USA, in Western Europe, in countries of the former Soviet bloc? What did it mean to be a student of American culture and society behind the Iron Curtain in the context of the Cold War? What did it mean to be a teacher of American studies during this era? Finally, we are looking for essays that analyze the political and ideological assumptions undergirding the current debates over the scope of American studies as an academic discipline.

Texts should be between 4,000 and 6,000 words inclusive of notes and bibliography. They should be prepared

according to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 5th Edition. Manuscripts of articles may be submitted as attachments to emails in either Word or WordPerfect files or may be sent in printed form to the address below. Articles should be double-spaced, with standard margins and font and should include a cover page, with the title, author's name, institutional affiliation, email address, and postal address. The text of the essay should have its title only, without the author's name.

**Deadline: 15 June 2006**

**William R. Glass (w.glass@uw.edu.pl)**

**Agnieszka Graff**

**(agraff@poczta.onet.pl)**

# AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

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### RAAS Board

Dear Colleagues,

**The current academic year has seen a proliferation of American Studies programs across the country. As one of the initiators and driving forces of the process, our Association has been active in providing a site for an exchange of ideas and experiences between various universities at home and abroad regarding the Bologna reform and the teaching of American Studies at the undergraduate and graduate level.**

# Letter from the President

By its e-network the RAAS has kept its members informed about conferences, events, grants, job opportunities and publications in the field. Quite a number of our members took advantage of the information we sent.

The accelerated pace of the institutionalization of American Studies, the growing number of American Studies sessions at the annual conferences of various English Departments throughout the country and the growing number of books and Ph.D. dissertations on American topics are a few examples of the new vitality of the field to which RAAS has made a constant contribution.

RAAS was proud to host some lectures and discussion forums on the occasion of visits made to Romania by distinguished guests, such as Professor Catherine Stimpson from Rutgers University, or the Nobel Prize winner, Elie Wiesel. Another full-fledged event involving a large number of RAAS members was the celebration of William J. Fulbright's 100th birthday, organized by the U.S. - Romanian Fulbright Commission, with which RAAS frequently collaborates in organizing cultural and scholarly events. A most useful feedback provided by the participants' answers to a questionnaire pointed out the respondents' need of belonging to a community of Americanists, their need of interconnectedness.

Developing a national American Studies network and securing ties with

the international community of scholars, particularly with EAAS and ASA, has been a major concern of our association from its very inception. A recent recognition of our endeavors came at the 2004 ASA Annual Meeting in Atlanta, where in her Presidential Address entitled „Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies“, ASA President Shelley Fisher Fishkin included *Transatlantic Connections* (Integral, 2001), a volume of essays by RAAS members, edited by Rodica Mihăilă and Irina Grigorescu Pană, among her examples of contributions to the field made by American Studies scholars from outside U.S. borders that may open new

perspectives for the U.S.-based scholars. (*American Quarterly*, 57, no.1 (March 2005): 17-57)

Attended by some 150 leaders in American Studies – program directors, center directors, presidents of national associations, journal editors and other scholars from 30 countries, including Romania, the Atlanta Meeting was transformed by ASA into a forum of international exchange that indicated how much the transnational turn has transformed American Studies, and launched valuable initiatives to further internationalize the field.

In April, I attended the EAAS Board Meeting, which thanks to our BAAS Colleagues was held at Cambridge (UK) in conjunction with the Conference of the British Association for American Studies celebrating its 50th anniversary. The report of the EAAS President, Marc Chenetier, “Perspectives on the New Century,” placed the discussions on the management and development of the Association in a moral and realistic context.

Apart from running business, fundraising and the state of affairs, other issues under scrutiny have been the new strategies for web versions of the European American Studies Journal linked both with the Newsletter and a discussion forum, the integration of younger colleagues at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels as well as the revision of the EAAS by-laws. Among the issues of special interest to our members

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

was the report from the Executive Board with regard to the EAAS/Fulbright Intra-European and Trans-Atlantic Travel Grants for 2005. One of the three recipients is our colleague Eniko Maior from the Partium Christian University, Oradea, who received an intra-European grant for a two-month research stay at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. After Bogdan Barbu, Ludmila Martanovschi and Dan Horatiu Popescu, she is the fourth RAAS member to receive an EAAS travel grant.

A main item on the agenda was the organization of the EAAS Biennial Conference "Conformism, Non-Conformism and Anti-Conformism in the Culture of the United States", April 7-10, 2006, hosted by HELAAS in Nicosia, Cyprus. Out of the submitted proposals, the Board selected eight lectures, 24 workshops and three shoptalks. Among them is included the only proposal that came from a Romanian scholar, our RAAS colleague Dan Horatiu Popescu from the University of Oradea, who will co-chair the workshop "From the Melting Pot of 'Entropy' to a 'Crack-Potting' Ecriture". The guidelines for workshops, the workshop themes and chairs, the titles of the shoptalks and the parallel lectures have already been published in the ASE Newsletter no.54 (May 2005), available in electronic form at <http://www.eaas.info>. As in the past, I wish to encourage the members of our Association to submit proposals for workshop papers. It's good to know that during the current academic year, several RAAS members have received funding for participation in various international conferences and seminars when their proposals were accepted.

In response to the invitation of the American Studies Program at the Institute of Political Science and International Relations in Kishinev, together with Adina Ciugureanu, RAAS Board member, Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University, Constanta, I attended their National American Studies Conference, "The USA at the Dawn of the Third Millennium: A New Era?", 17-18 May, 2005, Kishinev, organized with the support of the US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova. We shared with our Moldavian colleagues our experience in the institu-

tionalization of American Studies and in developing our Association for American Studies, as the highlight of the Conference was the founding of the Moldavian Association for American Studies (MAAS) for which RAAS served as model. We discussed avenues for future exchanges, especially the possibility of Moldavian students to attend our graduate programs in American Studies, as well as forms of collaboration between our two associations.

At the end of my brief report I would like to remind you all of our fourth RAAS Biennial Conference, **New/Old Worlds: Spaces of Transitions**, 2-3 February 2006, organized in collaboration with the Fulbright Commission, and to invite you to submit proposals for papers by September 15. All our RAAS colleagues should take advantage of the scholarly opportunities offered by our membership in the national association and also in the EAAS. In order to make our work more efficient and keep you informed, the RAAS board would appreciate if you could update your addresses and e-mails as soon as possible. We would also appreciate if you could inform the association of any American Studies event, publication, dissertation, grant, program, seminar and conference in which you may be involved so that by means of the Newsletter and our network your experience may be shared by us all.

Don't hesitate to use all the RAAS resources, such as copies of articles from journals received through subscriptions that we make available, on request, as well as the resources of the Center for American Studies in Bucharest, which is currently hosting the RAAS.

I wish you all strength and determination to accomplish your current projects and envisage new ones. See you in September, at the launching of the collection of essays based on the 2004 Biennial Conference, *Our America: People, Places, Times* (Univers Enciclopedic, 2005).

With best wishes for an enjoyable and productive summer,

Rodica Mibăilă  
RAAS President

## Ars Docendi:

### My American Dream

Olivia Bădoi,

American Studies 1st year

I have a dream...That one day I'll be surfing on the waves of Miami Beach...have an extralarge mocha at Starbucks or maybe spend my life savings on a pair of Manolo Blahniks on sale. Oh yeah - and study at a top U.S. university. But how am I going to fulfill these great expectations? How am I going to make my American Dream come true? By enrolling at the American Studies department at the Faculty of Foreign Languages! Or at least this seemed to be the perfect solution for a Romanian student with an American dream.

We are the first series of American Studies major so this means that when we graduate we have to walk and talk not like an Egyptian but like an American. Our department has a liberal arts system so we've had a variety of courses, from the media to sociology, to literature, linguistics and politics. One thing is for sure: boredom is out of the question. It's true that after having eaten American history with a big spoon (a metaphor for a four-hour class) we would start humming in a heart-breaking tone the spiritual „Let my people go"... Oh and, a tip for those who think that learning the American Constitution by heart (as concise and to-the-point as it is) is a piece of cake? May the force be with you.

Looking back at what has been the first year of college of my life I realize how lucky I am. I am studying what I like and I've had the greatest teachers ever. Not only have they been committed to teaching us a certain course but they've also tried to expand our horizon as citizens of the world. They have tried to break into this shell of indifference that the Romanian educational system creates.

It's true that many of my classmates have ended up at the American Studies department by chance, but not me. I have a dream. My breakfast at Tiffany's awaits me.

Don't get me wrong about this whole American Dream expose. I am not having the typical Eastern-European fantasy of America being the modern cornucopia (though a term inspired by a certain Baywatch mermaid would be more American; this will have to do). It's a good thing to have a dream. It's what keeps you going. It is just that my dream happens to be an American one.

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

## the American Studies Department in Bucharest

**What's So Cool about Being an M.A. Student?****Gabriela Mehedințu****M.A. American Studies**

Most graduate students decide to pursue a Masters degree in American Studies from very much the same reason why some Romanians choose to live in the United States – they fall under the irresistible and probably inescapable charm of AMERICA in a post-communist country. It definitely worked in my case. I enrolled in this program eager to find out what the glamorous America which I knew from books and movies was all about and, as I soon understood, the answer lay very much in the direct contacts with the American scholars which the program made possible.

Beside the actual information and personal experience which the Romanian professors could and did excellently provide, the American Fulbrighters were by far the main attraction in the syllabus, precisely for the sense of Western democracy which they alone could offer. And they helped us feel it in plenty of ways.

To begin, it has become a commonplace to say that American professors do not set rigid boundaries between formal and informal teaching. The two come together in a variety of equally valid ways. For instance, my classmates and I were introduced to the American concept of 'after-hours' discussions, held in cafes, parks, or anywhere at hand. It gave birth to an unprecedented feeling of equality and familiarity between professors and students, who were no longer they and us, but a wider community of learners. Received at first with suspicion, the 'experiment' determined me to reconsider the importance of "outdoors" activities in the teaching-learning process. During my years as a pupil in elementary and high schools, I was constantly made to look upon "out of classroom" activities as a disguised way of wasting time with the tacit approval of school authorities, in the good old Romanian tradition.

The Fulbright scholars gave me the opportunity to change my opinion, even though at first in a harsher manner – using the grading policy to do it. In the end, I was surprised to discover that, at the end of my career as a student, I could still alter long-held conceptions about school.

The American professors shaped my perceptions about peer group relations, as well. I was gradually introduced to the concept of 'positive competition'. If the traditional Romanian learning system wanted me to engage in a fierce competition against my classmate, in the American one I had to compete alongside the other who was to be seen as a valuable partner.

ant, which, in my opinion, could be a huge success.

Filtered through the eyes of the Fulbrighters, America acquired for me a more human face, less isolated in its first world aura.

At the end of my fascinating experience in the American Studies graduate program, the dominating feeling is that of gratitude that it offered a unique opportunity to



**The American Studies Room at the University of Bucharest**

Last, but not least, I owe to these Fulbright scholars my understanding of the basics in the methodology of academic research, such as: reading with an open, inquisitive mind, rejecting impression-based studies as non-scientific, learning to value one's own opinion and to defend it.

If I were to make some suggestions for the program, one would be to include some optional courses in the syllabus, and the other to try to create an on-line vari-

heal an old inferiority complex of mine as a Romanian intellectual in becoming – namely, that Romania can be again set as a partner for cultural exchanges with the West, on equal footing. Asked about what she would like to get back from her teaching experience in this program, one of the American professors said, "As a matter of fact, I am here to learn. What I'd like to get back is as much information as possible about Romania and I expect that from you!"

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

**When EGG came to Cluj****Professor Ștefan Oltean, Lecturer Adriana Todea****Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj**

Between July 26 and August 6 the Babeș-Bolyai University hosted the the 2004 Eastern European Generative Grammar Summer School (EGG), a prestigious international summer school in linguistics focusing on Central and Eastern Europe. The school is organized by a small group of linguists from prominent European universities such as Michal Starke (Tromso), Luisa Marti (Tromso), Hedde Zeijlstra (Amsterdam), and Tobias Scheer (Nice). This itinerant summer school had already been hosted by universities in Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and the Czech Republic. It was the first time such an important school in linguistics had been organized in Romania, where, especially in universities such as the University of Bucharest or BBU, linguists are more and more interested in the generative perspective on language. Founded by Noam Chomsky almost 50 years ago, Generative Grammar has developed ever since and opened new areas of language studies, from language acquisition to neurolinguistics. It is considered today as the dominant linguistic theory in most of the important universities in US, Europe, Asia and Australia.

The school managed to bring together top-notch researchers, such as Hilda Koopman and Marcus Kracht (University of California in Los Angeles), Tom Roeper (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Michael Wagner (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Curt Rice, Michal Starke, Luisa Marti and Oystein Nilsen (University of Tromso), Tobias Scheer (University of Nice), Orin Percus (University of Milan) and Alexandra Cornilescu (University of Bucharest).

For two weeks, the school (which was entirely free) brought together 200 teachers and students from 27 countries on 4 continents.

Although very accessible, the topical introductions focused on the latest developments in the generative theory such as the syntax-phonology interface or the syntax-semantics correlation. Such an interesting intro course was Introduction to Prosody and the Syntax/Phonology Interface given by Michael Wagner (MIT). Another highly appreciated intro class was Tom Roeper's Language Acquisition, (Amherst, Massachusetts), which is the Applied Linguistics in the Generative theory. The lectures presented a number of linguistic experiments that allow us to identify the main paths and stages in the language acquisition of the first language and the formation of linguistic competence.

