

AN [UNDER]GRADUATE
AMERICAN STUDIES
JOURNAL

[Inter]sections

ISSUE

04

March,
2009

A Monthly Publication of the American Studies Program at the University of Bucharest

"[...] If a man can pipe or sing, so as to wrap the imprisoned soul in an elysium; or can paint a landscape, and convey into souls and ochres all the enchantments of Spring or Autumn; or can liberate and intoxicate all people who hear him with delicious songs and verses; it is certain that the secret cannot be kept; the first witness tells it to a second, and men go by fives and tens and fifties to his doors." -

Ralph Waldo Emerson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. <u>A Word from the EDITOR-IN-CHIEF</u> 2 by Mihaela Precup	8. <u>SOCIOLOGY / ANTHROPOLOGY</u> 30 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone's Talking About Mormons: A Double Review by Alexandra Vasile
2. <u>OPINION</u> 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life, etc. by Ema Dumitriu	9. <u>VISUAL ARTS</u> 33 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life in Plastic Really is Fantastic: Diana & Holga by Alexandra Magearu• Who Watches "Watchmen"? by Bogdan Coman
3. <u>HISTORY AND POLITICS</u> 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The (Mis)Education of Abbie Hoffman by Marius Bogdan Tudor	10. <u>CREATIVE WRITING</u> 39 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Return by Adriana Boagiu• Path to Necropoli by Ioan Lucian Zamfirescu• Intruding by Zoey Schmurz• I Could Almost Laugh by Eleanor Heaney
4. <u>FILM</u> 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shotgun Reviews by Andrei Răuțu• "The Road Not Taken": Dead Ends and Elusive Dreams by Laura E. Savu	11. <u>AMERICAN STUDIES ABROAD</u> 41 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Conversation with Olivia Bădoi by Silvia Filip
5. <u>LITERATURE</u> 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shotgun Review of <i>Lord of Light</i> by Bogdan Coman• The American Dream Soured and the Power of Language in David Mamet's Plays by Maria Pîtea• Fractals in the House (of Usher) by Adrian Haidu	12. <u>EDUCATION</u> 44 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who Is In Charge? Educational Institutions and Children Affected by Workforce Migration by Alexandra Vasile
6. <u>MUSIC</u> 23 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18th century American Music. The Yankee Doodle by Flavia Cioceanu• The Beat Generation and Psychedelic Rock by Diana Mihai	13. <u>AMERICAN LIFE IN BUCHAREST</u> 47 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emily Darrell – An American Fulbrighter in Bucharest by Andra Dicu
7. <u>POPULAR CULTURE</u> 27 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Carrot in <i>Casablanca</i> by Ilinca Diaconu	

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

by *Mihaela Precup*

Welcome to the March opening of the Spouter Inn! We have made some changes around here, and we dare to presume Melville would be downright tickled. To begin with, we kicked Ishmael and Queequeg out of the main room and gave it to Humphrey Bogart and Bugs Bunny instead.

But that's not our Inn's most unusual marriage of true minds: in the **Opinion** chamber, Ema Dumitriu, the quirkiest lodger of us all, has an involved dialogue with a number of ghosts; in the **History & Politics** conference room Marius-Bogdan Tudor is in heated conversation with Abbie Hoffman; in the overcrowded **Film** projection room, Andrei Răuțu talks to a Few brilliant directors from the Balkans,

while Laura Savu is having a hard time with the unruly couple down on *Revolutionary Road*; in the **Literary** bay window SciFi author Roger Zelazny and playwright David Mamet are both fast asleep, having exhausted the few topics of conversation, while Edgar Allen Poe is drawing fractals on the walls; in the **Musical** hall, the Yankee Doodle has a little improv session with Simon and Garfunkel; in the **Sociology** lounge Alexandra Vasile expertly negotiates with two groups of Mormons, and the **Visual Culture** observatory finally introduces more plastic, with Diana and Holga vying for attention with *Watchmen*. For advice on Fulbright or Romanian Government **scholarships**, pop your head inside the the downstairs bar, where, exhausted from all the paperwork

and culture shock, Olivia Badoi and Emily Darrell are chilling out.

Although there are no mints on these pillows, we do hope you'll join in the conversation. And should you deem our makeover of the Spouter Inn at all eccentric, just remember that it's better to sleep with a sober cartoon than a drunken author.



Opinion

Life, etc.

by *Ema Dumitriu*

I was going through an existentialist phase, the Sartrean type to be precise, experiencing the *angst*, the *despair*, the *abandonment*, you know, proceeding to hell in a handbasket to such an extent that I thought I was entitled to coin my own idioms (*la femme révoltée* thinggie).

My head was filled with unanswerable questions, my heart was throbbing with envy towards my Guinea pig, which lay in its terrarium, gloating at my elephantine freedom...I was miserable, sorry sight kind of miserable!

I know what you're thinking, my dear reader: "Hell, it's about time she came up with a miraculous solution to all her sorrows! She always does that, she's more twisted than O.Henry!" (to be noted that the use of "hell" belongs to the reader, thus the term does not represent a misdemeanor to the public eye).

I hate to disappoint you, reader, since you probably think of me as the Oracle at Delphi, the one who possesses all the knowledge of the world, including the existentialist sort. No, no! It's all Greek to me!

However, I know this girl - let's call her Martha - who strikes me as being incredibly sagacious, not to mention

scrupulously honest. She's a wise gal, this one! Her story about how she went from Existentialism to Idealism in only one night reaches such a high degree of germination that all the other problems become irrelevant. So here is our Martha, breaking her existentialist eggshell: mad foam-at-the-mouth with the world, blind as a bat (Existentialism can do that to you), she loses her head (an oh so important element for this philosophy!) and goes out to get a breath of fresh air at 4 o'clock in the morning. In the park, "black lake, black boat, two black, cut-paper people." And then she sees Him: seraphic, mercurial, He was the man doing Yoga on the leaves of grass...

This is the point when the story ends, although quite predictable, with a "and they lived happily ever after."

You are disappointed, aren't you? Well, Martha was initially disappointed also, because the one whom she had expected her entire life chose to approach her with a bland and nondescript: "Give me your wallet!" But to her lover's lack of originality, she responded with warmth and tenderness. Think of your life as your long-expected significant other with a timid behavior, dear reader! Stop maltreating it, and, most importantly, stop having opinions about it! May peace be with you!



**The Jewish Prophetic
Tradition and Civil
Disobedience.
The (Mis)education of Abbie
Hoffman**

by *Marius-Bogdan Tudor*

It's a pity so few people remember the sixties... Not because they happened a long time ago, it's just that everyone was high. Luckily historians snapped out of it sooner than the rest and so today, we young radicals can give our parents and our teachers something to really talk about over coffee and cigarettes. "Be realistic," you say? I'm sorry, mom, there's no such thing as "reality." "Obey the rules. Color within the lines, it's the standard. Work for this corporation, they have all these benefits." Because the sixties happened, I can just say "No, thanks, I'd rather go 'steal' Abbie's book and try to lift the Pentagon up in the air."

Abbie Hoffman chose to color outside the lines. He taught us how to live outside the establishment's confined social space in his most acclaimed work, *Steal This Book*. He mocked authority for its brutal and oppressive behavior in his fringe acts, where he would change dozens of clothes to emphasize the possibilities for change. He carried out the Jewish prophetic tradition by "afflicting the comfortable and

comforting the afflicted." His life is one of the most interesting works of fiction ever written and its plot began to be developed at Brandeis University.

In 1955, Brandeis was seven years old and free. It had managed to dodge the McCarthyist deluge due to its image of "Jewish" university (McCarthy wanted to avoid accusations of Anti-Semitism and so targeted his search for "un-American activities" at Harvard and MIT, two of the bigger Ivy League fish). Thus, Brandeis had attracted an academic staff that would have probably been blacklisted at other universities in the fifties. There were literary critic Irving Howe, a veteran of the Old Left; Frank Manuel, who had fought in the Spanish Civil War alongside the communist Abraham Lincoln Brigade and who taught Abbie's freshman History of Ideas course; Leo Bronstein, Marxist sociologist and nephew of Leon Trotsky; and Herbert Marcuse, a Marxist German philosopher, author of the radical book *One-Dimensional Man*, who had immigrated to the USA. And that's only to name a few...

Abbie had learned in school that ideas were dogmatic; they were to be accepted, not challenged. At Brandeis he was stunned to find that his natural tendency towards questioning ideas had intellectual sanction. It was like a revelation that he wasn't just a troubled kid, like he had been told before. Under the influence of the chairman of the psychology department, none other than Abraham Maslow, and

against his father's wish, Abbie chose the psychology major.

In one of his first classes, Maslow told his students that it would be all right to use words like *fuck* in his course. The point was that language in itself could not be vulgar or obscene; it was the listener's subjectivity that made it so. In a time when words like *hell* or *damn* were forbidden on radio and television and the *f* word couldn't even be printed in novels, this was revolutionary stuff. But what attracted Abbie to Maslow was not only his theory on language. Even more appealing was his belief that "social rebellion was not necessarily a manifestation of maladjustment, and that conformity did not necessarily represent healthy or moral behavior." (Jezer 22) Maslow taught that when the status-quo repressed an individual's need for self-expression, acts of rebellion might come as a psychological necessity. The reluctance to conform became, thus, a sign of mental health, not a symptom of neurotic behavior.

Abbie was thrilled. He could now use the authority of his Brandeis professor in the constant squabbles with his father. "You think the whole world's wrong and you're right?" would demand John Hoffman of Abbie. Because of Maslow's teachings, Abbie felt confident to reply "That's **exactly** what I think!" He even honors Abe Maslow in his autobiography, *Soon to Be a Major Motion Picture*:

Most of all, I loved Professor Abe Maslow. There was something about his humanistic psychology (considered radical at the time) that I found exhilarating amidst the general pessimism that pervaded Western thought. A hundred years of examining the dark side of human experience, chiefly because of the influence of Darwin and Freud, would be set in perspective by Maslow's insights regarding healthy motivation... Maslovian theory laid a solid foundation for launching the optimism of the sixties. Existential, altruistic and up-beat, his teachings became my personal code. (qtd. in Jezer 23)

Maslow's approach to psychology was the very opposite of Freud's. In *Motivation and Personality*, a collection of writings Abbie used as a text at Brandeis, Maslow claimed that psychology focused too much on the "darker" aspects of human personality – on "man's shortcomings, his illnesses, his sins" – while ignoring "his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations... his psychological height." Maslow proposed to study the characteristics of psychologically healthy people, hoping to uncover the innate human qualities that "made the best people tick."

In his theory of human motivation, Maslow taught that humans have a hierarchy of needs. After the basic physiological needs like hunger or thirst are met, there comes the need for survival (having an income, a place to stay, etc.), followed by the need for love or belongingness and then the need for self-

esteem. Now for those who fulfill the need for self-esteem, there appears an additional need, that of self-actualization. Maslow described this need as referring to "man's desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything one is capable of becoming." (Maslow 178)

One of the traits that Maslow associated with self-actualized individuals was altruism. Abbie was particularly fond of this idea when he became active in the civil rights movement. "Until Maslow, you challenged legal segregation because you hated your father or wanted to sleep with your mother. You were deprived in early childhood and were fighting to overcome it," Abbie said, explaining to an interviewer the Freudian position on individuals who promoted unconventional views. However, "Maslow taught that you have a need to do good," Abbie continued. Maslow's hierarchy of needs resembled a moral ladder which motivated you to the point where you could give unselfishly, not out of guilt, but from an inner need to be altruistic. Protesting against racial injustice was an example of healthy human behavior.

Jonah Raskin, one of Abbie's close friends during his years in hiding and a radical professor of British and American literature, paints a unique picture of Abbie:

After his suicide in April 1989 [...] the *New Yorker* observed that ‘Abbie Hoffman led three lives... social activist, yippie anarchist and white-collar impostor.’ By my count he led more than half a dozen lives. Abbie was orphan, imp, outlaw, martyr, patriarch, prodigal son, lost soul and tragic hero. Moreover, he consciously tried to be Prometheus, Dionysus, Wandering Jew, Ulysses, Faust, Robin Hood, Pied Piper and Road Warrior. He was like a contemporary incarnation of Proteus, the god who was continually changing his form – who ought to have served as the deity of the sixties, an era of unprecedented transformation and metamorphosis. (Raskin xviii)

Works Cited:

Jezer, Marty. *Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel*. New York, Rutgers University Press, 1993.

Maslow, Abraham H, Richard J. Lowry. *Dominance, Self-esteem, Self-actualization*. ReinventingYourself.com, 1973.

Raskin, Jonah. *For the hell of it – The Life and Times of Abbie Hoffman*. Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998.

“Steal This Movie!,” dir. Robert Greenwald. Cast: Vincent D’Onofrio, Janeane Garofalo, Kevin Pollack.



Change, transformation... words that in time have become devoid of content and are now used as mere speech ornaments meant to create the illusion that the vicious status-quo is actually not being consolidated under our very eyes. It’s easy to find the teachings that shaped the social conscience of men like Abbie Hoffman, Tom Hayden, Jerry Rubin or Malcolm X. But we’ve been media-tranquilized and corporatized into thinking that they’re just not worth it anymore. Prisoners of office cubicles, students exited communism as the most outspoken revolutionary force and entered capitalism as bland yuppies. “Education must be subversive,” Abbie said, and it makes sense. Learn to question; to doubt; to criticize. Afflict the comfortable. Live for something or die for nothing.

