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Dear Colleagues,

**The current academic year has seen a proliferation of American Studies programs across the country. As one of the initiators and driving forces of the process, our Association has been active in providing a site for an exchange of ideas and experiences between various universities at home and abroad regarding the Bologna reform and the teaching of American Studies at the undergraduate and graduate level.**

# Letter from the President

By its e-network the RAAS has kept its members informed about conferences, events, grants, job opportunities and publications in the field. Quite a number of our members took advantage of the information we sent.

The accelerated pace of the institutionalization of American Studies, the growing number of American Studies sessions at the annual conferences of various English Departments throughout the country and the growing number of books and Ph.D. dissertations on American topics are a few examples of the new vitality of the field to which RAAS has made a constant contribution.

RAAS was proud to host some lectures and discussion forums on the occasion of visits made to Romania by distinguished guests, such as Professor Catherine Stimpson from Rutgers University, or the Nobel Prize winner, Elie Wiesel. Another full-fledged event involving a large number of RAAS members was the celebration of William J. Fulbright's 100th birthday, organized by the U.S. - Romanian Fulbright Commission, with which RAAS frequently collaborates in organizing cultural and scholarly events. A most useful feedback provided by the participants' answers to a questionnaire pointed out the respondents' need of belonging to a community of Americanists, their need of interconnectedness.

Developing a national American Studies network and securing ties with

the international community of scholars, particularly with EAAS and ASA, has been a major concern of our association from its very inception. A recent recognition of our endeavors came at the 2004 ASA Annual Meeting in Atlanta, where in her Presidential Address entitled „Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies“, ASA President Shelley Fisher Fishkin included *Transatlantic Connections* (Integral, 2001), a volume of essays by RAAS members, edited by Rodica Mihăilă and Irina Grigorescu Pană, among her examples of contributions to the field made by American Studies scholars from outside U.S. borders that may open new

perspectives for the U.S.-based scholars. (*American Quarterly*, 57, no.1 (March 2005): 17-57)

Attended by some 150 leaders in American Studies – program directors, center directors, presidents of national associations, journal editors and other scholars from 30 countries, including Romania, the Atlanta Meeting was transformed by ASA into a forum of international exchange that indicated how much the transnational turn has transformed American Studies, and launched valuable initiatives to further internationalize the field.

In April, I attended the EAAS Board Meeting, which thanks to our BAAS Colleagues was held at Cambridge (UK) in conjunction with the Conference of the British Association for American Studies celebrating its 50th anniversary. The report of the EAAS President, Marc Chenetier, “Perspectives on the New Century,” placed the discussions on the management and development of the Association in a moral and realistic context.

Apart from running business, fundraising and the state of affairs, other issues under scrutiny have been the new strategies for web versions of the European American Studies Journal linked both with the Newsletter and a discussion forum, the integration of younger colleagues at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels as well as the revision of the EAAS by-laws. Among the issues of special interest to our members

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was the report from the Executive Board with regard to the EAAS/Fulbright Intra-European and Trans-Atlantic Travel Grants for 2005. One of the three recipients is our colleague Eniko Maior from the Partium Christian University, Oradea, who received an intra-European grant for a two-month research stay at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. After Bogdan Barbu, Ludmila Martanovschi and Dan Horatiu Popescu, she is the fourth RAAS member to receive an EAAS travel grant.

A main item on the agenda was the organization of the EAAS Biennial Conference "Conformism, Non-Conformism and Anti-Conformism in the Culture of the United States", April 7-10, 2006, hosted by HELAAS in Nicosia, Cyprus. Out of the submitted proposals, the Board selected eight lectures, 24 workshops and three shoptalks. Among them is included the only proposal that came from a Romanian scholar, our RAAS colleague Dan Horatiu Popescu from the University of Oradea, who will co-chair the workshop "From the Melting Pot of 'Entropy' to a 'Crack-Potting' Ecriture". The guidelines for workshops, the workshop themes and chairs, the titles of the shoptalks and the parallel lectures have already been published in the ASE Newsletter no.54 (May 2005), available in electronic form at <http://www.eaas.info>. As in the past, I wish to encourage the members of our Association to submit proposals for workshop papers. It's good to know that during the current academic year, several RAAS members have received funding for participation in various international conferences and seminars when their proposals were accepted.

In response to the invitation of the American Studies Program at the Institute of Political Science and International Relations in Kishinev, together with Adina Ciugureanu, RAAS Board member, Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University, Constanta, I attended their National American Studies Conference, "The USA at the Dawn of the Third Millennium: A New Era?", 17-18 May, 2005, Kishinev, organized with the support of the US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova. We shared with our Moldavian colleagues our experience in the institu-

tionalization of American Studies and in developing our Association for American Studies, as the highlight of the Conference was the founding of the Moldavian Association for American Studies (MAAS) for which RAAS served as model. We discussed avenues for future exchanges, especially the possibility of Moldavian students to attend our graduate programs in American Studies, as well as forms of collaboration between our two associations.

At the end of my brief report I would like to remind you all of our fourth RAAS Biennial Conference, **New/Old Worlds: Spaces of Transitions**, 2-3 February 2006, organized in collaboration with the Fulbright Commission, and to invite you to submit proposals for papers by September 15. All our RAAS colleagues should take advantage of the scholarly opportunities offered by our membership in the national association and also in the EAAS. In order to make our work more efficient and keep you informed, the RAAS board would appreciate if you could update your addresses and e-mails as soon as possible. We would also appreciate if you could inform the association of any American Studies event, publication, dissertation, grant, program, seminar and conference in which you may be involved so that by means of the Newsletter and our network your experience may be shared by us all.

Don't hesitate to use all the RAAS resources, such as copies of articles from journals received through subscriptions that we make available, on request, as well as the resources of the Center for American Studies in Bucharest, which is currently hosting the RAAS.

I wish you all strength and determination to accomplish your current projects and envisage new ones. See you in September, at the launching of the collection of essays based on the 2004 Biennial Conference, *Our America: People, Places, Times* (Univers Enciclopedic, 2005).

With best wishes for an enjoyable and productive summer,

Rodica Mibăilă  
RAAS President

# Ars Docendi:

## My American Dream

Olivia Bădoi,  
American Studies 1st year

I have a dream...That one day I'll be surfing on the waves of Miami Beach...have an extralarge mocha at Starbucks or maybe spend my life savings on a pair of Manolo Blahniks on sale. Oh yeah - and study at a top U.S. university. But how am I going to fulfill these great expectations? How am I going to make my American Dream come true? By enrolling at the American Studies department at the Faculty of Foreign Languages! Or at least this seemed to be the perfect solution for a Romanian student with an American dream.

We are the first series of American Studies major so this means that when we graduate we have to walk and talk not like an Egyptian but like an American. Our department has a liberal arts system so we've had a variety of courses, from the media to sociology, to literature, linguistics and politics. One thing is for sure: boredom is out of the question. It's true that after having eaten American history with a big spoon (a metaphor for a four-hour class) we would start humming in a heart-breaking tone the spiritual „Let my people go"... Oh and, a tip for those who think that learning the American Constitution by heart (as concise and to-the-point as it is) is a piece of cake? May the force be with you.

Looking back at what has been the first year of college of my life I realize how lucky I am. I am studying what I like and I've had the greatest teachers ever. Not only have they been committed to teaching us a certain course but they've also tried to expand our horizon as citizens of the world. They have tried to break into this shell of indifference that the Romanian educational system creates.

