

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) 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 21st 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 grrrrls, 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 7th, 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 20th 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 15th, 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.bit.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, Babeş-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,
Babeş-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 Babeş-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 Babeş-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 Zdrenghea, 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 Brînzeu'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 9th 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, 20th 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

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 17th 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 26th and ended on August 6th 2010, offering the egg-eaters 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 20th 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 Metterson, 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

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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 ethnoscapas 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 ethnoscapas, 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 ethnoscapas 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

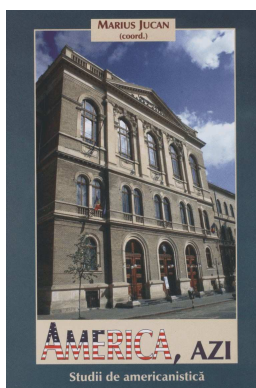
Tribuna, Cluj-Napoca, 2010

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 20th 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 Mihuț 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 in 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 unpractical, 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 Văețiși 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 Universității din București, 2010

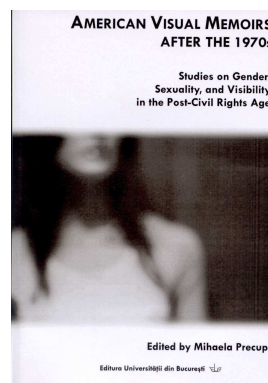
Dana Mihăilescu

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 Vizenor 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 CNCSIS-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 Stanescu, 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, seen 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

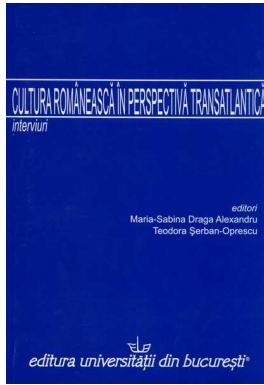
University of Bucharest

Cultura românească în perspectivă transatlantică. Interviu

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, Éliza 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.

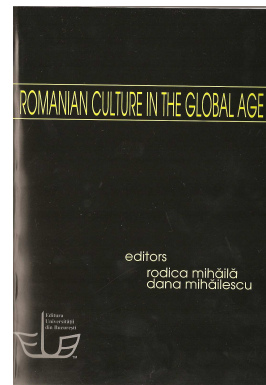
Romanian Culture in the Global Age

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
Phone: +44 1482 465287
Fax: +44 1482 466107

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 15th 2011**

To register, check your registration or keep up with conference news, you may visit our site at 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>

Ana Blanca Ciocoi-Pop

<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 13th 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

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

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Field: American Literature

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Field: American Studies

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 Field: Business Administration, International Banking

Dr. David Christian WEINDORF

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 Field: Agriculture, Soil Morphology

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 Host University: Babes Bolyai University, Cluj
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