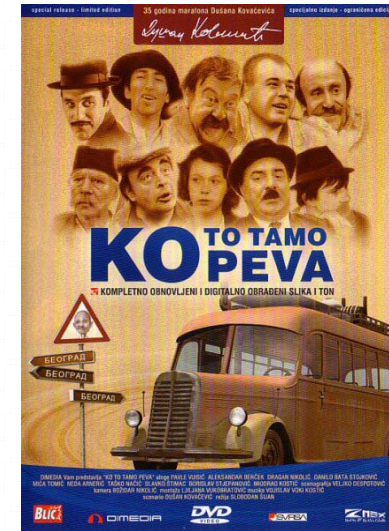
F i l m

Shotgun Reviews

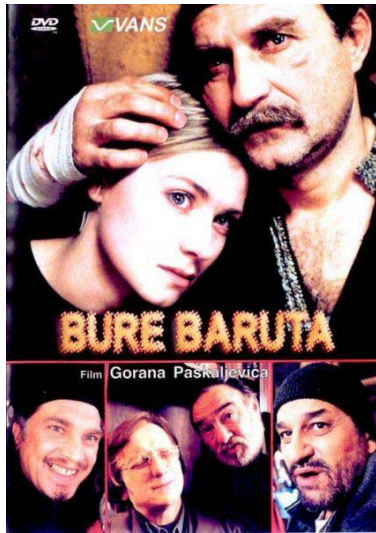
by **Andrei Răuțu**

With all the fuss about the Oscars and the release of *Watchmen*, I propose an alternative cinema. If you think of the films you watch, you quickly realize that they mostly come from Western countries. Let's see what the East has to offer.

A wonderful dark comedy with a sad touch. The film is a road trip; a bus takes passengers for Belgrade, and this gives the director the perfect chance to develop the relationships between the characters. The characters vary from a local Don Juan, a very lewd character who only cares about his image to a recent married couple with the naiveties of youth, and two gypsies. As the story unfolds the film becomes a close look at society and its prejudices from economic to racial ones. The gypsies sing and explain each important scene which gives the film a natural authentic rhythm.

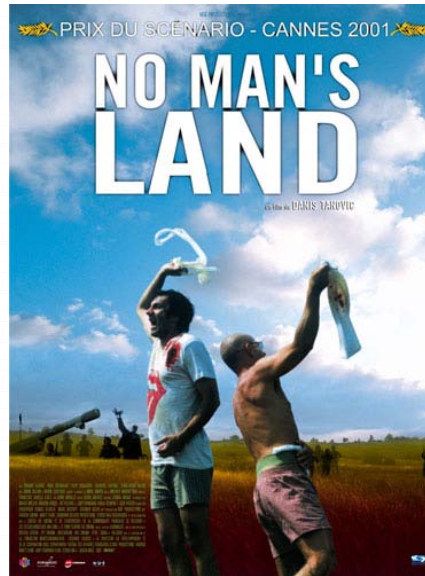


Ko to tamo peva (*Who sings over there?*), 1980
D. Slobodan Sijan



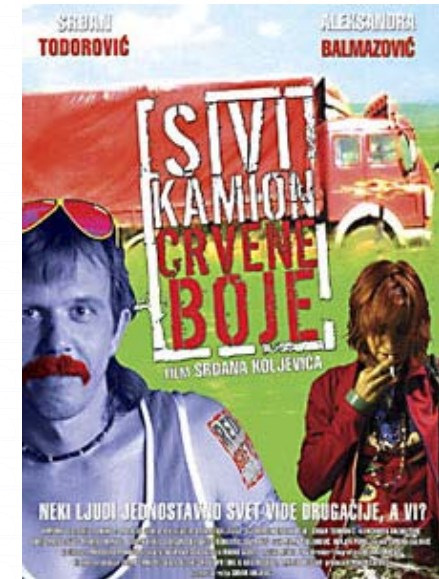
Bure baruta (*Cabaret Balkan*),
1998
D. Goran Paskaljevic

With almost the same cast as Kusturica's *Underground*, the film follows how 20 people's lives intertwine in one night, the night before NATO's intervention in Kosovo. Paskaljević's darkest film tells how dark human nature really is; almost every meeting between the characters results in a murder. But the film doesn't make use of unnecessary violence like so many of the films today do. Set between the theatre where the cabaret takes place and the harsh real life outside, it becomes a bleak but nonetheless powerful description of life in critical situations.



Nacija zemlja (*No Man's Land*),
2001
D. Danis Tanovic

The fact that it was nominated for an Oscar doesn't say anything. The movie in itself is a great metaphor. During the Bosnian War, two men - one from the Serbian side and one from the Bosnian side - are caught on neutral ground. The beauty of the film resides in the intelligent and quirky humor. They talk about the reasons for the Civil War and whose fault it is. In this context, there is also a subtle irony targeted at the UN troops wanting to help and a strong criticism of how the Americans cover up what they can't handle, which also emphasizes cultural differences. A wonderful film.



Sivi kamion crvene boje (*Red Colored Grey Truck*), 2004
D. Srdjan Koljevic

The film tells the story of color-blind peasant driver Ratko (Srdjan Todorovic) who loves stealing trucks. After just being released from prison, he steals another truck, and on the way he encounters a city girl, Suzana (Aleksandra Balmazovic), who is completely different from him. The day is the last day of peace in Yugoslavia before the Civil War. Ratko's being color-blind is a metaphor for those who see things differently. Against all odds, on their fantastic journey the two fall in love.



“THE ROAD NOT TAKEN”: DEAD ENDS AND ELUSIVE DREAMS

by **Laura E. Savu**

Leonardo DiCaprio Kate Winslet



become nightmares, and whose desperation, quiet as it may be, cries out its stark and grim message to us. Moreover, in each movie one of the spouses, who feels a stranger in his/her own home, seeks to reinvent herself or himself as a sort of emotional radical, only to find that such a reinvention of self is either impossible (due to a social climate of racist oppression and/or sexual repression) or has devastating consequences for those involved.

In *Revolutionary Road*, the more recent movie directed by Sam Mendes and based on the eponymous novel by Richard Yates, it is both partners that share not only the initial existentialist urge to live life authentically, to *feel* life at its highest intensity, but also the subsequent guilt over having betrayed their best selves and settled for the mundane and mediocre. From the moment that Frank (Leonardo DiCaprio) and April (Kate Winslet) first lay eyes on each other at a party, they delude themselves into thinking that they are different from the run-of-the-mill people around them and that their love for each other will endure, or “go on,” as Celine Dion’s famous song has it. But it soon turns out that the star-crossed lovers in *Titanic* can barely stay afloat *after* their marriage, as if in tying the knot, they have also tied themselves to the very things that are slowly but surely pulling them down and rendering them ordinary, all-too-ordinary. Theirs is a tortured relationship, fueled by

pipe dreams and riddled with the sense of missed opportunities, of possibilities cut short by choices they made in the past. April Wheeler is a creative person (a would-be actress) hemmed in by the daily routine of child-rearing and house-keeping—by the “feminine mystique,” as Betty Friedan defined it around that time. Her restlessness is best explained by a statement that poetess Anne Sexton once made in an interview: “one can’t build little white picket fences to keep nightmares out.” Sexton went on to say that, “[t]he surface cracked when I was about twenty-eight. I had a psychotic breakdown and tried to kill myself” (qtd. in Heilbrun 70). Love, she added, was not enough to keep “demons” at bay, but exploring her “creative depths” helped her find her authentic self.

To be sure, neither April nor Frank seem to know exactly what they want, and their marriage rests on a shaky foundation. We sense that Frank, too, is dissatisfied with the “hopeless emptiness” that plagues his life, an emptiness which neither his job at Knox Business Machines nor his casual, sexual affair with a secretary can possibly fill. Both April and Frank undergo a personal crisis that awakens them from the American dream of comfort and prosperity to the nightmare of a stifling, death-within-life existence. But from this painful recognition to a resolute step towards change is a long way, or road. The irony of the title—the name of the street upon

What do highly-acclaimed movies like *The Swimmer*, *American Beauty*, *Far From Heaven* and *The Hours* have in common? One might say that they all bring to the surface, more or less boldly, the undercurrent of anxiety and despair running through the mainstream of mid-century, or in the case of Sam Mendes’ *American Beauty*, end-of-the-century, American suburbia. Each movie features a married couple whose picture perfect life turns blurry and then dark, whose dreams

which the couple lives—is then unmistakable. A close and perceptive observer of the complex social and psychological realities of postwar America, Yates explained that his book's title was meant

more as an indictment of American life in the 1950s. Because during the Fifties there was a general lust for conformity all over this country, by no means only in the suburbs — a kind of blind, desperate clinging to safety and security at any price, as exemplified politically in the Eisenhower administration and the Joe McCarthy witch-hunts. Anyway, a great many Americans were deeply disturbed by all that — felt it to be an outright betrayal of our best and bravest revolutionary spirit — and that was the spirit I tried to embody in the character of April Wheeler. I meant the title to suggest that the revolutionary road of 1776 had come to something very much like a dead end in the Fifties.

It is April, the embodiment of energy, sensuality, and vitality in the novel, who comes up with a life-saving plan to which Frank feels immediately drawn: they will move to Paris, the symbol of bohemian freedom, where she will work as a secretary while he figures out what to do with his life. Together, she says, they will once again “live life as *if* it matters.” “As if” is key here, implying that they may only be chasing a ghost, or a figment of their imagination, that the freewheeling self the Wheelers glimpsed in their youth will always elude them. The phrase also points to the finitude, insubstantiality and ultimate

meaninglessness of human life, a deeply troubling realization that clouded the intellectual climate in Paris at the time, as shown by the writings of existentialist philosophers such as Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. On the other side of the Atlantic, it was the Beatniks, of course, who, like the existentialists, tried to maintain the significance—and sanctity—of the individual personality in a world devoid of spiritual values. They led what Paul O'Neil called “The Only Rebellion Around” (*Life*, November 30, 1959), seeking an alternate life-style that flew in the face of the overwhelming pressures of conformity, competition and respectability. Read in this context, *Revolutionary Road* emerges as an ironic counterpart to the Beats' cult favorite, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), which chronicles and at the same time celebrates the liberating journey out of the mechanized world into one's spontaneous nature.

The Wheelers' daring plan collapses when April announces that she is pregnant with their third child and when Frank, who meanwhile has been promoted at work, wonders aloud if he can actually go along with her unrealistic plan. As his initial enthusiasm start petering out, April's desperation erupts into violent outbursts, much like those between George and Martha in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* But whereas the vicious games played by George and Martha end

up catalyzing their relationship and bringing them closer together, the Wheelers' emotionally draining fights pull them further and further apart. The film traces the gradual movement away from closeness (the day-to-day life the married couple share in their cozy house) each partner's awareness of the other as “other,” or different from the idealized image one had of the other. In a last-ditch attempt to escape conformity, including the legal system that prohibited abortion, April tries to abort their child herself, which proves fatal. We last see her looking out the window towards the road that has only been a dead-end for her from the beginning. Lacking “real guts” to hit the road on his own, as it were, Frank is thrown back into suburban rut, with its petty world of “office machines,” himself a mere cog in the machinery of the corporate system he once despised. The paralysis of Frank's will is visually matched by the last shot we get of him, as he sits on a bench, against a background of loss and loneliness. Hence the film's powerful message: trapped in webs of their own making, suburbanites are warped and in the end undone not so much by external circumstances (social and domestic constraints of the period) as by their own weaknesses and inhibitions.

The screenplay (by Justin Haythe) may fail to capture the source text's rich interiority, but thanks to the director's subtle, indeed superb craftsmanship, the

movie succeeds as an adaptation of Yates's emotionally powerful novel by steering a middle course between social melodrama and psychological realism. This balance is achieved through camera work (by turns distant and involved), continuity editing (fine graphic matches), cinematography (colorful but not joyful visuals, suggestive of what is left unsaid), through scrupulous attention to period detail (time, place, and atmosphere), and last but not least through the naturalness of the actors' performance. One of the few exterior scenes that attempts to break up the confines of the characters' existence is also the most highly charged, being set in a forest near the Wheelers' house. Accompanying the couple on a stroll in the forest is John (Michael Shannon), the schizophrenic son of the couple's real estate agent (Kathy Bates). At one point, the camera shows John taking a step back from the hand-holding couple as he voices the story's most poignant insight: "Plenty of people are on the emptiness, but it takes real guts to see the hopelessness." John's merciless, slightly mocking, observation punctures the Wheelers' idealism and self-confidence, hinting at the futility of their flight from reality and reverberating throughout the rest of the movie. Moreover, the irony of the fact that it takes a lunatic to see things for what they truly are suggests that sanity may only be a matter of impersonation, of staying "in character" for the sake of appearances. Perhaps that is

why April, who has already failed as an actress, cannot keep her act up in real life either. Not for long, anyway, for the camera allows us to experience the wide range of emotions that pass across her face (or rather Kate Winslet's) without our being conscious of any effort on her part. Equally telling are the shots that get past DiCaprio's cool exterior to reveal how palpably torn he is over April's decision to leave and start fresh.

At times, the camera foregrounds the straight lines of roads, buildings, and interiors which are "objective correlatives" for the characters' structured lives, and the lighting solidifies the material reality in which the Wheelers are trapped. At other times, the camera seems to adopt the perspective of the house or of the road in front of it, turning both into "characters" in their own right. Against a "revolutionary road" and a sanctuary of a healthy family life, the movie pits a "dead end" (the end of illusions) and a haunted house that lures its tenants—first the Wheelers and then the new couple that takes their place in the house on Revolutionary Road—with empty promises of a happy, meaningful life. Even those with a revolutionary streak, who once dared to dream, do not fare any better, for they ultimately come off as "ordinary, all-too-ordinary," the dust floating in the wake of their dreams. The story of their failed aspirations is to a great extent our story, as relevant now as it was then.

