

Fall/Winter 2004



American Studies in Greece

Newsletter of the Hellenic Association for American Studies

IN THIS ISSUE:

Poetry Symposium

Prizes

EAAS Newsletter On-Line

Symbiosis Biennial

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Editorial

For the first time did HELAAS undertake the organization of a poetry symposium which was dedicated to '**American Poetry in Greece**'. The event was held with great success in Thessaloniki on October 23rd. It brought together a number of voices from the academic, translational and poetic world in Athens and Thessaloniki. At a time when poetry does not sell, young people showed that it does!! It was a pleasant surprise to see a full house. Scholars, students, translators and many other poetry fans kept us company throughout the whole day.

Many special thanks go to our sponsors (**Fulbright, Aristotle University, Prefecture of Thessaloniki**), the **bookshop 'Konstandinidis'** and our audience which supported this diverse and stimulating event. Now that we got this strong feedback, we are considering preparing a new poetry venture for the near future.

The papers of the poetry symposium will soon be published in book form by **University Studio Press**. More information on the papers presented during the event can be found in the present Newsletter or you could contact directly: **Dr Tatiani Rapatzikou** trapatz@enl.auth.gr

Also, we are inviting our HELAAS members to **strongly support** our forthcoming **Symbiosis International Conference** to be held here in Thessaloniki between June 30 - July 3 2005. The theme of the conference is: '**Anglo-American Literary Relations / Anglo-American Hellenisms**'. Your paper/panel proposals should be submitted by **January 15th 2005** to: **Dr Tatiani Rapatzikou** trapatz@enl.auth.gr

As for the programme of the **2006 EAAS Conference in Cyprus**, it will be finalized in the next Board Meeting to be held in Cambridge during the 2005 BAAS Conference. For more information regarding the 2006 EAAS conference you could contact: **Dr Antonis Balasopoulos** balaso@ucy.ac.cy

The **EAAS Newsletter** has gone **on-line**. You can now find the **May/October 2004 issues** on: www.eaas.info/newsletter/eaas_52.pdf
www.eaas.info/newsletter/eaas_53.pdf

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

Professor Savas Patsalidis
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Poetry Symposium: Individual Paper Reports

Professor Liana Sakelliou (University of Athens)

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A Personal Reminiscence of American Poetry

I have studied some American poets so much that when I remember them I feel as I do when I remember close friends because they seem so familiar. Hilda Doolittle and Gary Snyder, among my closest, are recognizably American to me – in the strong transcendental tradition going back to Emerson, who reveals in ordinary life the imagination needed to live it.

H.D. seeks to reaffirm some truth to myths prior to Christianity and by using the technique of the palimpsest she creates new meaning and mystery by the mutual transformation of images. In her *Trilogy*, she presents regeneration by and of poetry. The poet like the alchemist has a secret. The poem conveys meaning on many levels from the very personal to the very general – to the course of Western civilization – so that it may discuss various types of survival in the middle of crisis. The events in the book are linked through an apocryphal story, reinterpreting the Biblical versions so as to reinvent the position of the woman. The strategy of the poem is to present the process of storytelling in order to uncover a repressed past.

Snyder's poetry attempts to reverse the alienation resulting from the loss of the sense of place that leads to increasingly dissociated ways of thinking, dissociated from actual values of people living now in a certain place. He tries to reinstate critical, wholistic thinking. People according to him should be grounded in their environment, their lives, their bodies; they must have a sense of place integrated with the sense of

their whole life. Snyder with his poetry tries to revive the importance America has placed on nature, but revise it by replacing exploitation with participation.

I believe both poets make us transcendentalists when we read about our common imagination and in so doing we are led to develop it further.