It's true that many of my classmates have ended up at the American Studies department by chance, but not me. I have a dream. My breakfast at Tiffany's awaits me.

Don't get me wrong about this whole American Dream expose. I am not having the typical Eastern-European fantasy of America being the modern cornucopia (though a term inspired by a certain Baywatch mermaid would be more American; this will have to do). It's a good thing to have a dream. It's what keeps you going. It is just that my dream happens to be an American one.

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# the American Studies Department in Bucharest

## What's So Cool about Being an M.A. Student?

Gabriela Mehedintu

M.A. American Studies

Most graduate students decide to pursue a Masters degree in American Studies from very much the same reason why some Romanians choose to live in the United States – they fall under the irresistible and probably inescapable charm of AMERICA in a post-communist country. It definitely worked in my case. I enrolled in this program eager to find out what the glamorous America which I knew from books and movies was all about and, as I soon understood, the answer lay very much in the direct contacts with the American scholars which the program made possible.

Beside the actual information and personal experience which the Romanian professors could and did excellently provide, the American Fulbrighters were by far the main attraction in the syllabus, precisely for the sense of Western democracy which they alone could offer. And they helped us feel it in plenty of ways.

To begin, it has become a commonplace to say that American professors do not set rigid boundaries between formal and informal teaching. The two come together in a variety of equally valid ways. For instance, my classmates and I were introduced to the American concept of 'after-hours' discussions, held in cafes, parks, or anywhere at hand. It gave birth to an unprecedented feeling of equality and familiarity between professors and students, who were no longer they and us, but a wider community of learners. Received at first with suspicion, the 'experiment' determined me to reconsider the importance of "outdoors" activities in the teaching-learning process. During my years as a pupil in elementary and high schools, I was constantly made to look upon "out of classroom" activities as a disguised way of wasting time with the tacit approval of school authorities, in the good old Romanian tradition.

The Fulbright scholars gave me the opportunity to change my opinion, even though at first in a harsher manner – using the grading policy to do it. In the end, I was surprised to discover that, at the end of my career as a student, I could still alter long-held conceptions about school.

The American professors shaped my perceptions about peer group relations, as well. I was gradually introduced to the concept of 'positive competition'. If the traditional Romanian learning system wanted me to engage in a fierce competition against my classmate, in the American one I had to compete alongside the other who was to be seen as a valuable partner.

ant, which, in my opinion, could be a huge success.

Filtered through the eyes of the Fulbrighters, America acquired for me a more human face, less isolated in its first world aura.

At the end of my fascinating experience in the American Studies graduate program, the dominating feeling is that of gratitude that it offered a unique opportunity to



**The American Studies Room at the University of Bucharest**

Last, but not least, I owe to these Fulbright scholars my understanding of the basics in the methodology of academic research, such as: reading with an open, inquisitive mind, rejecting impression-based studies as non-scientific, learning to value one's own opinion and to defend it.

If I were to make some suggestions for the program, one would be to include some optional courses in the syllabus, and the other to try to create an on-line vari-

heal an old inferiority complex of mine as a Romanian intellectual in becoming – namely, that Romania can be again set as a partner for cultural exchanges with the West, on equal footing. Asked about what she would like to get back from her teaching experience in this program, one of the American professors said, "As a matter of fact, I am here to learn. What I'd like to get back is as much information as possible about Romania and I expect that from you!"

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**When EGG came to Cluj****Professor Ștefan Oltean, Lecturer Adriana Todea****Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj**

Between July 26 and August 6 the Babeș-Bolyai University hosted the the 2004 Eastern European Generative Grammar Summer School (EGG), a prestigious international summer school in linguistics focusing on Central and Eastern Europe. The school is organized by a small group of linguists from prominent European universities such as Michal Starke (Tromso), Luisa Marti (Tromso), Hedde Zeijlstra (Amsterdam), and Tobias Scheer (Nice). This itinerant summer school had already been hosted by universities in Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and the Czech Republic. It was the first time such an important school in linguistics had been organized in Romania, where, especially in universities such as the University of Bucharest or BBU, linguists are more and more interested in the generative perspective on language. Founded by Noam Chomsky almost 50 years ago, Generative Grammar has developed ever since and opened new areas of language studies, from language acquisition to neurolinguistics. It is considered today as the dominant linguistic theory in most of the important universities in US, Europe, Asia and Australia.

The school managed to bring together top-notch researchers, such as Hilda Koopman and Marcus Kracht (University of California in Los Angeles), Tom Roeper (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Michael Wagner (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Curt Rice, Michal Starke, Luisa Marti and Oystein Nilsen (University of Tromso), Tobias Scheer (University of Nice), Orin Percus (University of Milan) and Alexandra Cornilescu (University of Bucharest).

For two weeks, the school (which was entirely free) brought together 200 teachers and students from 27 countries on 4 continents.

Although very accessible, the topical introductions focused on the latest developments in the generative theory such as the syntax-phonology interface or the syntax-semantics correlation. Such an interesting intro course was Introduction to Prosody and the Syntax/Phonology Interface given by Michael Wagner (MIT). Another highly appreciated intro class was Tom Roeper's Language Acquisition, (Amherst, Massachusetts), which is the Applied Linguistics in the Generative theory. The lectures presented a number of linguistic experiments that allow us to identify the main paths and stages in the language acquisition of the first language and the formation of linguistic competence.

Curt Rice's intro in Optimality Theory presented the latest development in generativism, according to which the knowledge of grammar is based on a system of universal linguistic restrictions organized hierarchically. Therefore, linguistic variation could be explained in terms of different languages favoring different hierarchies of such grammatical restrictions.

Introduction to Semantics given by Luisa Marti (Tromso) and Orin Percus (Milan) illustrated the dynamic development of present-day Semantics. Integrating together formal logic, the Fregean theory of sense and reference, the theory of sets, and functional application, it proved that any linguistic expression allows formalization and that the representation of linguistic meaning is compatible with the Chomskian binary trees. Further more, semantic descriptions require a close correlation between Syntax and Semantics.

The advanced track offered a number of courses on narrower topics which represented the teachers' current research interests in the field, for example, Syntactic representations: from Chains to Multidominance (Marcus Kracht, UCLA); The Direct Object — Syntax and Information Structure and The AP as a DP constituent (Alexandra Cornilescu, University of Bucharest); Agreement (Hilda Koopman, UCLA); Derivational Morphology and Minimalism (Tom Roeper, Amherst, Massachusetts); How the big guys (morphology, syntax, semantics) talk to phonology, and what they tell her (Tobias Scheer, MIT); The Case Filter and its semantics (Oystein Nilsen, Tromso).

# Conference

**Echoes from a Prague Spring****Lecturer Iulian Cănanău,****University of Bucharest**

With 220 speakers out of more than 300 participants, the EAAS biennial conference in Prague was last year's major academic event in the life of the American Studies community in Europe. Under the title "America in the Course of Human Events: Presentations and Interpretations" the conference hosted by the prestigious Charles University comprised 26 workshops, eight parallel lectures, two plenary ones, and three shoptalk meetings to wind it up. An impressive variety of topics was squeezed in a two-day schedule, thus leaving some frustrated after having been forced to perform drastic surgery in the selection of the workshops and lectures they would have liked to attend. Even so, an avid scholar would still have plenty of opportunities to satisfy his/her intellectual appetite as the vast majority of the presentations lived up to the expectations one got from their titles and abstracts. Just for the sake of being on the safe side I won't insist on the workshops and parallel lectures, although it would be interesting to see how much audience each of these topics attracted and enjoyed throughout the conference.