Works Cited:

DeWitt, Henry and Geoffrey Clark. "An Interview with Richard Yates." *Ploughshares: The Literary Journal at Emerson College*. Winter 1972. <http://www.pshares.org/issues/article.cfm?prmArticleID=128>

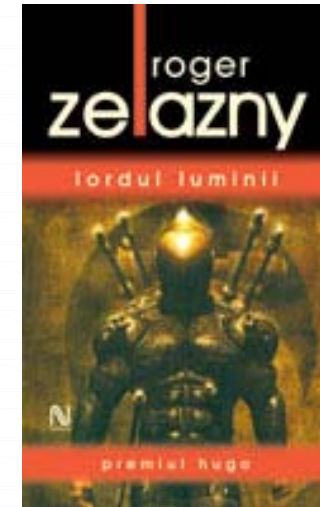
Heilbrun, Carolyn. G. *Writing a Woman's Life*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2002



Shotgun Reviews

This is the sturdy little corner where you can shoot books down...or up...give tips, plant mischievous little teases and leave readers dissatisfied but incensed.

We have been neglecting Science Fiction...and the theater, we are fully aware of that. Thus, in this issue, the SHOTGUN REVIEW section is happy to accommodate a host of exciting reviews covering specifically this territory. We are starting with an invitation to read some classic American Sci Fi by Bogdan Coman, whose PhD topic touches on similar matters, and then we are treated to a bunch of reviews of some of David Mamet's most prominent works, prefaced by an introductory note by Maria Pîtea, a young Mamet researcher and enthusiast who has just finished a graduation paper on the American playwright.



Lord of Light
by Roger Zelazny

A very good book that was published a while ago in our country (2006) is Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light* translated into Romanian as *Lordul Luminii*. If you can find it, I suggest reading the English version - the translation is a good one, but it doesn't really capture Zelazny's style in this novel, which is very beautiful and at times almost lyrical. Zelazny (1937-1995) is a science-fiction and fantasy writer who takes an almost perverse pleasure in mixing the two genres so much so that some of his work is very hard to categorize (the Amber cycle which brought him fame was first considered science fiction only to be sold as fantasy nowadays, although I guarantee that is not like any fantasy you ever read, you really should read that as well; on

second thought you should try reading anything by this author). *Lord of Light* makes no exception. A science fiction novel, it transcends the genre by using characters that bear the names of Hindu gods and using a mixed timeline. It's a must-read. I don't want to get into details because I might spoil the pleasure of potential readers, suffice it to say that you should definitely give it a try, you won't be disappointed (just make sure you read up on your Hindu mythology before, so that you have a basic understanding of the gods in question). The characters that are gods or godlike and the mix of mythology and technology is a trademark of Zelazny, whose novels, novellas and short stories use mythological elements and great storytelling. Other famous works of his are *This Immortal (And Call Me Conrad)*, the *Amber* cycle, *A Night in the Lonesome October*, *Eye of Cat* and many others. (Bogdan Coman)



The American Dream Soured and the Power of Language in David Mamet's Plays

by *Maria Pitea*

David Mamet is mostly noted for his extensive analysis of the contemporary theme of the destruction of the American Dream and its consequences on behavior and language in American society. His plays illustrate a post-industrial America, with emotionally empty characters that don't know how to interact with one another, constantly fearing those who might disturb their solitude. There is a continuous rat race at the heart of Mamet's plays, where achieving one's goal is always on someone else's back. The corruption of values and their effect on human relations are most relevant in three of Mamet's business plays - *American Buffalo*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *The House of Games* - that are very well-known to the public. Reading these plays, we will discover that "Mametian" language is actually poetic and words are used to manipulate and reflect greed, exploitation, moral regression, failed relationships.

Two of Mamet's tragedies - *Edmond and Oleanna* - emphasize the forms of subversion through language and gender roles in capitalist America. In these plays, there are also signs of racism, misogyny, and homophobia, as the issue of equality soured along with the American Dream.

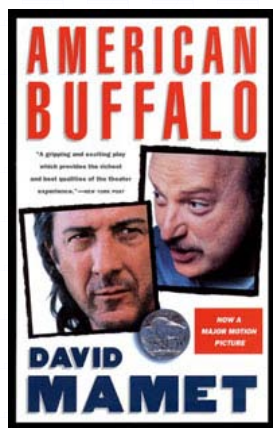
Mamet often introduces a key concept in his plays that underlines the meaning of the entire action. For example, in *House of Games*, Mamet introduces the concept of "tell" - the key word of the play. In *Glengarry Glen Ross*, it is the maxim "Always Be Closing." In *Oleanna*, it is the "term of art", used by John in the first scene. Essentially, *Oleanna* is about the use and abuse of terms of art, of the specialized language that serves as a pass into restrictive linguistic communities that offer power, money and privilege to their members.

David Mamet can thus be viewed as a political writer due to his portraits of alienated individuals, deeply antisocial, speaking a language which often lacks any human content, betraying the past and thus the future, implying the necessity to confront what is lost, without which effort recuperation is impossible.

A self-declared liberal, Mamet always comments in his interviews on the corruption of power, the hypocrisies and cynicism of those who become mere puppets in corporations who disavow their responsibility for their actions and thus offer a model of human disregard. In a utopian society such as America only the past and the future offer a true form. In-between is a provisional world in decline, reaching for perfection beyond immediate reach, existing between nostalgia and hope. Mamet's characters are always

with their eyes on the prize, thus they can only exist in the future.

Nietzsche insisted that we need lies in order to live...That lying is a necessity of life. Eugene O'Neill, an admirer of Nietzsche, was liable to interpret that as a defense of what he called "pipe dreams." It is what his characters so desperately cling to in *The Iceman Cometh*. For Mamet it is more than that. Language itself dwells in invention, ambiguities, and ambivalences. It speaks of a hidden yearning.



American Buffalo
by David Mamet
(Grove Press, 1994)

American Buffalo is a naturalist social drama in which the human being is a reflection of its environment. The play offers a portrait of a decaying America. The trust and unity that the nation once held dear ends up in paranoia, the security and hope

people once had turn into extreme violence. Business ethics decays into unscrupulous criminality and the play's setting, the junk shop full of old products, becomes a metaphor of ultimate decay and superseded characters. Here, Mamet makes clear allusions to Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Veblen argued that the Americans dwelled in abundance and exaggerated consumption of material goods, precipitating the financial collapse of the American economic system, which would destroy the working class. This urge to gain more wealth created, in Veblen's opinion, the Robber Barons, who ignored the fundamental ethical principles in pursuit of the American Dream. Their predatory nature was constantly fed by their wealth. Their social behavior was linked to that of wild beasts, an allusion to the Darwinian evolutionary theories of "survival of the fittest."

The language is exaggerated for theatrical purposes, thus deconstructing business discourse and its "recipes." The discourse becomes a kind of business poetry with suitable dialogues. It becomes self-consuming, it fails to create any connections between the characters, stressing the gap between word and meaning. The whole play is a linguistic farce; it is anti-action, anti-climatic. In the space between gesture and meaning there is the sense of loss and the irony of the situation. Actually, the language stresses the need for friendship, understanding, and acceptance. The whole

play is a fight through words, revealing the destruction of a society who lacks any sensation of the real and whose people have long been put aside as junk materials. On the other hand, language helps the characters find meaning and importance in their world.



House of Games
by David Mamet
(Grove Press, 1985)

House of Games was Mamet's 1987 directorial debut and represented an accurate study of control and seduction between two characters that are both involved in the action and detached observers at the same time: a gambler who is also a con artist, and a psychotherapist who is also an emerging guru in the book market. Like all of the characters in Mamet's plays, in the *House of Games*, the protagonists are scared of those who might

interfere in their solitariness. Those who believe in them will quickly be deceived. They understand human weaknesses and moral values, fear and need and exploit them in their advantage. In what men are concerned, there is a constant fear of women, a fear which is responsible for the immense amount of cruelty to women. Men typically form obsessive defense mechanisms to avoid confronting that fear and to avoid acknowledging their vulnerable, soft sides, occasionally refusing emotional involvement with women altogether, finding refuge in work, in the club or in the locker room.



Oleanna

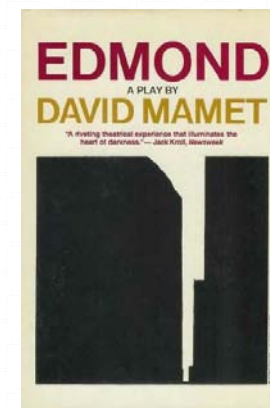
By David Mamet

(Dramatists Play Service Inc, 1998)

The title *Oleanna* offers an insight into the play's linguistic strategies. Oleanna was a 19th century agricultural utopian

community founded by the Norwegian violinist Ole Bull and his wife Anna - from whose names "Oleanna" was created. The community failed as the land they had bought was rocky and infertile, the settlers returning to Norway. As the play unfolds, Mamet applies the concept of utopia to the world of academia. The play shows the basic failures in American education and the long-term effects of the damage on young people. *Oleanna* is not a play on education. Mamet uses the educational system as a means of human interaction, the ironic desire to have both power and understanding in a human relationship. Mamet described his play as a tragedy about power. The tragedy comes from John and Carol's failure to meet as human beings at any point in the three conversations that make up the three acts of the play. Some critics have suggested that Carol's place in the drama could easily be taken by a male. But this, in my opinion, is a huge mistake, as in Western culture, male and female characters cannot become interchangeable. The language used on stage acquires significance through the gender of the speakers and through the filter of culturally determined gender roles. Thus, when the professor offers to spend extra time with Carol, telling her "I like you" and assuring her that "There's no one here but you and me," (19) it is obvious that these lines would signify a totally different thing when addressed to a male student. Also, the violence between a

man and a woman on stage amplifies the issue of gender roles and the language of physical violence. The violence of a man towards a woman always implies the threat of sexual violence.



Edmond

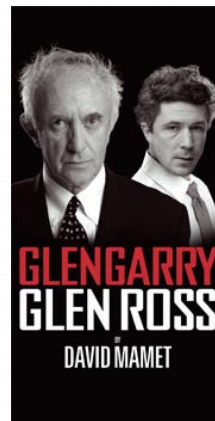
by David Mamet

(Grove Press, 1983)

Mamet described *Edmond* as a morality play about modern life. The moral of the play is that you can't win the game with life. And through this moral, *Edmond* can be introduced in the naturalist literary trend, where people are victims of their environment, with no escape from its web. *Edmond* is an expressionistic drama, implicitly dealing with strong emotions, typical characters, powerful contrasts, in a mechanized, soulless existences. The protagonist's sexual quest through New York's underworld can easily be compared to a modern Everyman's search for

enlightenment. The play is made up of a succession of short scenes, in which Edmond leaves his wife in order to look for the satisfaction he apparently cannot find at home. Adventuring into an odyssey through New York, he meets a number of interesting underworld figures - criminals, con artists, pimps, crooks, and prostitutes. He tries to overcome the banality of his daily life but cannot escape the abuses and the deceit of the capitalist society he is tortured by. His journey is determined by a confidence trickster - a fortune teller - whose words are as powerful as those of the salesmen in *Glengarry Glen Ross* or of those of the tricksters in *House of Games*. Edmond's dominant realities are money and sex. This can be clearly seen from the places he visits or through which he passes - a hotel, a subway station, a coffeehouse, the doorway of a church, the police station's interrogation room. He always seems to be passing by, searching for something he cannot put into words. The language in the play is that of self-deceit and the elaborated theories that the characters sometimes undermine are the fruit of paranoia. Like in most of Mamet's plays, there is the constant need for human contact. In *Edmond* in particular, it takes the shape of sexuality as a means of exchange. In the human contact, the protagonist has the obsessive need to dominate or at least not to be dominated. He is a man desiring power but feeling powerless and victimized. He makes

reckless attempts at gaining control of his life. Ironically, women are the ones who determine Edmond's fate in his quest for self-identity. They are both dominating and dominated by men. They are the presumed source, according to Edmond, of his unhappiness, yet also the means by which he seeks contentment and understanding. This particular type of women can be found in *Edmond* and they convert male triumph and authority into male tyranny and self-destruction, which provokes the violent desire to subvert. They are the ones that trigger the man's quest in the play; they are the cause and the victims of man's self-education.



Glengarry Glen Ross

by David Mamet
(Grove Press, 1994)



From the first act, the reader or the audience is faced with the portrait of a real estate company and with men who are

totally empty of any ethical concerns. They live in constant greed in a ruthless environment. They are gangsters who talk like gangsters. They are always open to lying, theft and corruption in order to obtain the sales that would keep them safe from being fired. The play illustrates the decay of trust. It talks about the degradation of a dream, manipulated and tailored to serve personal needs. The businessmen are very much like the characters in *American Buffalo* - the characters live a pragmatic life, deprived of any human warmth or affection, they constantly fear one another, and are eaten up by greed. As the stakes in the company rise, ethics fall dramatically. The obscene and aggressive language in the play hides in fact the characters' insecurity and anxiety, problems they cannot confront. They are solitary people who relate to each other in their dreams, but never in reality. They sense reality but hide from it all the time. They are actors that use other people's vulnerabilities in order to become influential. They sell worthless land to naïve buyers through an improvised drama, which is in fact their routine of persuasion. They are confidence tricksters that sell illusions but who, at the same time, were themselves created by these illusions.

Fractals in the House (of Usher)

by **Adrian Haidu**

In this article I will demonstrate that Poe's story "The Fall of the House of Usher" is not a *mise en abyme* of reading, but that it has a fractal nature, and that a fractal reading is required if we are to understand it. I will first give an introduction to fractal geometry and some of its uses, and I will then apply fractal tools to literary criticism and theory. Using these tools, I will analyze "Usher" and explain its narrative strategy.

1. Fractal geometry and its uses

Fractal geometry is opposed to the Euclidian geometry, which, to some extent, can be considered to be the geometry of *pure* forms, such as triangles and circles. It was noticed however that some forms are atypical, and these forms were considered to be geometric *monstrosities* (cf. Mandelbrot). Fractal geometry studies these forms and, basically, it intends to find the structure of the chaotic forms. Fractals can be found in geometry as well as in nature (some examples would be the form of the clouds, waves, trees, etc.).

