

## Journal of American Studies of Turkey

5 (1997) : 1-2.

### Editorial

This issue starts with Stuart Knee's "Anglo-American Relations in Palestine 1919-1925: An Experiment in *Realpolitik*." The article has nothing to say about the current political situation in the Middle East. However, it does better, as it sheds light on past developments that may have had direct consequences on the present day. The article examines the approach taken towards the land of Palestine, during the years following World War I and the demise of the Ottoman Empire, by the United States and Britain, the "heirs" in the region to the Turks. Knee argues that a spirit of nationalism did not prevail in the case of either nation and that, as a result, Middle East problems were exacerbated.

Susana Vega, in "Surviving the Weight of Tradition: Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*," argues that, faced with such a question as "what comes first: feminism or ethnicity?;" or, put in another way, "gender or culture?", the author's choice is clearly stated in her narrative. Vega finds that, at the risk of being accused of participating in neo-colonialism, Walker advocates in that novel the rights of the female human being above everything else, even when it seems to clash with claims of national and ethnic identity preservation.

In "Contemporary American Indian Artists: An Issue of Identity," Catherine Baldit discusses the case of Native American Artists who decided to create "universal" works rather than "Indian" ones, insisting on being acknowledged as simply artists, not American *Indian* artists. Baldit asks whether they need to obliterate their tribal identity, or on the contrary, keep on promoting their culture in order to be accepted by an elitist American art world.

I interviewed Talât Sait Halman, the first minister of culture of Turkey and a well-known personality among Turkish-American circles in the US where he has been a permanent resident for long. Halman spent the Fall '96 semester as a visiting professor at Bilkent University. I hope you will enjoy reading the interview which concentrates on his aspect as a poet, and in which he relates, among others, his reminiscences of the late Jerzy Kosinski and Allen Ginsberg.

María Antonia Alvarez, in "Henry James's New Approach to the Autobiographical Genre: The Growing Consciousness of A Small Boy," argues that without reading James's memoirs, we cannot understand the rest of his work. Moreover, James's *Autobiography*, written in the most refined style of his latest novels, can be considered a literary experiment in the genre by a writer consistently devoted to change.

In “Controlling the Images of Black Womanhood: The Contemporary African-American Women's Novel,” E. Lâle Demirtürk discusses three well-known novels by African-American women authors, explaining how the latter take it upon themselves, through their texts, to combat the negative image of black women in American society. By creating strong female characters who are able to assume their destinies, these black women authors seem to have become the new image-makers of black womanhood.

The issue ends with an article devoted to poetry. But this is poetry mixed with economics. Barış Gümüşbaş, in “Charles Olson's Poetical Economy,” brings the contexts of political economy and the process of poetic production together, and discusses the interaction between these two fields in Charles Olson's work, particularly in *The Maximus Poems*. Gümüşbaş argues that for Olson principles that govern poetic activity and economic life are closely interrelated.

Last but not least, there is a substantial letter to the editor by Laurence Raw, a British scholar currently based in Ankara. The author of an article in our second issue, Raw is the driving force behind the British Council contribution to the cultural studies seminar organized annually in İzmir. Responding to the article “The Cultural Context of American Literature: A Barrier or a Bridge to Understanding“ by Marwan Obeidat in our last issue, Raw has from the very beginning of his letter posited his discussion within a framework of cultural studies. Of his own confession, Raw moves away from Obeidat’s concern about how to teach American literature in a non-American context, into more general issues of interculturality. Yet, in so doing, he touches upon an issue of great centrality at present in Turkey among Americanists—as well as Anglicists. How to practice cultural studies, let alone comparative cultural studies, or interdisciplinarity, while the old guard, trying to hold the fort of “literature only,” retains key decision-making positions in matters of professional evaluation and promotion? It remains to be seen whether any scholar will take the discussion further.

With this issue, we start our third year of publication. At this point, we would like to thank the numerous anonymous readers—who must, perforce, remain anonymous—who have served as referees for the many manuscripts sent to us. It is to them, as well as to the authors themselves, we believe that we owe the high quality of our articles. I would also like to thank the colleagues who have helped me in matters of editing and proofreading, İrem Balkır, Gülriz Büken, Cliff Endres, Charles Gates, Lawrence Goodheart, Peter Grieco, and Michael Oppermann, among them.