

## american studies column

AMERICAN STUDIES IN LATIN AMERICA. Previous Fulbright teaching experiences in Argentina, Mexico and Costa Rica gave Your Faithful Editor a good sense of what to expect pedagogically in Paraguay (where his wife was Fulbright professor) and Chile (where he was, too), but not much sense of the importance of our discipline in special political contexts. Nine years before, on a lecture tour, he had spoken in Uruguay during the period when that nation was under a repressive military dictatorship. Listeners said that his lectures were “like opening windows,” though to tell the truth the talks had been written with domestic audiences in mind, and hastily translated into Spanish. He and his wife were still editing them on the plane. One was on American painting as social history, and was in part about method; the other was on the effect of modern scholarship on the image of Edgar Poe. But even the most routine of scholarly observations had unexpected implications in that setting. One remembered how very political U.S. painters and authors have always been, and how many parables of freedom lie embedded in our national cultural experience.

One had a strong sense in Uruguay in 1976 that Uruguayans were going to get rid of their unsatisfactory regime. They have. Paraguay and Chile are very different from Uruguay, and extremely different from one another. Because the Council for International Exchange of Scholars advertises Fulbrights in American Studies in the Southern Cone, YFE offers the following observations to readers thinking of applying—or to readers who would not have thought to apply.

Do not trust news media portrayals of these countries. Nothing in the popular press would lead one to expect to find, for example, that the pace and texture of life in Paraguay are utterly lovely. Tranquil, calm and gentle, living there is also safer than in any country I can think of. Paraguayans love the pace of their life, and love their country. Even those who most loathe the government point out that it does not touch the everyday life of citizens in as many ways as do the governments of much freer nations. This is not to give it credit for any of the things that are good about Paraguay. It is merely to say that

Paraguay is an awfully nice place to live, so nice that the nation attracts tourists, especially from Argentina, who come not to see sights or attend cultural events, but simply for the pleasure of being around happy, tranquil and considerate people.

You will live very nicely in Asunción if you have a decent dollar income, but you can live decently on very little. You will not see around you evidence of the grinding poverty one associates with Latin America, even now when Paraguay is undergoing a dreadful financial crisis made worse by large thefts in high places. There are a great many very poor people, but the country is very rich in staples, and nobody suffers from exposure to the cold: it isn't cold. There is no particular national welfare system, but there is a close network of kinship; almost everyone has relatives who can help out in a pinch. Although a friend who said “Paraguay has a classless society” was exaggerating, class lines are not strong. Most neighborhoods are economically mixed; people communicate frequently and well (generally in Guaraní—their language of family and friendly conversation) across what would be powerful social boundaries in most nations. So the living, as they say, is easy, good for the digestion and the nerves, and very good for the structure of the family. The model of close and loving Paraguayan families rubs off. The model of industriousness, too: my wife and I brought a scholarly project along, and made great headway on it. Paraguayans like to work, and work energetically for long hours with evident pleasure. (I add a note: a Paraguayan told me in April of 1986 that there is actually some hunger in certain areas now, the result of severe and very unusual weather conditions and the inability of the government to provide emergency supplies.)

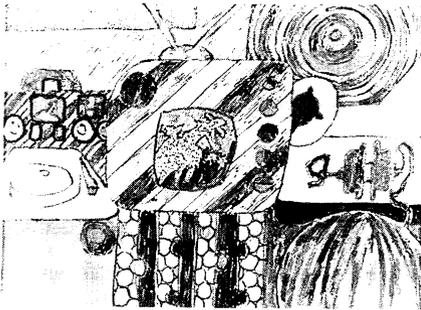
Government policies have crippled certain disciplines, and severely damaged what had been the stronger of the two universities. But the students are very nice and are grateful for training you can give them. Moreover, there is a surprisingly vigorous artistic and intellectual

(continued on page 159)

## american studies column

(continued from p. 4)

community. Its courage is moving. Though books are very expensive, Asunción supports a twenty-four hour bookstore which has just opened a second twenty-four hour branch. A visiting scholar will not likely encounter high-level students in his or her field, but will find intelligent and energetically inquisitive students and friends. You also will find yourself learning not only about Paraguay, which is endlessly fascinating, but, cross-culturally, about the United States. Although a list of all the aspects of Paraguayan life which are radically different from what we are used to in the United States would make Paraguay seem to be an extremely exotic civilization, Asunción is perhaps the least alien foreign capital I've ever lived in. Americans who handle Spanish comfortably are immediately comfortable here. Americans who know Guaraní as well . . . ah, but too few of us do.