Curt Rice's intro in Optimality Theory presented the latest development in generativism, according to which the knowledge of grammar is based on a system of universal linguistic restrictions organized hierarchically. Therefore, linguistic variation could be explained in terms of different languages favoring different hierarchies of such grammatical restrictions.

Introduction to Semantics given by Luisa Marti (Tromso) and Orin Percus (Milan) illustrated the dynamic development of present-day Semantics. Integrating together formal logic, the Fregean theory of sense and reference, the theory of sets, and functional application, it proved that any linguistic expression allows formalization and that the representation of linguistic meaning is compatible with the Chomskian binary trees. Further more, semantic descriptions require a close correlation between Syntax and Semantics.

The advanced track offered a number of courses on narrower topics which represented the teachers' current research interests in the field, for example, Syntactic representations: from Chains to Multidominance (Marcus Kracht, UCLA); The Direct Object — Syntax and Information Structure and The AP as a DP constituent (Alexandra Cornilescu, University of Bucharest); Agreement (Hilda Koopman, UCLA); Derivational Morphology and Minimalism (Tom Roeper, Amherst, Massachusetts); How the big guys (morphology, syntax, semantics) talk to phonology, and what they tell her (Tobias Scheer, MIT); The Case Filter and its semantics (Oystein Nilsen, Tromso).

# Conference

**Echoes from a Prague Spring****Lecturer Iulian Cănanău,****University of Bucharest**

With 220 speakers out of more than 300 participants, the EAAS biennial conference in Prague was last year's major academic event in the life of the American Studies community in Europe. Under the title "America in the Course of Human Events: Presentations and Interpretations" the conference hosted by the prestigious Charles University comprised 26 workshops, eight parallel lectures, two plenary ones, and three shoptalk meetings to wind it up. An impressive variety of topics was squeezed in a two-day schedule, thus leaving some frustrated after having been forced to perform drastic surgery in the selection of the workshops and lectures they would have liked to attend. Even so, an avid scholar would still have plenty of opportunities to satisfy his/her intellectual appetite as the vast majority of the presentations lived up to the expectations one got from their titles and abstracts. Just for the sake of being on the safe side I won't insist on the workshops and parallel lectures, although it would be interesting to see how much audience each of these topics attracted and enjoyed throughout the conference.

Werner Sollors's plenary lecture, "Dedicated to a Proposition", brought everyone present in the School of Arts' great auditorium on a journey through the history of American culture pursuing the ever-changing fate and understanding of the famous "proposition" included in the Declaration of Independence "that all men are created equal". Professor Sollors produced a breathtaking multimedia presentation that had all the narrative features of a great story that captivated the audience.

Besides its seminal presentations, inspiring comments and brainstorming, such a conference also benefits the young American Studies scholars by developing their sense of belonging to this international academic community. This does not mean that your national identity becomes a rather obsolete appendix to your name tag or that it stops playing any significant role in making the party you end up hanging out with. There were lots of groups at the conference in Prague: Scandinavian, French, British, German, you name them. (Much as I tried, I couldn't identify the group to which a middle-aged lady who kept knitting throughout the conference belonged.)

I really enjoyed my first experience with an EAAS conference and I hope that those of my colleagues from the RAAS who will send their applications for the 2006 conference in Cyprus will have their projects selected by the workshop chairs.



## 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

**O**n the 2nd of March 2005, the English Department at "Petru Maior" University of Tg-Mureş was proud to be the host of a long expected event: the visit and conference of our Canadian colleague and friend Stephen Henighan, from the University of Guelph. An established Canadian novelist and short story writer, Stephen Henighan boasts an impressive 'multicultural' record: born in Germany, naturalized in Canada, with undergraduate studies in the United States, and postgraduate studies in Montreal and Oxford. He is the author of well-received novels such as *The Streets of Winter* (2004). Although Canadian Studies is not yet a subject taught at "Petru Maior" University of Tg-Mureş, the room where the conference was held could not accommodate all the students and faculty interested in attending the event.

### A Special Guest to our University Stephen Henighan

Actually, interest was sparked not only by the subject of the conference—the concept of Canadian literature—but also by Mr. Henighan's special interest in Romania and Romanian language. Indeed, the Canadian novelist belongs (thanks to his book *Lost Province. Adventures in a Moldovan Family*) to a small but distinguished group of writers—including Saul Below (*The Dean's December*) and Olivia Manning—who chose Romania and Romanian issues as subjects for their novels. Accordingly, many of the questions that followed the conference addressed Mr. Henighan's Moldavian experience (he taught English in Chişinău, in the Republic of Moldova, a former Romanian territory where Romanian is still spoken by a majority of the population) and the way in which this experience is represented in *Lost Province*.

Other questions referred to minorities and minority languages and the status of Canadian literature as a post-colonial literature. As the conference was a success, an invitation was extended to Stephen Henighan to come again for a similar event.

*Conf. dr. Anda Ştefanovici,*

*Conf. dr. Tatiana Iaţu,*

*Lector Iustin Sfăria*

### A Talk at "Petru Maior" University

by Stephen Henighan

University of Guelph, Ontario

Sometimes I travel for business and sometimes I travel for pleasure. My visit to "Petru Maior" University in Târgu-Mureş enabled me to bring together business and pleasure.

As a Canadian writer, I do much of my travelling in Canada. Last year, when my novel *The Streets of Winter* was published, I travelled to five Canadian provinces to read from the novel in universities, bookstores and cafés.

Of course I also feel strong links to other countries, particularly those countries where I have begun to learn about the culture. As Romania is one of the countries I feel close to, I was very pleased when a series of coincidences led to invitations to speak in Romania and Hungary this March. I was especially happy to renew my contact with southeastern Europe at a time when my memoir of living in the Republic of Moldova, *Lost Province: Adventures in a Moldovan Family*, originally published in Vancouver in 2002, was about to appear in Romanian translation from Editura Arc in Chişinău. After weeks of frantic emailing, the rough outlines of a schedule emerged.

"Petru Maior" University was the first stop on my tour. I rode to Târgu-Mureş by bus from Sibiu. The residually Austro-Hungarian square reminded me of those in Arad and Oradea, although Târgu Mureş's square felt more symmetrical and spacious. As a Canadian brought up with official bilingualism, I was intrigued by the bilingual Romanian-Hungarian signs posted by some of the businesses around the square. "Petru Maior" University's literature department was small, friendly and varied. I was shown an excellent collection of English books in a resource room near the departmental office. Unusually, the shelves were open to the students for consultation or borrowing. As is always the case during a visit to a university, meeting the students was the high point of the trip.

At least fifty students were present for my talk; the conference room was overflowing and some of the students had to stand. I tried to illustrate the informality of Canadian culture by wading into the crowd to distribute my hand-outs.

Knowing that for many of the students this was their first encounter with the idea of Canadian literature, I attempted to explain the basic contours of the literature in a way that was simple without being condescending. In spite of the need to keep to a broad outline, I wanted to give the students a sense of the contradictions and tensions underlying Canadian writing. I was very pleasantly surprised by the torrent of questions that followed my talk.

I had feared that these students would be more passive than those I was used to in Canada. In fact, on the basis of the questions I received, the students at "Petru Maior" University were more inquisitive and idealistic than those I'm accustomed to at home. In retrospect, my only regret concerning this stimulating experience is that I didn't ask the students a few more questions in return. It would have been fascinating to learn what relevance students in Târgu-Mureş see concepts that are central to Canadian debates, such as bilingualism and multiculturalism, as having in their own lives.



# AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

## American Studies in Bucharest

Beginning with 1996, the School of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Bucharest has been hosting a very successful MA program in American Studies. While self-contained and enjoying undeniable popularity, the program also revealed the interest in a wider-ranging undergraduate training, which led to the setting up of a new minor specialization under the Department of English. American Studies as a „B” option has been functioning since the academic year 1999–2000. The undergrad program was structured on thematic levels, into three modules: 1.Culture and values; 2.History and politics; and 3.Society and communication for the first three years, while the fourth year in the old structure (before Bologna) also added interdisciplinary optional and elective courses. For a year now, an American Studies major is offered at the School of Foreign Languages and Literature in Bucharest. Under the Bologna educational reform, the American Studies undergraduate programs in Bucharest will be three-year long, with a two-year MA program; apart from that, the faculty is striving to keep to the same formula that has proved so successful in the past years. Apart from a strict core structure, the specialization allows for



teacher-training modules, and also accommodates a number of American Fulbright scholars in various fields of study, so that not only the program is highly interdisciplinary, but also there is a wealth of direct experience for the undergraduate and graduate students as well. A rich (and growing) library, a multimedia system and a web page ([www.america-studies.ro](http://www.america-studies.ro)) with an active forum and permanently updated information also add to the attractiveness of the American Studies program in Bucharest.

## American Studies in Timișoara

Cristina Chevereșan

One year ago, in April, a spiritual child was conceived in Timișoara. The beginning of the academic year 2004–2005 witnessed the fulfilment of a dream and the birth of a strong willed baby, a newcomer to the academic family: the English Department managed to devise a new and innovative MA program, meant to cover as many areas connected to American Studies as currently possible. Thus, benefiting from a close collaboration with the Political Science Department, this initiative is aimed at offering a panoramic view of the American socio-political and cultural space, as well as detailed outlooks on its specific issues. Graduates in letters, philosophy, journalism, political science etc. who are proficient in English are invited to enlarge their knowledge of the 'American Dream' by means of attending series of lectures and seminars focusing on a large variety of study-topics.

The American Studies postgraduate specialization functions according to an interdisciplinary model of presentation and analysis: American culture, civilization and literature come to meet history, geography, religion, as well as gender and media studies or human rights in what is intended as an original and highly interactive program regarding the United States of America. Under the guidance of the reputed professor Mircea Mihăieș, PhD, this generous plan sets itself to open pathways to a better understanding of Transatlantic stereotypes and controversy, as well as to an accurate evaluation of the existing similarities and differences between American and European cultural patterns.

The objectives of this ambitious project are utterly diverse: offering the MA students solid knowledge as to the above-mentioned fields of American Studies, it envisages their ulterior involvement in research, as well as the development of their analytical skills by means of comparative approaches. The students will be able to apply the acquired theoretical knowledge in practical situations typical of the American way of thinking and acting, in the context of their frequent meetings with foreign lecturers. Such communicative instances facilitate interaction and direct contact with representatives of the studied space; during its first year of existence, the program has already benefited from the presence of three Fulbright lecturers (Amy Karpan, Carrie Galbrath and Deanna Moore), as well as that of a specialist in teaching methodology, Rebecca Janson.

Support from the US Embassy and the Fulbright Commission in Bucharest has proved essential to

the effective and successful development of a comprehensive study-program, both in terms of teacher exchanges and in what resources and logistics are concerned. The students have access to up-to-date materials and bibliographical sources which help them improve their critical perception of the debated issues, in and outside class. Becoming acquainted with canonic and progressive theories, the American Studies MA groups have the opportunity to participate in various conferences, symposiums and other public academic events, wherein they can present the results of the research projects they have been engaged in during their postgraduate studies.

This two-year program is designed to round up with the presentation of carefully documented dissertations, which the candidates will elaborate under the supervision of the English Department's specialized staff. Together with the diversified knowledge obtained during their MA studies, these papers offer the

graduates an ideal starting point for the development of challenging future PhD theses in the field of American Studies. The range of subjects included in the schedule is covered by a series of specialists and growing members of the academia, among which one can recognize names such as Mircea Mihăieș, Victor Neumann, Gabriela Colțescu, Reghina Dascăl, Luminița Frentiu, Codruța Goșa, Marius Radu, Silviu Rogobete, Petru Vărgă, Sorina Voiculescu, Cristina Chevereșan, Eliza Filimon, Diana Mădroane, Dana Percec, Dorian Branea.

Since the English Department at the University of the West takes pride in its modern and ingenious ways of communicating with actual and potential students, the practical information regarding entrance examination procedures, dates and requirements as well as the number of places available each year can be found either on the University's Internet sites, or in the Faculty of Letters info guides. Having received full support from the Rector, prof. dr. Ioan Mihai, the Pro-Rector, prof. dr. Pia Brânzeu, the Dean, prof. dr. Maria Țenchea and the Head of the English Department, prof. dr. Hortensia Pârlog, the American Studies MA program owes its existence to a group of enthusiastic people whose aim is that of giving the Timișoara students (and not only) access to one of the most exciting and controversial cultural spaces in world history. In the hope of turning this effort into a lasting tradition, we are looking forward to celebrating the first generation of MA graduates in June 2006.

Until then, happy 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary!

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

## American Studies in Cluj

Marius Jucan

The inauguration of the B.A program in American Studies at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj reveals itself as a fortunate opportunity to realize the unprecedented growth of academic specializations in our University within the time span of the last decade, along with the intellectual commitment of researchers and professors determined to carry out the demanding scientific and cultural tasks of academic modernization.