Werner Sollors's plenary lecture, "Dedicated to a Proposition", brought everyone present in the School of Arts' great auditorium on a journey through the history of American culture pursuing the ever-changing fate and understanding of the famous "proposition" included in the Declaration of Independence "that all men are created equal". Professor Sollors produced a breathtaking multimedia presentation that had all the narrative features of a great story that captivated the audience.

Besides its seminal presentations, inspiring comments and brainstorming, such a conference also benefits the young American Studies scholars by developing their sense of belonging to this international academic community. This does not mean that your national identity becomes a rather obsolete appendix to your name tag or that it stops playing any significant role in making the party you end up hanging out with. There were lots of groups at the conference in Prague: Scandinavian, French, British, German, you name them. (Much as I tried, I couldn't identify the group to which a middle-aged lady who kept knitting throughout the conference belonged.)

I really enjoyed my first experience with an EAAS conference and I hope that those of my colleagues from the RAAS who will send their applications for the 2006 conference in Cyprus will have their projects selected by the workshop chairs.

# participation

On the 2nd of March 2005, the English Department at "Petru Maior" University of Tg-Mureş was proud to be the host of a long expected event: the visit and conference of our Canadian colleague and friend Stephen Henighan, from the University of Guelph. An established Canadian novelist and short story writer, Stephen Henighan boasts an impressive 'multicultural' record: born in Germany, naturalized in Canada, with undergraduate studies in the United States, and postgraduate studies in Montreal and Oxford. He is the author of well-received novels such as *The Streets of Winter* (2004). Although Canadian Studies is not yet a subject taught at "Petru Maior" University of Tg-Mureş, the room where the conference was held could not accommodate all the students and faculty interested in attending the event.

## A Special Guest to our University Stephen Henighan

Actually, interest was sparked not only by the subject of the conference—the concept of Canadian literature—but also by Mr. Henighan's special interest in Romania and Romanian language. Indeed, the Canadian novelist belongs (thanks to his book *Lost Province. Adventures in a Moldovan Family*) to a small but distinguished group of writers—including Saul Below (*The Dean's December*) and Olivia Manning—who chose Romania and Romanian issues as subjects for their novels. Accordingly, many of the questions that followed the conference addressed Mr. Henighan's Moldavian experience (he taught English in Chişinău, in the Republic of Moldova, a former Romanian territory where Romanian is still spoken by a majority of the population) and the way in which this experience is represented in *Lost Province*.

Other questions referred to minorities and minority languages and the status of Canadian literature as a post-colonial literature. As the conference was a success, an invitation was extended to Stephen Henighan to come again for a similar event.

*Conf. dr. Anda Ştefanovici,*

*Conf. dr. Tatiana Iaţcu,*

*Lector Iustin Sfăria*

## A Talk at "Petru Maior" University

by Stephen Henighan

University of Guelph, Ontario

Sometimes I travel for business and sometimes I travel for pleasure. My visit to "Petru Maior" University in Târgu-Mureş enabled me to bring together business and pleasure.

As a Canadian writer, I do much of my travelling in Canada. Last year, when my novel *The Streets of Winter* was published, I travelled to five Canadian provinces to read from the novel in universities, bookstores and cafés.

Of course I also feel strong links to other countries, particularly those countries where I have begun to learn about the culture. As Romania is one of the countries I feel close to, I was very pleased when a series of coincidences led to invitations to speak in Romania and Hungary this March. I was especially happy to renew my contact with southeastern Europe at a time when my memoir of living in the Republic of Moldova, *Lost Province: Adventures in a Moldovan Family*, originally published in Vancouver in 2002, was about to appear in Romanian translation from Editura Arc in Chisinau. After weeks of frantic emailing, the rough outlines of a schedule emerged.

"Petru Maior" University was the first stop on my tour. I rode to Târgu-Mureş by bus from Sibiu. The residually Austro-Hungarian square reminded me of those in Arad and Oradea, although Târgu Mureş's square felt more symmetrical and spacious. As a Canadian brought up with official bilingualism, I was intrigued by the bilingual Romanian-Hungarian signs posted by some of the businesses around the square. "Petru Maior" University's literature department was small, friendly and varied. I was shown an excellent collection of English books in a resource room near the departmental office. Unusually, the shelves were open to the students for consultation or borrowing. As is always the case during a visit to a university, meeting the students was the high point of the trip.

At least fifty students were present for my talk; the conference room was overflowing and some of the students had to stand. I tried to illustrate the informality of Canadian culture by wading into the crowd to distribute my hand-outs.

Knowing that for many of the students this was their first encounter with the idea of Canadian literature, I attempted to explain the basic contours of the literature in a way that was simple without being condescending. In spite of the need to keep to a broad outline, I wanted to give the students a sense of the contradictions and tensions underlying Canadian writing. I was very pleasantly surprised by the torrent of questions that followed my talk.

I had feared that these students would be more passive than those I was used to in Canada. In fact, on the basis of the questions I received, the students at "Petru Maior" University were more inquisitive and idealistic than those I'm accustomed to at home. In retrospect, my only regret concerning this stimulating experience is that I didn't ask the students a few more questions in return. It would have been fascinating to learn what relevance students in Târgu-Mureş see concepts that are central to Canadian debates, such as bilingualism and multiculturalism, as having in their own lives.



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

## American Studies in Bucharest

Beginning with 1996, the School of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Bucharest has been hosting a very successful MA program in American Studies. While self-contained and enjoying undeniable popularity, the program also revealed the interest in a wider-ranging undergraduate training, which led to the setting up of a new minor specialization under the Department of English. American Studies as a „B” option has been functioning since the academic year 1999–2000. The undergrad program was structured on thematic levels, into three modules: 1.Culture and values; 2.History and politics; and 3.Society and communication for the first three years, while the fourth year in the old structure (before Bologna) also added interdisciplinary optional and elective courses. For a year now, an American Studies major is offered at the School of Foreign Languages and Literature in Bucharest. Under the Bologna educational reform, the American Studies undergraduate programs in Bucharest will be three-year long, with a two-year MA program; apart from that, the faculty is striving to keep to the same formula that has proved so successful in the past years. Apart from a strict core structure, the specialization allows for



teacher-training modules, and also accommodates a number of American Fulbright scholars in various fields of study, so that not only the program is highly interdisciplinary, but also there is a wealth of direct experience for the undergraduate and graduate students as well. A rich (and growing) library, a multimedia system and a web page ([www.america-studies.ro](http://www.america-studies.ro)) with an active forum and permanently updated information also add to the attractiveness of the American Studies program in Bucharest.

## American Studies in Timișoara

Cristina Chevereșan

One year ago, in April, a spiritual child was conceived in Timișoara. The beginning of the academic year 2004–2005 witnessed the fulfilment of a dream and the birth of a strong willed baby, a newcomer to the academic family: the English Department managed to devise a new and innovative MA program, meant to cover as many areas connected to American Studies as currently possible. Thus, benefiting from a close collaboration with the Political Science Department, this initiative is aimed at offering a panoramic view of the American socio-political and cultural space, as well as detailed outlooks on its specific issues. Graduates in letters, philosophy, journalism, political science etc. who are proficient in English are invited to enlarge their knowledge of the ‘American Dream’ by means of attending series of lectures and seminars focusing on a large variety of study-topics.