Nothing in the media indicates the great elegance of Chilean urban life (or, for that matter, the overwhelming beauty and variety of the national landscape). Life in Chile these days is not tranquil; the country is dangerous, explosive. It seems far harder than in Paraguay to predict what will happen. A well-educated populace with strong democratic traditions, with a history of respect for both law and justice, lives today in a situation in which national ideals and traditions are being violated. Chileans have not traditionally hated and feared their police and their army as citizens do in numerous other nations. Today many do, and with reason.

It is not easy for humanists in totalitarian regimes. When we encountered a roomful of scholars who, like their students, come to class at risk, whose universities cannot pay them living wages or provide them with libraries adequate for the most elementary kind of work, who have difficulty obtaining books, and yet who have managed to read the latest works in their specialties, even to remain up-to-date in scholarship, all for absolutely no material reward, we were more than impressed. We were moved, humbled, made to feel part of something large and glorious that would outlast exile, repression, dictators. The experience was enough to make one believe again in those old truisms about the power of ideas to liberate.

In Chile there is a very large intellectual community, but it is very diverse in its political attitudes. You will meet bright, committed, idealistic and sacrificing colleagues whose positions will strike you as naively radical, frighteningly reactionary and all shades in between. As in Paraguay, so different in almost every other way, you will also meet students who want to learn.

Should one encourage colleagues to pursue and accept teaching positions in countries governed in ways they do not like? I think that my answer in general would be, If it is reasonably safe, yes, for your ideas and the materials you teach are potentially liberating.

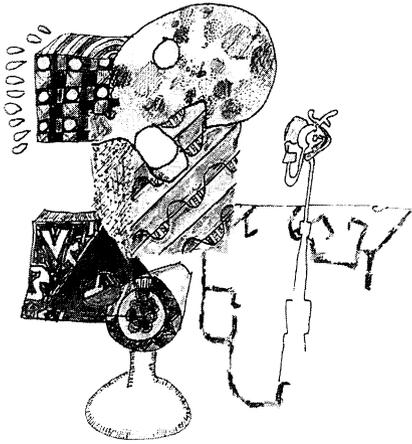
The situations in these countries are far more complex than I can suggest in a few informal paragraphs. Criticism of a sort which is common in one country is impossible or terribly dangerous in another. The texture of life in one place is not at all like that in the next. One could get along quite well in one without being fluent in the language; in the other, Americans who don't speak Spanish are likely to go bananas. But we felt we had learned enormously, and even that we had done some good. And we feel that the specialties of American Studies, even in the hands of those who read American history in ways more negative than I do, are needed and will make a difference.

*MOSAIC, A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, notifies us of two projects: first, a conference May 14-16, 1987 on the "Interdisciplinary Study of Literature"; second, a special issue on "Life-Writing," which is to say biography, autobiography, memoirs, diaries and such. For the conference, get information from John J. Teunissen; for the issue, from Evelyn Hinz. Same address for both: 208 Tier Building, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada R3T 2N2.

TO HONOR HEMINGWAY in 1986, Boise State University has arranged a remarkable series of events: lectures, conferences, films, presentations on the Spanish Civil War, a hike, dance programs, no telling. Norm Weinstein will provide you with information; you can write him c/o the University Research Center, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725.

THE AMERICAS AND AFRICA is the topic for the fourth symposium sponsored by the African Association for the Study of the Americas. It happens in early January 1987 at the University of Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Information comes from R. F. Morton, Private Bag 0022, Gaborone, Botswana.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY of Afro-America and its relation to general American religious history: such the topic of a summer institute at Princeton, June 22-July 18, 1986. NEH sponsorship makes grant money available to participants. You write to Albert Raboteau and David Wills, co-directors, at the Center for Visitor and



Conference Services, Prospect House, Princeton, NJ 08544.

LABOR AND URBAN AFFAIRS can be studied through the resources of the Walter P. Reuther Library; there is Rockefeller money to support Resident Fellows. Fellows for 1986-87 are Anthony Carew and Jeffrey Mirel. Small travel awards to work in the archives are available, too. Contact Joan Rabins at the Library, Detroit, MI 48202, for information about either program.

BUILT FORM AND CULTURE RESEARCH: The University of Kansas School of Architecture now has a program in it, and a conference scheduled for November 5-8, 1986. Information comes from David G. Saile, Architecture, KU, Lawrence, KS 66045.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was awfully sharp on the local history of Salem, though he sometimes distorted it to make literary points. LOCAL HISTORY of more than Salem is—and without distortion—the topic of a three-day institute, August 4-6, 1986 at Salem State College; the institute can be taken for credit by qualified students. John J. Fox of the History Department there has information; his zip is 01970.

HISTORIC DEERFIELD tries to interest college students in historic preservation, museum work and American Studies in general; it gives summer fellowships. Information comes from the Summer Fellowship Program, Deerfield, MA 01342.

