

## Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hoping for ever more flexible and merrier times,

I wish you all a stimulating and academically rewarding spring.

Adina Ciugureanu  
President of the RAAS  
EAAS Treasurer

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

## Remapping Urban Spaces: American Challenges

Anca-Luminita Iancu

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## American Studies

### American Studies in Timișoara

Roxana Ghita,  
West University of Timișoara

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

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

way of thinking in a postmodern world.

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

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

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

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

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

## American Corners

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

#### **Coordinators:**

**Claudia Baicu and Rodica Toma**

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

## Conference Participation

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

Costin-Valentin Oancea  
University of Bucharest

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

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



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



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

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

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

Costel Coroban  
Ovidius University Constanta

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## Academic Exchanges and Summer Schools

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

Raluca Rogoveanu  
Ovidius University Constanta

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

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

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

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

Professors affiliated with UMass, Shippensburg University,

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Sorina Chiper**

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași

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

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

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

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

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



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

**Cristina-Georgiana Voicu**

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași

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

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

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

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

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

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

claim to absolute authority or unquestionable authenticity.

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

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

Raluca Roveanu  
Ovidius University Constanta

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Roxana Ghita,**  
West University of Timișoara

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

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

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

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

In addition to offering unlimited access to the materials

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

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

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

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

## Ph.D. Theses

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

Adriana Bulz

University of Bucharest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The thesis was defended in  
January 2012*

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

**Cristina-Georgiana Voicu**

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The thesis was defended in  
September 2011.

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

**Monica Manolachi**

University of Bucharest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The thesis was defended in  
September 2011.

## **America in post-1945 Romanian Travel Writing**

**Costinela Dragan,**  
University of Bucharest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

which hegemony, power relations impinge on the travel texts.

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

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

and indirectly brought down the Iron Curtain.

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

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

The thesis was defended in  
September 2012

## Reflections of a U.S. Fulbrighter

Katelyn Browher

Catholic University of America, DC /

Ovidius University Constanta

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Book Reviews

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

Ronald Story

Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012

**Raluca Rogoveanu**

Ovidius University Constanta

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# US Embassy Events/Notices

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

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

## Fulbright Scholars 2011-2012

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Adriana AGAPIE

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

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

Adrian BIRZU

Home University: Al. Ioan Cuza University of Iasi

Host University: Saint Louis University  
Field: Chemistry/Physical Chemistry

Radu N. CATANA

Home University: Babes-Bolyai U. Cluj

Host University: University of California, Berkeley  
Field: Law/Corporate Law

Dan COGALNICEANU

Home University: Ovidius University of Constanta

Host University: Oklahoma State University  
Field: Environmental Sciences/Biodiversity

Irina CULIC

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj

Host University: New York University  
Field: Sociology/Ethnicity& Migration

Olivia DORNEANU

Home University: University of Medicine and Pharmacy  
Gr. T. Popa Iasi

Host University: Louisiana State University  
Field: Medical Sciences/Microbiology

Augustin IOAN

Home University: University of Architecture and Urbanism  
Ion Mincu Bucharest

Host University: University of Cincinnati

Field: Architecture/Architecture of Public Space

Cristina MODREANU

Home Institution: Romanian Association for Performing Arts

Host University: New York University  
Field: Performance Studies

Laura SITARU

Home University: University of Bucharest

Host University: Georgetown University

Field: History (non-US) and Cultural Studies

Catalina ULRICH

Home University: University of Bucharest

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

### ROMANIAN JUNIOR GRANTEES

Mihai COPACIU

Home University: Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

Host University: Northwestern University  
Field: Economics/Finance

Irina COSTACHE

Home University: University of Bucharest

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

Bogdan DOSPINESCU

Home University: National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest

Host University: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Field: Political Communication

Ciprian DUMITRACHE

Home University: POLITEHNICA University of Bucharest

Host University: Georgia Institute of Technology  
Field: Aerospace Engineering

Delia MATEIAS

Home Institution: The Romanian Academy

Host University: George Washington University  
Field: Education

Oana MISTREANU

Home University: University of Bucharest

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

Olimpia MOSTEANU

Home University: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj

Host University: The New School for Social Research  
Field: Political Sociology

Ana PASTI

Home University: "I. L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Cinematographic Arts, Bucharest

Host University: University of Southern California Los Angeles, CA

Field: Acting

Florin Andrei POENARU

Home University: Central European University Budapest

Host University: City University of New York

Field: Anthropology

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

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

## **FULBRIGHT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

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

## **HUBERT H. HUMPHREY GRANTEES**

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

## **AMERICAN SENIOR GRANTEES**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **AMERICAN JUNIOR GRANTEES**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## RAAS Officers & EAAS

### RAAS

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

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

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

Treasurer: **Ileana Jitaru**, Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University - Constanta, Aleea Universitatii 1, Campus, Constanta; <ileanajitaru@gmail.com>

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