The American Studies postgraduate specialization functions according to an interdisciplinary model of presentation and analysis: American culture, civilization and literature come to meet history, geography, religion, as well as gender and media studies or human rights in what is intended as an original and highly interactive program regarding the United States of America. Under the guidance of the reputed professor Mircea Mihăieș, PhD, this generous plan sets itself to open pathways to a better understanding of Transatlantic stereotypes and controversy, as well as to an accurate evaluation of the existing similarities and differences between American and European cultural patterns.

The objectives of this ambitious project are utterly diverse: offering the MA students solid knowledge as to the above-mentioned fields of American Studies, it envisages their ulterior involvement in research, as well as the development of their analytical skills by means of comparative approaches. The students will be able to apply the acquired theoretical knowledge in practical situations typical of the American way of thinking and acting, in the context of their frequent meetings with foreign lecturers. Such communicative instances facilitate interaction and direct contact with representatives of the studied space; during its first year of existence, the program has already benefited from the presence of three Fulbright lecturers (Amy Karpan, Carrie Galbrath and Deanna Moore), as well as that of a specialist in teaching methodology, Rebecca Janson.

Support from the US Embassy and the Fulbright Commission in Bucharest has proved essential to

the effective and successful development of a comprehensive study-program, both in terms of teacher exchanges and in what resources and logistics are concerned. The students have access to up-to-date materials and bibliographical sources which help them improve their critical perception of the debated issues, in and outside class. Becoming acquainted with canonic and progressive theories, the American Studies MA groups have the opportunity to participate in various conferences, symposiums and other public academic events, wherein they can present the results of the research projects they have been engaged in during their postgraduate studies.

This two-year program is designed to round up with the presentation of carefully documented dissertations, which the candidates will elaborate under the supervision of the English Department’s specialized staff. Together with the diversified knowledge obtained during their MA studies, these papers offer the

graduates an ideal starting point for the development of challenging future PhD theses in the field of American Studies. The range of subjects included in the schedule is covered by a series of specialists and growing members of the academia, among which one can recognize names such as Mircea Mihăieș, Victor Neumann, Gabriela Colțescu, Reghina Dascăl, Luminița Frentiu, Codruța Goșa, Marius Radu, Silviu Rogobete, Petru Vărgă, Sorina Voiculescu, Cristina Chevereșan, Eliza Filimon, Diana Mădroane, Dana Percec, Dorian Branea.

Since the English Department at the University of the West takes pride in its modern and ingenious ways of communicating with actual and potential students, the practical information regarding entrance examination procedures, dates and requirements as well as the number of places available each year can be found either on the University’s Internet sites, or in the Faculty of Letters info guides. Having received full support from the Rector, prof. dr. Ioan Mihai, the Pro-Rector, prof. dr. Pia Brânzeu, the Dean, prof. dr. Maria Țenchea and the Head of the English Department, prof. dr. Hortensia Pârlog, the American Studies MA program owes its existence to a group of enthusiastic people whose aim is that of giving the Timișoara students (and not only) access to one of the most exciting and controversial cultural spaces in world history. In the hope of turning this effort into a lasting tradition, we are looking forward to celebrating the first generation of MA graduates in June 2006.

Until then, happy 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary!

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## American Studies in Cluj

Marius Jucan

The inauguration of the B.A program in American Studies at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj reveals itself as a fortunate opportunity to realize the unprecedented growth of academic specializations in our University within the time span of the last decade, along with the intellectual commitment of researchers and professors determined to carry out the demanding scientific and cultural tasks of academic modernization.

The real starting point of the American studies at Babeş-Bolyai University was fashioned by the rebirth of academic life and research, which came around in the 1990's within the framework of a radical educational reform. A number of factors contributed successfully to the creation of an academic and student audience for the study of the United States in our University. Professor Andrei Marga's research concerning American pragmatism broke ground for new perspectives tailoring approaches to the field, as early as 1992. Later on, the founding of the Center for American studies and the setting up of M.A. programs, at the Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of European Studies meant taking the first necessary steps to pave the way to the today's setting of the BA program in American studies. New courses were designed, dealing with the significance of cultural history, philosophy, law, economy, media and film within the general study of the American society. We were privileged in all these years to have received the considerate assistance of the American Embassy in Bucharest who gave us impetus to continue and diversify our MA programs, especially the BA program, as to create its interdisciplinary dimension and design useful ways to employ further on the novelty of these specific studies. The valuable collection of books hosted by the American Library, the cooperation with the Fulbright lecturers maintained a constant professional updating for our professors and researchers.

At the same, one should remark on the gradually increasing number of professors and researches belonging to different social sciences fields, as history, political sciences, literature, linguistics, sociology, geography and economics, who attested through their works an unabated interest for American culture as well as for American studies. This enables us to consider the founding of the B.A. program in American studies as a genuine sequel to academic approaches started before, reinforcing the idea that while the study of the American society and culture might shape more accurately our knowledge regarding the United States, it could also yield desirable consequences to our society's transition toward democracy.

The shifting course of American studies has continuously striven to represent identity and its constructions, reflecting the difficulty of building a consensus regarding the hierarchy of values in our modern world. Passing from showing the distinctiveness of the US, to preaching its exceptionalism, then to revealing the repressed voices of the American society in the study of difference and border, American studies prove not only their pragmatic resilience, but also the potentialities of intellectual innovation. At the same time, the emerging impact of American studies worldwide was connected to the most significant theoretical critiques of the last century, among

which perhaps the relevant one concerns the concept of power. Whether American exceptionalism was founded on a sense of mission, as this was highlighted in the Cold War period, the social and cultural critique of the ensuing years brought along a new setting, focusing on civil rights and the awareness of difference, dividing society along the lines of race, gender and class. The present day cultural turn of the American studies has put into bold relief the rhetorical and imaginary construction of the topic named "America". A crucial meaning was set in the new understanding of the notion of "text", namely in the replacing of the historical or literary text with a "cultural" one. It is therefore useful for the present-day approach to American studies to consider them as providing us with such an immense cultural text, whose overlapping strata and voices render the many-folded images of American reality envisioning multicultural plurality.

The emergence of the American Studies should be regarded as natural in the framework of an already established and accredited specialization – international relations and European Studies. The foundation for the emergence of this BA specialization was laid in 1997, when an interdisciplinary master degree in American Studies was established at Babeş-Bolyai University, this being subsequently included among the master programs of the Faculty of European Studies (in 1999). The master degree enjoyed the support of many prominent personalities within the faculty, the university, and from outside the academic environment. The partnerships developed since the establishment of the master program will be continued and extended with the creation of this BA in American Studies, international cooperation being one of the pillars upon which academic performance and competitiveness is based. The most enduring and fruitful relationships have been those with the Fulbright Commission and the Romanian and American Studies Association, with Michigan State University, Plymouth State University (New Hampshire), as well as with the American Studies Seminar in Salzburg. These part-

*The present day cultural turn of the American studies has put into bold relief the rhetorical and imaginary construction of the topic named "America". A crucial meaning was set in the new understanding of the notion of "text", namely in the replacing of the historical or literary text with a "cultural" one. It is therefore useful for the present-day approach to American studies to consider them as providing us with such an immense cultural text.*

nerships, following in the footsteps of those established by the European studies – which resulted in joint and double degree programs for the BA and MA level – will yield similar results leading to a better understanding of the complex realities of the contemporary

American society. These studies, beyond their mediatic appearance, actually refer to more than just history, literature, politics or economics – they deal with the intertwining of the American and European realities pertaining to the two most significant actors on the contemporary world stage.