Professor Ekaterini Georgoudaki (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

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African American Women's Poetry: An Important Part of American Poetry hardly known in Greece

Our contemporary poetry by African American women is characterized by a variety of themes and forms. In poems dealing with the historical experience of black Americans or the poets' own experiences there is a strong element of protest against racial, sexual, economic and other kinds of discrimination existing in American society. Portraits of African and African American female historical and mythological figures, folk artists, poets, novelists, singers, as well as ordinary women are used to revise white stereotypes of black women and to stress their important contribution to the development of their own race and the USA society at large. In addition to socio-political issues, the poets also focus on themes of more general interest (love, death, family relations, nature, etc.).

Sonnets, ballads, formal quatrains and conventional meters co-exist with poems written in free verse and ranging from short lyrics to long poems, including prose poems, choreopoems, etc. Standard English is occasionally replaced by black English with its distinctive speech rhythms, and the rules of traditional grammar, syntax and punctuation are often violated. The poets also

experiment with the spacing of poems on the page. The influence of music (blues, jazz, spirituals, etc.) and other forms of the oral tradition that originated in Africa is also very strong in their poetry.

Margaret Walker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni, Audre Lorde, Rita Dove and other African American women poets have won national and international fame, but their poetry remains unknown to the Greek reading public, because it is not available either in the original or in translation.

Dr Tatiani Rapatzikou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

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The New York Poets

In this paper emphasis is placed on the key representatives of the so-called 'New York School of Poetry'. Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, Kenneth Koch and John Ashbery made their appearance in New York in the 1960s. Their poems, radical and everyday in style, function, according to David Lehman, as "linguistic engines rather than repositories of felt experience". In their poetic lines, everyday expressions and impressions transform into a lively, enthusiastic and liberating wordplay. Although these poets knew one another and they would often get inspired by each other's work, the poetry that they produced is stylistically varied rather than formulaic. Each poem bears its own individual traits in the way it manipulates the poetic line as well as language itself.

O'Hara, Koch and Ashbery are known to the Greek public through the translational endeavours of Sakis Serefas, Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke, Haris Vlavianos and Vassilis Papageorgiou. However, there are no translations available as far as Schuyler's poetry is concerned. In this paper, an attempt is made, through a variety of poetic examples

(O'Hara's 'The Day Lady Died', Koch's 'Permanently' and Schuyler's 'February') to familiarize the public with the techniques that each poet employs. It is the stylistic diversity and experimental mood of their poetry that the translator succeeds in transferring to his/her own language which verifies the communicative power and cosmopolitan character of this kind of verse.

Dr David Connolly (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

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Rewriting the poem – Stages in the translation process: Factors and Constraints

A translation of a poem is, by definition, a re-writing of the poem and, depending on the translator's aim, a re-writing for a particular purpose. Practicing translators tend to write of the specific problems they encounter in translating a particular poet but rarely reflect on the various stages they pass through in the process, far less on the reasons for the choices they make at each stage. The process involves the translator in numerous drafts leading to the eventual translation product, which is, at least from the translator's point of view, often less than completely satisfactory. In my talk, I intend to discuss the process and illustrate it with examples of draft material.

Haris Vlavianos (Poet-Translator)

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John Ashbery: The Convex Mirror of Language

This paper focuses on the translational practices employed when John Ashbery's 'Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror' was translated into Greek. During this demanding process, the translator was mostly interested in the rhythmic associations that the words in the original text evoked so as to be able to transfer them to his own language. Of course, there are certain features of the original text

that will always remain untranslatable, as it is the case of intricate rhyming and wordplay patterns. However, the translator mainly concentrates on the images that the poem in its original form is trying to create, the thoughts that the poet is attempting to communicate and the sounding effects that the poem generates when it is read aloud.

The translator should always be aware of the fact that there is no perfect translation. He is only aiming at producing an analogous to the original text that will bring the target audience close to the diverse cultural experiences and the unusual language patterns that the original poem contains.

Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke (Poet-Translator)

Women's poetry crosses the Atlantic

"The form is nothing but the extension of the content" says Robert Creeley. Also, Louise Gluck in her poem 'The untrustworthy speaker' writes: "In my own mind I'm invisible: that's why I'm dangerous". To my mind, women's poetry seems to be pushing aside the form while concentrating mostly on trying to express a woman's content, her inner self. So, while appearance is so important during her lifetime, in her poetry, one has the impression that she wants to get rid of what seems to be her destination on this earth as she dives into her guts. "I am a smiling woman / I am only thirty / and like a cat I have nine times to die" says Sylvia Plath in her 'Lady Lazarus', before she starts describing her suicide attempts ('Dying / Is an art, like everything else. / I do it exceptionally well'). The prevailing element in the content of a woman is her womanhood. (Probably that of a man is the world that he has created). This does not mean that all women are the same just because they share this element. It means that the concentration on the roots of things will make the

expression of their uniqueness, in poetry, very difficult. It is, indeed, a very difficult operation when one wishes to combine the feeling of and for our womanhood with what we have in common as well as with the desire to be, each one of us, a unique case. This combination of the two opposites that women share in poetry has an advantage: that of being a very good traveller; it crosses the Atlantic almost easily.

Dr Don Schofield

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Mapping the Country behind the Words: American Poets in Greece

Based on the recently published anthology, *Kindled Terraces: American Poets in Greece* (Truman State University Press, 2004), this paper briefly discusses what a Greek might gain by reading poems by Americans on Greece. The paper identifies four distinct groups of post-World War Two Americans who either live in Greece or have spent time here as tourists, sojourners, residents and descendents. By demonstrating the diversity of motives and aesthetic perspectives of the poets comprising these groups, the paper suggests that those drawn to this country are more varied and complex than many have given them credit for. And in showing that, what appeals to these writers reveals more regarding what is missing in the American cultural milieu than it does regarding the specific place they are writing about. The paper asserts that the primary value of such poems for a Greek reader is that they enable him/her to gain a better understanding of the American creative imagination and what attracts that imagination to Greece.

Sakis Serefas (Poet-Translator, Thessaloniki)

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Heading Toward Old Man Whitman: The Presence of American Poets in Greek Poetry

The presenter examines and comments on the presence of American poets in the poetry of twentieth century Greece.

The first section of the paper presents the different ways in which an American poet is referred to within a Greek poem (e.g., specifically naming a poet, a dedication on a title page or reference in a poem title, a line quoted from the original poem in English or in Greek, etc.).

The second part identifies the methodology used and the research sources – approximately 7000 poems, written by 250 Greek poets representing all the years of the twentieth century.

The third section examines a few characteristic instances in which the presence of an American poet serves as a catalyst in the formation and development of the poem (and not simply as a gesture of esteem).

In the fourth part, the frequency of appearance of individual American poets is examined.

In the fifth section, some beginning quantitative and qualitative conclusions are drawn from the research, which is still in process.

The main conclusions which the presenter comes to are as follows:

- 1) Six out of 10 appearances of American poets in Greek poems refer to Whitman, Pound and Poe, in other words to the three giants of the American poetry canon.
- 2) Contemporary American poetry is, to a great extent, unknown and untranslated in Greece, and as such has had minor influence on twentieth century and contemporary Greek poetry.

Dr Anastasia Stefanidou
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*Andonis Decavalles: The
Reconstruction of Time in the Work
of a Greek Poet in America*

Andonis Decavalles (1920), a distinguished writer, critic, professor, and translator of T.S. Eliot and Odysseus Elytis, has made significant contributions to the research and study of classical and modern Greek literature in America. Interested in the innovation and renewal of the literary tradition, Decavalles follows modernist techniques and themes to contrast his idealized native Greek island of Sifnos with the raw and fragmented reality of the American city. In his poetry collections, written in Greek and published in Greece, Decavalles underlines his cultural and spiritual bonds with his homeland, which is nostalgically reminisced in an effort to exorcise the immigrant's guilt for leaving one's family and home behind. However, the immigrant's intense fear of losing the stable and secure values and structures of home brings about the reconstruction of linear time and the creative intervention with the past. Investing his original home with mythical qualities and placing it within ahistorical dimensions, where past, present, and future intersect to produce a utopian time, the persona in Decavalle's poetry reconciles with sad or traumatic events and sorrowful memories. Thus the past is reassessed, partly reinvented, and finally affirmed as an essential source of comfort within exile, while dystopic America gives the impetus for the imagined return to a home which is always immediate and present.