Would you trust a news release coming from Bunker Clark and advertising a conference beginning on April Fool's Day? I guess I would. The dates are April 1-5, 1987; the topic is "American Music and Society," the group is the SONNECK SOCIETY, and the Director of the

program in Dale Cockrell, Music, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA 23185.

A letter from Thomas B. Lee, editor of a NEW AMERICAN STUDIES JOURNAL, published at Tamkang University, tells us that the publication is in the market for "scholarly articles on American subjects, other than literary criticism." You can write Mr. Lee c/o the Graduate Institute of American Studies, Kinhua Street, Taipei, Taiwan, R. O. C.

MAASA's SECOND Annual Meeting would have been MASA's thirtieth and NCASA's twenty-sixth at least (nobody seems sure), but it has just been two years since the Midcontinent and North Central American Studies Associations merged operations; the kinks are still being manipulated out of the critter and some stitches show, but it's vigorous. The meeting was at Wichita; Wichita State University was the host, and Greg Sojka did most of the dirty work. Here was his program:

#### HABITS OF THE HEARTLAND

Thursday, April 17

1 to 2:30 p.m.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND PANEL DISCUSSION: Individualism and Commitment in American Life. Speaker: Richard Madsen, University of California-San Diego. Panelists: Marvin Harder, University of Kansas; E. William Nelson, Wichita State University; Ron Matson, Wichita State University.

3 to 4:30 p.m.

TOPIC A: ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND POLITICS, Sally Kitch, Wichita State University, Chair.

"Our Postwar Hopes: John W. Aldridge and the American Novel," Mark Bassett, Wichita State University.

"The Omaha Magic Theatre: Its 1970 Season," Judith Babnich, Wichita State University.

"Women/Art/Politics: Revising the Mix in the 1980s," Gayle Davis, Wichita State University.

TOPIC B: ISSUES OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY, John Gaston, Wichita State University, Chair.

"Seduction, Accommodation or Realism? Tabbs Gross and the *Arkansas Freeman*," Diane Neal, Central State University.

"Race, Identity and the Free Women of Color: The *Narrative* of Mrs. Nancy Prince," Sharon E. Wood, University of Iowa.

"Building the World of Our Fathers from the Worlds of Our Fathers: Creating Jewish Community in Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1840-1945," Chester Prochan, University of Minnesota.

TOPIC C: CHANGING DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY FOR BLACK AMERICAN WOMEN, 1950-1980, Patricia Washington, Wichita State University, Chair.

"Changing Aspects of Health and Wellness Affecting the Quality of Life for Black Women," Alva Barnett, University of Nebraska-Omaha.

"Redefining Success as Political Power: Black Women Politicians," Eartha Mae Issac, Washington D.C.

"Changing Definitions of Success for Black Women," Carla Wilson, Wichita State University.

"The Effect of Increased Access to Nontraditional Career Opportunities on the Lives of Black Women," Joy Vann, Wichita State University.

Friday, April 18  
8:30 to 10 a.m.

TOPIC A: WILLA CATHER'S HEARTLAND, Diane Quantic, Wichita State University, Chair.

"Into the Morning: Willa Cather's Use of Skyscapes," Linda A. Hughson Ross, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"Cather's 'Climate Within a Climate': The Art of Domesticity," John Anders, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"Cather's Children of the Moon: The Success Theme in the Middle Novels," Jacqueline Eis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

TOPIC B: CHANGING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPIRATIONS, Dennis Mihelich, Creighton University, Chair.

"Ironic Industrialists: Artisan-Entrepreneurs and the Transformation of Rural America, 1760-1860," David P. Jaffee, Georgetown University.

"Individualism and Commitment in *Raintree County*," Park Dixon Goist, Georgetown University.

"Ways of Going and Ways of Being: Dubuque County, Iowa," Patrick Nunnally, University of Iowa.

10:30 a.m. to noon

TOPIC A: THE IMAGING OF AMERICA, James H. Thomas, Wichita State University, Chair.

"Midwestern Adaptations of the California Bungalow: An Evaluation," Thomas Kuhlmann, Creighton University.

"The Rainbow and the People: Three Centuries of American Artifacts," W. Arthur Mehrhoff, St. Louis University.

"Frank Lloyd Wright and Kansas," George Platt, Wichita State University.

TOPIC B: INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO ENVIRONMENT, Andrew J. Craig, Wichita State University, Chair.

"Charles A. Lindbergh and Changing American Attitudes Toward Technology and the Environment," Susan Musgrove, Olivet College.

"The House of Life, or Whatever Happened to Rachel Carson?" June Allen, Wichita State University.