The interdisciplinary character, the teamwork, the constant updating of the scientific discourse mean not only the acknowledgement of a new specialization, but also the leading principles upon which this has been built. American - European modernity should be setting the pragmatic basis of the contemporary world; thus, this specialization addresses not only high school graduates, but also different categories of specialists interested in acquiring knowledge from a different and innovative field, motivated by a necessity imposed by the pragmatic world we live in.

# Call for papers

## **1. RAAS BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2006 New/Old Worlds. Spaces of Transition**

### **Organizers:**

**The Romanian Association for American Studies  
The Romanian - U.S. Fulbright Commission  
Bucharest, 2nd - 3rd of February 2006**

Contoured between utopia and reality, the New/Old World, both constructed in memory and experienced in anticipation still constitutes a dominant cultural topos. Our conference seeks to investigate, from literary, cultural studies, historical, sociological, psychological, economical and political perspectives modes of approaching and disseminating New/Old World structures, from the period of colonization to contemporary phenomena such as globalization.

We invite proposals for papers and panels from interdisciplinary perspectives on themes suggested above and on all correlative aspects of the issue of New/Old Worlds.

Please send 100-word proposals for papers by 15th of September to the following addresses:

Ilinca Anghelescu: [ilinc@fastmail.fm](mailto:ilinc@fastmail.fm)

Mihaela Precup: [mihaela\\_precup@yahoo.com](mailto:mihaela_precup@yahoo.com)

[www.american-studies.ro](http://www.american-studies.ro)

## **2. 2006 EAAS BIENNIAL CONFERENCE, "Conformism, Non-conformism and Anti-conformism in the Culture of the United States"**

**April 7-10, 2006 Nicosia, Cyprus**

### **DEADLINES**

■ SEPTEMBER 1, 2005 : Proposals of workshop papers (with abstract, 150-200 words) to be sent to the Workshop Chairs.

■ SEPTEMBER 15, 2005 : Tentative lists of speakers & paper titles to be sent by Workshop Chairs to the EAAS Secretary-General, for inclusion in the October issue of the ASE NEWSLETTER and the EAAS WEBSITE ([www.eaas.info](http://www.eaas.info)).

For more information, please read the electronic edition of the latest EAAS newsletter: <http://www.eaas.info/newsletter.htm>

## **3. AAH ANNUAL CONFERENCE „A Tremendous Shattering of Tradition“: Reconsidering Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’**

**University of Leeds, UK**

**4/6/2006 - 4/8/2006**

For details, please check the AAH website: [www.aah.org.uk](http://www.aah.org.uk)

## **Update from the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania**

Applications for Fulbright Grants listed below can be downloaded from our website:

[www.usembassy.ro](http://www.usembassy.ro)

■ Competition for High School Teacher Exchange is underway now and will end Oct. 15th.

■ Competition for Fulbright Visiting Scholar Grants will open August 29 and close Nov. 7

Applicants are required to have a Ph.D.

■ Competition for Fulbright Grants for studying in the US will open in mid May next year.

Consult our website for exact dates.

### **Fulbright/EducationUSA Regional Centers:**

**Arad:** Universitatea de Vest "Vasile Goldis";

Tel/Fax: (0257) 285 813 (Corina Pagu)

**Cluj Napoca:** Centrul de Cooperari Internationale;

Tel: (0264) 429 762 (Zsuzsanna Borbath)

**Constanța:** Universitatea "Ovidius";

Tel: (0241) 619 040;/interior 18 (Dr. Mihai Gițu)

**Craiova:** Universitatea din Craiova;

Tel: (0251) 544 621 int. 41; (Cristina Vodă)

**Iasi:** Biblioteca Centrală Universitară;

Tel: (0232) 264-245; (Camelia Boca)

**Sibiu:** Universitatea Lucian Blaga;

Tel: (0269) 216 06 (Teodora Pastiu & Andreea Metea-Ciortea)

**Timișoara:** Universitatea de Vest;

Tel: (0256) 193 035; 494 068; (Roxana Pop)

### **U.S. Fulbright Scholars:**

1. Prof. Julie Tetel ANDRESEN - Assoc. Professor

Topic: Social and Political Issues in American Language Studies: Past and Present

2. Dr. Donald Edward DAVIS - Assoc. Professor

Topic: Introduction to Social Problems and American Studies

3. Dr. Robert John MANNING - Chair and Professor

Topic: Contemporary Western Intellectual and Political Issues

4. Dr. Margaret Reed MUKHERJEE - Professor

Topic: Studying the Development and Analysis of Public Policy in the U.S. and Romania

5. Dr. Jonathan Hugo REES - Assoc. Professor

Topic: American Social and Political History

6. Christopher Lynn SHOOK - Assoc. Professor

Topic: Strategic Management in Transitional Economy

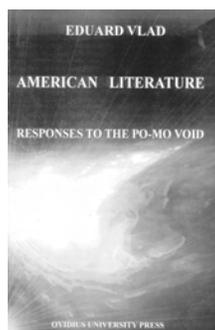
7. Dr. Charles Adam TEMPLE - Professor and Chair

Topic: Curriculum Development for University-Based Teacher Education

8. Mr. Gary Duane DILWORTH - Professor

Topic: Music

# Book Reviews



**Vlad, Eduard.**  
*American Literature: Responses to the Po-Mo Void.*

Constanța: Ovidius University Press, 2004.

Some of the symptoms of what would come to be

called postmodernism appeared long before the theorists turned up to diagnose and describe them, as the result of an "unfinished job." The enlightenment project, promoting reason as a guarantor and facilitator of the successful journey toward universal peace, security, good government and an ideal society of perfect people, was severely undercut by developments brought about by the use of science, technology and ideology during, and in the aftermath of, the Second World War.

These symptoms are linked in Responses... to important cultural issues in the US of the postwar age which will feature prominently in the "literary stories" being created and circulated by significant American novelists and poets (Salinger, Kerouac, Nabokov, Heller, Kesey, Barth, Pynchon, Morrison, Ginsberg, Lowell, Berryman, Sexton, Plath, Bishop).

The first postwar decades in the US were an age of prosperity and conformity for a large section of society, but also of anxiety, suspicion, alienation, linked to both the Cold War confrontations and to the dehumanization and standardization that some individuals felt was threatening humankind. The impending threat of global nuclear destruction, combined with the philosophical and artistic effect of existentialism and absurdism earned the period several defining phrases; Responses... puts one forth, to be added to the rest: the age of "the po-mo void."

The authors under discussion in Responses to the Po-Mo Void defined their positions as individuals, reacting against the general conformism, but they also acknowledged their broader cultural positionings, dealing with issues of general interest and speaking for a category of people in society. Some of these authors tend-

ed to speak to these people and for them, the texts becoming "cult books."

The volume is, to a certain extent, an invitation to disregard typical po-mo incredulity, at least toward this particular "metanarrative." It weaves the close reading of important literary texts with significant aspects of their "production" and "reception."



**Vlad, Eduard.**  
*Ironic Apocalypses: The World According to Vonnegut.*

Constanța: Ex Ponto, 2004.

This monograph is meant to celebrate the literary

achievement of one of postwar America's major novelists, one of those rare contemporary writers that have enjoyed success with both a wide, popular audience and with a considerable proportion of the critics.