The real starting point of the American studies at Babeş-Bolyai University was fashioned by the rebirth of academic life and research, which came around in the 1990's within the framework of a radical educational reform. A number of factors contributed successfully to the creation of an academic and student audience for the study of the United States in our University. Professor Andrei Marga's research concerning American pragmatism broke ground for new perspectives tailoring approaches to the field, as early as 1992. Later on, the founding of the Center for American studies and the setting up of M.A. programs, at the Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of European Studies meant taking the first necessary steps to pave the way to the today's setting of the BA program in American studies. New courses were designed, dealing with the significance of cultural history, philosophy, law, economy, media and film within the general study of the American society. We were privileged in all these years to have received the considerate assistance of the American Embassy in Bucharest who gave us impetus to continue and diversify our MA programs, especially the BA program, as to create its interdisciplinary dimension and design useful ways to employ further on the novelty of these specific studies. The valuable collection of books hosted by the American Library, the cooperation with the Fulbright lecturers maintained a constant professional updating for our professors and researchers.

At the same, one should remark on the gradually increasing number of professors and researches belonging to different social sciences fields, as history, political sciences, literature, linguistics, sociology, geography and economics, who attested through their works an unabated interest for American culture as well as for American studies. This enables us to consider the founding of the B.A. program in American studies as a genuine sequel to academic approaches started before, reinforcing the idea that while the study of the American society and culture might shape more accurately our knowledge regarding the United States, it could also yield desirable consequences to our society's transition toward democracy.

The shifting course of American studies has continuously striven to represent identity and its constructions, reflecting the difficulty of building a consensus regarding the hierarchy of values in our modern world. Passing from showing the distinctiveness of the US, to preaching its exceptionalism, then to revealing the repressed voices of the American society in the study of difference and border, American studies prove not only their pragmatic resilience, but also the potentialities of intellectual innovation. At the same time, the emerging impact of American studies worldwide was connected to the most significant theoretical critiques of the last century, among

which perhaps the relevant one concerns the concept of power. Whether American exceptionalism was founded on a sense of mission, as this was highlighted in the Cold War period, the social and cultural critique of the ensuing years brought along a new setting, focusing on civil rights and the awareness of difference, dividing society along the lines of race, gender and class. The present day cultural turn of the American studies has put into bold relief the rhetorical and imaginary construction of the topic named "America". A crucial meaning was set in the new understanding of the notion of "text", namely in the replacing of the historical or literary text with a "cultural" one. It is therefore useful for the present-day approach to American studies to consider them as providing us with such an immense cultural text, whose overlapping strata and voices render the many-folded images of American reality envisioning multicultural plurality.

The emergence of the American Studies should be regarded as natural in the framework of an already established and accredited specialization – international relations and European Studies. The foundation for the emergence of this BA specialization was laid in 1997, when an interdisciplinary master degree in American Studies was established at Babeş-Bolyai University, this being subsequently included among the master programs of the Faculty of European Studies (in 1999). The master degree enjoyed the support of many prominent personalities within the faculty, the university, and from outside the academic environment. The partnerships developed since the establishment of the master program will be continued and extended with the creation of this BA in American Studies, international cooperation being one of the pillars upon which academic performance and competitiveness is based. The most enduring and fruitful relationships have been those with the Fulbright Commission and the Romanian and American Studies Association, with Michigan State University, Plymouth State University (New Hampshire), as well as with the American Studies Seminar in Salzburg. These partnerships, following in the footsteps of those established by the European studies – which resulted in joint and double degree programs for the BA and MA level – will yield similar results leading to a better understanding of the complex realities of the contemporary

*The present day cultural turn of the American studies has put into bold relief the rhetorical and imaginary construction of the topic named "America". A crucial meaning was set in the new understanding of the notion of "text", namely in the replacing of the historical or literary text with a "cultural" one. It is therefore useful for the present-day approach to American studies to consider them as providing us with such an immense cultural text.*

American society. These studies, beyond their mediatic appearance, actually refer to more than just history, literature, politics or economics – they deal with the intertwining of the American and European realities pertaining to the two most significant actors on the contemporary world stage.

The interdisciplinary character, the teamwork, the constant updating of the scientific discourse mean not only the acknowledgement of a new specialization, but also the leading principles upon which this has been built. American - European modernity should be setting the pragmatic basis of the contemporary world; thus, this specialization addresses not only high school graduates, but also different categories of specialists interested in acquiring knowledge from a different and innovative field, motivated by a necessity imposed by the pragmatic world we live in.

## 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

## 1. RAAS BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2006 New/Old Worlds. Spaces of Transition

### Organizers:

The Romanian Association for American Studies

The Romanian - U.S. Fulbright Commission

Bucharest, 2nd - 3rd of February 2006

Contoured between utopia and reality, the New/Old World, both constructed in memory and experienced in anticipation still constitutes a dominant cultural topos. Our conference seeks to investigate, from literary, cultural studies, historical, sociological, psychological, economical and political perspectives modes of approaching and disseminating New/Old World structures, from the period of colonization to contemporary phenomena such as globalization.

We invite proposals for papers and panels from interdisciplinary perspectives on themes suggested above and on all correlative aspects of the issue of New/Old Worlds.

Please send 100-word proposals for papers by 15th of September to the following addresses:

Ilinca Anghelescu: [ilinc@fastmail.fm](mailto:ilinc@fastmail.fm)

Mihaela Precup: [mihaela\\_precup@yahoo.com](mailto:mihaela_precup@yahoo.com)

[www.american-studies.ro](http://www.american-studies.ro)

## 2. 2006 EAAS BIENNIAL CONFERENCE, "Conformism, Non-conformism and Anti-conformism in the Culture of the United States"

April 7-10, 2006 Nicosia, Cyprus

### DEADLINES

■ SEPTEMBER 1, 2005 : Proposals of workshop papers (with abstract, 150-200 words) to be sent to the Workshop Chairs.

■ SEPTEMBER 15, 2005 : Tentative lists of speakers & paper titles to be sent by Workshop Chairs to the EAAS Secretary-General, for inclusion in the October issue of the ASE NEWSLETTER and the EAAS WEBSITE ([www.eaas.info](http://www.eaas.info)).

For more information, please read the electronic edition of the latest EAAS newsletter: <http://www.eaas.info/newsletter.htm>

## 3. AAH ANNUAL CONFERENCE „A Tremendous Shattering of Tradition”: Reconsidering Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’

University of Leeds, UK

4/6/2006 - 4/8/2006

For details, please check the AAH website: [www.aah.org.uk](http://www.aah.org.uk)

## Update from the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania

Applications for Fulbright Grants listed below can be downloaded from our website:

[www.usembassy.ro](http://www.usembassy.ro)

■ Competition for High School Teacher Exchange is underway now and will end Oct. 15th.

■ Competition for Fulbright Visiting Scholar Grants will open August 29 and close Nov. 7

Applicants are required to have a Ph.D.

■ Competition for Fulbright Grants for studying in the US will open in mid May next year.

Consult our website for exact dates.

### Fulbright/EducationUSA Regional Centers:

**Arad:** Universitatea de Vest "Vasile Goldis";

Tel/Fax: (0257) 285 813 (Corina Pagu)

**Cluj Napoca:** Centrul de Cooperari Internationale;

Tel: (0264) 429 762 (Zsuzsanna Borbath)

**Constanța:** Universitatea "Ovidius";

Tel: (0241) 619 040;/interior 18 (Dr. Mihai Gîrțu)

**Craiova:** Universitatea din Craiova;

Tel: (0251) 544 621 int. 41; (Cristina Vodă)

**Iasi:** Biblioteca Centrală Universitară;

Tel: (0232) 264-245; (Camelia Boca)

**Sibiu:** Universitatea Lucian Blaga;

Tel: (0269) 216 06 (Teodora Pastiu & Andreea Metea-Ciortea)

**Timișoara:** Universitatea de Vest;

Tel: (0256) 193 035; 494 068; (Roxana Pop)

### U.S. Fulbright Scholars:

1. Prof. Julie Tetel ANDRESEN - Assoc. Professor

Topic: Social and Political Issues in American Language Studies: Past and Present

2. Dr. Donald Edward DAVIS - Assoc. Professor

Topic: Introduction to Social Problems and American Studies

3. Dr. Robert John MANNING - Chair and Professor

Topic: Contemporary Western Intellectual and Political Issues

4. Dr. Margaret Reed MUKHERJEE - Professor

Topic: Studying the Development and Analysis of Public Policy in the U.S. and Romania

5. Dr. Jonathan Hugo REES - Assoc. Professor

Topic: American Social and Political History

6. Christopher Lynn SHOOK - Assoc. Professor

Topic: Strategic Management in Transitional Economy

7. Dr. Charles Adam TEMPLE - Professor and Chair

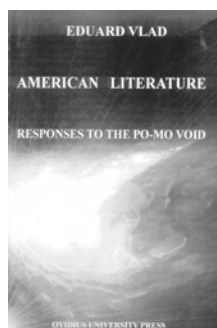
Topic: Curriculum Development for University-Based Teacher Education

8. Mr. Gary Duane DILWORTH - Professor

Topic: Music

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

## Book Reviews



**Vlad, Eduard.**  
**American Literature: Responses to the Po-Mo Void.**

Constanța: Ovidius University Press, 2004.

Some of the symptoms of what would come to be

called postmodernism appeared long before the theorists turned up to diagnose and describe them, as the result of an "unfinished job." The enlightenment project, promoting reason as a guarantor and facilitator of the successful journey toward universal peace, security, good government and an ideal society of perfect people, was severely undercut by developments brought about by the use of science, technology and ideology during, and in the aftermath of, the Second World War.

These symptoms are linked in Responses... to important cultural issues in the US of the postwar age which will feature prominently in the "literary stories" being created and circulated by significant American novelists and poets (Salinger, Kerouac, Nabokov, Heller, Kesey, Barth, Pynchon, Morrison, Ginsberg, Lowell, Berryman, Sexton, Plath, Bishop).

The first postwar decades in the US were an age of prosperity and conformity for a large section of society, but also of anxiety, suspicion, alienation, linked to both the Cold War confrontations and to the dehumanization and standardization that some individuals felt was threatening humankind. The impending threat of global nuclear destruction, combined with the philosophical and artistic effect of existentialism and absurdism earned the period several defining phrases; Responses... puts one forth, to be added to the rest: the age of "the po-mo void."

The authors under discussion in Responses to the Po-Mo Void defined their positions as individuals, reacting against the general conformism, but they also acknowledged their broader cultural positionings, dealing with issues of general interest and speaking for a category of people in society. Some of these authors tend-

ed to speak to these people and for them, the texts becoming "cult books."

The volume is, to a certain extent, an invitation to disregard typical po-mo incredulity, at least toward this particular "metanarrative." It weaves the close reading of important literary texts with significant aspects of their "production" and "reception."



**Vlad, Eduard.**  
**Ironie Apocalipses: The World According to Vonnegut.**

Constanța: Ex Ponto, 2004.

This monograph is meant to celebrate the literary

achievement of one of postwar America's major novelists, one of those rare contemporary writers that have enjoyed success with both a wide, popular audience and with a considerable proportion of the critics.

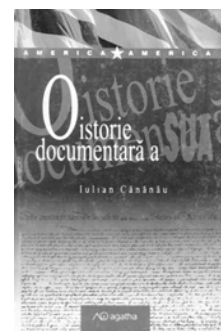
"Call me Jonah," the narrator in Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s Cat's Cradle urges the reader at the beginning of his apocalyptic narrative, and the allusion points to more than Melville's "Moby Dick." The world is dying of ice-nine, and "Jonah" has some time left to tell us a story that began, he says, "two wives ago, 250,000 cigarettes ago, 3,000 quarts of booze ago."

At that time "Jonah" (or John as he was christened by his parents) was collecting material for another apocalyptic, documentary book about what important Americans had done on one particular day. It was no coincidence that that day was August 6, 1945, and the name of the book Jonah was planning was The Day The World Ended.

"Call me Junior. My six grown kids do," the reader is told at the beginning of Timequake (1997), in all likelihood Vonnegut's last book. The writer was 75 at the time, and he had been experimenting with catastrophe and revelation in his own ways for half a century. The monograph is an attempt to approach Vonnegut's special uses of apocalyptic discourses in all the novels he has published so far.

Like Responses..., this is a book you should definitely try not to read. The two

volumes might also be detrimental to students of postwar American literature. In case you are planning to defy this wise piece of advice, here is a useful e-mail address: [eduardvlad@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:eduardvlad@yahoo.co.uk).



**Iulian Cănanău.**  
**O istorie documentară a SUA.**

București: Agatha, 2003.

Better late than never. It took us a long time to signal the coming out of Iulian

Cănanău's documentary history, but the volume deserves its mention even as late as this. A rigorous compendium, put together with a keen eye for the cultural dimension behind the more political one of the texts itself, the book is the result of its author's familiarity with North American history as well as of his understanding of multiculturalism and the inherent pitfalls of trying to focus on "one history" only.

The outcome is a book that reads as easily as a novel. From the Mayflower Compact to George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Nation speech, history seems to "make sense" in the author's bifocal approach: the text itself, in English, is preceded by a comprehensive accompanying explanation of the larger context of each document. The reader is thus allowed to access the original wording of a text such as the Fugitive Slave Act, for instance, as well as to understand how the document itself failed to meet the expectations and necessities of the era by pinpointing its inherent flaws. Seminal pieces of legislation, court decisions (from Marbury vs. Madison to a discussion of president Clinton's impeachment procedure) and speeches find their way into the contents of this book, so that the student of American history gets both a raw taste of the documents and a more refined understanding of how they came about.

