

Letter from the President

Adina Ciugureanu

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

Dear colleagues,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Looking forward to seeing you all in Constanța,

Adina Ciugureanu

American Studies

American Studies at Sibiu

Ana-Karina Schneider

Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

American Corners

American Corner Baia Mare

Coordinators: Adina Dorolţan and Ştefan Selek

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There were plenary lectures, 3 DVCs with important professors



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

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

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

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

Conference Participation

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

Marius Jucan

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Silvia Florea and Lucia Pavelescu

Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Odette Blumenfeld and Sorina Chiper

"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi

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

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

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

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

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

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

Academic Exchanges and Summer Schools

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

Anda Ștefanovici

"Petru Maior" University Târgu-Mureș

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Costinela Dragan

University of Bucharest

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

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

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

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

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

Ludmila Martanovschi

Ovidius University, Constanța

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

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

Research Projects

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

Anamaria Schwab

University of Bucharest, Romania

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Michaela Praisler

"Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați

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

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

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

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

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

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

attach to the values of their own identity;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

representatives, their expression of identity and the law.

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

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

Daniela Angelica Dorobantu
University of Craiova

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

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

slavery/pre-colonial indigenous traditional cultures.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Research Projects

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

Anca-Luminita Iancu

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Book Reviews

The Sense of America. Histories into Text.

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

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

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

Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru

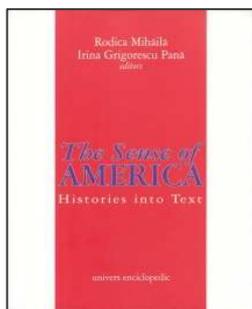
University of Bucharest

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Bernard Malamud and the Type Figure of the Schlemiel

Eniko Maior

Partium Christian University, Oradea

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

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

CALLS FOR PAPERS

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

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

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

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

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

We are pleased to announce that

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

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

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

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

International Whitman Week 2010
Seminar and Symposium

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Readings from Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay and others

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

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

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

Proposals should be emailed to textingobama@mmu.ac.uk by no later than 26 March 2010.

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

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

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

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

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

Any additional queries should be addressed to the Project Officer, Viv Minton at vivien.minton@plymouth.ac.uk

Conference theme

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

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

Submission of abstracts

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

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

US Embassy Events/Notices

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

http://romania.usembassy.gov/resources/educational_exchange.html

Fulbright Scholars 2009-2010

ROMANIAN SENIOR GRANTEES 2009-2010

Mihaela Marilena ALBU

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

Adalbert BALOG

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

Eveline CIOFLEC

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

Virgil-Florin DUMA

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

Gabriel LEANCA

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

Miruna MAZURENCU MARINESCU

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

Andrei Cristian MIU

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

Levente SALAT-ZAKARIAS

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

ROMANIAN JUNIOR GRANTEES 2009-2010

Ovidiu Constantin COCIERU

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

Emil Alexandru DINU-POPA

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

Ciprian DOMNISORU

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

Eliza Rodica GHEORGHE

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

Cristiana Niculina GRIGORE

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

Alexandru Ioan MIHAIL

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

Alexandra Melania MIHALE

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

Marta NYESO

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

Andreea Laura SAVU

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

Raluca SOREANU

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

Monica STANCU

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

Anca-Maria TOPLICEANU

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

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY GRANTEES

Cristina ADAM

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

AMERICAN SENIOR GRANTEES 2009-2010

Mr. Ioan Sherban LUPU

Home University: University of Illinois
Host University: Academy of Music G.Dima, Cluj, University of Arts G.Enescu, Iasi
Field: Music The Mastery of Violin Playing; The Folk Music of Romania for Virtuoso Violin

Dr. Paul S. SUM

Home University: University of North Dakota--Grand Forks
Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj
Field: Comparative Politics; Democratization; Civil Society; Political Participation; Ethnic Relations

Dr. John M. POLIMENI

Home Institution: Albany College of Pharmacy, NY
Host University: Bucharest University of Economics
Field: Ecological Economics, Agricultural Economics, Energy Economics, Economic Development

Dr. Alina Marina CLEJ

Home University: University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
Host University: Ovidius University, Constanta
Field: Romanians in Paris: Their Contribution to Literary and Artistic Modernity

Mr. David Darius BRUBECK

Home University: independent, unaffiliated
Host University: Academy of Music G.Dima, Cluj
Field: Jazz

Dr. Matthew H. CISCEL

Home University: Central Connecticut State University
Host University: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
Field: English in America, Romania, and the World; Language Learning Attitudes and Practices

Dr. Jane S. LOPUS

Home University: California State University--East Bay
Host University: Bucharest University of Economics
Field: Economic Education: Active Learning Strategies and Evaluation of Teacher Training

Dr. Shari Lynn MUNCH

Home University: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey--New Brunswick
Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj
Field: Social Work Practice in Cluj, Romania: An Opportunity for Teaching and Learning

AMERICAN JUNIOR GRANTEES 2009-2010**Ms. Lauren J. HERMELE**

Home University: At-Large, New Mexico
Host University: University of Arts and Design, Cluj
Field: Photography: Is European Union Membership Jeopardizing Village and Agrarian Communities in Romania?

Ms. Elyssa FORD

Home University: Arizona State University
Host University: Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj
Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

Mr. Martin WOODSIDE

Home University: San Diego State University
Host University: University of Bucharest
Field: U.S. Culture and Modern Romanian Poetry

Mr. Wyatt Eugene HARPER

Home University: University of the South, TN
Host University: University of Bucharest
Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising; Education Curriculums and Economic Development in Romania

Ms. Diana GLIGA

Home University: East Carolina University, NC
Host University: University of Oradea
Field: Medicine: Ocular health behaviors and the influencing socio-economic factors

Ms. Jennifer GABLE

Home University: Ohio State Univ., Undergraduates, OH
Host University: Transylvania University, Brasov
Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

Ms. Hannah HALDER

Home University: Beloit College, WI
Host University: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

Ms. Iris POSTELNICU

Home University: University of Arizona
Host University: University of Bucharest
Field: Anthropology: The Changing Culture of a Romanian Village Since the Fall of Communism: Customs and Values

Silvia LOICA-MERSA

Home University: Stanford University
Host University: University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Timisoara
Field: Public Health and Private Organizations: The Role of NGOs in Romania's Healthcare System

Mr. Charles HARRIS

Home University: Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
Host University: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
Field: Teaching English As A Foreign Language & Advising

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