

### **Editorial**

Although the year 2001 is arguably the real beginning of a new century and a new millenium, 2000 is taken as a threshold at which appraisals are the order of the day, at the same time that a search for new beginnings is taken up. Or, as Victoria Lipina-Berezkina, the author of our first article, writes, “If a *fin-de-siècle* is generally marked by a crisis concerning prevailing values, and an urgent search for new horizons in art and literature, then, accordingly, a *fin-de-millennium*—with a heightened sense of ending envisaging complex transformations in all spheres of life—should be characterized by a search for even more drastic aesthetic changes, by a turnaround in all kinds of literature, and by even more self-conscious art.”

With Lipina-Berezkina’s article, this issue, the last of the “nineties,” starts by casting a look at an aspect of American culture associated in the minds with one of the most salient features of American twentieth century culture. In “John Barth’s *On with the Story: Stories* and the Transformation of American Postmodernist Poetics,” Lipina-Berezkina argues that American postmodernism, far from being dead, as some maintain, is well and alive, albeit transformed, through the likes of Barth’s book-length story, to include a “human” dimension that had been absent from its earlier stage(s). For Lipina-Berezkina, the new “realistic tendencies,” such as the “sense of reality, authenticity, [and] humanism,” in Barth’s recent work and especially his *On with the Story: Stories*, “have become signs of postmodernist art at the end of the millennium.”

Hasan Al-Zubi, in an article entitled “American Realism versus French Naturalism: Henry James, Émile Zola and the Negotiation of Ideology,” takes millenial assessment further back, to the nineteenth century, to compare and contrast the portrayal in fiction of a lady and a *courtisane* (as he puts it), in the authors’ *The Portrait of the Lady* and *Nana* respectively. Al-Zubi argues that while the “basic ideological construction that prevails in James . . . is the Emersonian idealistic and transcendent philosophy of life,” the “basic ideologies in Zola . . . are the author’s bio-sociological determinism on the one hand, and the traditional, patriarchal view of prostitution on the other.” Neither work has lost its luster, nor either woman her verve.

The issue has a special section, entitled “Women and Fiction: New Perspectives,” comprising a group of articles on fiction about women written by women. The articles each bring a new perspective to traditional assumptions. Jeffrey Howlett in

“Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* as Counter-Narrative” argues that “American literature in the mid-twentieth century undertook a thorough critique of some of the guiding narratives of the nation’s popular mythology and political ideology,” and finds that the “fiction of the 1960s was especially intent on reevaluating such official discourses by de-centering narratives to include previously suppressed viewpoints.” Howlett then discusses Plath’s novel as such a “counter-narrative.” Teresa Moralejo Gárate in “Disruption of the Traditional View of the Southern Past in Bobbie Ann Mason’s ‘Shiloh’” argues that whereas American Southern Renaissance fiction used to be characterized by its depiction of the tension between tradition and modernity, new voices, such as that of Bobbie Ann Mason, are now moving this fiction towards a different direction. Gárate finds that Mason uses the contrast of past versus present to expose the lack of significance that this binary opposition now bears, and demonstrates “how it deviates from and disrupts the traditional view of the past that had been prevalent in Southern fiction.” Anna Notaro in “Space and Domesticity in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’” discusses the short story in question in the context, at the end of the nineteenth century, of the interplay between gender and family roles on the one hand, and questions of space and domesticity on the other. Highlighting the importance of space over more conventional elements of feminist criticism, Notaro argues that “Gilman understood quite well . . . that spatial arrangements between the sexes are socially created,” and that “the organization of space becomes a crucial factor in perpetuating status differences.”

From its first year of publication, *Journal of American Studies*, very much conscious of operating outside of the US, and aware also of efforts at internationalizing American Studies and desirous to contribute to such efforts, has taken pains to publish testimonies, whether articles, essays, or letters to the editor, on the experience of teaching American Studies outside of the US. Writing from Brazil, Cristina M. T. Stevens shares her reflections on the experience in “Teaching American Studies in Brazilian Universities: Johannes Factotum Or Janus?.” While the essay carries special significance for scholars in the Americas, it will also give food for thought for many a non-US scholar, as Stevens ponders “both the practical problems of pedagogy and the political implications of working in American Studies,” and warns against “attitudes of unquestioning subservience to Eurocentric models,” whether these be high-falutin theories or teaching material of any sort.

Laurence Raw in “‘Communicating America’: Validating Turkey” gives a first-hand, provocatively subjective account of the American Studies seminar organized in Cappadocia (in Central Anatolia) in the fall of 1999. The interest of the report lies in its approach: Raw, a British scholar, construes the seminar, an American Studies conference organized annually by the American Studies Association of Turkey (ASAT) jointly with the USIS office in Ankara, as an exercise in Turkish studies.

I would like to extend my thanks to the various people who made this issue possible: to Selim Sünter and Çiğdem F. Genç, the indefatigable editorial assistants; to Michael Jasper (Bilkent University), Elaine Lundy (University of Texas at San Antonio), and Nilüfer Eren Pultar (Türk Tarih Vakfı - Turkish Historical Foundation) for their invaluable editing; and to Dianne Bunch (Bilkent University), Laurence Raw (Başkent University), Muammer Şanlı (Bilkent University), and Meldan Tanrısal (Hacettepe University) for their assistance.

This tenth issue ends five years of publication, crowning the efforts of many, to whom I would like to offer my gratitude, all of whom, including members of the Editorial and Advisory Boards, I cannot name here. There are nevertheless three groups I would like to single out. First come the referees, those unsung heroes and heroines, whose names must remain anonymous (as we will probably need them again), who very graciously donated their time and energy in evaluating submissions. Of course, such evaluation could not have taken place had there been no submissions to start with. Thus it is to the many authors, from all corners of the world, who sent in manuscripts, whether these were eventually published or not, that I would also like to extend my thanks. The USIS office, which has helped financially, however sporadically, and the embassy officials who conferred the grants receive my gratitude as well. Last but not least, there is one person I would like to mention: the Rector of Bilkent University, Ali Doğramacı, who financed the journal partially from its second issue onwards.