With *O istorie documentară a SUA*, Iulian Cănanău, a lecturer at the University of Bucharest, fills in a gap that was widely felt in (and outside) American Studies departments around the country. We welcome it and warmly recommend it for class use, as well as for an informed reading at any level.



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

## Academic Exchanges

**College life and all that:  
a view from UCLA**

I grew up in an environment that educated people to believe that American students were somehow equal, at best, to their Romanian counterparts; and there is still an ongoing prejudice as to how little reading they do, and how uneducated they are as to the world outside their window. I beg to differ. Not, indeed, that they know a lot about the European history and art; but then, how much do we know about American history and art? Even as we try, the American landscape is so fluid, so diverse, that we miss out on too much to safely claim profound knowledge. In a country larger than our continent, how much blame can we attach to the commitment to the "here" rather than "there", when the "here" is so widely encompassing?

Aside from that, I have never seen so many people reading, in any of the Romanian universities I've set foot in. At UCLA, students read. In the library, on benches, on the pavement, at outdoors cafes, on the lawn, on their backs, on their bellies, during breaks, online, at the corner Starbucks, their act shows that they know why they're there: to pass exams, graduate and get a job; and for that they need to do their homework. The system is ruthless. How many times do Romanian stu-

dents resort to online critical notes, reading sheets, summaries, articles etc, hoping that teachers won't notice? How many times do we know not half of the class did their reading for the day, yet somehow forget to be indignant about it?

I do not intend to discuss the quality of their reading, nor do I care whether we could ever pronounce one species of students to be better than another; I am so fond of our old university and our lively and fun students, so impressed with the dedication it must take to struggle against everyday hardships to even be able to study, so understanding of our peculiar conditions, that the comparison might come out unbalanced for all the wrong reasons. I am simply struck by the seriousness with which these people perform their tasks.

My research here is twofold: library work and attending classes on a rather informal basis. Attending classes is, then, what has allowed me to see the downside of being a student in the American academic system: a lack of cohesion in both academic and social structure. Selecting your classes with little or no steering at all can have you graduate with detailed knowledge of how to shoot an entire film, but no vision of what a film is for, so to speak. Or, it can give you an intricate insight into African-American writing at the turn of the



century, but leave you in the dark as to how that specific literature accords with its context.

And, almost as important, it often happens for students to graduate without having had a fabulous time. The American academic system has students hopping from class to class all through college, so that hardly ever are a couple of students going to find themselves together in more than circumstantial encounters. Thus, friendships are formed on roommate-ship rather than sharing classes (and consequently, stories). That, in itself, is somewhat maiming. No small selective student groups, no snickering in between classes, no class parties? No mountain trips on hardly any money at all, no coffee and cheap lunches for ten? No nights out (or in), no borrowing notes, no messing around with the Others (read teachers, TA's, people from the other groups or schools)? Then it's nothing like the college experience I (and every single other Romanian student I know) had, and that's sad.

*Ilinca Anghelescu*

**Becoming a Liberal in Kansas**

In truth, the largely conservative state of Kansas can hardly be expected to be an appropriate destination for anyone with an interest in radicalism in literature and cultural studies. Hence, learning I had been accepted to a Master's program in English literature at Emporia State University in Kansas, I braced myself for a solitary break from my youthful engagement with social issues. Emporia State was going to be my hideaway in a pseudo-sabbatical two-year preparation stage for my PhD in Romania - or so I thought. Contrary to my naïve presuppositions, going to grad school at Emporia State meant becoming involved in a complex program, essentially interdisciplinary, sometimes fiercely competitive, and yes, more often than not, quite liberal.

Graduate-level classes across a variety of literary spaces often required intensive study and an incredible amount of work. In addition to a particularly strong work ethic, and even more importantly, they required the use of a serious critical vocabulary for the exploration of British, American and world literature. From the deconstructionist analysis of Chaucer's „The Prioress's Tale“ to the philosophies of Judith Butler and bell hooks, the challenges we had to undertake as graduate students were simply never-ending. The amazingly engaging and popular classes I took in postcolonial Francophone literature and film, combined with classes in the philosophy of technology and an in-depth look at Hardt

and Negri's Empire, breathed new life into my experience and understanding of cultural work (to follow Stuart Hall's suggestion).

Yet, speaking of cultural work, I found the perfect arena for cutting-edge discussions of contemporary critical theories in the classes offered by Dr. Gary Holcomb, whose work I was already familiar with from his first Fulbright experience at the University of Bucharest (back in 1999). Thus, the investigation of American ethnic literature through the lens of the most recent and most engaging critical approaches became the basis for most of the MA theses written during my time there. Following the intention I had already expressed, while in Bucharest, to examine current issues in Native American Studies, I was fortunate enough to have Dr. Holcomb direct my thesis on the former wonder-child of Native American literature, currently film director, producer, novelist and four-time heavyweight champion of slam poetry, Mr. Sherman Alexie.

Consider the treat we had attending one of Sherman Alexie's lectures in an overcrowded hall at the University of Kansas: trickster artistic performance, political satire, literary discourse and well, pure fun. What more would one need to turn Kansas, a red state and proud member of the Bible Belt, yet also the site of the historic Brown v. Board of Education case, into the sun-flower state of transformation and friendship? Perhaps just one more beer at Town Royal...Cheers, my friends! And thank you.

*Ruxandra Rădulescu*

## AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

# Doctoral Theses

## American Drama's Reception in the Romanian Culture – with Special Reference to Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams

The purpose of our doctoral thesis is to investigate and analyse the complex phenomenon of the American Drama's 60 – year journey in our culture, starting with the inter-war period and ending with 1989 – the final point of a rich, varied controversial post-war era, deeply influenced by the social and political developments in Romanian society. Our approach consists of three main directions of investigation: the reaction of the Romanian criticism to the American drama – as a permanent challenge for the Romanians, its translation into Romanian and, last but not least, its reception on the Romanian stage.

Therefore, our research is, first of all, meant to be an analysis of the intellectual, political, social and cultural background that favoured the penetration of the American literature in the Romanian culture starting with the '30s and ending with the late '80s. We have mainly focused on the reaction of literary and dramatic criticism to the American drama, we mean E. O'Neill's, A. Miller's and Tennessee Williams's and their reception by the Romanian public.

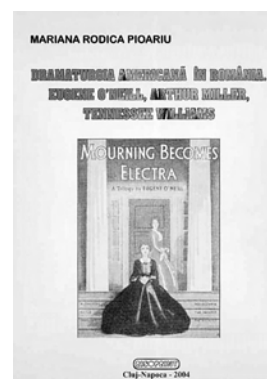
In the '30s and '40s the American drama was mainly represented in our country by Eugene O'Neill's theatre, which had been prevalent on the Romanian stage for years and enjoyed tremendous success. In the next decades Arthur Miller's name will prevail. Due to his constant preoccupation with contemporary society's problems and the individual-society relationship, Arthur Miller was rapidly "adopted"

by the Romanian criticism and the cultural ideology of the communist regime.

Tennessee Williams' theatre enjoyed even greater popularity in our country; a large number of his plays were translated into Romanian and staged by the most prominent Romanian theatres. The first drama to be translated and staged in Romania in 1960 was *The Glass Menagerie*, in a version signed by Anda Boldur. It will be published in a one-volume collection of American theatre with a preface written by Mihnea Gheorghiu, who had also translated *Orpheus Descending*, which appeared in "Secolul 20" in 1961.

The intense, feverish activity of intellectual Romanian circles, the widening of doors to the world culture-officially encouraged for about a decade (1962-1972) gave Romanian culture more fresh impetus than ever before. Notable progress was done in "recovering the synchronization with the west which the forebears had so avidly sought and achieved" (T. A. Perry, p. 145). The interest in American drama persisted in the decades to come but it diminished in the 1970s and 1980s because of a well-known shift in cultural policies after 1972. Then, focus of interest changed a lot concentrating mainly on "moulding the socialist conscience of the new man".

One basic conclusion is to be drawn: the Romanian interest in American literary and dramatic creations was genuine and permanent; its ties are deeply rooted in our minds and souls and are sure to enhance in future as a natural consequence of the Romanian-American multi-faceted partnership – a dream that has eventually come true.



## Elements of Romance in the Contemporary American Best Seller

Ema Stere's thesis was coordinated by professor Rodica Mihăilă and includes 8 chapters, 3 appendices and a bibliography.

The 1st chapter – "A Tradition in Romance" – attempts to clarify the topic of my research, by discussing various understandings of the term "romance" and by tracing the history of this popular genre back to the "scribbling women" in the 19th century. Instead of descending from Hawthorne and Melville, the paper argues, contemporary romance has simply borrowed the name of the fiction established by such writers, while using the conventions and literary style of good old domestic fiction.

In the following chapter, the thesis summarizes the main critical approaches to romance, from the mass culture theory to the innovations brought by cultural studies. However, an all-encompassing classification would have been somewhat artificial, if one is only to think at the many strands within feminist thought, for instance. It is the rea-

son for which the paper attempts to offer a fluid representation of romance criticism, as a continuously changing field, that takes advantage of the arguments developed in sociology, psychoanalysis, politics etc.

Chapter 4, "The Making of Best Selling", is based on the assumption that, as all popular genres, romances are created by the publishing industry, rather than by independent authors. This industry confines them into certain limits (through a clever re-working of titles, cover designs, etc.), while carefully exploring new markets and their possible appetite for new narratives and characters.

"Fantastic Elements In Contemporary Romance" takes a look at different representations of bodies, landscapes, and religious elements, arguing that, in the light of the theory above, they unveil the return of female repressed fears and doubts, in the contemporary society.

The final chapter ("8. Reading the Readers") is dedicated to readers as consumers of romance and to the act of reading/consuming, pointing to three new possibilities of analysis. Thus, "The Romantic Ms

Wilkes" situates romances as marginal products in the wider framework of popular fiction, using as a starting point Stephen King's well-known novel, "Misery". "The Problem with Ideology" suggests that many critics have used the term rather inconsistently, and that a broader understanding of the circulation and exchange of power, knowledge and ideology in Western societies could help creating a more diversified interpretation of the reading act. Consuming romances has been perceived as a tool for male domination (Pierre Bourdieu), or a subversive, carnivalesque activity (Gabriel Bar-Heim), while other critics emphasized the importance of fandom as a sociological phenomenon, able to create "an alternative cultural community" (John Storey, Janice Radway).

The thesis also includes 3 appendices, presenting the 50 top romance writers in USA, industry statistics, and excerpts from the famous "Harlequin guidelines for authors". The bibliography is revealing for the variety of secondary sources used during the research.

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**EAAS Board Members**

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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 Drâmbăreanu (Blaia University), who was replaced on the board by Emil Sirbulescu (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



## AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

# 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 Cornilescu) 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 Olteanu**

## 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 Chevereșan 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 Mihăilă 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 by lead 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 Țeșănescu (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(ivide), 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/vision 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 /

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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:

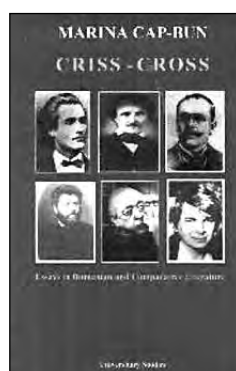
[www.amerikahaus.de/program/events/AIW26/AIW26.html](http://www.amerikahaus.de/program/events/AIW26/AIW26.html)

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

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

## 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 unfailingly 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**

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

## 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.



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### **RAAS Board**

Dear Colleagues,

One of the main concerns of the Association is to keep all our members currently informed, mainly through electronic mail, of what is going on in our field. Hoping that we have been quite efficient in this respect, instead of giving you more news now, I would rather speak in more detail about those RAAS activities that seem to have more relevance for the future, offering our members excellent professional opportunities.

In March, I attended the EAAS board meeting ably hosted in Athens by the Hellenic Association for American Studies (HELAAS) and co-sponsored by the American College of Greece, the Onassis Foundation, the Athens chapters of the Indianapolis University and the University of LaVerne. Preceding the 2004 EAAS biennial Conference „America in the

Martanovski in 2002, he is the third RAAS member to be awarded an EAAS Travel Grant. If you qualify for a 2004 grant, don't hesitate to apply for it. Along the same line I would like to mention that several RAAS members have received funding to participate in various international conferences and seminars after they applied for it following the announcements received from our association.

Apart from its semi-annual Newsletter, American Studies in Europe, and the European Journal, the first edition of which was distributed to all our members for inspection, as agreed in Athens, the EAAS has already offered its members another important information and communication tool - a new expanded and updated website (<http://www.eaas.info>). It provides information about EAAS,

# Letter from the President

Course of Human Events: Presentations and Interpretations" to be held in Prague, April 2-5, the meeting established new guidelines for the workshops, emphasizing the need to encourage European approaches to American Studies as well as „conceptual and philosophical perceptions" alongside discussions of various significant aspects of the American experience. After a thorough selection process, the board selected 8 parallel lectures, three shoptalks and 26 out of 47 workshop proposals. The selected proposals published in the May issue of the EAAS Newsletter. Encouraging our members to submit proposals for individual papers to the workshop organizers, I must, however, admit I was somewhat disappointed to see that there were no proposals for lectures and/or workshops coming from Romania.