"City Limits: Order and Anarchy in Poe's Fiction," Jules Zanger, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

1:30 to 3 p.m.

TOPIC A: AMERICAN STUDIES: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD AND METHODOLOGIES, Albert Stone, University of Iowa, Chair.

"American Studies: Recent Changes and Trends," Eric Sandeen, University of Wyoming.

"The Internationalization of American Studies," Edward Griffin, University of Minnesota.

"Publishing American Studies in *American Quarterly*," Dennis Renner, Gannon University.  
TOPIC B: A SENSE OF PLACE IN LITERATURE, Sally McNall, University of Kansas, Chair.

"Willa Cather's Trilogy of Place: *O Pioneers!*, *My Antonia* and *A Lost Lady*," Susan J. Rosowski, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"Land and Society in Great Plains Literature: The Search for a Balance," Diane Quantic, Wichita State University.

"Willa Cather and H. B. Alexander: Echoes of Rock Imagery in Southwest Indian Culture," Karen E. Veverka, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

3:30 to 5 p.m.

TOPIC A: PERCEPTIONS OF THE PLAINS INDIANS, Jerry Clark, Creighton University, Chair.

"Words of the Prophet: The 1890s Ghost Dance Religion," Katherine Smith, St. Louis University.

"Peyote, the Native Religion," Jerry Shaw, Wichita State University.

"Through a Glass Darkly: The Plains Indian in Painting, Photography and Illustrations, 1830-1890," Phillip D. Thomas, Wichita State University.

TOPIC B: THE REGIONAL VOICE: READINGS BY REGIONAL WRITERS, Susan Nelson, Wichita State University, Chair.

Fiction: Thomas Averill, Washburn University.

Poetry: Denise Low, University of Kansas; Anita Skeen, Wichita State University.

6:30 p.m.

MAASA DINNER AND BUSINESS MEETING. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS: "Religion in American Culture," Winton V. Solberg, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Saturday, April 19

8:30 to 10 a.m.

TOPIC A: CHANGING MODES IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY, Frank Chorba, Washburn University, Chair.

"Drawing the Curtain: The Reagan Executive Order on Classified Information," Sheldon Vogt, Wichita State University.

"Those Slovenly, Incompetent Vixens: American Women Journalists, 1935-1965," Maureen J. Nemecek, Oklahoma State University.

"Who's Telling Us the Most? The Weekly Supermarket Tabloid as Purveyor of Urban Folklore," Randy Phillis, Northwest Missouri State University.

TOPIC B: PERSONAL RESPONSES TO THE GREAT PLAINS EXPERIENCE, P. J. Wyatt, Wichita State University, Chair.

"Essays by the Kansas Centennial Poet, Lora D. Reiter," Lora K. Reiter, Ottawa University.

"This Land is My Land and Your Land: 19th Century German and Russian Emigration," Sr. Madeleine Kisner, Kansas Newman College.

"Joan O'Bryant: A Folklorist's Kansas," Mary Linn, Wichita State University.

The program doesn't show Greg's care and craftsmanship. He arranged special—and very

worthwhile—excursions which went more smoothly than on comparable field trips at most scholarly rallies; he also provided places and time for folks in different fields and from different types of academic institutions to socialize and exchange ideas. Munchies and booze showed up when they were needed. Greg, moreover, made a great sacrifice by standing near the registration desk throughout the entire conference where people could always find him if they needed help.

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE for our friends not on the editorial board who helped out by reading manuscripts: Haria Diner, University of Maryland—College Park; William Fletcher, University of Kansas; Alonzo Hamby, Ohio University; Theodore Hovet, University of Northern Iowa; Reese Jenkins Thomas A. Edison Papers, Rutgers University; John Modell, Carnegie Mellon University; Herbert Perluck, Brooklyn College; Thomas Robbins, Rochester, Minnesota; Bruce A. Rosenberg, Brown University; John Samson, Texas Tech. University; Robert Smith, University of Kansas; Dale Willer, University of Kansas; Michael Wreszin, Queens College.

Word-processing and handwriting deciphering for *American Studies* for the past three years have been the work of Sandee Kennedy. She moves to a new job after this issue. Editor and staff will miss her; they say “Thanks” and “GOOD LUCK.”

The equivalent office was performed in the early years of the journal by Betty Hagerman. When Betty retired—she and her husband farmed south of Lawrence—an official of the University Printing Service warned us that we would have to change printing processes and that our bill would go up. “Nobody else can do that job,” he said. “Betty was probably ‘carrying’ you because she liked the journal.” Betty became well-known as a quilter and as author on quilts; she was also an organizer of one of the sweetest and smallest fairs in America, the annual Vinland Fair. She died this past year. She was a smart, energetic and cheerful colleague, and should be remembered.