Though some fractals were discovered as early as 1875-1925, it was only with the use of computers that fractal geometry managed to achieve its full potential. B. B. Mandelbrot, the father of this geometry, managed to discover what today is called the Mandelbrot set, with which he was able to generate fractals using the computer.

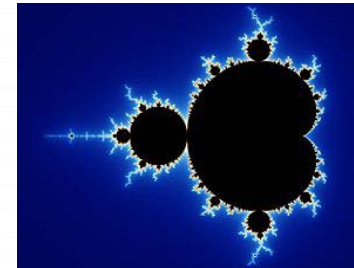


Fig. 1 – The Mandelbrot fractal

The main property of these fractals is the fact that, although they appear to be chaotic and to have no shape, their shape is indeed not chaotic. More than this, their shape is reiterated on different levels and lengths. If we are to zoom in on a fractal's form, we will discover the initial shape at some point. The same if we are to zoom out (for some fractals). In other words, the part holds the key to the whole. These two traits: the part which resembles the whole and the fact that the form is repeated (with some differences) are of most interest to us when trying to apply fractal geometry to literature.

When trying to link fractal geometry to the literary environment, we could consider that the Euclidian geometry is analogical to Aristotle's ideas of pure forms. Fractal geometry would then be similar with what happened in modern literature, where the idea of a pure type of literature was challenged, creating literary monsters, such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Agopian's *Tache de Catifea* and what happens nowadays in postmodern literature. The writer creates order out of chaos and makes use of most varied literary tools, disregarding Aristotle's warnings. Fractals have, indeed, been considered a postmodern product.

What can fractal geometry do? Mandelbrot's answer is rather allusive: "It will be argued momentarily that fractal geometry is best viewed as a geometric language, new as of 1975, which incorporates as *characters* several of the mathematical monsters of 1875-1925, and whose uses have now become so diverse, that it is possible to sort them out as poetry, strictly utilitarian prose and high prose."

2. Fractals in Literature

Early attempts of using fractals in literature have, in my opinion, failed. Some of these attempts are purely structuralist, such as the work of Ali Eftekhari, from the Electrochemical Research Center of Tehran, Iran – *Fractal Geometry of Literature: First Attempt to Shakespeare's Works* [consulted electronically at <http://arxiv.org/ftp/cs/papers/0408/0408041.pdf> on December 3, 2008], who argues that we can find fractals in literature by numbering the letters using Zipf's law. He thus comprises a statistical table including the letters' interval and incidence in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and states that the numbers have a certain degree of fractality. Eftekhari thus proposes a new method of analysing written materials. Other, more literary and un-structuralist ways of using fractals in literary analysis are also shown by Ion Manolescu in his work *Videologia, o teorie tehnoculturală a imaginii globale*. I will try to approach the fractal model by paying more attention to fractal geometry and trying to use fewer metaphors when converting geometry to literature. I will thus describe and define concepts such as *fractal reading*, *fractal narration*, *fractal description* and *fractal zoom*.

I will start by stating that certain texts require a *fractal reading* in order to fully reveal their identity. What is then a fractal reading and when can it be applied? A fractal reading is similar to the *close reading* method, in the sense that small portions of the text are extracted and analysed, and the conclusions can be extended to the whole text, as did Auerbach in his *Mimesis*. The difference lies in the way in which the portions of the text are chosen, as well as in the way in which we incorporate the details. When using a fractal reading, we pay attention to details, to repeated words or ideas, and we try to find the element which integrates them. The main advantage when using this method is that the things which seem unimportant or less important are integrated in the whole, thus, unlike the usual reading of texts, when using my method, we are more successful in remembering details and descriptions. Paying attention to everything that is repeated in a text is not a novelty; it is known that everything which is repeated is important.

A *fractal narration* is the narration which requires a fractal reading in order to be fully understood, or the one which uses fractals in descriptions (like Edgar Allan Poe does, as we will see), plot (as Alain Robbe-Grillet does in his *Les Gommages*), or narration (for example, each time more narrators narrate the same event differently, just as in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*).

F *Fractal descriptions* are easily found in "The Fall of the House of Usher," as we will see further on. Let us analyse, for example, the following description in Poe's "Ligeia:" "And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression—felt it approaching—yet not quite be mine—and so at length entirely depart! And (strange, oh strangest mystery of all!) I found, in the commonest objects of the universe, a circle of analogies to that expression." This description of Ligeia's eyes and the way in which they are perceived by the narrator remind us of a fractal. If, as a general fact, the eye shares some of the properties of a standard fractal (in the idea that it reflects the things which it sees at a smaller level, and the image reaches the brain where it is converted to impulses, thus rendering the image at a different level). It is not just the description of the eye, but also of the way in which the narrator describes how they are perceived by him: The full knowledge of their expression is approaching – yet it is not quite his, and so at length entirely departs. As if he were to mentally zoom in and out of their expression. The analogies found in order to analyze their expression are also awkward: "I recognized

it, let me repeat, sometimes in the survey of a rapidly-growing vine—in the contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis, a stream of running water. I have felt it in the ocean; in the falling of a meteor.” All of these can be interpreted as fractalic objects, especially the ocean.

The *fractal zoom* is perhaps the most interesting concept introduced by the method I am proposing. The fractalic zoom appears in literature in many ways, we need only to think about compared literary studies. When Borges rewrites Cervantes we can say that a fractalic zoom has been applied on Don Quixote, via Pierre Menard. The same in the case of the many rewritings of Don Juan. Another literary fractalic zoom refers to plot of the narration. How can we see the *monstrous* structure of Grillet’s *Les Gommés* until reading the last page of the novel? The ending brings a fractalic zoom because all of the other fragments in which the scene of the shooting are described had the only purpose of bringing forth the scene where the shooting actually succeeds, killing the victim – and the fractal is complete. We could explain *Les Gommés* using a scheme of the Sierpinski gasket:



This is how the novel looks at the beginning, when we read of the first killing attempt.



This is how the novel evolves, when the detective arrives and questions the commissary, who narrates the supposed killing.



The novel’s structure then gets more and more complicated, as more descriptions of the initial event emerge.



This is what the novel’s structure looks like in the end, when the detective closes the fractal by killing Dupont.

This whole novel is built on fractalic zooms and we could say that these zooms are its narrative propulsion system. Edgar Allan Poe also uses fractalic zooms in his descriptions. The fractal zoom is thus the process by which an element is revealed in another way at another level. By using the fractal tools described above, let us then analyze Poe’s story “The Fall of the House of Usher” and explain its ending, bearing in mind the fact that it can be interpreted as a fractalic narration.

3. Fractals in the house (of Usher)

The first fractal found in this story is the story’s title itself. The title is the most condensed narration which defines the story. For, indeed, “The Fall of the House of Usher” is the story itself. The narration which follows after the title is the first literary fractalic zoom applied by Poe, in the sense that it deepens the title and enlarges it, but that what follows after the title ends when the house of Usher falls, in other words, it ends where it begins, ending the fractalic zoom when the initial form reappears.

The second fractal found in this story is the way in which the narrator describes what he feels when viewing the house of Usher: “I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit.” The narrator cannot understand this feeling, which seems to be, for him, just what the geometrical monsters were for Euclidian geometry. The description of this sentiment reiterates during the narration, varying in length, depth and intensity; it is “a depression of the soul,” and then, operating another fractalic zoom, the sentiment appears as “the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil, (...) a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought,” and, ultimately, as “superstition,” and the fractal is complete.

Another fractal appears in the narration when the homogeneity between the Ushers and the house is explained. We note that one’s family tree could and will be considered a fractal, for we speak of the way in which a set of genes is distributed in time – the same genes, slightly modified in time appearing in different persons. Bearing this in mind, we can say that another fractalic zoom is applied when we read that: “It was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at **length**, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher”—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.” The home is then another zoom in (or rather out) applied to the fractal of the Usher family tree.

The next fractal we discover is the description of the house itself:

Quotation:	Narrative strategy:
<p>“I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building.”</p>	<p>Fractal zoom, performed because the aspect of the house could not have otherwise be perceived by the narrator.</p>
<p>“Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones.” (underlinings mine)</p>	<p>Notice the fractalic description and the fact that the described object seems to be a fractal itself. <i>A wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaption of parts</i> seems to me to be a literary description of a fractal.</p>

“Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.”	Another zoom in and fractalic description. We should remember that the zigzag direction which crosses the whole building and is lost in the tarn will appear at the end of the story too.
--	---

Until now, we have noticed that the title condenses the narration, the house and the main character of the story. In other words, all of these form a fractal, for if we were to zoom in on the title, we would see the whole narration, continuing to zoom in on the narration we would see Roderick, another zoom and we get Madeleine, and then Roderick’s family tree, zooming in we get the house and another zoom brings the tarn, which reflects it. This is the main fractal we are viewing.

Let us analyze other fractals. The description of Roderick’s face, for example:

Described element:	Negative feature:	Positive feature:
<i>Eye</i>	“large, liquid”	“luminous beyond comparison”
<i>Lips</i>	“somewhat thin and very pallid”	“but of a surpassingly beautiful curve”
<i>Nose</i>	“with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations”	“of a delicate Hebrew model”
<i>Chin</i>	“speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy”	“finely moulded”
<i>Hair</i>	“web-like”	“softness”
“These features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten.”		And this, I believe, is another literary definition of a fractal form.

If this is a different fractal, Roderick’s twin sister belongs to the main fractal. Being the last of the Ushers, if she is to die, surely the whole family will become extinct, thus deleting the main fractal created in this story. Another zoom in on the fractal brings forth the poem. The poem describes the story, operating on another level: it transforms the narrative into lyric.

The main fractal is complete when Madeleine dies, followed by the death of Roderick and the fall of the house of Usher into the tarn. This fall is explained by the previously stated fact that the three are inseparably linked; Madeleine is Roderick at another level, just as the house is, to some extent, Roderick and Madeleine (who include the whole genes of the Ushers), and just as the tarn is another zoom in on the house. The fall of one of these elements brings the fall of all of the others, just like in the case of the chaos theories.

We have thus explained why the house of Usher falls and the narrative strategies used by Poe. We may come at the conclusion that the main fractal – let us call it, the Usher set – acts as a narrative propulsion system for this narration. It begins, it develops and it ends the story. One could argue that my method is a purely structuralist one. If it is so, one only needs to perform a zoom out and integrate this essay in the cultural time and place where it was written, and speak of Poe's literary critic activity and his ideal of erasing the conventions regarding the Southern and Northern writers, or one could zoom out and integrate the study of this story in the studies regarding the other stories or poems written by Poe, and then speak about the Gothic elements he uses. That person, of course, is not me.

Works Cited:

Mandelbrot, B. B. "Fractal Geometry: what is it, and what does it do?" *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London. Series A, Mathematical and Physical Sciences*. 8 May 1989. December 11, 2008. <<http://journals.royalsociety.org>>

Poe, Edgar Allen. "Ligeia." December 11, 2008 <<http://d.scribd.com/docs/2bi3t7nyje6ufouqcqb0.pdf>>

Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Fall of the House of Usher." December 3, 2008 <<http://d.scribd.com/docs/1m77i7igl13p4q38900s.pdf>>



MUSIC

18th century American Music. The Yankee Doodle

by *Flavia Cioceanu*

After the beginnings of music in America have been cleared up, now it's time to see how it evolved in the 18th century, the revolutionary period. As we all know, this period in the history of the United States was very important, as the American Revolution took place in the second half of the decade. Consequently, the music was characteristic of this event and what we can hear from back then are tunes that reflect the spirit of the age: mainly patriotic songs, anthems and hymns, propaganda songs, odes and Yankee doodles. Maybe all these sound boring, but it's interesting to realize that at any time in history, people felt the need to express themselves through music, thus rendering their feelings and beliefs from their times, in what could later evolve into a great piece of music history.

The first part of the decade is similar to the beginnings, as the religious tradition continued to be expressed through collections of psalms or religious hymns, and also theoretical books about the art of singing began to appear. However, after 1750, new directions started to form and songs began to take the shape of their country's voice. In this way, worth to be remembered are songs such as: "My Days

Have Been So Wondrous Free" by Francis Hopkinson, which stands as the very first American Song; "The Liberty Song" by John Dickinson, a song which was written in consequence of the political strife caused by the Townshend Acts of 1767, and from which the Americans are left with the famous affirmation "By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall;" William Billings' "Thanksgiving Hymn," or the original Yankee Doodle "Father and I Went Down to Camp," whose lyrics are attributed to Edward Bangs.



A very interesting discussion can evolve on one of these songs, the Yankee Doodle, a song that was transformed from a patriotic mockery into a child's song (the melody was transformed into the cartoon song "Pop Goes the Weasel"). First, let's see what the word "Yankee" really means. It is a term which originated from the Dutch,

possibly deriving from the word “Jankees,” formed of “Jan” and “Kees,” meaning John Cheese. It is not clear why the word “Yankee” became a nickname for Americans (especially New Englanders), but it is certain that at its origins it was used with a mockery and contempt tone. However, after 1765, when the revolutionary period started to develop, Americans were proud to be called “Yankees.”