"Call me Jonah," the narrator in Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Cat's Cradle* urges the reader at the beginning of his apocalyptic narrative, and the allusion points to more than Melville's "Moby Dick." The world is dying of ice-nine, and "Jonah" has some time left to tell us a story that began, he says, "two wives ago, 250,000 cigarettes ago, 3,000 quarts of booze ago."

At that time "Jonah" (or John as he was christened by his parents) was collecting material for another apocalyptic, documentary book about what important Americans had done on one particular day. It was no coincidence that that day was August 6, 1945, and the name of the book Jonah was planning was *The Day The World Ended*.

"Call me Junior. My six grown kids do," the reader is told at the beginning of *Timequake* (1997), in all likelihood Vonnegut's last book. The writer was 75 at the time, and he had been experimenting with catastrophe and revelation in his own ways for half a century. The monograph is an attempt to approach Vonnegut's special uses of apocalyptic discourses in all the novels he has published so far.

Like *Responses...*, this is a book you should definitely try not to read. The two

volumes might also be detrimental to students of postwar American literature. In case you are planning to defy this wise piece of advice, here is a useful e-mail address: [eduardvlad@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:eduardvlad@yahoo.co.uk).



**Iulian Cănanău.**  
*O istorie documentară a SUA.*

București: Agatha, 2003.

Better late than never. It took us a long time to signal the coming out of Iulian

Cănanău's documentary history, but the volume deserves its mention even as late as this. A rigorous compendium, put together with a keen eye for the cultural dimension behind the more political one of the texts itself, the book is the result of its author's familiarity with North American history as well as of his understanding of multiculturalism and the inherent pitfalls of trying to focus on "one history" only.

The outcome is a book that reads as easily as a novel. From the Mayflower Compact to George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Nation speech, history seems to "make sense" in the author's bifocal approach: the text itself, in English, is preceded by a comprehensive accompanying explanation of the larger context of each document. The reader is thus allowed to access the original wording of a text such as the Fugitive Slave Act, for instance, as well as to understand how the document itself failed to meet the expectations and necessities of the era by pinpointing its inherent flaws. Seminal pieces of legislation, court decisions (from *Marbury vs. Madison* to a discussion of president Clinton's impeachment procedure) and speeches find their way into the contents of this book, so that the student of American history gets both a raw taste of the documents and a more refined understanding of how they came about.

With *O istorie documentară a SUA*, Iulian Cănanău, a lecturer at the University of Bucharest, fills in a gap that was widely felt in (and outside) American Studies departments around the country. We welcome it and warmly recommend it for class use, as well as for an informed reading at any level.

# Academic Exchanges

## College life and all that: a view from UCLA

I grew up in an environment that educated people to believe that American students were somehow equal, at best, to their Romanian counterparts; and there is still an ongoing prejudice as to how little reading they do, and how uneducated they are as to the world outside their window. I beg to differ. Not, indeed, that they know a lot about the European history and art; but then, how much do we know about American history and art? Even as we try, the American landscape is so fluid, so diverse, that we miss out on too much to safely claim profound knowledge. In a country larger than our continent, how much blame can we attach to the commitment to the "here" rather than "there", when the "here" is so widely encompassing?

Aside from that, I have never seen so many people reading, in any of the Romanian universities I've set foot in. At UCLA, students read. In the library, on benches, on the pavement, at outdoors cafes, on the lawn, on their backs, on their bellies, during breaks, online, at the corner Starbucks, their act shows that they know why they're there: to pass exams, graduate and get a job; and for that they need to do their homework. The system is ruthless. How many times do Romanian stu-

dents resort to online critical notes, reading sheets, summaries, articles etc, hoping that teachers won't notice? How many times do we know not half of the class did their reading for the day, yet somehow forget to be indignant about it?

I do not intend to discuss the quality of their reading, nor do I care whether we could ever pronounce one species of students to be better than another; I am so fond of our old university and our lively and fun students, so impressed with the dedication it must take to struggle against everyday hardships to even be able to study, so understanding of our peculiar conditions, that the comparison might come out unbalanced for all the wrong reasons. I am simply struck by the seriousness with which these people perform their tasks.

My research here is twofold: library work and attending classes on a rather informal basis. Attending classes is, then, what has allowed me to see the downside of being a student in the American academic system: a lack of cohesion in both academic and social structure. Selecting your classes with little or no steering at all can have you graduate with detailed knowledge of how to shoot an entire film, but no vision of what a film is for, so to speak. Or, it can give you an intricate insight into African-American writing at the turn of the



century, but leave you in the dark as to how that specific literature accords with its context.

And, almost as important, it often happens for students to graduate without having had a fabulous time. The American academic system has students hopping from class to class all through college, so that hardly ever are a couple of students going to find themselves together in more than circumstantial encounters. Thus, friendships are formed on roommate-ship rather than sharing classes (and consequently, stories). That, in itself, is somewhat maiming. No small selective student groups, no snickering in between classes, no class parties? No mountain trips on hardly any money at all, no coffee and cheap lunches for ten? No nights out (or in), no borrowing notes, no messing around with the Others (read teachers, TA's, people from the other groups or schools)? Then it's nothing like the college experience I (and every single other Romanian student I know) had, and that's sad.

*Ilinca Anghelescu*

## Becoming a Liberal in Kansas

In truth, the largely conservative state of Kansas can hardly be expected to be an appropriate destination for anyone with an interest in radicalism in literature and cultural studies. Hence, learning I had been accepted to a Master's program in English literature at Emporia State University in Kansas, I braced myself for a solitary break from my youthful engagement with social issues. Emporia State was going to be my hideaway in a pseudo-sabbatical two-year preparation stage for my PhD in Romania - or so I thought. Contrary to my naïve presuppositions, going to grad school at Emporia State meant becoming involved in a complex program, essentially interdisciplinary, sometimes fiercely competitive, and yes, more often than not, quite liberal.

Graduate-level classes across a variety of literary spaces often required intensive study and an incredible amount of work. In addition to a particularly strong work ethic, and even more importantly, they required the use of a serious critical vocabulary for the exploration of British, American and world literature. From the deconstructionist analysis of Chaucer's „The Prioress's Tale“ to the philosophies of Judith Butler and bell hooks, the challenges we had to undertake as graduate students were simply never-ending. The amazingly engaging and popular classes I took in postcolonial Francophone literature and film, combined with classes in the philosophy of technology and an in-depth look at Hardt

and Negri's Empire, breathed new life into my experience and understanding of cultural work (to follow Stuart Hall's suggestion).

Yet, speaking of cultural work, I found the perfect arena for cutting-edge discussions of contemporary critical theories in the classes offered by Dr. Gary Holcomb, whose work I was already familiar with from his first Fulbright experience at the University of Bucharest (back in 1999). Thus, the investigation of American ethnic literature through the lens of the most recent and most engaging critical approaches became the basis for most of the MA theses written during my time there. Following the intention I had already expressed, while in Bucharest, to examine current issues in Native American Studies, I was fortunate enough to have Dr. Holcomb direct my thesis on the former wonder-child of Native American literature, currently film director, producer, novelist and four-time heavyweight champion of slam poetry, Mr. Sherman Alexie.

Consider the treat we had attending one of Sherman Alexie's lectures in an overcrowded hall at the University of Kansas: trickster artistic performance, political satire, literary discourse and well, pure fun. What more would one need to turn Kansas, a red state and proud member of the Bible Belt, yet also the site of the historic Brown v. Board of Education case, into the sun-flower state of transformation and friendship? Perhaps just one more beer at Town Royal...Cheers, my friends! And thank you.