A substantive decision of the Board was the unanimous acceptance of the Russian Society for American Studies as the twenty-first member of the EAAS. Among other issues of special interest to our members was the report from the Executive Board regarding the EAAS 2003 Grants Allocations. The Board awarded one Intra-European and three Trans-Atlantic Travel Grants, the Intra-European one (for research in England) being given to our colleague Dan Horatiu Popescu. After Bogdan Barbu in 2001 and Ludmila

Conferences and Events, EAAS-L Distribution List, EAAS Newsletter (including the May 2003 issue), EAAS Travel Grants, Book Reviews and Links.

In May, members of the RAAS joined in celebrating the tenth anniversary of the U.S.Fulbright Commission and forty-three years of Fulbright activity in Romania. The RAAS-Fulbright Biennial Conferences in 2000 and 2002 were presented as examples of successful educational and cultural exchanges between the U.S. and Romania. You will find more details about the celebration later in this Newsletter.

The RAAS will hold its Third Biennial Conference „Our America: People, Places, Times" next February in Bucharest. The Conference will also host the RAAS General Meeting on the agenda of which we included reports on the RAAS activities since 2002 and the new RAAS board elections. We count on the participation of many of our colleagues from across Romania and from abroad and we hope to make the Conference, as in the past, a challenging forum for cross-cultural discussion. In the meantime, we'll try to keep you informed of all the events that may be of interest for our whole community of American Studies scholars.

*Rodica Mihaila*  
RAAS President

## A Lesson for the Teacher

Dr. Victoria Seitz

University of California at San Bernardino

Fulbright Senior Scholar, Academy of Economics, University of Bucharest

As educators, no matter what grade level, we serve the role of information distributors to students. At the university level, professors have spent years learning about topics of interest to them and of interest to their professors as they achieved their doctorate in a field. So it would seem that we have learned the lessons so our students can benefit from our education.

But learning is a life long process, and as one individual told me, the day you stop learning is the day you die. I have often communicated to my students that the University experience is meant to teach you to be teachable. What is learned in books in the classroom is so little to what we can learn in life.

Teaching in Romania has been a lesson for this teacher in a very positive way. So much so that it has inspired development of a framework for other educators to benefit for teaching in countries outside their own place of residence. Primarily, the influence of culture on the educational environment plays such a vital role that any professor that has the opportunity to teach elsewhere might consider such a lesson as well as an understanding of socio-demographic characteristics of that country to be better teachers.

Students are not the same everywhere, which is rather simple to state but can be difficult to implement when coming from a different country. I realized that in most cases teaching in Bucharest, that students, in many ways, are like students in the US; however, their perceptions and attitudes vary greatly. Now that professors throughout the world are called upon for their expertise in other countries to teach, the importance of differences in students affects how educators should manage delivery of information. For educators to be successful in another country, although the World Almanac is a wonderful tool to get the basics, it is also important to take time to find out what is important to students. One attitude is clear for all students, they are in school to get better opportunities; however, when it comes to defining examples for clarification of concepts get a lesson from them and find out what is important.

Teaching at the University of Bucharest has been a delightful experience. At first I gasped at the thought of teaching advertising to liberal arts majors. But another lesson was learned. As opposed to my university in California, where business majors are frowned upon, these students were „hip“ to marketing and advertising and realized the importance it played in society. This made my job easier and fun. We have been able to discuss concepts from examples that are prevalent in Bucharest and throughout Romania. They have been astute to the changes that are occurring in marketing and advertising and welcome the opportunity to evaluate good and not so good strategies employed by large and small companies.

Most importantly, students have been open to suggestion as well as posed serious questions for discussions. As we know in marketing and advertising, you have to know the rules and how to break them. Students asked why some strategies were used while others should have been used. If I have sparked more questions from them, then I feel I have accomplished my goal because students are consumers and will soon be making such decisions regarding the marketing and advertising of brands. Moreover, I have learned a lot from them regarding particular brands and the strategies used. As I have learned from them, they have learned from me, slowly but they are getting used to a different format for teaching - discussion and the value of their opinions. As an individual that worked in the field of marketing and advertising, if the truth be known, the value of theory is nonex-

# Fulbright Scholars

istent in practice, since strategies have to be developed on the spot and implemented quickly. Brainstorming sessions were readily used venues for developing strategies and the idea that two heads were better than one was constant. Teamwork was essential, and the appreciation of members' ideas helped spawn new ideas.

The „real world“ is fast paced and students need to be prepared to, as we say, „think on their feet.“ As my students in both of my advertising classes are discovering, developing strategies based on limited research is something that they have to believe in. So they are learning to trust their decisions as team members decide. My philosophy in teaching is to give students hands-on experience in the courses I teach. It may be the only hands-on opportunity they get but it will help them to think critically and evaluate options based on limited information. The more that they have the opportunity to get hands-on experience the better they will be at „thinking on their feet,“ an essential component of a successful businessperson.

I know that I have learned many wonderful lessons regarding students I have had the privilege to teach in Romania and they have made me a better teacher. They have been respectful, caring, and willing to try new ways of learning. In the meantime, I have learned a lot more about Romania, its culture and the young people that will soon be the ones taking the country to new places and its accession into the European Union. A practical approach in teaching prepares students for what lies ahead. If I can encourage that among educators wherever I work, we can all help students succeed in whatever career path they chose while also being citizens of the world.

Teaching at the University of Bucharest has taught me lessons I will not forget. I am truly grateful for the experience and know that when I return that I can enlighten American students regarding the delights of Romanian culture. To my students in Bucharest - THANK YOU!

## An Experience with a Happy End

Tom Smith, Director of Instrumental Music

Pfeiffer University, Misenheimer, NC

Senior Fulbright Scholar, National University of Music, University of Bucharest

I vividly recall my first encounter with University of Bucharest Professor Rodica Mihăilă. It was during the September, 2002 Fulbright orientation session. „We would be so happy to have you lecture at one of our American Studies sessions,“ she cooed. I immediately told her what an honor it was to be asked. „Good, it's all set,“ she shot back. „I will bring students to the reception tonight for informal introductions.“ She then quickly pressed a folded slip of paper into my hand. I opened the mysterious document just wide enough to see my name listed prominently on what appeared to be a Department of American Studies Graduate School Fall Schedule. When I looked up to respond, she was already gone. „See you at the reception tonight,“ I heard her yell from what I assumed was the street. I again looked down at the paper, and to my astonishment discovered my enlistment as a REGULAR lecturer. Moreover, my first session was scheduled to convene in a mere four days. I suppose I would have considered the aforementioned scenario a normal course of affairs, were it not for the fact that my home institution was the

# • in Romania

National University of Music, and not the University of Bucharest. „What on Earth did I just agree to?” I wondered.

To make a long story short, Professor Mihăilă's polite yet determined coercion turned out to be the beginning of a most pleasant surprise. Within a matter of days, my disposition had changed from „How do I have time for this?” into „I really love this class.” The premise of my lectures was supposedly Jazz Music and American Sociological Parallels. But, it was not long before the classes spiraled into a plethora of related and sometimes not so related topics; especially those that satisfied my own urges to explore the idiosyncracies of the American political system.

I especially remember the week when President Bush came to extend Romania an invitation into NATO. That week the students asked me to forego the usual topics, to instead devote more time to the subject at hand. This was one of many times when I realized that my American Studies students were pretty sharp customers, and the equal of any graduate students I had ever encountered. They may not understand the principles behind a credit card, but the youthful Romanian intelligentsia absolutely understand political gamesmanship. In fact there are many political nuances that my young Romanian friends could explain to the politically unwashed of my own country. I remember that particular session very well, because I recall with fondness how much they impressed me. They told me they believed that presidential character DID matter, that the American Supreme Court did not steal the American election of 2000, but that hanging chads almost did, that there was little difference in the ethics of either the Democratic or Republican parties, and that George Bush called himself a Texas cowboy, because Maine lobster fishing is probably not considered as masculine to the average voting American. I also recall the statements made by one of my more talkative students regarding what she considered Romania's „interesting” invitation into NATO. „What do they want from us?” she bellowed. „NATO appears interested in specialization at the moment,” I answered. „They seem to really like those Romanian mountain soldiers.” Soooo....our new NATO friends would like us to go fetch the especially vicious Al Qaeda who are still in Afghanistan,” she immediately chimed back. „You know who they are Professor Smith. They are the ones you Americans are tired of chasing.” Dead silence.

Later, we were honored (if not a little confused) to learn that our discussions had reached the attention of senior American diplomats. In fact, two weeks after the NATO lecture, our class was visited by the American Cultural attaché himself. „How you ever got them to embrace western politics by listening to jazz I will never know,” he told me. Frankly, I never had the heart to tell him that I was just as clueless as he was. Despite the numerous multicultural inroads my students and I forged, they paled in comparison to the enduring bonds of friendship that prevailed. I will never forget that wonderful Christmas party they organized, or the fine young man who taught my son French and showed my wife how to pay the cable bill. These are kindnesses not so easily forgotten in a person's life.

Recently Professor Mihăilă stated in public forum that I had made a difference in the lives of her students. I thank her with

more than a fair dose of embarrassment, since it is I who has been positively altered. And far more comprehensively than any random musings I may have donated to the intellectual psyche of the University of Bucharest. There was a time when I absolutely hated to hear someone utter the expression „young people are our future.” I used to think it was the single most inane line ever conceived. Now, I guess I will have to drop some of my cynicism and rethink that one. Rodica Mihăilă's students have a way of eventually wearing you down... and sometimes it is for all the right reasons.

## Coming to Teach, Staying to Learn

**Kimball MacKay, Associate Professor**

**Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle, Washington**

**Fulbright Senior Scholar, Babes-Bolyai University**

Thanks to the Fulbright Commission, my wife Diane and I have been in Romania for nearly four months, now. I am teaching contemporary American literature to third and fourth year undergraduates and MA students at Babes-Bolyai University; Diane is teaching second-year students English for Special Purposes. Before I write about our teaching experiences, though, let me tell a little story. Over the Easter holiday, we traveled to Bucovina to rendezvous with new friends we met at a conference at the „A.I. Cuza University” in Iasi in March. Dana and Tudor arranged for us all to stay with friends of theirs in Gura Humorului. For four or five days, we ventured out to visit the painted monasteries, returning to the house in the evening. Our final evening in Gura Humorului, we all had a long and heated conversation about the perception and representation of Romania and Romanians in U.S., about how, for the most part, Romania to Americans is Dracula, Ceaușescu, and Nadia Comăneci; how, since '89, the perception of Romania has been largely reduced—in the popular mind anyway—to images of a kind of sentimentalized poverty, typified by portraits of needy orphans that accompany pleas for donations. Responding to this kind of synecdoche, one Romanian member of our party said, „If that's what brings in the money, maybe we don't want it.” While not denying the difficulties facing the nation and its people, he was arguing for the recognition of the complexity of Romania, the depth and breadth of the country's potent-and sometimes confusing—contemporary life. He was arguing against the tendency of the West-especially of the U.S.-to simplify those complexities, to see in the unfamiliar either the image of the 'underdeveloped' or a romanticized, pastoral, prelapsarian culture worthy of 'preservation' rather than full recognition. He was arguing against the 'othering' of Romania. That evening's conversation is a central image for my experience here, in a way: I have to admit, quite shamefacedly, that I assumed I would be bringing something 'new' to the intellectual and academic life of my students and my university here—new material, a new approach. Instead, I found students who, even given the difficulties they face in gaining access to books (perhaps the single most difficult problem I've seen in the academic world here), are astonishingly well read and prepared, astonishingly sharp and insightful readers and thinkers—more so than many of my students at home. There are gaps—again, especially in access to materials—but I found that I could not presume to know what those gaps would be, could not presume to be the one to 'fill' them. I found something else, instead, something that's at the heart of any education: that through being as fully present as I can be, listening as carefully and paying attention as fully as I can, my own understanding-of the texts we read together, of the world we live in, of myself—has been expanded. Diane and I are already planning how we can return to Romania, not because of what we can teach people here—though we hope we have and will be able to contribute something—but because of what we can learn.

## The First Class of American Studies Undergraduates at the University of Bucharest

Founded in 1999, the B. A. program in American Studies at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Bucharest, the first, and so far the only one of its kind in Romania, has served as a center for creative multi- and interdisciplinary study and teaching about the United States. It has attracted some of the most talented and intellectually adventurous students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages by offering them a prestigious minor at the undergraduate level. This year, the American Studies Program is awarding the first B. A. degrees to its first students. Since its founding, the Program has enrolled roughly 150 students.

Organized and coordinated by Professor Rodica Mihăilă, director of the Center for American Studies, the purpose of the American Studies minor is to provide students with the opportunity to gain a broader understanding of the United States through the study of diverse aspects of American history, culture and society, the use of several disciplines and approaches, and the development of a comprehensive view of the country's past and present experience as well as its future perspectives. A variety of courses within the three main modules in the eight-semester program, i.e. Culture and Values, Society and Change, History and Politics, introduce students to changes in social and political life and institutions, forms of economic organization, competing

myths and ideologies, and responses to world politics and future challenges.

The program has sought to overcome some of the limitations of present day Romanian institutional politics and align itself with European and American universities (where such programs have a long tradition); this has been attempted mostly by drawing on various departments, creating alliances and pooling resources among teachers and scholars from various fields such as history, literature, philosophy, sociology, political science, mass media, popular culture, the arts, marketing and law, whose intellectual interests are U.S.-focused.