The “Yankee Doodle” is an unusual song; it is in fact a band tune which was first sung by the British soldiers in a mocking tone towards the colonial Americans, during the French and Indian War. In fact, the melody was known a few years before it became a patriotic tune and the main stanza of the lyrics also belong to an earlier period. Here’s how it goes like:

*Yankee Doodle went to town A-riding on a pony
Stuck a feather in his hat And called it macaroni.*

*Yankee Doodle, keep it up Yankee Doodle dandy
Mind the music and the step And with the girls be handy.*

*Father and I went down to camp
Along with Captain Gooding
And there we saw the men and boys
As thick as hasty pudding.*

*Yankee Doodle, keep it up Yankee Doodle dandy
Mind the music and the step And with the girls be handy*

*There was Captain Washington
Upon a slapping stallion
A-giving orders to his men I guess
there was a million.*

*Yankee Doodle, keep it up Yankee Doodle dandy
Mind the music and the step And with the girls be handy*

We can clearly observe the mockery and humorous tone that the lyrics bear towards the backwardness of Americans, but in spite of that, it was taken by them as their own and sung for a long while in a patriotic attitude. In case you’re wondering about the macaroni in the song, it’s not the Italian food, it’s the name of a fancy style of clothing worn in that period by the English. This is a way of criticizing the fact that the Americans were trying to imitate European high culture and believe themselves to be fashionable. Also, the verses mention Captain Washington riding on a slapping stallion, in comparison with the pony of Yankee Doodle. The verse “and with the girls be handy” is a pun that refers to the questioning girls’ morality of those times.

This is only the most common version of the song, there are many other versions and parodies, including one of the Confederates aimed at the Southerners. In the field of popular culture, it very interesting to see how important this song was for children. From its original melody sprang out “Pop Goes the Weasel”, a famous children’s song, and also versions of Yankee Doodle appear in cartoons such as *Tom and Jerry*, *Daffy Duck*, *Barney and the Backyard Gang*, *The Alvin Show* and so on. If you can believe it, there is even a Bengali version of the song, which speaks about a cockatoo.

In conclusion, from what was said before, we can observe that musically speaking, the revolutionary period in America can be seen not only as a very important moment that decided the future of the country, but also as a funny clash between cultures and people.

References:

<http://www.americanmusicpreservation.com/SEAM.htm>

<http://www.ncgenweb.us/craven/yank.htm>
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/yankee.html>



The Beat Generation and Psychedelic Rock

by **Diana Mihai**

In an attempt to escape tension and feel secure, postwar America was struck by an upsetting desire for orderly living. But there were reactions to the mechanized attitudes of the 50s and at the basis of different countercultural movements was Beat literature. Their thinking shook up the order and helped form a new consciousness. The change was put into practice by young people. In the 1999 movie *The Source*, Michael McClure said that “everybody who had feelings or ideas of their own had their hair a bit too long or wanted to experience some states of mind, or to feel anything out-of-the-ordinary was a renegade.”

The writers of the Beat generation used different methods to separate themselves from the general attitude. In order to discover new feelings they used LSD and other such chemicals, among which marijuana was a soft one. As they couldn't see reason in dismissing them, the Beats and the ones who followed and supported their actions actually advocated for the legal use of psychedelic chemicals. Allen Ginsberg pleaded that if they wanted to discourage the use of LSD for altering the attitudes of the period, the government would have to encourage such changes in

the society so that nobody would want to use it (*The Source*). The fact is that they didn't need to ease up as the mainstream did, they were trying to find answers and to promote the idea of individuality.



The movement crossed over to Britain and it is believed that The Beatles were introduced to LSD sometime during 1964. Working on *Rubber Soul* in 1965 they began to lose some features of their early style and added substantial experimental notes. By means of this inspired changeover of styles they moved towards the psychedelic period of their work, whose peak was referred to as the composition of *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. One of the elements that helped this period of transition was considered to be the hallucination-inducing drug. In order to turn to a concrete example of the Beat influence on the British band, the attention can be aimed at the name which was changed from The Beetles, name inspired by Buddy Holly's the

Crickets, to The Beatles, after a Lennon's revision (Everett, Walter).



Beat literature was also the literary background of bands like The Doors, Simon and Garfunkel, The Byrds, The Grateful Dead. They worked with the poetry of the Beats and transformed it into songs which became renowned and to which mainly the young generation responded. Thus their influence expanded, and that smoothed the path to a wide youth social revolution. Lyrically, it is believed that rock became more sophisticated due to the cultural and social ideas of the bohemian generation. Simon and Garfunkel used the theme of a life that lacks spiritual or aesthetic qualities in “The Sound of Silence;” they described a world all dried out, where humanity was lost because of the absence of emotions and reactions. Besides, there is a constant refusal to acknowledge meaningful words

and as a consequence, a certain sound of despair of the individual who lives in such a world, could be noticed:

*People talking without speaking,
People hearing without listening,
People writing songs that voices never
shared.*

*No one dared disturb the sound of silence
"Fools!" said I, "you do not know
Silence like a cancer grows. ("The Sound
of Silence")*

The thinking of the Beats set the stage for the freewheeling cultural movement of the hippies. This movement turned into a social revolution that had as a central element the psychedelic experience. What sets it apart from the Beat generation, from an ideological standpoint, is the fact that it grew more political as they extended their concerns to race issues and on the marginalized cultures. In addition to this they focused on the anti-war protests of the war in Vietnam.

The Beat cultural and social ideas were applied by the musicians of the 60s who modeled rock music, expanded the style by including psychedelic features and developed lyrics which focused attention on social matters.

Works Cited:

The Source, Calliope Films, Inc., dir. Chuck Workman, 1999

Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians: The Quarry Men through Rubber Soul*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001



The Carrot in *Casablanca*

by *Ilinca Diaconu*

If one sets about comparing a famous film with its spoof, there are a few observations that are worth mentioning. First of all, even if a spoof retraces the story of the film and reproduces many of its elements, the former is usually opposed to the latter in its aim and tone. Specifically, while the film is often a portrayal of a dramatic story in which the characters' actions are driven by serious events and ideas, the spoof relies on a humorous and ironical reinterpretation of that film. However, (and that takes me to my second point), a spoof never takes a truly tragic film as its point of departure: although the range of films that could constitute sources for parodies is vast, it is very hard to imagine a spoof that is based on Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, for example; the moral considerations that surround the subject matter as well as the graphic nature of this film do not allow its being parodied. Finally, the creation of a spoof is motivated by the desire to expose flaws in the overall structure of the film; these include inconsistencies in the logical flow of the narrative, a romanticized, biased rendition of historical "truth", stereotypes (especially in the portrayal of different minorities), along with a general sentimental tone which is typical of some classic movies.

One film that incorporates all these elements is Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942). Thus, although based on a very serious chapter of human history, the dominance of the Nazi regime and its effects, this drama is nevertheless devoid of any overtly tragic dimension: while the freedom fighter Victor Laszlo is mentioned to have escaped a Nazi concentration camp, there is no explicit reference to the atrocities of the Nazis or of World War II itself. Moreover, notwithstanding its obvious qualities which have insured its critical recognition, as well as its undying popular appeal, the film is flawed by a note of sentimentality that is inherent in the strict binary oppositions which inform its narrative: although a complex figure, the only American character, Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart) is placed at once on the side of good, in which case he is starkly opposed by a German, Major Strasser (Conrad Veidt), a Frenchman, Captain Louis Renault and a Hungarian, Ugarte (Peter Lorre), and in a position of power, as the only character who actually determines the ending of the narrative (in an almost *Deus ex machina* sort of way), in which case he is opposed, among others, by a Norwegian, Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman), and a Czech, Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid). This convergence of two qualities in one character is significant as it not only attests to the film's underlying general concept that, no matter what the circumstances are, good prevails over evil, but as it also

expresses a political rhetoric: in a time when the United States were involved in World War II fighting against the Axis, *Casablanca* (through its main character, Rick Blaine) provided a reflection of American patriotism, positing the United States as the good power that would ultimately win, that would ultimately decide the ending of the war, while heroically defending the weak. Thus, as Aljean Harmetz states in his work *The Making of Casablanca: Bogart, Bergman, and World War II*,

There are better movies than *Casablanca*, but no other movie better demonstrates America's mythological vision of itself – tough on the outside and moral within, capable of sacrifice and romance without sacrificing the individualism that conquered a continent, sticking its neck out for everybody when circumstances demand heroism. (6)

Therefore, the binary oppositions good-evil and powerful-weak that are conveyed by this film are motivated by its rhetorical purpose in an age in which the United States defined itself as morally and militarily superior in relation to what were deemed, on one hand, a morally inferior Other, and on the other hand, a militarily weak Other.

Returning to the notion of parody, the spoof *Carrotblanca* is a Looney Tunes cartoon that deconstructs through humor and irony, the political rhetoric which is an

integral part of *Casablanca*. Thus, while retracing its general plot outline, *Carrotblanca* parodies the sentimental nature of Curtiz's film in a number of ways: legendary actors like Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman are replaced by Bugs Bunny and a cat suggestively named Kitty; the alcohol and cigars which give Rick Blaine his rough persona are replaced by carrot juice and carrots; instead of Captain Renault and Major Strasser, one finds a single character, Yosemite Sam, who has neither Renault's slyness nor Strasser's malice; Victor Laszlo's distinction is substituted by Sylvester's (now named Slazlo) loquaciousness and accompanying saliva. Moreover, the spoof reproduces elements of the film but in a comical manner: "Rick's Café Américain" becomes "Café au Lait Américain"; Rick's famous statement "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine" is changed into "Of all the juice joints in all the towns, in all the countries, in all the worlds, she picks this one", while his "I stick my neck out for nobody!" becomes Bugs Bunny's "I stick my cotton tail out for no one"; also, at the end of *Carrotblanca*, Rick's declaration of love "Here's looking at you, kid" is replaced by "Here's looking for you, Kit", followed by Bugs's search of Kitty under a parachute that has opened and fallen over them ("Kit? Oh, Kit?"). Perhaps the detail that is most significant in this spoof's deconstruction of the rhetoric embodied by *Casablanca* is Bugs Bunny's

line at the beginning of *Carrotblanca*, when, asked by Tweety to receive an important document because "[he'll] be helping a great man who, with this document, will make life wonderful in America", he replies "Big deal"; thus, instead of the patriotism implicit in the portrayal of *Casablanca*'s only American character, *Carrotblanca* provides a completely opposite attitude, which works to deconstruct the grand narrative of America's morality. Another deconstruction occurs with the binary opposition powerful-weak. Thus, the main character who is depicted as the most helpless in Curtiz's film, Ilsa Lund, is replaced by Kitty, who demonstrates great physical strength in rejecting an overly insistent Pepe Le Pew. Kitty's power also becomes evident in the image of Bugs Bunny's head turned into a lollipop on which the word "Sucker" is written, a sign of the effect Kitty's pleading has on him despite his apparent pride.

An important point that needs to be made in this analysis is that, besides the spoof's obvious purpose, that of making fun of *Casablanca* and, therefore, of deconstructing its political rhetoric, *Carrotblanca* also works to reinforce the film's popular appeal, as it is testament of *Casablanca*'s large following and influence in film history; in other words, the cartoon's very existence is in fact an advertisement for Curtiz's film. In this sense, the spoof takes for granted the viewer's intimate knowledge of *Casablanca*: in order for the

viewer to find the cartoon funny and to discover its meaning, he/she has to know that “Carrot” in the title replaces “Casa”, for example; that, in general, this Looney Tunes production is a humorous reinterpretation of *Casablanca*. Essentially, he/she must be aware of the fact that *Carrotblanca* is in fact a spoof and not just another Bugs Bunny cartoon. This implicit knowledge that the cartoon speculates is, of course, inextricably linked to *Casablanca*’s success, which, despite the film’s flaws, has continuously been affirmed during over sixty years since its release. As Umberto Eco explains,

Thus *Casablanca* is not just one film. It is many films, an anthology. [...] When all the archetypes burst in shamelessly, we reach Homeric depths. Two clichés make us laugh. A hundred clichés move us. For we sense dimly that the clichés are talking among themselves, and celebrating a reunion. (qtd. in “*Casablanca* (film)”)

Therefore, the numerous clichés present in *Casablanca* provide the film with its enduring fascination. By humorously reproducing them, by literally and metaphorically placing the carrot in *Casablanca*, *Carrotblanca* becomes an homage to a cinematic legend.

Works Cited:

Harmetz, Aljean. *The Making of Casablanca: Bogart, Bergman, and World War II*. New York: Hyperion, 2002

“Carrotblanca”. Youtube. Accessed on the 21st of March, 2009. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqYWowHujBE>>

“Casablanca (film)”. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Accessed on the 21st of March, 2009. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casablanca_%28film%29>

Casablanca. Michael Curtiz. Warner Bros. 1942

“Casablanca”. The Internet Movie Database. Accessed on the 21st of March. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034583/main_details>

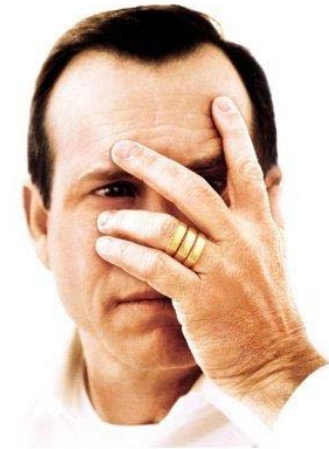


Everyone's Talking About Mormons: A Double Review

by *Alexandra Vasile*

Fundamentalist Mormons have become a widely discussed topic nowadays. Therefore, we thought it would only be fit to review some media products that deal with this subject, a movie series and a book. The reason why we have chosen to place them in the Sociology/Anthropology section is because they feature a more in-depth analysis of the subject matter than a regular review and have a common topic, Fundamentalist Mormons, that is of sociologic rather than popular culture interest.

BILL PAXTON JEANNE TRIPPLEHORN CHLOE SEVIGNY GINNIFER GOODWIN HARRY DEAN STANTON
BIG LOVE



Like all good things, *Big Love* gets better with time. As the episodes unfold, one thing that stays with its viewers is the recognition that even the most controversial of themes can become natural if looked at through a certain lens.

