

**Spring/Summer 2004**



**American Studies in Greece**

Newsletter of the Hellenic Association for American Studies

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## Editorial

For the first time in the history of HELAAS we had the announcement confirmation of the forthcoming biannual **EAAS Conference** to be held in **2006** in the **University of Cyprus**. **Antonis Balasopoulos** ([balaso@ucy.ac.cy](mailto:balaso@ucy.ac.cy)) will be taking care of the organisation in Nicosia. There are things to be done, but HELAAS is promising the organisation of a good and stimulating conference.

The topic proposed for the **2006 EAAS Conference** in **Nicosia** is '**Conformism/Anti-Conformism**'. All Americanists in Greece and Cyprus are strongly advised to propose workshop and/or panel topics. We are hoping that our HELAAS members will respond positively to this invite.

The programme of the 2006 EAAS Conference in Cyprus will be finalised in the next Board Meeting to be held in Cambridge during the 2005 BAAS Conference.

During the board members meeting held in Prague, it has been decided that the **EAAS Newsletter** will go **electronic** ([www.eaas.info/newsletter.htm](http://www.eaas.info/newsletter.htm)) so as to be able to reach more people.

The proceedings of the conference held in Graz, Austria, have just been published by the **VU University Press** in Amsterdam under the title "**Nature's Nation**" **Revisited**. The editors of the collection, **Hans Bak** and **Walter W. Hölbling**, write that "the essays collected in this volume offer critical reconsiderations of the manifold ways in which, over time, different concepts of "nature" have affected U.S attitudes towards the land Americans have explored, settled, cultivated, exploited and, more recently, also begun to protect".

All Americanists who are in the process of completing any books on American Literature and Culture please contact the General Editor, **Rob Kroes**, of the **European Contributions to American Studies Series** ([sales@gazellebooks.co.uk](mailto:sales@gazellebooks.co.uk)).

In the near future, EAAS will have its own logo. HELAAS is looking into having its own logo as well. In addition, HELAAS has been invited to join IASA (International American Studies Association) as a national member.

Overall, the EAAS conference in Prague, whose theme was "America in the Course of Human Events: Presentations and Interpretations", was interesting although less people than expected made it there. EAAS is inviting all its member associations to generate as many forms of co-operation between them as possible. In view of the now enlarged European Union, many board members stress the importance of gathering notes and impressions on the ways in which our study of the U.S should/can/must/might be, or objectively is, different from the efforts deployed by our colleagues in the U.S.

Professor Savas Patsalidis  
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## Prague EAAS Conference: Individual Paper Reports

**Dr Zoe Detsi-Diamanti (Aristotle University, Thessaloniki)**

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*The Mythical Pattern of the American Revolution: Political Ideology, Republican Rhetoric, and Manifest Destiny.*

In a letter to Jefferson in 1815, quite a few years after the American Revolution, John Adams confirms the widespread view that the Revolution was primarily an ideological, constitutional struggle, not just a military, political conflict:

What do we mean by the evolution? The war? That was no part of the Revolution; it was only an effect and a consequence of it. The Revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was effected from 1760 to 1775, in the course of fifteen years before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington.

From the perspective of ideological consensus, it has been tempting to explore the ability of American society during the revolutionary period to turn its myths into power and ideology, to secure assent through language, to open up and embrace an enormous diversity of people. For the leaders of the revolution, it proved a formidable task not only to transform the cultural identity of Americans, their provincial outlook, but also to introduce an alternative discourse that would transcend social/cultural distinctions and class barriers and create a sense of national unity.

For this reason, I have chosen to focus on the most popular - and most effective in the dissemination of ideas - form of writing during the revolutionary period: the propaganda plays of the Revolution, as these were shaped by the rhetoric of republican idealism as well as a

powerful restructuring of the American national mythology, the myths and symbols that extended from the Puritan Edenic myth of America to the Lockean philosophy of natural law and rights. My decision to examine the patriotic plays of the American Revolution was spurred by the fact that this is the first time in American history that drama holds such a unique position, that theatrical rhetoric is converted into an instrument of state policy. After all, it has been argued by a number of scholars that these 'dramatized' protests provided greater appeal to the American people than any other form of writing at the time.

So, taken as an aspect of social and political history, the propaganda plays of the Revolution reflect with historical authenticity and emotional vividness colonial reactions to actual events and fully dramatize a period of turmoil. They reveal, through their various sources and influences, all the ideological strains that carried the colonies to and through the Revolution, while, at the same time, unveil the latent mutuality of fact and ideal, of the actual historical reality and the mythical pattern of America's "manifest destiny," her mission in the world, the profound meaning of the nation's political regeneration.

I will try to show that the propaganda plays of the American Revolution draw extensively on the metaphors of America as the "New Eden," the "New Canaan," the "Land of Liberty," while, at the same time, the thematic interplay between political debate and sermonic language opens the way for identifying America's struggle for independence with the work of redemption. Patriotism and salvation become one in the dramatic version of the events of the revolution, thus heralding the climactic moment of the Puritan errand into the wilderness which is none other but the birth of a new nation, a new world, a new order of things.