Alongside well-established faculty, promising young scholars from the English department, have met this new challenge and elaborated new and highly stimulating courses and workshops such as Anthropology and American Cultures (Radu Surdulescu), American Life and Institutions (Octavian Roske), Native American Culture (Ilinca Iuraşcu, Ruxandra Rădulescu), Language and Society (Ruxandra Drăgan), Popular Culture (Cosana Nicolae) American Utopias (Roxana Oltean), American Philosophy (Sabina Draga, Corina Anghel), U.S. Cultures in the Era of Globalization (Ioana Luca).

Colleagues from other departments and institutions (History, Political Science, The

Academy of Economics, The Center of Contemporary Art) have always participated enthusiastically in the Program and have offered (in spite of administrative or financial difficulties that a new program unfortunately entails) core courses in American Law (Cornelia Lefter), American History (Bogdan Antoniu), The American Constitution (Radu Carp), Contemporary Visual Arts (Irina Cios), Business Trends (Alex Konick).

The Program has greatly benefited from the contribution of American Fulbright professors, whose innovative, inspiring and challenging courses on Film Studies (Barbara Nelson), Mass Media and Advertising (Victoria Seitz), Mass Communication (David Ritchey), Law (Jim Pfander), Journalism (Karen Schmidt), History and Society in American Drama (Joe Martin) have become cornerstones for both students and young scholars eager to gain valuable fresh insights into the respective subjects.

Moreover, the Center for American Studies, with the help of the Fulbright Commission and the US Embassy, has organized a series of lectures, „USA Today“, and a film series (initiated by Barbara Nelson) with a view to giving the students and the faculty the opportunity to meet and discuss together, in a more informal context, major issues concerning American culture and society.

As secretary of the Program and part of what we proudly call the „American Studies Team“, on the occasion of our first class graduating this year, I thank you all and wish our wonderful students best of luck.

*Ioana Luca*

## Ars Docendi within the American Studies Department: 1999-2003

Academic year 1999-2000 posed a major challenge for both the students and the teaching staff within the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures - University of Bucharest, namely the setting up of a new department with tradition in the US and Western Europe: American Studies. Initiated and relentlessly supported by Professor Dr. Rodica Mihăilă, the department evolved from 11 students in academic year 1999-2000 to 146 students registered in academic year 2002-2003. After four years of curricular experiments, I thought of inviting my fellow students to give a feedback on the extent to which the department objectives have been met. The survey, conducted between 20-01-03 and 13-05-03, was mainly aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the programs implemented and at providing us with a reliable image of the development of the American Studies department along its four years of existence. Evaluation sheets were handed out to the students within this specialization. I benefited from a 50% return rate of evaluation sheets, namely 73 respondents, which is a representative figure, given the scope of my research. Questions tested the effectiveness

of both professors and courses. Thus, 85 % of respondents rated the department very good and good, and 10% declared they were satisfied with it. Also, 78% of the students questioned pointed out that the instructors have been almost always and usually effective. Moreover, 76.7% of respondents declare that they have learned an exceptional amount and more than usual within this department. The students were also invited to give their opinion on the pros and cons of this specialization; most of them held in high esteem the wide range of courses and the tendency toward the generalization of studies, as well as the presence of American professors within this department; however, many respondents stated their dissatisfaction with the scarcity of scholarships available for American Studies students. All in all, the survey showed that the American Studies department enjoys a high popularity among its students and that most of the objectives undertaken at the beginning have been successfully fulfilled.

*Adrian FLOREA*

*American Studies (recent) Graduate*



## FULBRIGHT GRANTEES 2003-2004: A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

### 'Hate Speech in American and Romanian Print Media'

'Hate speech' can be defined as language advocating national, racial, religious and other kinds of hatred, instigating to discrimination and violence. The media is the main means of propagating such intolerant speech among the general public by relying on prejudices deeply-rooted in people's consciousness, arousing antipathy and even leading to violence and killing. Romanian media offers countless examples of 'hate speech' against the minorities living in our country, presenting them in black-and-white stereotypes and thus perpetuating prejudicial concepts about them.

In view of the above, I propose to carry on research on 'hate speech' in the American print media, focusing on racial issues - namely, the negative image of African Americans in the media and its own response to it, in order to compare it to that of the Roma community in the Romanian media. Building a case study, I will attempt to determine the origins of 'hate speech' against African Americans, the form and structure it takes in newspapers and magazines and the manner in which it is counterbalanced. I think that the American media best suits my purpose because the USA has a long tradition in democracy and is the least censored society in the world. Since it holds firmly to the First Amendment regarding freedom of speech and consequently, it is most exposed to 'hate speech', I find it interesting to see how this multicultural society tackles cultural pluralism and what 'self-correcting' mechanisms it has developed to neutralize 'hate speech' effectively.

On the other hand, I consider that African Americans offer the best case study possible because their social situation resembles that of the Roma in many ways and the stereotypes applied to the former also apply to the latter (for instance, both minorities are stereotypically viewed as marginal and inferior, both are known for their talent at music and dance, etc.).

Upon my return to Romania, I intend to develop a course based on my project, which I will teach within the American Studies program. I consider this study useful because it can shed new light on issues such as 'race' and 'racism', 'ethnicity', 'multiculturalism' / 'cultural pluralism' and the manner in which the American society understands and tackles them. In addition, given the fact that Romania is a former communist dictatorship and Romanian students are less sensitive to democratic values and human rights, I think this project can help them become aware of their own prejudices and develop tolerance and open-mindedness through critical thinking and dialogue. And last but not least, the data I will gather will offer me the basis to enter the Ph.D. program on American Studies.

*Ruxandra Dragan*  
*University of Bucharest*

The tenth anniversary of the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania, which also marks forty-three years of Fulbright activity in Romania, was celebrated on May 15 and 16, 2003 with a series of private and public events in Bucharest. Dignitaries from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest, and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, the President of Romania, several Romanian Ministers of State, Members of the Romanian Parliament, Romanian Orthodox clergy, the Executive Directors of the U.S. Fulbright Commissions in neighboring Bulgaria and Hungary, Romanian and American Fulbright alumni who taught and conducted research in the U.S., American Fulbright alumni, and many representatives from the academic, scholarly, business, scientific, and artistic communities were present at the two days of activities. This successful event provided wide media coverage and general exposure to America's most prestigious cultural and educational exchange program in a country where the close and enduring ties between the Romanian and American people have been strengthened by the Fulbright Commission and its work and activities.

At the private luncheon at the Athenee Palace Hilton in Bucharest, one Romanian alumnus and two alumnae (Dr. Eduard Vlad, Dr. Cornelia Bodea, and Dr. Cecilia Vass), were jointly awarded the Executive Director's Outstanding Alumni Award for 2003. Mrs. Ioana Ieronim, retiring American Program

10<sup>th</sup>

## ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE U.S. FULBRIGHT COMMISSION IN ROMANIA

'The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy — the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something that we have failed to see, or may see it more accurately.' Senator J. William Fulbright

Director at the Commission, was also awarded a certificate of appreciation for her many years of untiring labor for the Fulbright program in Romania.

A public reception took place at Cotroceni Palace in the beautiful reception hall (designed originally by Queen Marie of Romania), where President Ion Iliescu honored the Fulbright Commission's anniversary. His Eminence, Most Rev. Dr. Chrysostomos, Executive Director of U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania, was attended in speeches by Mr. Mircea Geoană, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Michael Guest, U.S. Ambassador to Romania. Dr. Cynthia Snow, Romanian officer from the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, accepted a certificate of appreciation from the Commission former directors.

On the second anniversary day, talks and presentations by Fulbright alumni and university administrators took place at the Palace of the Parliament. Speakers acknowledged, among other things, the contribution of the Fulbright program to the institutionalization of American Studies in Romania. In recognition of their whole activity in the field of American-Romanian relations, special awards were given to several academics. Among them there were two RAAS members, Dr. Rodica Mihăilă, University of Bucharest, and Dr. Ștefan Avădanei, „Al. I. Cuza” University, Iași. In the evening, a Concert in honor of the Commission anniversary, was held at the Sala Mică Concert Hall in the former Royal Palace. The presentation featured chamber music performed by a string quartet from the National University of Music in Bucharest; a George Gershwin „sampler” directed by Professor Vince Liotta, a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Gh. Dima Academy of Music in Cluj; selections from a musical („Ha!”) written by Fulbright alumnus Dr. Calvin McClinton; and a jazz performance by Professor Tom Smith, a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the National University of Music, and Professor Rick Condit, a Fulbright alumnus. The participants received an anniversary CD and a volume gathering several contributions by former alumni about their Fulbright experience.

*Cosana Nicolae*



## EAAS GRANTS ANNOUNCEMENT 2003-2004

- The EAAS is pleased to announce the continuation of EAAS travel grants for postgraduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences who are registered for a higher research degree at any European University. Two kinds of grants are available, the Transatlantic Grant and the Intra-European Grant. It is expected that between four and ten scholarships will be available each year. The scholarships will be aimed predominantly at young scholars in Eastern and Central Europe. The maximum single award granted will be \$6000.
- The Transatlantic Grant will permit the holder to conduct research which illuminates some aspect of the relationship between the United States and Europe, or between the United States and a country or countries within Europe in a designated university in the United States. The term of the grant will be between three weeks (minimum) and eight weeks (maximum). Successful applicants will receive a grant intended to cover return travel, living expenses, and a limited amount of travel within the United States where appropriate. Health insurance will also be provided. Only students registered for a Ph. D. are eligible to apply for the Transatlantic Grants. The Intra-European Grant will allow the recipient to conduct research for a period of up to four weeks in an American Studies Centre or University library in Europe. Graduate students who are registered either for a Ph. D. or a Master's degree by research are eligible to apply for the Intra-European Grants.
- The Intra-European Grants are also available for institutional research projects involving up to three scholars (M. A. or Ph. D.) based on the cooperation between two American Studies institutes in Eastern and Western Europe. In this case, applications may be made collectively; each (sub)-project, however, will also be evaluated individually. Although the EAAS grant program is especially meant to encourage American Studies research in Eastern Europe, applications from Western European scholars will be welcome if they are part of an institutional project as outlined above.
- Applications must be made on the official form and should include written confirmation from the host institution that the researcher will have access to the necessary resource materials, and a letter from the student's academic supervisor. Applicants will be required to supply a detailed estimate of the cost of their visit, including the cost of travel, subsistence, and incidentals. They should also state the minimum amount of money needed to make the trip possible. Applicants are encouraged to seek supporting or matching funding wherever possible.
- Grantee recipients will be responsible for making their own arrangements for travel and accommodation. Travel must be completed within twelve months of the grantee being notified of the award. Grantees will be required to make a report to the grant committee, normally within thirty days of returning from their research visit.
- Application forms are available from the EAAS Board representatives of constituent associations or can be downloaded. Details can be found on the following site:  
[http://www.eaas.info/travel\\_grants.htm](http://www.eaas.info/travel_grants.htm)

## A WINNER OF THE EAAS TRANSATLANTIC GRANT, 2003

Ludmila Martanovschi

„Ovidius” University, Constanta

### On a Recent American Experience, with Nostalgia

The Transatlantic Grant awarded by the European Association for American Studies enabled me to do research on the American dimension of my project „The Construction of Ethnic Identity in Native American and Serbian Romanian Poetry of the Southwest: Simon Ortiz and Ioan Flora” at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas from January 17th to March 15th, 2003. The proposal I submitted had benefited from Professor Dr. Rodica Mihail's guidance and recommendation for which I am most grateful. During my stay in the United States, I had the chance to work on the project under Associate Professor Dr. P. Jane Hafen's supervision as well as to be part of enlightening „creative” experiences.

Attending my supervisor's course on Native American Literature, especially the classes on contemporary writers, opened new directions in my broader research of the field. I got acquainted with novelists such as LeAnne Howe whose **Shell Shaker** is a journey into Choctaw history meaningfully interpreted or Thomas King whose **Green Grass, Running Water** challenges the reader with a deconstruction of preconceived ideas about Indians. Most importantly, I joined a group responsible for the presentation of Simon Ortiz's ethnohistorical context and thus I deepened my understanding of the poet's Acoma Pueblo culture. My study of his work analyzes the sense of history as shared past, the return to the place of origin and the relation to the oral tradition as themes relevant for the construction of ethnicity in volumes such as **Woven Stone** and **Out There Somewhere**. These themes reappear in Ioan Flora's poetry from **Fifty Novels and Other Utopias** and **Medea and Her War Machines** though in significantly different variants, the most obvious being the Serbian Romanian poet's postmodernist approach to the tradition of written literature.

Besides research, I treasure a few other experiences that are connected to literature and creative writing in various ways. They inform my memories of UNLV, the American university that offered most unexpected cultural treats. The most significant one is Sandra Cisneros' coming to give a reading from her latest book **Caramelo** on February 28th. The opportunity to listen to the celebrated Chicana writer performing the text gathered both members of the local Spanish-speaking community and students, especially from the Creative Writing MFA on campus. Cisneros' characters voiced their fears and desires through her almost ceremonial acting to the delight of the audience.

Several people present at the event were acquaintances of mine. They have a special fascination for words and aspire to become writers. On several occasions, we had meetings aimed at starting a web literary magazine, *mamaliga.us*. The project is directed by John Quinn, who has been teaching Creative Writing courses in the United States and at 'Ovidius' University, Constanta for several years now. The first issue of the magazine will include the best literary pieces that came out of these workshops as well as recent work by well-established writers. After the magazine's release in June, the editing team will be looking forward to receiving new materials from prospective contributors.