B*ig Love* is a contemporary drama about a practicing Fundamentalist Latter-day Saint, Bill Henrickson (played by Bill Paxton), who has escaped the grueling and tedious life of an FDLS compound and settled down with his three wives, Barb (Jeanne Tripplehorn), Nicki (Chloe Sevigny) and Margene (Ginnifer Goodwin) in a Salt Lake City suburb. A home improvement store owner, Bill needs to support all three of his wives (and children) and make sure that everyone is content – a task that

proves difficult most of the time, as the wives argue about money and responsibilities. Viewers immediately realize that being in a plural marriage may not be God's gift to man(kind), since Bill is clearly overwhelmed by the stress of juggling schedules, calming down jealous fits and bickering, all of which naturally arise in such a big family.

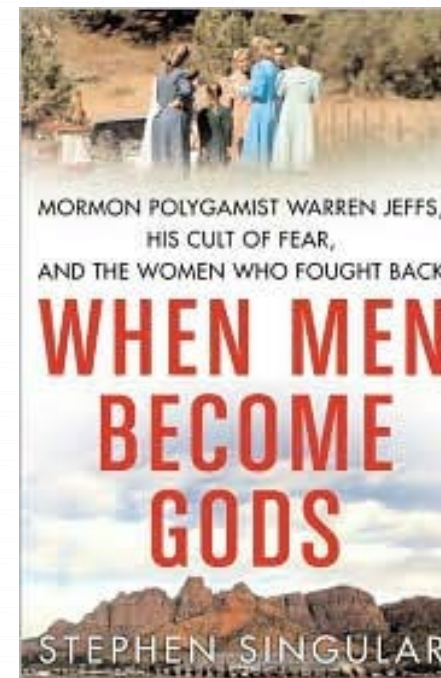
Up to this point, *Big Love* might sound like a run-of-the-mill comedy/drama with a religious influence. But after a couple of episodes, one gets the feeling that there is much more to the story, since not many series accurately portray such interesting living arrangements from a dramatic point of view. Intertwined with the hectic and fast-paced lifestyle of the Henricksons is also a darker, more sinister story, which presents the cultish aspects of Fundamentalist Mormons: Roman, the vengeful and ruthless leader of the compound wants to take control of Bill's business and – more importantly – of a large share of the company's profits. Fierce arguments, arson and poisoning attempts start to take place between the two, made all the more interesting by the fact that Bill's second wife, Nicki, is Roman's daughter. And she, just like her father, is very calculated.

Throughout the jealousy, noise, children and fighting, several questions related to morals must surely come to everyone's mind. But, because viewers cannot voice them directly, there are

characters who act as a public conscience: the rest of the Salt Lake City Mormons.

There is a clear distinction in *Big Love* between Fundamentalist and (regular) Mormons. The former live in compounds (that look very much like the real-life ones rules by the infamous Warren Jeffs) and look up to a living prophet (Roman, in this case) who has total control over their lives. They also practice the principle of plural marriage, which dictates that a man must have more than one wife. In contrast, the other Mormons are shown as being strongly against Fundamentalists and see plural marriage as a horrendous act that must be stopped.

So yes, *Big Love* has a big plot that requires a bit of getting used to. But after a while you will hopefully learn that, in fact, there is much to learn from it. Apart from getting to know a religion that is so controversial (even though many people nowadays do not know exactly why that is), viewers will also realize that the series approach the complex topic of polygamy with an open heart and an open mind: the movie neither condemns nor condones Bill and his wives. Instead of taking one position or the other, it tries to present a family (albeit a very unusual one) in such a way that their love for one another seems genuine and realistic.



When Men Become Gods presents readers with the darker and more oppressing aspects of the FDLS world. It is a story of hardship and violence, an account of the beginnings of the FDLS church and how its prophets (like Warren Jeffs) use their power to manipulate thousands of people into becoming faithful to the Fundamentalist preaching. The book begins with a very provocative and well thought-out statement: "Mormonism is a conservative religion with unconventional origins". At first, there was only the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), whose members practiced polygamy. But, as the United States outlawed polygamy, the leader of the Church also said that he

had had a revelation from God, who told him that members should not practice it anymore. A small number of followers, however, distrusted this revelation and did not wish to abandon that principle of plural marriage. They formed tight-knit communities and separated themselves from the rest of the LDS members by forming their own church, the FLDS church. Tucked away in the secluded desert areas of Colorado City, Arizona and Hildale, Utah, these communities began to follow the exact word of their leaders. And one of the most influential of these was Warren Jeffs, now famous after the 2008 raid on the Yearning for Zion ranch in Texas.

The book provides a page-turning account of the power that Jeffs has on the FLDS communities and what he did in order to gain more and more power. There are first-hand accounts of children being raped, teenage girls being forced into marriage with much older men and education being forbidden – all in the name of religion. Particularly interesting is the chapter devoted to explaining how Warren Jeffs managed to gain the trust of the communities in the beginning and make them susceptible to his demands. Jeffs learned the art of manipulation and use of power by studying the works of Hitler and Napoleon and trying to apply some of their most controversial principles to the FLDS Church. This led to the breaking up of families and the use of rewards for those who blindly obeyed Jeffs.

Reading *When Men Become Gods*, most people will probably find it surreal that so many individuals willingly let themselves be treated in such a way. But the biggest proof that all of these events are true is in a very chilling set of numbers. According to the book, at the height of his power, Jeffs had 180 wives and more than 250 children. However, one must keep in mind that for those who were already born in this system, escaping it was nearly impossible, first of all because Warren Jeffs was too controlling to allow any such incident and secondly, because none of the individuals know what life outside these compounds was like: most of them were born, lived and died there. *When Men Become Gods* presents all of these chilling aspects in a thoroughly-researched and captivating way, which makes it a must-read for anyone interested in religious cults and the power of manipulation.



Life in Plastic Really is Fantastic: Diana & Holga

by *Alexandra Magearu*

“Standard photographs are too sharp, too real, even super real. I feel the world isn’t that way, and you don’t see or remember it that way, at least I don’t.”

(Mark Sink)



Holding a Holga camera in your hands gives you quite the uncanny feeling. For one, it looks like a non-descript chunk of plastic, with the rudest features and an anything-but-beautiful design. Then, it feels so frail and whimsical in your hands that you instantly think about how it would be if you were to drop it – it would surely explode in millions of tiny plastic segments that will fly away in all directions, and that’s when anxiety takes hold of you. Getting over this first panicky moment, you finally see something worth photographing, you take out your Holga and push the button, and that’s when a feeling of wonder descends upon you: it seems as if nothing happened, the click felt superficial and the whole thing looks like a joke, a prank played on you by those who sold you the camera. Are you with me? Ok, perfect, *this is how it’s supposed to feel*. Holga and its older sister, Diana, are toy cameras for adults; they do not expect to be treated with great deference; they don’t impose on you or think too highly of themselves; they are not as oppressive as more sophisticated film cameras; they are unpretentious, laid-back, adorable. Obviously, they don’t ask to be taken too seriously, but they want to be loved. And few of those who get to know them resist the temptation.

First manufactured in Hong Kong, Diana (launched in the 60’s) and Holga (1982) were made as simple and as cheap as possible in order to be sold as mass-market products.

Sample photo: taken with Holga & Ilford 400 BW film



Copyright©2009 Alexandra Magearu

Holga, for example, is wonderfully minimal – it has only two aperture options – sunny (f/8.00) and cloudy (f/11.00), and two shutter-speed values, 1/100 and Bulb (the shutter stays open as long as you keep the button pressed). But the very cheapness of their material complicated the whole business. Their unreliable and frail plastic bodies allow light leakages which result in unusual light streaks on the film, while the plastic lenses distort the image through vignetting, blurry spots, dust and speckles, grain etc. Precisely because of the artistic flaws which could be easily obtained at a low cost, the cameras started to appeal to certain

avant-garde artists and movements and developed a cult following. Diana was used in Warhol's Factory, alongside the Polaroid, both of them being the embodiment of pop art in photography, of course. Holga won a prize for the prominent photojournalist David Burnett, who managed to capture a haunting image of Al Gore during his 2001 campaign.

The images captured with the ever lovely toy cameras must be real sources of abomination for traditional photographers. The wild burst of light in the middle of the photographs, which creates a weary halo around the subject matter, the dark and blurry margins, the excessive noise which seems to spread unstopably throughout the whole photograph, they all represent essentially what is worst in classical photography. But how could you resist the invitation to look at the world through a plastic lens? It is much more beautiful, surreal, ecstatic – a dream world.

On browsing through several photos taken with a Holga camera, my friend declared that this is how life is supposed to be. I love his remark because it perfectly describes that nostalgic feeling that sticks with you after looking at such photographs. And indeed, if the real world, with all its clear patterns and dull colors, isn't enough for us, why not stretch it? Why not take it further? Why not expand the limits of our perception? Who knows, maybe in the end, we will manage to pervade the fabric of the pictures and become part of them.

Photographers

Nancy Rexroth used a Diana camera for her project entitled IOWA, in which she put together several photos reminiscent of her childhood. One of the photos, in particular, is the most disturbing for me - her mother's legs photographed from the waist down and stretched in the grass as if pertaining to a dead body. There's something exquisitely surreal in the atmosphere captured in her photos.

Link:http://www.wirtzgallery.com/exhibitions/2000/exhibitions_2000_09/rexroth/exhibitions_nr_2000_09_images.html

Ted Orland (who, by the way, was Ansel Adam's student and assistant) experimented with Holga and managed to obtain, apart from beautiful Holga landscapes, hand colored images and panoramic shots that combine several frames.

Website: <http://www.tedorland.com>

Anne Arden McDonald has collected some amazing plastic camera photos in her portfolio. The Diana tones are softer and more obscure than usual. Her subjects float in dreamlike realms.

Website: <http://www.anneardenmcdonald.com/>

Jean-Cristophe Sartoris has a wide collection of Holga images, ranging from vividly colored beach-themed snapshots to distorted pictures of Parisian buildings in black and white and high contrast.

Website: <http://jcsartoris.com/>

Sylvie Sotgiu is about raging colors and beauty, courtesy of Holga. Her skies are amongst the most shocking ever recorded on film. One photo in particular drew my attention. It shows a remote place, perhaps a rooftop or a parking lot, under an amazingly blue sky. The image is vibrant.

Website:<http://ellipses.aminus3.com/>

Mark Sink was once part of Warhol's insane Factory. His love affair with Diana gave birth to a wide collection of famous faces, documented on film, as well as to a set of beautiful dark & blurry photos of NY. Warhol, Sink confesses on his website, was never really fond of toy cameras.

Website: <http://www.galleriesink.com/>

Other Useful Links

- <http://www.lomography.com/>

This is the official site of the Austrian producer of Holgas and the like. You can browse through a wide range of plastic cameras, from the Diana and Holga to the colorful Actionsampler. The prices are, of

course, much higher than in shops, but this is the main producer of toy cameras, after all.

- <http://www.toycamera.com/>

You can access a wide number of galleries of toy camera artists on this website. Some of the photographs are very beautiful indeed, some are weaker in intensity, but the site is certainly worth checking out.

- <http://filemagazine.com>

This site is dedicated to unexpected photographs. Apart from photos taken with plastic cameras, you can browse through all kinds of unusual images taken with conventional cameras, but which concentrate on bewildering subjects.



Who Watches “Watchmen”?

by Bogdan Coman



Watchmen is a graphic novel that the media obstinately called a comic when it was finally turned into a movie this year. What's the difference between a graphic novel and a comic, you might ask? Well, comics have generally been assimilated with superheroes and very long runs, whereas graphic novels have a limited number of issues, a complex stand-alone storyline that resembles that of a novel and don't have to deal with superheroes at all. Going back to *Watchmen*, it is a graphic novel that has superheroes in it, but they are just a plot tool. They are there just to make the story more poignant. After all, we are dealing with Alan Moore here,

who is a special kind of guy, as we'll soon see.

Just to recap for those who didn't see the film or read the comic, *Watchmen* is about an alternate 80's US, where Nixon is about to be 're-elected' for a fifth term as president, the nuclear tension between the US and the Soviet Union is stronger than ever and masked superheroes are real, but they also have been outlawed. Moore uses this background for a whodunit type of story, something he did before. But *Watchmen* is so much more than a detective story, it has so many layers that it was deemed unfilmable, not only by movie and comic experts everywhere (yes, there really is such a thing as a comic book expert) but by its author as well, who immediately declared that he isn't interested in the movie and will not go to see it. Of course, Alan Moore's problem with Hollywood is an older one. Moore is also the author of other quite famous graphic novels: *From Hell*, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, and *V For Vendetta* for example. When we consider the movie adaptations of these comics, which are considered basically masterpieces by the aforementioned critics and the large fanbases, we can easily see that Alan Moore has just cause to be upset at Hollywood.

From Hell is a daunting piece of over 500 pages, that uses the Jack the Ripper murders as the foundation for the description of Victorian England, all presented in black and white, with enough historical references to make your head spin. Hollywood took that and turned it into a classical detective story

and they also changed the ending, which really upset Moore, and rightly so. Then came *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, a brilliant comic which again took the Victorian era and a bunch of characters from various novels and put them together in another type of detective-story-that-turns-out-to-be-so-much-more, like *From Hell* and *Watchmen*. Well the movie adaptation destroyed that by changing the plot completely and adding two characters that weren't in the comic, namely Dorian Gray, and Tom Sawyer, of all people. Moore was so upset with this adaptation that he famously had his name removed from all movie adaptations that involved his work-which is why you won't see his name on anything *Watchmen* related-and refused to take any money that were entitled to him from the royalties of these movies, having that money split between the original artists that were involved in creating the comic in the first place, David Gibbons, for example, the guy who drew *Watchmen*. He also declared that movies will never be made from comics to which he solely owns the rights. You see, the problem with the other titles is, that while he wrote the comics as such, they were bought by various publishing houses that deal with comics, which meant that Alan Moore couldn't stop them from being made into movies as he might have wanted to in the wake of the *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* disaster.

