

# 147

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# CONFERENCE

## REVIEW

### T H E 1 4 T H B R I T I S H A N D A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S C O N F E R E N C E

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual conference devoted to the British and American Studies was held in Timisoara, Romania, 13–15 May 2004. It was organized by the Department of English, University of the West Timisoara and was eventful because of the wide range of topics that were covered during the very short two days of the conference.

On 13 May, the conference was officially opened by the Rector, Dr. Ioan Mihai. The remaining opening speeches were delivered by: Mark Tauber, the First Secretary, Cultural Affairs, American Embassy, Barbara Nelson, Executive Director, Fulbright Commission, Bucharest, Marion Hughes, Director *ELT* Programmes, British Council, Bucharest, Dr. Maria Tenchea, Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Dr. Hortensia Parlog, ESSE Secretary, Head of the English Department, University of the West Timisoara.

There were 3 plenary sessions and over 160 presentations divided into 7 workshops: *British Literature*, *American Literature*, *Cultural Studies*, *Gender Studies*, *Language Studies*, *ELT* and *Translation Studies*. In this convention, the international representation was very significant. The Conference gathered *ELT* professionals from Europe (Great Britain, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Albania, Lithuania, Serbia and Montenegro), Africa (Kuwait, Jordan, South Africa) and America. There were 20 participants from our country, namely, Belgrade, Novi Sad and Nis, all of whom presented papers and some were involved with moderating workshops.

The first plenary session was given by Cay Dollerup, a renowned professor of the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and Editor-in-Chief of the international journal *Translation Studies*. His paper dealt with the globalisation of translation, briefly touching upon the history of translation activity. The main focus was on the changes that took place in the XX century and sea changes in translation and *Translation Studies* in the last 10–15 years.

In his plenary paper, the second keynote speaker, Norman Fairclough, a distinguished professor of the University of Lancaster, UK, a 'guru' of critical

148  
approach to discourse analysis, briefly described one version of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), discussed the relationship between CDA and social theory and research on 'transition' in Central and Eastern Europe.

The third plenary lecture was delivered by Stefan Avadanei, a local professor of the University of Iasi, Romania. Theoretical issues of literary polemic were considered together with an extremely inspiring series of readings from literary works.

The conference allowed participants to choose from a list of varied, interesting topics presented in 7 different workshops with 5-7 speakers each, taking place simultaneously in 6 different rooms at the University buildings, in one morning and two afternoon sessions. The presentations within the *British Literature* and *American Literature* workshops were the most numerous and included comparative literary studies focusing on romanticism, modernism and postmodernism. *The Cultural Studies* workshop involved topics related to British and American Culture as well as cross-cultural studies and the issues of identity. The hot and challenging topics of feminism and femininity, sexual identity and sexism were of primary interest in a newly emerging discipline of *Gender Studies*. *The Language Studies* covered the largest range of linguistic areas such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics as well as highly interesting, contemporary studies of idioms and metaphors and discourse analysis. There was a noticeable presence of teaching writing and speaking skills at a university level within the *ELT* workshop and, finally, the presentations in the *Translation Studies* session concentrated on different genres, primarily legal translation. It is worth mentioning that presentations from Serbia-Montenegro covered all 7 workshops and attracted great interest in terms of participation and discussion. It is only with regret, as the saying goes *That I couldn't divide myself into several beings* and attend several sessions that I would have liked to attend at the same time. Nevertheless, the conference was superbly organized with the social programme involved (two wonderful evenings and an outing to a wine-producing place). The enthusiasm of Romanian teachers and the advanced level of the English and American studies in Timisoara, Romania is to be admired: consider just the 4 professional journals published there! Not to mention a true commitment and involvement of the British Council in projects encompassing all aspects of *ELT*.

Last, but not least, the two famous publishing houses, Longman and Macmillan, put up interesting exhibitions of their latest books and sold them at reduced prices. Also, they organized Prize Awards in form of dictionaries, and the author of this review is proud to share with you her joy of being one of the lucky winners!

On the whole, the 14<sup>th</sup> British and American Studies Conference is an event to remember. It has contributed remarkably to the development of the participants as professionals. The presentations have provided much food for thought. We teachers experienced the sense of belonging to an international community. The discussions showed that there is a great interest for further contacts and exchange of experiences. But, it is always comforting to discover that despite having very different realities, we all face very similar difficulties.