*Ruxandra Rădulescu*

# Doctoral Theses

## American Drama's Reception in the Romanian Culture – with Special Reference to Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams

The purpose of our doctoral thesis is to investigate and analyse the complex phenomenon of the American Drama's 60 – year journey in our culture, starting with the inter-war period and ending with 1989 – the final point of a rich, varied controversial post-war era, deeply influenced by the social and political developments in Romanian society. Our approach consists of three main directions of investigation: the reaction of the Romanian criticism to the American drama – as a permanent challenge for the Romanians, its translation into Romanian and, last but not least, its reception on the Romanian stage.

Therefore, our research is, first of all, meant to be an analysis of the intellectual, political, social and cultural background that favoured the penetration of the American literature in the Romanian culture starting with the '30s and ending with the late '80s. We have mainly focused on the reaction of literary and dramatic criticism to the American drama, we mean E. O'Neill's, A. Miller's and Tennessee Williams's and their reception by the Romanian public.

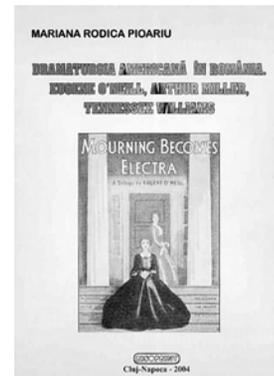
In the '30s and '40s the American drama was mainly represented in our country by Eugene O'Neill's theatre, which had been prevalent on the Romanian stage for years and enjoyed tremendous success. In the next decades Arthur Miller's name will prevail. Due to his constant preoccupation with contemporary society's problems and the individual-society relationship, Arthur Miller was rapidly "adopted"

by the Romanian criticism and the cultural ideology of the communist regime.

Tennessee Williams' theatre enjoyed even greater popularity in our country; a large number of his plays were translated into Romanian and staged by the most prominent Romanian theatres. The first drama to be translated and staged in Romania in 1960 was *The Glass Menagerie*, in a version signed by Anda Boldur. It will be published in a one-volume collection of American theatre with a preface written by Mihnea Gheorghiu, who had also translated *Orpheus Descending*, which appeared in "Secolul 20" in 1961.

The intense, feverish activity of intellectual Romanian circles, the widening of doors to the world culture-officially encouraged for about a decade (1962-1972) gave Romanian culture more fresh impetus than ever before. Notable progress was done in "recovering the synchronization with the west which the forebears had so avidly sought and achieved" (T. A. Perry, p. 145). The interest in American drama persisted in the decades to come but it diminished in the 1970s and 1980s because of a well-known shift in cultural policies after 1972. Then, focus of interest changed a lot concentrating mainly on "moulding the socialist conscience of the new man".

One basic conclusion is to be drawn: the Romanian interest in American literary and dramatic creations was genuine and permanent; its ties are deeply rooted in our minds and souls and are sure to enhance in future as a natural consequence of the Romanian-American multi-faceted partnership – a dream that has eventually come true.



## Elements of Romance in the Contemporary American Best Seller

Ema Stere's thesis was coordinated by professor Rodica Mihăilă and includes 8 chapters, 3 appendices and a bibliography.

The 1st chapter – "A Tradition in Romance" – attempts to clarify the topic of my research, by discussing various understandings of the term "romance" and by tracing the history of this popular genre back to the "scribbling women" in the 19th century. Instead of descending from Hawthorne and Melville, the paper argues, contemporary romance has simply borrowed the name of the fiction established by such writers, while using the conventions and literary style of good old domestic fiction.

In the following chapter, the thesis summarizes the main critical approaches to romance, from the mass culture theory to the innovations brought by cultural studies. However, an all-encompassing classification would have been somewhat artificial, if one is only to think at the many strands within feminist thought, for instance. It is the rea-

son for which the paper attempts to offer a fluid representation of romance criticism, as a continuously changing field, that takes advantage of the arguments developed in sociology, psychoanalysis, politics etc.

Chapter 4, "The Making of Best Selling", is based on the assumption that, as all popular genres, romances are created by the publishing industry, rather than by independent authors. This industry confines them into certain limits (through a clever re-working of titles, cover designs, etc.), while carefully exploring new markets and their possible appetite for new narratives and characters.

"Fantastic Elements In Contemporary Romance" takes a look at different representations of bodies, landscapes, and religious elements, arguing that, in the light of the theory above, they unveil the return of female repressed fears and doubts, in the contemporary society.

The final chapter ("8. Reading the Readers") is dedicated to readers as consumers of romance and to the act of reading/consuming, pointing to three new possibilities of analysis. Thus, "The Romantic Ms

Wilkes" situates romances as marginal products in the wider framework of popular fiction, using as a starting point Stephen King's well-known novel, "Misery". "The Problem with Ideology" suggests that many critics have used the term rather inconsistently, and that a broader understanding of the circulation and exchange of power, knowledge and ideology in Western societies could help creating a more diversified interpretation of the reading act. Consuming romances has been perceived as a tool for male domination (Pierre Bourdieu), or a subversive, carnivalesque activity (Gabriel Bar-Heim), while other critics emphasized the importance of fandom as a sociological phenomenon, able to create "an alternative cultural community" (John Storey, Janice Radway).

The thesis also includes 3 appendices, presenting the 50 top romance writers in USA, industry statistics, and excerpts from the famous "Harlequin guidelines for authors". The bibliography is revealing for the variety of secondary sources used during the research.

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

## Romanian Association for American Studies – RAAS

7-13 Pitar Moş Street, 70151  
Bucharest, Romania

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

**Vice-President:** Ecaterina Popa,  
Faculty of Letters, Department of  
English, Babeş-Bolyai University.  
31 Horia Street, 3400 Cluj-  
Napoca, Romania.

E-mail: kittypopa@lett.ubbcluj.ro

**Secretary:** Irina Grigorescu  
Pană, Faculty of Foreign  
Languages, Department of  
English, University of Bucharest.  
7-13 Pitar Moş Street, 70151  
Bucharest, Romania.

E-mail: irinapana@fx.ro

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

### Board Members:

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

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



Edited by the Romanian Association for American Studies

**Editor:** Mihaela Precup,  
mihaela\_precup@yahoo.com

**Co-Editor:** Ilinca Anghelescu  
ilinc@fastmail.fm

**Layout:**



www.american-studies.ro

## RAAS NEW MEMBERSHIP (May 2004- June 2005)

**Irina Toma**, University of Ploiesti:  
irinatoma55@yahoo.com

**Floriana Popescu**, Dunarea de Jos University,  
Galati: [floriana\\_popescu@yahoo.com](mailto:floriana_popescu@yahoo.com)

**Adriana Bulz**, University of Bucharest:  
[adibulz@yahoo.com](mailto:adibulz@yahoo.com)

**Daniela Carstea**, University of Bucharest:  
[danielacarstea\\_ro@yahoo.gr](mailto:danielacarstea_ro@yahoo.gr)

**Mihaela Ioana Grosu**, University of Bucharest:  
[bisericaenei@pcnet.ro](mailto:bisericaenei@pcnet.ro)

**Gabriela Mehedintu**, University of Bucharest:  
[gfb@k.ro](mailto:gfb@k.ro)

**Dana Mihailescu**, University of Bucharest:  
[mdanutaro@yahoo.com](mailto:mdanutaro@yahoo.com)

**Alexandra Mitrea**, Lucia Blaga University, Sibiu:  
[alexandra.mitrea@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:alexandra.mitrea@ulbsibiu.ro)