Of course, then came *V For Vendetta* which managed to be quite a good movie and which the same fans who deplored the other adaptations actually considered better

than the comics in some respects. What *V For Vendetta* did differently was that while it took some liberties with the plot of the original source, it maintained the characters and the mood of the comic very well. Opinions still varied with regard to the success of the movie, but a general consensus seems to be that the movie is a good one and it does justice to the comic, which the previous movies did not.

Which brings us back to *Watchmen* and the question in the title. Who will watch, or already has, a movie adaptation of a comic that is so rich in material and subtext that it was deemed unfilmable, especially given the track record of adaptations based on Alan Moore comics—for those of you still keeping score, the board would now show a 2 against 1 in terms of unsuccessful adaptation versus good ones? Which side will *Watchmen* fall on? Fanboys were ecstatic when the movie was announced and even more so Zack Snyder was announced as director. Snyder became famous after he directed *300*, another comic-book adaptation that made a lot of money, more than anyone expected. But that not why fans were happy. They were happy because Snyder made a point of stating that he is an avid *Watchmen* fan and that he would strive to be as true to the comic as possible. They were even happier when the first clips appeared online and they were frame for frame exactly as the comic, and when stories about how Snyder managed to fight the studio on certain scenes that Warner wanted to take out of the movie and Snyder managed to keep. Then the first weekend came and *Watchmen*

opened big but not big enough. After the unexpected success of *Dark Knight* and the hype that *Watchmen* had managed to generate, everyone was kind of disappointed when *Watchmen* took in a little over 50 million \$, fewer than *300*, especially Warner that expected the money to really come rolling in, especially seeing how much *Dark Knight* made and when it dropped on the second weekend in second place most movie critics started to consider it a failure. As for the quality of the movie, reviews are mixed.

Fans generally liked the film, but still feel that too much has been left out. Seems that at over two hours Snyder was forced to still leave out a lot of material, among which the famous comic within the comic, *Tales of the Black Freighter* which apparently will be on the DVD along with the Director's Cut of the movie, which will span at over three hours, and a lot of characters which prompted fans to complain that the absence of certain characters took away the tension from the plot and prevented the audience from relating to what was happening on the screen. So in exchange of a real-life model of the Owl ship, with working switches, the Comedian's funeral and the scene on Mars, which Snyder fought to keep in the movie, he had to give up the now famous giant squid at the end (it actually isn't as ridiculous as it sounds, trust me, just read the comic if you don't believe me), the two cops who are trying to figure out just what the hell is going on and a lot of other secondary characters that are put there in the comic so that the reader can better understand this alternate

US in which the action takes place, and which don't appear in the movie.

People who hadn't read the comic considered the movie pretty much boring, because they were expecting a superhero movie, which meant a lot of action, and they got a two action scenes and an exaggerated use of slow motion (hint: the director is not called 'slo-mo Snyder' for nothing), because *Watchmen* is not so much a movie about superheroes, but a movie about an America in which superheroes happen to exist. Moore initially wanted to use more famous superheroes, like Superman and Batman, but DC (big comic company for those who don't know, in direct competition with Marvel) didn't give him permission to use them when he told them what he wanted to do, which forced him to invent new ones. Ironically Moore's darker *Watchmen*, as well as his *Batman: The Killing Joke* gave rise to Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again*, and the whole 'dark superheroes' trend now in fashion, which does exactly what Moore wanted to do initially, that is make superheroes morally ambiguous.

The main idea of *Watchmen* is that we have these superheroes that are actually ordinary people in costumes – they don't have any special powers, except for Dr. Manhattan, but more on him later – who act more like vigilantes than heroes, which is why they get outlawed in the first place. Of course, the U.S. seems to be on the course of becoming a totalitarian society in this comic, which doesn't help their cause, but

still. The heroes we see in the movie and in the comic, for that matter, are second-generation, with Nite Owl II and Silk Spectre the youngest, Rorschach, The Comedian, Ozymandias and Dr. Manhattan as the rest. The comic, and the movie again, begin with the murder of The Comedian, the only superhero who could still act legally as he was working with the government-do not miss the Woodward and Bernstein reference, let's not forget, Watergate never happened in this version of reality-and Rorschach's attempt to find the culprit as he wrongly believes that the killer must be after masked heroes, and his stumbling in a conspiracy. As mentioned before, the idea of the comic is that there's no one capable of keeping these superheroes in check, especially someone like Dr. Manhattan, who actually has superpowers. Dr. Manhattan is the only superhuman on the planet in *Watchmen*, and he works on the behalf of the US government in the beginning, but the problem with Dr. Manhattan is that he breaks the delicate balance between the US and the USSR, which triggers an increased fear of a nuclear holocaust and is the engine for the whole plot of the comic.

This was a pretty revolutionary idea in 1986 when the comic appeared, that superheroes needed to be watched and even feared, rather than depended on, but it subsequently became something implied with DC imposing it in its Justice League of America comics and JLU (Justice League Unlimited TV animated series), with characters quoting the *Quis custodiet ipsos*

*custodes?*¹ line, and Marvel using it for both X-Men and Spiderman series. Both these companies also borrowed the idea of the paranoid and even malevolent government that wants to control superheroes, and when that fails proceeds to locking them up or even exterminating them. So Moore's initial idea has now become the standard and gave rise to fears that we might never escape this trend of 'dark' heroes.

Going back to the title and the little play on words I did, the answer is that quite a lot of people watched *Watchmen*, but not as many as expected, mostly fools, er, sorry, fans. But no seriously, it is not a great movie but it is a good movie, especially if you're a fan of the comic, and if you're not you should try reading it, you might be surprised.



¹ Who will guard the guards themselves? (Juvenal)

Return

by *Adriana Boagiu*

My nostrils keep the memory of those
sweet grapes of childhood
Their aroma is redeeming for me at this
very moment,
It suffices me...it alleviates my pain...
I'm only protected by the shadow of the
infamous oak tree.

My inner self doesn't need the alluring elixir
of white love anymore
Immaculate doves pass unobserved by my
sickening spirit.
Blackness doesn't overwhelm me any
longer either.

I rise anew and I am made of thin air.
My head is filled with transparent visions.
I cannot see through life and death...
I lose myself with every passing day.

I seek mortal benefits,
I become one with the mundane,
What a most terrible thought!



Path to Necropoli

by *Ioan Lucian Zamfirescu*

The bouquets of time ceased to cover
The bodies of those who, one another
Enchained in pleasure, reached the fruit
That milky white Eve didn't suit.

I bear the scent of flesh divine,
The blood immortal as red wine,
In glasses raped by cold moonlight
As crows are circling, mesmerized.

The lights that pulse before me,
Are not the ones to show me
The path to worlds beyond the stars
But those who lick my deepest scars
With salty tongues and acid breath
That drive me in the sin of flesh.

For beautiful Her eyes appear,
They froze me, yet i sense no fear,
I'm screaming as they petrify
My blooded path to necropoli.



I could almost laugh

by *Eleanor Heaney*

I could almost laugh
At the thought of your thought
That my running away,
My attempt – as you call it –
To distance myself from you,
Was merely meant to hurt you,
Was a plot plot agists you,
Was a death for you to die,
And a laugh for me to laugh.

I could almost laugh
Imagining you imagine
That I have ever intended
To inflict injury to you,
To make you bleed or shed tears
Or to make you scream in fear.

I could almost laugh
Casting a glance at you – bemused –
Looking at you – puzzled for once –
Seeing you not understanding
Either who is who or who I
Who you have been or who have I.
I could almost laugh
As you look me straight in the eye;
I know whom you are seeking for,
For me, for you, for me or you –
Never again will it be ‘and’ –
To think of it, has it ever?

I could almost laugh
Were it not for this pain
I had laid out for you
To trap you in, you thought,
Pain molded by my hand
And meant for me alone.

★

Intruding

by *Zoey Schmurz*

Thunder. Silence. Lightning. Darkness.
The storm is bound to start
And busy streets begin to breath
As all dart, flee, run for cover.

Like flock of sheep with wolf among
They scatter in all four
Maddened with fear, thought of foe,
Moan, grunt, whisper damply:

‘It is amongst us, amongst us!’
They cry in their despair
Eyes and ears spread out to seek
The intruder who is I.

Yet though so many they are blind
Whiles I amid them
I see them all, I hear them well,
And crave their senseless feelings.

★

American Studies Abroad

March – what a lovely month! Actually, the perfect time to book your ticket to Poland and chat with Olivia Bădoi, an alumna of our American Studies department who is now enrolled in an MA program in Poznan. Read her story and don't hesitate to contact her if you have any suggestion for ... well, you'll see for what. (Silvia Filip)

I remember writing an article, about five years ago, about why I'd chosen American Studies as my major. "*I have a dream.*" I wrote at the time, trying to be both funny and serious. My dream was to discover America for myself, to see if all the myths of exuberant consumerism, endless possibilities and multicultural synergy held any water. In my sophomore year I was lucky enough to receive a Soros grant (which unfortunately is no longer available to Romanian citizens) and thus experience America first-hand for a year, while studying at a tiny liberal arts college in Virginia. The culture shock was substantial, especially since at the time I hadn't really traveled much. Now, with more air miles under my belt and half a year spent in Poland, I can say this: nothing ever really prepares one for the experience of living in another country. It is a perpetual process of translation.



While studying at Randolph College I did encounter the cultural mosaic I was anticipating. People have different reactions to culture shock: some engage in a perpetual critique of the host country as a way of dealing with the sometimes overwhelming novelty of it all, or quite the opposite, they become more tolerant, acknowledging cultural differences as the salt and pepper of every traveling experience. It often happens that after having lived abroad a while, one has a bit of trouble calling home “home.” There is a feeling of displacement, a pull of the heart that leaves one deeply rooted in midair.

So here I am, at home, in Poland. I graduated from the American Studies Department last summer and flew off to Poznan the following October. The scholarship I am on at the moment is a governmental one, a bilateral agreement between Romania and Poland. It is best to apply for this particular type of scholarship if you are interested in countries like Poland, Denmark or Slovakia, for which the competition is less intense (as compared to France, the UK, the States etc.) The best part of this bilateral agreement is that tuition is fully paid, which is no trifling thing since tuition for foreign students in Poland is around 4.500 euros per year. The downside is that you cannot personally apply to your university of choice, as happens with the H.G. governmental grant. You can, however, try to steer the committee by providing strong arguments

why a particular university would best cater to your academic needs. I was fortunate enough to be sent where I wanted to go, to the School of English (or Polish IFA, Instytut Filologii Angielski), part of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan.

Poznan is a charming university town in the Western part of Poland known as Wielkopolska (Great Poland). Its meandering narrow streets, dimly-lit cafes and the old market square (Stary Rynek) are constantly flocked with trendy, boisterous students, munching on *zapiekanas* (a local favorite pizza-wannabe snack). The students comprise more than a quarter of the city's population of half a million. It is the international students who add a bit of multicultural color to what is generally a homogenous city. Unfortunately, Poznan retains little of its Jewish heritage, as only a handful of Poznan Jews survived World War II. However, efforts are made to preserve this legacy, one of the most notable being Dzień Judaizmu (Judaism Day) hosted by the old synagogue.

Living in a foreign country is always challenging, all the more so when you don't know the language. When I came out of the Arrivals sliding doors in October I knew little more than *dzien dobry* and *dziekuje* (good day and thank you). I had been to Poland before (my significant other is Polish), so I wasn't scared completely witless. Nevertheless, the first semester was not easy. I had to adjust to a lot of

things: making my way around a completely foreign city, having to commute every week, learning Polish and so on. Getting around without knowing the language proved to be more difficult than I had expected. It's not that people were not helpful; Poles are renowned for their hospitality. Indeed, professors and fellow students have been welcoming and accommodating, if not quite as effusive as I had previously experienced in the States. However, outside of the academic environment people know very little, if any, English. So knowing basic Polish makes a huge difference.

Poles might seem overly-formal and reserved at first but in fact they just need more time to warm up to a new acquaintance. As compared to the American one, Polish society is more tightly-knit and less casual. There is a lot of deference one must show to age and status, as can be observed in the way students address professors; there is little of the first-name basis and casual interaction so prevalent in American classrooms. Polish students may be less assertive than the Americans, but just as studious and inquisitive as their Romanian counterparts. Young Poles also show a good deal of initiative, reflected by a number of self-organized activities such as the Young Linguists' Meeting in Poznan, workshops, reading clubs etc. Poland is well-known for its high level of technical education; this is often evident even when

it comes to their approach to the Humanities. At Poznan's School of English a lot of emphasis is placed on Comparative and Cognitive Linguistics and although Linguistics has never been my forte, I did enjoy last semester's seminars in neuro and biolinguistics.

I was somewhat taken aback by the fierce national pride, manifested by Poles of all ages. At least pragmatically speaking, more often than not this kind of pride proves to be beneficial for a society's morale (although it can be a bit unnerving for an outsider).

Another eye-opener was how much sway the Catholic Church in Poland holds over political and socio-cultural matters. I have never made a secret of my dislike for organized religion. The radical religiousness of the Bible belt was one of the major difficulties I had to face during my stay in Virginia. While driving from Virginia to New Orleans I could see my previous impressions of a secular America dissolving in a sea of giant roadside crosses and other miscellaneous religious paraphernalia, baptized with suggestive names such as Golgotha Fun Park, to name but one. Of course, the implications of the ever-expanding American Evangelism are much deeper than mere roadside aesthetics, with radical movements instructing women to forget about Roe vs. Wade and get back to reality, "be fruitful and multiply." Poland is one of the few European countries where abortion

is illegal. And while things seem to be changing, there is still a considerable amount of homophobia and racism.