Looking back on both the academic experience and the more informal encounters on campus, I can only feel enriched and grateful to have received the grant that made possible my trip to Las Vegas. Despite the initial apprehension about the dangers of the desert that surround the place not only geographically speaking, I found wonderful people inspired by creativity making the university a welcoming and friendly site.

# Conference participation

**Adina Ciugoreanu**

„Ovidius” University, Constanța

## **Cultural Icons: City Lights and the Pocket Book**

This challenging topic gathered about 40 academics at the international Conference in Rome (12-14 December 2002), who discussed both the publishing venture of **City Lights** and the work of the poets published in the Pocket Book Series. Besides the Italian participants, who outnumbered the ones from abroad, and who counted, among others, Maria Anita Stefanelli, Cristina Giorcelli and Sara Antonelli, there were Robert Lee, the author of a study about the Beat Generation, Larry Smith, another specialist in the 1950s and the American poet Anne Waldman, a close friend of Allen Ginsberg and, most probably, the last Beat alive. The papers and the discussions revealed various aspects of Kerouac's, Rexroth's and Ginsberg's work, the history of City Lights, Ferlinghetti's devotion to it, and the impact of the book series upon readers.

**Ludmila Martanovschi**

„Ovidius” University, Constanța

## **Intellectual Challenges and Organizational Excellence Salzburg Seminar, April 2003**

The Salzburg Seminar at Schloss Leopoldskron hosted Session 408, „Contemporary American Literature: Cultural Diversity and Aesthetic Continuities” between the 2nd and 9th of April, 2003. If invited to establish which part of the session was most effective or meritorious, I could not choose among the many sections that proved to be as many beneficial experiences.

Emory Elliott, the editor of the recently published *Aesthetics in a Multicultural Age* and chair of the present session, gave a comprehensive overview of the current concerns in contemporary American literature and criticism in his „National Dreams and Rude Awakenings: The Global Warnings of American Literature”. The relationship between aesthetics and multiculturalism continued to be discussed in the days to follow. Marc Chénétier insisted that literature should disengage itself from ideology while the other three speakers seemed to emphasize the opposite through their choice of focus: Shirley Geok-Lin Lim used an inter-ethnic approach to an analysis of „terror and trauma”, Mae Henderson concentrated upon the „white Africanist presence” or the narratives of „passing” in African American literature and Helena Maria Viramontes discussed border crossings and read from her latest novel.

The afternoons were dedicated to further work in small groups. I was part of the first group responsible for enlightening aspects concerning „Racial Formations, Diasporas and Homeland Security”. Writer, critic and professor Shirley Geok-Lin Lim.

Some of the special opportunities offered in the evenings were: watching *Smoking Signals* based on a text by successful Native American writer Sherman Alexie and listening to readings from the work of the writers present.

**Anca Iancu**

„Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu

## **The „East - West Cultural Passage” Conference**

Every year in April or May, the „Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu,

together with the „C. Peter Magrath” Center for Romanian-American Academic Interaction celebrates the American Week. This is a week dedicated to American culture and civilization, to American values, to American-Romanian academic interaction, to friendship and solidarity. This year the American Week took place between April, 7 and April, 12 and included student sessions, a creative writing, workshop for students and the third edition of the „East-West Cultural Passage” Conference convening Fulbright lecturers and researchers from Transylvania. The students' papers focused on American literature and civilization and included such authors as W. Faulkner, K. Vonnegut, V. Nabokov, Th. Dreiser, J. Dos Passos and Andrei Codrescu. The „EAST-WEST CULTURAL PASSAGE” conference, organized in association with The Fulbright Commission in Romania, took place on Friday, April 11 and included an opening plenary whose key-note speaker was Dr. Mihaela Irimia, Director of Studies, British Cultural Studies Centre, Bucharest (this year, happily, experts on British Studies joined specialists in American Studies), and several workshops running in parallel. Dr. Irimia challenged the audience with a very contemporary topic. „In the Wake of International Trauma: Orientalism and Occidentalism Reconsidered”. The themes of the workshops were also very well chosen and thought-provoking. They ranged from discussions about postcoloniality(ism) and global civilization, led by Dr. Mihaela Irimia, Bucharest University, Dr. Adriana Neagu, „Lucian Blaga” University Sibiu and Dr. Eric Gilder, „Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu, to documentary fine art photos (Chair Dr. Kathleen Laraia McLaughlin), translation of poetry (Chair Dr. Monica Cure), modern American poetry (Chair Dr. Kim McKay) and an overview of the American Music Theater (Chair Dr. Vince Liotta).

**Corina Anghel**

University of Bucharest

## **The International Postgraduate Conference Postmodern Deconstructions Erlangen, Germany**

This conference took place between November 22-24 2002, in Erlangen, a small university town situated near Nuremberg. The keynote speaker of the conference was Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who lectured on „Transgressing Third Space.”

Each panel consisted of 6 papers that centered around a common theme: „The Spectre of Theory,” „Narrating Self and Other,” „TranscendSense,” „CyberSoma,” „Postmodern Histories,” „PostSpaces,” „Postcolonial Literatures” and „The Global Empire.”

Many papers focused on literary works from all over the world, spanning from American authors, such as Tim O'Brien and Don DeLillo to English and postcolonial writers, such as A. S. Byatt, J. M. Coetzee and Salman Rushdie.

Other papers that had a higher degree of abstraction explored the (im)possibility of theory to voice the postmodern unrepresentable (Carolin Roder, University of Cardiff), the movement of criticism beyond poststructuralism (Helga Thahofer, LMU München), the relationship between Platonic terms and deconstruction (Corina Anghel, University of Bucharest), the postmodern as a drive towards the divine (Michael O'Sullivan, University of Cork, Ireland).

# Call for papers

Dear Colleagues,

The Romanian Association for American Studies - RAAS meeting will be held on 7 February 2004 in Bucharest, at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, str. Pitar Mos 7-11, Amfiteatrul Eminescu, at 5:00 PM. The main points on the agenda are : 1. RAAS activities and achievements since 2002; 2. New RAAS board elections. Suggestions, contributions, nominations are most welcome. Please plan and confirm participation - it is a great occasion to think and shape future RAAS matters. Looking forward to meeting you all there.

RAAS President,  
Rodica Mibăilă

## 1. RAAS Biennial Conference 2004 OUR AMERICA: PEOPLE, PLACES, TIMES

### Organizers:

The Romanian Association for American Studies

The Romanian - U.S. Fulbright Commission

6-8 February 2004

The Romanian Association for American Studies and the Romanian - U.S. Fulbright Commission invite paper proposals for our third biennial conference to be held in Bucharest on February 6-8, 2004 at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures. The theme is „Our America: People, Places, Times“. Proposals are welcome from all researchers in the field, from senior colleagues to postgraduates on any theme in American Studies from a multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinary direction or may examine a topic from the perspective of literature, culture, history, politics, social sciences, business/economics, visual arts, architecture, music, film or any other approach contributing to the study of America.

■ Individual oral presentations should not exceed 20 minutes.

■ Selections of papers presented at preceding RAAS conferences have been published in volumes form and we envision a publication this time. To be acceptable for publication revised conference papers from RAAS members should be of 4- 5000 words, in MLA format.

■ Participants wishing to join RAAS may do so at the conference.

■ The conference fee is 200.000 lei

■ Proposals (300 words), including a provisional title, should be submitted by 1 October 2003 to:

Ruxandra Radulescu (ruxandra@fx.ro)

Mihaela Precup (mihaela\_precup@yahoo.com)

## 2. In(ter)discipline: New Languages for Criticism

An International Conference, 19-21 September 2003

University of Cambridge, Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities Sidney Sussex College, UK

This conference aims to stimulate discussion about the kinds of critical languages used within the scholarly as well as the public sphere, and the linguistic challenge that represents an increasingly interdisciplinary research culture within the modern Humanities. Given the conventions of professional critical prose in academia, critics are often expected to give weight to handed-down knowledge, to questions of origin, and to historical, cultural, and social

context. Often they are encouraged to avoid a personal style of writing. Might a more immediate and individualized response, possibly in the spirit of a 'close reading', lead to a better kind of critical writing that would send the reader back to the art work, to look at it, read it or listen to it again, with a heightened sense of understanding and - more crucially - responsiveness and enjoyment? Or is the outcome of such an approach likely to be atomism? As regards interdisciplinary work, are the languages used in the different specialisms transposable from one field into another? Or do we need a meta-language? What are the advantages as well as the difficulties and risks when using different methods and modes of analysis?

Proposals for papers addressing issues of in(ter)disciplinary scholarship and writing are now invited from younger as well as senior members of any humanities or arts discipline or practice.

Please send proposals not exceeding 300 words plus a brief biographical note to Dr Beate Perrey via e-mail bep1000@cam.ac.uk, or fax (+44)1223 765276, or post (see below)

■ DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: MONDAY 30 JUNE 2003

■ NOTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE: MONDAY 7 JULY 2003.

Papers by conference speakers as well as a selection of proposed papers that could not be accommodated in the conference will be published in a book. This conference forms part of the long-term research programme New Languages for Criticism: Cross-currents and Resistances, co-directed by Prof. Dame Gillian Beer, Prof. Malcolm Bowie and Dr Beate Perrey, and sponsored by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASH) of the University of Cambridge.

■ For more information and to register, please visit the project website: <http://www.crash.cam.ac.uk/projects/newlangs.html>

For practical details about the conference, please contact Mary-Rose Cheadle at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Cambridge, Old Press Site, Silver Street, Cambridge, CB3 9EW, tel: 01223-765279, email: administrator@crash.cam.ac.uk.

## 3. American Literary Geographies: Space and Cultural Production, 1588-1888 (collection)

In light of the recent „spatial turn“ in critical theory and various critical attempts to „remap“ the field of American studies, we are seeking contributions for an essay collection that investigates intersections between geography and cultural production prior to the founding of the National Geographic Society in 1888.

Proposals are invited to address some of the following questions: How does the recent turn towards spatial questions in cultural studies affect the field of American studies? How do the methods of historical geography and literary analysis complement each other? How does the geographical rhetoric in critical theory and practice influence the conception of identity in the imperial, colonial, or national contexts? How have the materiality and technology of geographic discourse informed subjectivities, sexualities, literatures, and cultures? While the collection will be organized around questions of U. S. literary history, essays that address other geographies (such as transatlantic or hemispheric perspectives) and disciplines (such as visual art, material culture, urban studies, and historiography-not to mention cultural geography) are welcome. Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

■ geographies of identity: gendered spaces, domestic fiction, religion and representational spaces, racial geographies, Black Atlantic, personal/psychological space

■ transnational (hemispheric, transatlantic, etc.) perspectives: imperialism, intertextuality, comparative approaches, Monroe Doctrine, gunboat diplomacy, Mexican-American War

■ genre and geography: pastoral, travelogues, romance, exploration, maritime literature

■ technologies of geographic writing: print culture, history of cartography, geography textbooks, land surveys

■ geography and nation-building: „imagined community,“ „democratic social space,“ National Geographic Society, American exceptionalism

■ mobile geographies: nomadism, exile, migration, speed, steamships, canals, railroads

■ theorizing literature and geography: spatial aspects of metaphor and metonymy, new formalism, The Space of Literature, poetics and „cognitive mapping

Please send a cv and a 3-page proposal (or completed paper) to Martin Brckner (mcb@udel.edu) or Hsuan L. Hsu (hsu@socrates.berkeley.edu) by 7 October, 2003. Accepted papers of 6,000-8,000 words will be due by 1 August, 2004.

## 4. IV International Conference on Chicano Literature, Seville, Spain (12-14 May 2004)

The fourth venue in Spain is the University of Seville, where scholars and artists will be able to meet and discuss the multiple manifestations of Chicano studies. As areas of study we offer the following options:

Border theory, drama and performance, popular culture, gender theory, mitos, history, sociology, folklore, poetry, fiction, film, television, immigration, ethnic stereotyping and/or works of specific authors. Those wishing to make a proposal (in English or Spanish), please send the text of the complete paper before 15 January 2004 to:

Jesus Lerate de Castro o Juan Ignacio Guijarro ,  
Facultad de Filologia, Departamento de Literatura Inglesa y Norteamericana, c/Palos de la Frontera, s/n, 41004 Seville  
(jlerate@siff.us.es jguijarro@siff.us.es).

## 5. The Commonwealth Fund Conference on American History of 2003:

**‘AMERICAN CINEMA AND EVERYDAY LIFE’, University College London on 26th-28th June**

The theme of the conference will be ‘American Cinema and Everyday Life.’ Up to 60 papers on the social experience of film-going will be discussed. Among the issues considered will be: how did cinema become a part of everyday life for so many Americans? What was the nature of film exhibition? How did the experience of movie-going differ at different times and places within the United States? How were audiences themselves constituted in social and economic terms? To what extent was the experience of film-going itself shaped and influenced by such factors as the gender, race, class, and ethnicity of members of the audience? How important to film-goers were the physical and social contexts of movie-going? How did spectators create meanings for themselves out of the films they viewed? How, if at all, did the influence of such constructed meanings extend beyond the immediate context of film-going, affecting aspects of spectators’ own lives? Did foreign audiences respond in the same way as American audiences to American cinema?