**Emilia Postolache**, University of Bucharest:  
[emilia\\_postolache@yahoo.com](mailto:emilia_postolache@yahoo.com)

**Matt MacDonald**, Romania (translator, interpreter)

### EAAS OFFICERS, 2004

**President:** Marc Chénétier,  
Université de Paris VII, Institut  
Charles V, 10 Rue Charles V,  
75004 Paris, France  
Phone: +33 1 57 27 58 79 Fax:  
+33 1 57 27 58 01  
[chenetier@eaas.info](mailto:chenetier@eaas.info)

**Vice President:** Gülriz Büken,  
Department of History, Bilkent  
University, 06533 Bilkent, Ankara,  
Turkey  
Phone: +90 312 29 02 341 Fax:  
+90 312 266 4960  
[buken@eaas.info](mailto:buken@eaas.info)

**Treasurer:** Hans-Jürgen Grabbe,  
Institut für Anglistik und  
Amerikanistik, Martin-Luther-  
Universität Halle-Wittenberg,  
06099 Halle, Germany  
Phone: +49 345 552 3520 Fax:  
+49 345 552 7272  
[grabbe@eaas.info](mailto:grabbe@eaas.info)

**Secretary General:** Ole O. Moen,  
Department of Literature, Area  
Studies and Languages,  
University of Oslo, P.O. Box 1003  
Blindern, 0315 Oslo, Norway  
Phone: +47 22 85 69 72 Fax:  
+47 22 85 68 87.  
[moen@eaas.info](mailto:moen@eaas.info)

### EAAS BOARD MEMBERS, 2005

**Marcel Arbeit**, Department of  
English and American Studies,  
Palacky University, Krizkovského  
10, 771 47 Olomouc, Czech  
Republic  
Phone: +420 68 563 3104  
Fax: +420 68 563 3111  
[arbeit@aix.upol.cz](mailto:arbeit@aix.upol.cz)

**Jesús Benito**, Departamento de  
Filología Inglesa, Facultad de  
Filosofía y Letras, Plaza del  
Campus, Universidad de  
Valladolid, 47011 Valladolid,  
Spain  
Phone: +34 983 42 3747 Fax:  
+34 983 42 3421  
[jbenito4@fyl.uva.es](mailto:jbenito4@fyl.uva.es)

**Tiziano Bonazzi**, School of Political  
Sciences, University of Bologna,  
Strada Maggiore 45, 40125  
Bologna, Italy  
Phone: +39 051 2092501

Fax: +39 051 239548  
[bonazzit@spbo.unibo.it](mailto:bonazzit@spbo.unibo.it)  
**Isabel Caldeira**, Instituto de  
Estudos Norte-Americanos  
Faculdade de letras,  
Universidade de Coimbra, 3000-  
447 Coimbra, Portugal  
Phone: + 351 239 859982 Fax: +  
351 239 836733  
[mic@ci.uc.pt](mailto:mic@ci.uc.pt)

**Jerzy Durczak**, Department of  
American Literature and Culture,  
Maria Curie-Skłodowska  
University, Pl. Marii Curie  
Skłodowskiej 4, 20-031 Lublin,  
Poland  
Phone: +48 81 5339 689  
Fax: +48 81 5375 279  
[durczak@klio.umcs.lublin.pl](mailto:durczak@klio.umcs.lublin.pl)

**William Anthony (Tony) Emerson**,  
School of History and International  
Affairs, University of Ulster at  
Jordanstown, Newtownabbey, Co.  
Antrim, Northern Ireland, BT37  
0QB, United Kingdom  
Phone: +44 28 9036 8186  
Fax: +44 28 9036 6824  
[w.emmerson@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:w.emmerson@ulster.ac.uk)

**Michel Granger**, Université Lumière  
– Lyon 2, 6 Avenue Leclerc,  
69007 Lyon, France  
Phone: +33 4 78 72 28 87 Fax:  
+33 4 72 80 94 52  
[michel.granger@univ-lyon2.fr](mailto:michel.granger@univ-lyon2.fr)

**Martin Heusser**, Englisches  
Seminar, Universität Zürich,  
Plattenstrasse 47, 8032 Zürich,  
Switzerland  
Phone: +41 44 634 3551 Fax:  
+41 44 634 4908  
[heusser@es.unizh.ch](mailto:heusser@es.unizh.ch)

**Sarolta Marinovich-Resch**, Institute  
of English and American Studies,  
University of Szeged, Hungary,  
Egyetem u. 2, Szeged, 6726,  
Hungary.  
Phone: +36 62 544260  
Fax: +36 62 544259  
[resch@lit.u-szeged.hu](mailto:resch@lit.u-szeged.hu)

**Rodica Mihaila**, Director, Center for  
American Studies, University of  
Bucharest, Str. Pitar Mos 7-11,  
70151 Bucharest, Romania  
Phone: +40 21 211 1820  
[rodica-mihaila@b.astral.ro](mailto:rodica-mihaila@b.astral.ro)

**Savas Patsalidis**, Aristotle  
University, Department of  
American Studies, School of  
Philosophy, Thessaloniki, 4124,  
Greece.  
Phone: +30 2310 997461  
Fax: +30 2310 947432  
[spats@enl.auth.gr](mailto:spats@enl.auth.gr)

**Alain Piette**, Ecole d'Interprètes  
Internationaux, de l'Université de  
Mons-Hainaut, Avenue du Champ  
de Mars, 17, 7000 Mons, Belgium  
Phone: +32-65.37.36.00  
Fax: +32-65.37.36.22  
[alain.piette@umh.ac.be](mailto:alain.piette@umh.ac.be)

**Yuri V. Stulov**, American Studies  
Center, European Humanities  
University, 3 P.Brovki St., Minsk  
220000, Belarus  
Phone: +375 17 232 7036  
Fax: +375 17 2315062  
[stulov@yahoo.com](mailto:stulov@yahoo.com)

**Tatiana Venediktova**, MSU,  
Department of Philology, 41,  
Leninsky prosp., Moscow 117334,  
Russia  
[vened@philol.msu.ru](mailto:vened@philol.msu.ru) and [vta-tiana@mtu-net.ru](mailto:vta-tiana@mtu-net.ru)

**Jaap Verheul**, History Department,  
Utrecht University, Kromme  
Nieuwegracht 66, 3512 HL  
Utrecht, The Netherlands  
Phone: +31 30 253 6034  
Fax: +31 30 253 6391  
[jaap.verheul@let.uu.nl](mailto:jaap.verheul@let.uu.nl)

**Jenel Virden**, American Studies,  
University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX,  
United Kingdom  
Fax/Phone: +44 1482 465 303  
E-mail: [J.Virden@hull.ac.uk](mailto:J.Virden@hull.ac.uk)

**Reinhold Wagnleitner**, Department  
of History, University of Salzburg,  
Rudolfskai 42, 5020 Salzburg,  
Austria  
Phone: +43 662 8044 4733  
Fax: +43 662 8044 413  
[reinhold.wagnleitner@sbg.ac.at](mailto:reinhold.wagnleitner@sbg.ac.at)

### ASE EDITOR

**Editor-in-Chief:** Gülriz Büken,  
Department of History, Bilkent  
University, 06533 BILKENT,  
Ankara, Turkey  
Fax: +90 312 266 4960  
[buken@bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:buken@bilkent.edu.tr)