Sadly, it seems that Polish people know very little, if anything, about our country. Their impressions, when they do express them, are unflattering to say the least. Hopefully I will manage to break down some of the stereotypes during a talk I will give next month, about Romania in general and women's role in Romanian society in particular. I would be extremely grateful to receive any thoughts on this matter that you'd like to share with the Polish public. I will post my email address at the end of this article, so feel free to make any suggestions!

I wrote this article hoping to provide some insight into my study experiences in Poland and the US. My message to readers hesitating about whether or not to study abroad would be: go for it! Traveling is truly a unique, revelatory experience, one that will leave a significant imprint on your personality and your life.

Olivia's e-mail address: oli_lily@yahoo.com



Who Is In Charge? Educational Institutions and Children Affected by Workforce Migration

by *Alexandra Vasile*

Ever since Romania joined the European Union in 2007, there has been a steady stream of Romanians going abroad in search of better work opportunities. As a result, Romania has been facing a new phenomenon: that of children left alone or in the care of their relatives. The hardships they encountered along the way have had a great impact on their academic results – often times, children even chose to abandon school altogether. According to psychologists and sociologists, these children develop disharmonic personalities that progressively lead to antisocial behavior and lack of communication with other family members.

In recent years, various non-governmental organizations have made surveys in order to fully grasp the dimension of the Romanian workforce migration. The main purpose of these surveys is to send out the message to education institutions and governmental forums that children left at home or abandoned by their parents need specific forms of help. In 2007, the Open Society Institute constructed a survey in

collaboration with the Romanian Child Protection Services and carried it out on a segment of 2,500 students in eight different regions of the country. The results of this study will most certainly attract the attention of educational institutions as well as local communities. The number of children whose parents have gone abroad to work has risen from 82,500 in June 2007 to over 170,000 in May 2008. There are 54,000 children that are at home with just their mother, 80,000 have just the father, and 36,000 children are now left without either parent at home. It is also important to note that the regions most affected by this trend are situated in the western part of the country, namely Banat, Crisana, Maramures, where the percentage of students with both parents working abroad is 28%. More than 66% of children are left in the care of their grandparents, 23% live with close relatives, and 11% do not live with anyone from their immediate family. One question naturally arises: How do the children who have been left behind feel as a result of this widespread social phenomenon in Romania? The numbers seem to offer a pragmatic answer: approximately 40% of the children states that they feel alone, 23% - that no one loves them, 15% - that they feel neglected and 22% are “depressed and unhappy” (OSI, 2008).

At the end of 2007, the Gallup Organization investigated the causes and the effects of parents leaving their homes,

from the point of view of the children. It also analyzed the legal framework regarding the schools' involvement in protecting children's rights. The methods used for the study consisted of interviews and questionnaires of school and family-related topics. The children's answers were profound and full of sensitivity, but they also betrayed sadness and – in some cases – depression.

Using the data supplied by the Gallup Organization, UNICEF organized a complex study on the same topic in April 2008, which showed that more than half of the children who are abandoned live in rural areas (52%). The study also pointed out that the majority of children with both parents working abroad reside in small rural towns, whereas those with only fathers gone live in metropolitan areas. While the study shows that workforce migration also has a positive results in some cases (children receive money to purchase school supplies and clothes), the negative impact is more visible. To this effect, students in grades 1 through 4 whose mothers work abroad are more scared, nervous, shy and they cry more than their colleagues do. Their vulnerability grows every day and they encounter problems in getting adjusted to other children, individuals and the community as a whole. The survey showed that the risk of vulnerability is higher if: both parents are away, the children are under 6 and the parents work away from home for more

than 6 months, the children live in rural areas, the families have a low economic status or if the community does not have proper social services (UNICEF, 2008)

Education institutions play a great (and irreplaceable) role in helping these children, since their target is to not let any child abandon school or feel the devastating effects of depression caused by lack of communication with parents. In order to dissipate at least some of the feelings of sadness and loneliness, teachers have started suggesting and implementing programs that help the students through counseling, as well as financial aid. However, very few schools in Romania have staff trained in psychology, pedagogy and student counseling. That is why supplementing current school staff is an urgent measure that needs to be taken, especially in rural areas, where abandoned children need an individual who will listen, understand and offer advice. To this effect, many teachers have signed a document that was forwarded to the Department of Education. This document presents the necessity of supplementing funds and personnel to align Romanian schools with the European Union requirements for counseling students. The lack of teacher-counselors in schools with abandoned children can lead to serious short and long-term effects: children will not only drop out of school, but they can also become more aggressive, lack self-esteem, and become involved in petty crimes. All of these are

caused by lack of supervision, guidance and care.

These efforts on behalf of Romanian teachers led the Government in March 2007 to start the Child Protection Program for minors whose parents have left Romania to work abroad. As part of this project, the state funded establishment of ten counseling and information centers in an effort to prevent and diminish child neglect. The program also includes counseling for families that plan to leave their children in order to work in the EU, as well as for those who are taking care of the children in the absence of their parents. The program calls for the centers to exist mostly in rural areas, where the majority of abandoned children reside.

In order to support such projects, schools require funding to purchase much needed teaching materials and – in the case of rural areas – to offer students a warm meal. That is why most schools have tried to reach out to various NGOs, Child Protections services, and local forums. They have trained teachers to write grant proposals in order to receive European grants. So far, these funds have been used towards creating clubs where children spend their spare time in a safe environment, as well as for setting up summer camps. Here is what a 10-year-old boy from a Moldavian village had to say about these changes: "I really liked the three-week summer camp. I did not cry once, and I almost forgot that I am home

alone. I made new friends, I learned how to play chess and build birdhouses. But now I am very sad that I have to return to a home where no one is waiting for me.”

I believe that there are also other long-term measures that can be taken by Romanian educational institutions in order to help children affected by workforce migration. First of all, teachers need to encourage the creation of teams consisting of students who volunteer to help children integrate better into society. Secondly, teachers and students can organize various fundraising events (shows, sports contests and so on) in order to raise funds to provide some financial support for those children who are left behind by their parents. However, in order for all of these efforts to be successful in the long run, educational institutions need to implement more specialized programs and measures that can be applied uniformly, throughout Romania. This also calls for a project that would create a database featuring the names of all the children and their specific situations, in order to monitor their changes and progress. Frequent updates of this database would allow easy access to information for those NGOs and charitable foundations that wish to contribute towards the care and education of a child.

In addition, the Department of Education should offer financial support for those teachers who wish to participate in international seminars that focus on the prevention of excessive workforce

migration or on diminishing its negative effects on children. At the same time, the current state of legislation calls for adopting a set of policies that will specifically ask for the care of children who have been abandoned because of workforce migration.

Educational institutions can and must help these “orphan children with parents”, even if teachers know that sometimes, all it takes is a smile or a kind word to bring happiness to a child left behind, without the support and care of his parents.

WORKS CITED:

Gallup. *An Investigation on Romanian Workforce Migration and Risks Associated with Abandonment*, Nov 2007.

Open Society Institute. *The Effects of Migration: Children Left at Home; Risks and Solutions*, Oct 2007.

UNICEF. *A Report on the Effects of Migration on Romanian Schoolchildren in Rural Areas*, April 2008.



Emily Darrell – An American Fulbrighter in Bucharest

by *Andra Dicu*

As the second semester began, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that I would be studying journalism. I have always wanted to follow this career but, I decided that it would be better to study Foreign Languages and then get a Master's Degree in journalism. Things got even better when I met my instructor. Her name is Emily Darrell and she's a Fulbright junior scholar. She was born in Virginia and lived there until college but she decided to move to Texas and then to graduate in Montana. Afterwards she stayed in Seattle for 9 months to work on her thesis, she got a Fulbright scholarship and started teaching what she knows best, journalism. About her years as a student, she says that she was kind of shy. She was partying and studying and working but that she "didn't feel the classes," she didn't have friends among her colleagues maybe because it was a big school. Things changed when she moved to Montana, she started writing for the school's newspaper and also got involved in different activities.

She's been in Bucharest for 6 months now and she's now teaching 3 classes a week. I have asked her about the students, what she thinks so far; her answer was very sincere, she likes them a

lot, she came across mixed motivations, some of them are really involved in almost everything that concerns the American Studies Department but others...well, she asks herself "what are they doing here?" By comparison to the USA, she finds the system very different, as they have fewer classes and there actually is freedom of choice, some classes are mandatory but you can choose most of them. Of course you got to the basic questions like "How is Romania different from the USA?" Well, "in most basic ways life is kind of similar." Emily lived in different places in the USA and they were all different.

Bucharest is the biggest city she has ever lived in and she believes that life here is very stressful for her because not all Romanians speak English and even though she started learning Romanian she still has a long way to go until she could have a conversation with no problems. In her opinion, in Bucharest people may appear cold in public until you get to know them, and you need someone to introduce you so that they won't look at you funny, and they are more formal in some ways like interaction or dress. In the US people are more relaxed when they interact. But, she is pleased that she got the chance to be friends with some Romanians, as well as people from other countries besides the Americans she met through the Fulbright program.

Another difference is that jobs pay better there. But, people in other countries

have a wrong impression that finding a job is easier, life is easier and work as well. They have unrealistic expectations; it's easier than in Romania but, not as easy as they think. Among the things that surprised her about Romania we can name at first the ethnic problems, people here are so obsessed with ethnic differences. Safety she considers both good and bad, people here are less concerned about their things and workers do crazy things, there are no regulations at all, she doesn't know if it's because they don't care or they just don't realize it. One thing that she hates about Bucharest is the traffic, she hates the honking. In Bucharest she likes to go to parks like Herastrau and Cismigiu. She likes going to Piata Obor to do her shopping because people there are very nice and she gets the chance to practice her language. In her spare time she likes writing poems, short stories but also she is trying to finish her Master's thesis. When she wants to go out she goes dancing in *Control*, *Fabrica* or *Green Hours* to listen to jazz music. The one thing that she can't find is a nice and quiet place where she could get a coffee and read a book.

After our conversation about Bucharest we started discussing Romania in general as she has already visited different places like: Sibiu, Iasi, Cluj, Brasov and Sinaia. What surprised her most about Romania was the bureaucracy and everything that has to do with going to a Government agency, things are so

complicated here. Her favorite place so far is a small village between Iasi and Cluj where she had the occasion to see the Romanian countryside and how people live there. Even though she doesn't like the cold weather she likes the mountains and she finds that Sibiu has the most beautiful architecture.

I had to ask her opinion about journalism in Romania. But, since she doesn't know Romanian so well the only thing she could say was that the TV shows' format is the same as the one in the US, the same stories: fires, crimes, car crashes.

After Romania, Emily would like to move back to Austin, Texas because she loved the city and her best friends live there. But, because she has traveled so much it would be kind of weird to live just in one place. She plans to write a book, learn Spanish and go to Mexico and Central Asia. As a final question, I asked her what she would say to students that want to apply for a Fulbright scholarship. Her answer was clear and simple: "Go for it! It's fun and they pay for everything!"



As [Inter]sections is a monthly student publication, you are kindly invited to send contributions to our editors, usually during the last week of each month). Also, should you wish to respond to any of the articles published in this and any other future issues, send your comments to: **intersections_amst@yahoo.com** .

EDITORIAL STAFF:

Editor-in-chief:

Mihaela Precup - *mihaela_precup@yahoo.com*

Opinion Editor:

Emanuela Dumitriu - *ema.dumitriu@yahoo.com*

History and Politics Editor:

Marius Bogdan Tudor - *bogdan_gbp@yahoo.com*

Film Editors:

Andrei Răuțu - *rautu_andrei_raziel@yahoo.com*

Doinița Bănceanu - *doinita.banceanu@yahoo.com*

Literature Editors:

Alexandra Magearu - *alexandra.magearu@yahoo.com*

Alexandru Măcărescu - *Okaminari0@gmail.com*

Mihaela Precup - *mihaela_precup@yahoo.com*

Music Editors:

Flavia Cioceanu - *slackerflu@yahoo.com*

Diana Mihai - *mihai_diana_stam@yahoo.com*

Popular Culture Editors:

Mihaela Mircia - *mihaela_mircia@yahoo.com*

Ilinca Diaconu - *ilincadiaconu@yahoo.com*

Sociology/Anthropology Editors:

Iulia Nentu - *iulia.nentu@yahoo.com*

Alexandra Vasile - *v_xara@yahoo.com*

Visual Arts Editors:

Mihaela Precup - *mihaela_precup@yahoo.com*

Alexandra Magearu *alexandra.magearu@yahoo.com*

Creative Writing Editors:

Alexandra Magearu - *alexandra.magearu@yahoo.com*

Alexandru Măcărescu - *Okaminari0@gmail.com*

American Studies Abroad Editor:

Silvia Filip - *silvia_filip_ro@yahoo.com*

Education Editor:

Alexandra Vasile - *v_xara@yahoo.com*

GRAPHICS

Alexandra Magearu

Alexandru Măcărescu Rotari

COVER PHOTO

Alexandru Măcărescu Rotari

CONTRIBUTORS:

Mihaela Precup - ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Ema Dumitriu - 2nd year, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Marius Bogdan Tudor - MA, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Andrei Răuțu - 1st Year, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Alexandra Magearu - 3rd Year, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Ilinca Diaconu – MA, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Andra Dicu – 2nd year, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Laura E. Savu - ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, APPLIED MODERN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Adriana Boagiu – 3rd Year, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Diana Mihai – 2nd year, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Alexandra Vasile – 4th year, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Bogdan Coman - PhD student, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Maria Pîtea - Foreign Languages Faculty graduate, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Flavia Cioceanu - 3rd Year, AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Ioan Lucian Zamfirescu – MA FEEA, Al. I. Cuza UNIVERSITY, IASI

Adrian Haidu - 3rd Year Romanian – English, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Zoey Schmurz

Eleanor Heaney