For the writers of early patriotic drama, glorifying America's process in the world is the first step towards developing an unassailable ideology of protest and rebellion. Much like the political language of the United States today, the patriotic plays of the Revolution build their argument on immutable grounds combining feeling and common sense, faith and effective propaganda, in an attempt to establish a sense of security and cohesion and convince the people of the inevitability of political/military action.

**Dr Helena Maragou (Deree College, Athens)**

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*Realism, Primitivism, and Ethnic Selfhood in Amy Tan's The Bonesetter's Daughter*

Referring to the popularity of Amy Tan's work as the "Amy Tan phenomenon," Sauling Wong, among numerous other Chinese American critical theorists, links the author's success to a tendency to "mis-read," "appropriate," and "co-optate" Asian American materials for mainstream consumption. Tan caters to the ideological interests of Anglo-America, Wong and others believe, by "repackaging Orientalism" for a white readership. Like Kingston, Hwang, and other Asian American authors, Tan has been labeled as a merely "ornamental Oriental", whose mismanagement of Chinese history and culture fulfills the Orientalist formula and displays a suspect—even dangerous—assimilationism.

It seems, thus, that Amy Tan's work has to be unavoidably encountered in the context of a controversy begun with the publication of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and formulated round the question of cultural authenticity and autobiographical accuracy. The rhetoric of representational authenticity, supported by cultural nationalist and "masculinist" critics

like Frank Chin and associates, promotes belief in "the truth of the Chinese culture and history that has been carried and developed into Chinese American institutions". Such rhetoric thinks of itself as granting voice to "the sensibility or the imagination of Chinese Americans," while, ironically, subscribing to the Western/patriarchal theorem of mimetic representation, working as it is from the monologic center of 'historical truth' and an essentialized conceptualization of China and Chinese America.

In contrast, Tan's fiction negates the notion of an authentic cultural origin and thus debunks essentialist conceptions of ethnic identity; far from affirming stereotypical, "Orientalized" versions of Chinese culture, it dislodges them by deconstructing the very concept of authenticity itself. Her work reflects theoretical awareness of the impossibility of referencing past experiences with historical accuracy, but without proclaiming at the same time the cancellation of history itself; instead, it entails a re-assessment of the concept of history in the light of its linguistic and ideological constructedness.

Thus, first of all, Tan manages to successfully raise the problematic of representation by enabling a post-colonial critique of mimesis, and, second, succeeds in proposing a literary alternative by de-essentializing ethnic categories such as "Chinese", "American", "East", "West". Her work eludes the traps of historical accuracy and ethnic definition, and instead positions self formation within the context of gender and outside the constraints of time, country, and culture. In this sense, too, Tan subverts the neo-colonial purist pursuit of authentic ethnic experience, to propose a post-colonial investigation of ethnicity that addresses the porosity of national/cultural boundaries and the continual fracturing and liquefaction of identities. At the same time, she promotes a new concept of dual identity in which the two sides of the

duality are not fixed by powers beyond human agency, but are continually under construction.

Tan's discursive treatment of authenticity, and by extension historical knowledge, is discussed by reference to *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001). The paper focuses on the various narrative strategies and tropes that orchestrate the text's self-reflexivity, thus dissolving nationalist and masculinist conceptions of origin and historical memory.

**Professor Theodora Tsimpouki (University of Athens)**

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*The Literature Shoptalk: "The very Best of Contemporary Fiction": Literary Prizes and American Literary Identity*

This shoptalk attempted to expand cultural theory of literary awards

beyond issues of literary merit into an analysis of the market forces that determine and place limitations on new fictions. The Nobel and the Man Booker awards have been taken as examples in order to acknowledge the tendency of both prestigious awards to give way to a more balanced literary scene by taking notice of the fringe, that is the literature created outside the Western mainstream. At the same time, however, attention was paid to the politics as well as economics that determine the inclusion or exclusion of good writing from being accepted and lauded in the West. Special reference was made to the discourse of "exoticism" which can be regarded as a celebration of multiculturalism but also as a means of commodifying both the author and the product.

## EAAS Travel Awards

Eleftheria Arapoglou ([elefarapoglou@yahoo.com](mailto:elefarapoglou@yahoo.com)), Ph.D. candidate at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, received this year's **EAAS Transatlantic Grant** – one of the two kinds of travel grants EAAS offers for postgraduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences who are registered for a higher research degree at any European University.

Arapoglou will be traveling to the Van Pelt library of The University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) to conduct research that will assist her with the revision and final editing of her dissertation. Her dissertation discusses how the travel writings of Mark Twain (in particular, *The Innocents Abroad*), Henry James (*The American Scene*) and Demetra Vaka-Brown (her travel books *The Heart of the Balkans*, and *In the Heart of the German Intrigue*) contribute to the cultural construction of "space" in the context

of the early American modernist tradition. At UPenn, Arapoglou will be able to investigate the latest materials and sources related to the three writers, by using the Van Pelt library's exceptional facilities.