■ For more information on the conference and a registration form, see the conference website: [www.ucl.ac.uk/history/cf2003](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/cf2003)

## 6. THE ‘LEON EDEL’ PRIZE

The ‘Leon Edel’ Prize is awarded annually for the best essay on Henry James by a beginning scholar. The prize carries with it an award of \$150, and the prize-winning essay will be published in HJR. The competition is open to applicants who have not held a full-time academic appointment for more than four years.

Independent scholars and graduate students are encouraged to apply. Essays should be 20-30 pages (including notes), original, and not under submission elsewhere or previously published.

■ Send submissions (in duplicate, produced according to current MLA style, and with return postage enclosed) to:

Susan M. Griffin, Editor; The Henry James Review, Department of English, University of Louisville; Louisville, KY, 40292.

Author’s name should not appear on the manuscript. Please identify essays as submissions for the Leon Edel Prize. A brief curriculum vitae should be included. Decisions about regular publication are also made at the same time as the prize decision.

■ Deadline: November 1, 2003.

## 7. U. S. Icons and Iconicity

**AAAS (Austrian Association of American Studies) Conference November 7-9, 2003 University of Graz, Austria**

Aids Ribbons. Barbie. Cape Canaveral. Ellis Island. FDR. Ground Zero. Harvey Milk. JFK. Moby Dick.

US cultural icons fall into three main groups: a) fictional as well as historical characters (Daisy Duck to Harvey Milk); b) sites, monuments, natural elements (Ground Zero, Vietnam War Memorial, Buffalos); and c) logos, isotopes, and computer icons (pink triangle, dot-com, Windows, trash bin, etc.). How do these icons come into being? Who controls their shaping? What aspects of an emotionally, socially and historically complex phenomenon do they cover? What aspects are left out? What denotations and connotations do they carry? What are cultural or political consequences of these icons? What is their relation to the mass media? How do they or their reception change historically? How are they challenged or toppled? Can we do without iconicity? How are these icons appropriated by those on the margins? Icons being symbols of the ruling ideas, what do they tell us about the relations between classes, ethnic groups and genders? And, above all, are they rather manifestations of hegemonic rule (Gramsci, Foucault, Laclau & Mouffe) or manifestations of a shared body of norms and values and therefore democratic elements (Durkheim, Parsons)?

Keynote speakers so far: Paul Smith, Mandy Merck

Concept and Organization: Klaus Rieser

Conference homepage: <http://angam.ang.univie.ac.at/aaas/>

■ Please send proposals for papers, including an abstract (100-300 words) before June 1, 2003 to: [amerikanistik@uni-graz.at](mailto:amerikanistik@uni-graz.at)  
AAAS Conference 2003; Department of American Studies; University of Graz;

Attemsgasse 25/II; A-8010 Graz; Austria/EU; Fax: +43-316-380-9768; Conference homepage: <http://angam.ang.univie.ac.at/aaas/>

## 8. Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-present)

**invites submissions for the fall 2003 edition of its peer-reviewed e-journal.**

■ Please see the call for papers link at

<http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/index.htm> for the guidelines and more information.

■ Submissions and queries to [editor@americanpopularculture.com](mailto:editor@americanpopularculture.com).

■ Deadline 15 October 2003.



## An Unconventional Review

Dear Ilinca,\*

Thank you for your phone call that found me overwhelmed by an intense feeling of professional failure. One of my students' papers says that Edgar Allan Poe was a Victorian woman deported to America for having murdered her newborn baby (probably in Rue Morgue)...O, tempora, oh students! It's true that it was an optional course of literatures in English and the student is majoring in German... But where was he when I read from the beautiful bilingual volume of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry and drama, with introduction, translations and notes by the distinguished scholar from the university of Cluj-Napoca, Liviu Cotruș? What shall I do now? Kill myself or just expect my natural extinction in a home for failed academics? „You will survive...” sings Tina.

In this dark mood my eyes fell on the Heath Anthology of American Literature I got from a charming American stationed in Deutschland who had studied in the same academy as Edgar Allan Poe and was also ready to say a farewell to arms... I was just wondering whether he is on the Black Sea coast now listening to „Red roses for my baby...” on Romanian wavelength... But long before the Heath Anthology, my first introduction to American culture had been Petru Comarnescu's *Homo Americanus* and therefore I was very happy to see some of his types - to which we should add some new ones - included in the excellent anthology of American Studies edited by Alina Branda, with Marius Jucan's most learned introduction. Besides Comarnescu's „types”, the anthology contains the work of other two Romanian explorers of the American culture, Virgil I. Bărbat and Nicolae Petrescu. One cannot be but amazed at their thorough investigations of the overseas realities, published as early as 1922.

As to what happens at our North University - Baia Mare, the field of American Studies is covered by postmodern writer (doctor mirabilis) Adrian Ocoiu and the fond of Cohen free-lance photographer Horea Nașcu. They are real heroes as they have to cover and discover lots of other fields as well. The mean budget of our university does not allow us to invite visiting professors. Books about the faces and sights of the US are written by travelers from the zone, journalists who are not afraid to publish in book form their notes jotted down during guided tours. Still, there is an achievement I should mention: the first book published by our Canadian Studies Center, a collection of articles in English and French about identity and alterity in Canadian literature. Most of the contributors are from the US. From among the Anglophone Romanians I have to mention Liviu Cotru, Horea Nașcu and the undersigned,

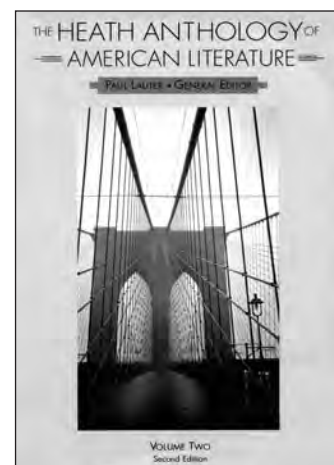
With best wishes and love,

Ana

P.S. Now it's May Day and I strongly feel like marching and loitering in the streets as my generation used to. In the meantime I concluded that the student was only influenced by postmodern thinking. George Eliot, murder, deportation, then T.S. Eliot... Long live the young and the restless! But I'd rather watch „My Fair Lady” tonight...

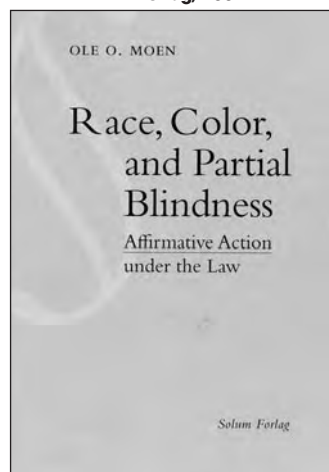
■ Edgar Allan Poe, *Poezie* - Dram. Ediție bilingvă. Traducere, studiu introductiv, note și comentarii de Liviu Cotru. Institutul European, Iași, 2001; ■ Studii de americanistică 2001. Studiu introductiv de Marius Jucan. Ediție îngrijită de Alina Branda. Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, Cluj-Napoca; ■ *Identity and Alterity in Canadian Literature. Identité et Altérité dans la littérature canadienne*. Ed. Dana Puiu, Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, 2003

\* *Informal letter from Ana Olos to Ilinca Anghelescu*



**THE HEATH ANTHOLOGY  
OF AMERICAN LITERATURE**  
General Editor: Paul Lauter  
Lexington, Toronto:  
DC Heath & Comp. 1994

**OLE O. MOEN.**  
**Race, Color, and Partial  
Blindness. Affirmative Action  
under the Law.** Oslo: Solum  
Forlag, 2001



## The Law as political Tool

Professor Ole O. Moen investigates the questions and debates raised by the introduction of a consistent program of affirmative action in the United States. As underlined in the introduction, the book proposes an analysis of the concept of affirmative action as a legal-political tool, focusing primarily on the discourse within the

Supreme Court since the decisive period of the sixties. The development of the political role of the Court as demonstrated in cases pertaining to the gradual introduction of the program of affirmative action is indicative of a major paradigm shift in American society, from a „color-blind” interpretation of the Constitution to a sustained, although controversial program of race-conscious measures. The necessity of a program such as affirmative action is seen by Professor Moen to originate in the „American dilemma”: „the acceptance of a virtual gulf between ideals and reality”. While acknowledging that President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration was the first to introduce the concept in the 1930s, the author highlights the stages of the metamorphosis of the „color-blind” ideal into a „color-conscious” political tool for the rights of minorities in the 1990s. With race still a relevant legal concept in the United States, the opinions of the Supreme court for the selected period of time (1961-1995) have also had to handle the issue of the benign and malign use of race in affirmative action programs and Professor Ole Moen's book touches on controversial questions such as the law as political tool, equality under the constitution and conservative and neo-liberal backlashes. Selecting representative cases and opinions of the Court, the book examines the impact of affirmative action in various walks of life, while surveying the main implications of what has been called „one of the most daring political experiments „ in the 20th century in America. (*Ruxandra R`dulescu*)



**ADINA CIUGUREANU**  
**The Boomerang Effect.**  
**(A Study in the Twentieth**  
**Century American popular**  
**Culture), Constanța: Ex**  
**Ponto Printing House, 2002**



## Elite and mass culture

This book is the result of Adina Ciugureanu's one year experience as a Fulbright visiting scholar at the University of Nevada, Texas. It has to be hailed as the first coherent contribution made by a Romanian scholar in the still academically debated field of popular culture. The main assumption held in the volume is that

American popular culture has European roots, thus originating in Greek and Latin mythologies and medieval cultural patterns. All these have been appropriated, creolized and exported to the world via American popular culture. As a matter of fact, Richard Keller Simon's 1999 book, **Trash Culture: Popular Culture and the Great Tradition**, starts from similar consideration, but to a different end. Simon maintains that great literature and popular entertainment evoke „comparable experiences.“ and parallels modern supermarket tabloid and gossip magazine tragedies to the great tragic literature; TV talk shows, sitcoms, and soap operas to the history of the theater; and **Star Wars**, **Star Trek**, and Vietnam War movies to **The Faerie Queene**, **Gulliver's Travels**, and Homer. In her turn, starting from several definitions of culture that can be traced back to Matthew Arnold, Adina Ciugureanu discusses distinctions between high and low, elite and mass culture operated by the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno), Walter Benjamin, Umberto Eco, Patrick Brantlinger and Nachbar and Lause. The study focuses on mythical heroes and superheroes (the knight model in **Beowulf** and in the Arthurian legends recycled in Superman or Batman), the vampire archetype and Dracula, and the model of the Virgin Martyr and the Aggressive Lady (impersonated by Barbie and Madonna). At the same time, it fast forwards on food as an identity marker, consumption in general, hyper-reality and entertainment. A special chapter is devoted to theme parks, viewed as „bubbles“ of consumerism and expressions of an American sense of the carnivalesque. Thus, sites such as Las Vegas or Disneyland become heterotopia zones, in Michel Foucault's terms, thereby embodying American popular fantasies about classic, chivalric, romance or the ancient agora. This alert study is useful for both American Studies scholars and the larger audience, as it highlights bipolar effects on European and American imagination in terms of hybridized European forms. (Cosana Nicolae)

**MIHAI MÂNDRA. Strategists**  
**of Assimilation, Institutul de**  
**cercetri al Academiei Române,**  
**„G. Călinescu“, 2002**



## Additive acculturation

Recently published by the Romanian Academy, together with the National Science and Art Foundation and the 'G. Călinescu' Literary History and Theory Institute, Mihai Mândra's latest book represents the first published work which fully reflects his interest in the field of Jewish-American literature. By focusing on three Jewish-American novelists who emerged from the same background at the end of the nineteenth century (i.e. Russia, including the Polish territories), Mihai Mândra attempts at finding an answer to the question of whether genuine assimilation is possible. The theoretical background includes two studies by Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity* and *The Invention of Ethnicity*, as well as phenomenological overtones which may represent a connection with the author's previous publications. Thus, by looking at Abraham Cahan's **The Rise of David Levinsky**, Mary Antin's **The Promised Land** and Anzia Yezieska's **Bread Givers**, Mihai Mândra pinpoints the predicament of a condition which is inescapably ambiguous, dangling between 'additive acculturation', 'self-hating' recognition of one's roots, commercial exploitation of the stereotypical representations of Jewishness, and fighting and/or giving in to the ethnic prejudices or ethnocentric impositions of the American/Russian culture. (Mihaela Precup)

## VIRGIL I. BĂRBAT, NICOLAE PETRESCU, PETRU COMARNESCU: Studii de americanistică

Studii introductiv de Marius Jucan, ediție îngrijit de Alina Branda, EFES, Cluj, 2001

The surprisingly various ways to render the many-faceted portrait of modern America was undoubtedly a challenging and at the same time a luring task for many authors in the interwar period in Romania. Among them, Virgil I. Bărbat, Nicolae Petrescu and Petru Comarnescu, may deserve a special consideration for their coherent endeavour to interpret American realities. Their articles and essays, a telling testimony ascertaining the interest for the American civilization, its imagology and impact upon the world, can be read today with the critical awareness of having left behind the unaffected eulogistic appraisal, without tarnishing the reader's unwavering curiosity for the American world.

Attempting to draw a sketch of the ever changing contours of the American cultural modernity, the three above mentioned authors dovetail their essayistic, sociological or political reflections on contemporary America in fragmentary „studies“, pointing both at the novelty of the American cultural model and its way of life.

Marius Jucan



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