Prizes

Dr Adrienne Kalfopoulou
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FIG, a collection of 22 poems, won the 2000 EDDA Women's Poetry Contest (from the Sarasota Poetry Theatre Press), Florida, and was translated by Katarzyna Nowak into Polish: The introduction of the Polish-English edition of FIGA notes, "these poems are characterized, to borrow one of the titles, by 'The Effort of Intimacy' (published by Wyzsza Szkoła Ekonomiczno-Humanistyczna, Bielsko-Biala, summer, 2004

'He Wants Me to Describe It' won the 2003 Poetry Contest from the Canadian journal, *Room of One's Own*; published in the Spring 2004 issue Vol 26.4. also available online:
www.roommagazine.com/26_4kalfopoulou_poem.pdf

Adrienne Kalfopoulou is Featured Poet for the fall/winter 2004 issue of *Valparaiso Poetry Review* which features her narrative poem, 'Holy Agony': beginning December 1: www.valpo.edu/english/vpr

Forthcoming Events and Conferences

3rd Annual Conference

**REALITY REVISITED:
 LITERATURE, COMMUNICATION,
 AESTHETICS AT THE
 CROSSROADS.**

November 27, 2004.

**University of Indianapolis,
 Athens Campus.**

This is the Third Annual Conference of the English Department organized in cooperation with the Communication Department. The Conference will provide an opportunity for scholars and students to explore an area of interdisciplinary and comparative research in Philosophy, Literature and Communication studies.

For more information please contact:
 Dr. Susie Michailidis (2103239908/9,
 or michaelidiss@uindy.gr

**5th Biennial International
 Symbiosis Conference
 June 30-July 3, 2005.
 Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.**

*Anglo-American Literary Relations /
 Anglo-American Hellenisms.*

Keynote Speakers:

Professor Yiorgos Kalogeras
 (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

Professor Susan Manning
 (Edinburgh University)

Professor William Belhower
 (Padua University)

Paper/Panel proposals should be submitted by **Jan.15th 2005** to Dr Tatiani Rapatzikou
trapatz@enl.auth.gr

For more information see:
www.symbiosisonline.org.uk/conference.htm

New Members

Dr Yorgos Christidis teaches at the Department of History and International Relations at Anatolia College in Thessaloniki. His research interests are: Political Science and Middle Eastern Politics.
belief@balkan.auth.gr

Dr Nephie J. Christodoulides teaches courses on English literature and culture at the University of Cyprus. Her research interests are: Ted Hughes, H.D and autobiography, Felicia Hemans and women's Romantic poetry, Sylvia Plath's early writing. nephie@cytanet.com.cy.

Dr Anna Maria Konsta teaches at the Department of History and International Relations at Anatolia College in Thessaloniki. Her research interests are: Political Science and European Law.
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Journal News - GRAMMA

Gramma is on line:
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:
 Assistant Professor Antonis Balasopoulos
balaso@ucy.ac.cy
 Professor Yiorgos Kalogeras
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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 Dr Tatiani Rapatzikou
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Members' Publications

Christodoulides, Nephie J. *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking: Motherhood in Sylvia Plath's Work.* Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2004.

Karamanis, Theomary. *The role of culture and political institutions in media policy: The case of TV privatization in Greece.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2003.

Logotheti, Anastasia. *From History to Storytelling: Confession and Redemption in the Novels of Graham Swift.* UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2005.