The Transatlantic grant permits the holder to conduct research, which illuminates some aspect of the relationship between the U.S. and Europe, in a designated university in the U.S. The term of the grant is between three and eight weeks. Successful applicants receive a grant intended to cover travel and living expenses, on the basis of a **detailed budget** they submit to the grant committee. Before they apply, applicants *must* have ensured official, **written confirmation** from the host institution that they are guaranteed complete access to the library and research facilities of the institution.

Application forms are available electronically at the EAAS web-site [www.eaas.info](http://www.eaas.info)

## Forthcoming Events and Conferences

**International Symposium  
May 14-15, 2004.  
University of Athens, Main  
Building, 30 Panepistimiou Av.**

*Humanities within the Global  
Paradigm: English Literature/English  
Studies/Cultural Studies*

Speakers:

**ASPASIA VELISSARIOU**, University of Athens.

**STATHIS GOURGOURIS**, Columbia University, USA

**ARISTIDES BALTAS**, National Polytechnic, Athens.

**JINA POLITI**, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki

**BRUCE ROBBINS**, Columbia University, U.S.A.

**WILLIAM V. SPANOS**, State University of New York at Binghamton.

**SCOTT WILSON**, Lancaster University, U.K.

For more information call  
210- 72 77 771 or email  
pelkab@enl.uoa.gr

**MESEA (Multi-Ethnic Studies of  
Europe and the Americas),  
May 20-23, 2004.  
Aristotle University, School of  
English, Department of American  
Literature and Culture.**

*Ethnic Communities, Democratic  
Societies.*

For more information contact:  
Professor Yiorgos Kalogeras  
[kalogera@enl.auth.gr](mailto:kalogera@enl.auth.gr)

**Fulbright Association in Greece  
October 8-10, 2004.  
Athens.**

*Humanism in Action: Olympism and  
the Fulbright Spirit.*

For more information contact:  
Professor Anastasia  
Papakonstantinou  
[apapako@enl.uoa.gr](mailto:apapako@enl.uoa.gr)

**One-day Symposium  
October 23, 2004.  
History Centre, Billy Megaron,  
Ippodromiou Square,  
Thessaloniki.**

*American Poetry in Greece*

Speakers:

**LIANA SAKELLIYOU-SCHULTZ**, University of Athens.

**EKATERINI GEORGOUDAKI**, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.

**TATIANI RAPATZIKOU**, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.

**DAVID CONNOLLY**, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.

**HARIS VLAVIANOS**, Translator, Poet, Deree College, Athens.

**KATERINA AGGELAKI-ROUK**, Translator, Poet, Athens.

**SAKIS SEREFAS**, Translator, Poet, Thessaloniki.

**DON SCHOFIELD**, University LaVerne, Athens.

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## New Members

**Dr Konstantinos Blatanis** teaches Language at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His research interests are: contemporary American Drama and Popular Culture. [kblatanis@yahoo.gr](mailto:kblatanis@yahoo.gr).

**Dr Artemis Michailidou** teaches American Literature at the University of Athens. Her research interests are: twentieth century American Women's Poetry. [arorm@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:arorm@yahoo.co.uk)

**Dr Kyriakos Kouveliotis** teaches at Deree College, Athens, International Business and Management. His

research interests are: Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management European; Integration and International Relations.

[kkouvel@hol.gr](mailto:kkouvel@hol.gr)

## Journal News - GRAMMA

**Gramma** is on line:

[genesis.ee.auth.gr/dimakis/gramma/gramma.html](http://genesis.ee.auth.gr/dimakis/gramma/gramma.html)

### CFP for **Gramma 13**.

*Comparative Literature and Global Studies: Histories and Trajectories.*

Deadline for Submissions:

31 December 2004.

For more information contact:

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Professor Yiorgos Kalogeras

[kalogera@enl.auth.gr](mailto:kalogera@enl.auth.gr)

## Other News

### EAAS Travel Grants

Information can be obtained by visiting the EAAS Homepage:

<http://www.let.uu.nl/eaas>

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In order to contribute to the discussion send messages to [eaas-1@let.uu.nl](mailto:eaas-1@let.uu.nl)

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## Members' Publications

Blatanis, Konstantinos. *Popular Icons in Contemporary American Drama.*

Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson

University Press, 2003.

Macedo, Donald, Bessie Dendrinou, Panayota Gounari. *The Hegemony of English.* Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2003.

Pastourmatzi, Domna, ed.

*Biotechnological and Medical Themes in Science Fiction.*

Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2002.

Patsalidis, Savas. *From*

*Representation to Presentation:*

*About Limits and Margins.* Athens:

Ellinika Grammata, 2004.

Rapatzikou, Tatiani. *Gothic Motifs in the Fiction of William Gibson.*

Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi

Editions, 2004.

Schofield, Don, ed. *Kindled Terraces:*

*American Poets in Greece.* Kirksville,

MO: Truman State University Press,

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