

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

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Period: 1 July – 29 July 2013

Host institution: Center for American Studies, Bd. de l'Empereur 4, 1000 Brussels

2013 EAAS TRAVEL GRANT REPORT

Thanks to the 2013 EAAS travel grant, I was able to conduct my research at the Center for American Studies in Brussels for a period of four weeks. This experience contributed greatly to the completion of my research project.



The main objective of my doctoral research is to explore Woody Allen's short fiction against the cultural landscape it came from and, in its turn, has changed. I have identified three major sets of factors which, in my opinion, have influenced and shaped Woody Allen's short fiction: the immediate literary context of the short story tradition of *The New Yorker*, the larger

literary context of American postmodernism, and the specific ethnic context of the author's personal background, represented by his Jewish cultural heritage.

During my stay at the Center for American Studies in Brussels, I could consult books, articles, and doctoral theses which helped me consolidate the arguments of the first chapter of my thesis, a chapter which contextualizes the humor and the aesthetics promoted by *The New Yorker* magazine and explores the impact of this tradition on Woody Allen's writing. For example, works such as *America's Humor: from Poor Richard to Doonesbury* by Walter Blair and Hamlin Hill, Jesse Bier's *The Rise and Fall of American Humor* and *The American Humorists: Conscience of the Twentieth Century* by Norris W. Yates offered valuable insight into the larger context of the American humorous writing tradition. *The Smart Magazines: 50 years of literary revelry & high jinks at Vanity Fair, the New Yorker, Life, Esquire and the Smart Set* by George H. Douglas is an important resource for any scholar interested in understanding the inception and the evolution of sophisticated magazines on American soil and the impact they had on their contributors as well as on their readership. The series of *Short Stories from "The New Yorker"* published by Simon and Schuster together with the microfilms of *The New Yorker* magazine helped me validate my understanding of the literary direction of the magazine and gather valuable information regarding the immediate context of Woody Allen's short stories since I could actually see what else was published in the same issue they appeared. Nathaniel Benchley's biography of his father, Robert Benchley, accomplishes a complete portrait of one of the most influential American humorists of the twentieth century whose technique and style contributed to shaping Woody Allen's writing to a considerable extent. Rolande Diot's thesis *Humour et surréalisme chez trois humoristes du New Yorker. Robert Benchley, James Thurber, Sidney J. Perelman* also proved a valuable resource for my research; his exploration of the surrealist and humorous techniques employed by three of the most important contributors of *The New Yorker* helped me consolidate my arguments regarding the lineage I established between Benchley, Perelman, and Allen. The subchapter dedicated to Woody Allen's life and professional achievements could be completed based on books such as *Reconstructing Woody. Art, Love and Life in the Films of Woody Allen* by Mary P. Nichols, *Woody Allen* by Nancy Pogel, and *Woody Allen, Little Big Man* by Fabian Maray. I also found materials which contributed to completing that subchapter of my thesis dedicated to God, religion, and morality in Woody Allen's short fiction, such as *Conversation avec Dieu. De St. Augustine a Woody Allen*

by Jean-Michel di Falco. Moreover, the electronic resources available at the Center for American Studies in Brussels, were extremely useful in finding recently published articles pertaining to the same academic field as my doctoral research.

During my stay at the Center for American Studies in Brussels I verified a series of hypotheses I could not have verified otherwise. Moreover, the interaction with other students in the field of American Studies was also very beneficial, even if our specific fields were fairly different. My research gained more depth and my thesis got closer to completion. For all of these I am extremely grateful to the support I received from the European Association for American Studies.