

Program Year
July 2009 – June 2010

THE LOIS ROTH ENDOWMENT

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Grisselle Cohen
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Robin W. Winks (1930 - 2003)

THE LOIS ROTH ENDOWMENT

Country Programs

Australia. Dartmouth-grad Chelsea Lane-Miller is deeply engaged in her 12-month project in Adelaide and at the University of Southern Australia. She is studying water-distribution policy in the Murray-Darling Basin, weighing the needs of communities against those of farmers and the environment. A mid-year report of her work may soon be available on our website. Meanwhile, in Canberra, we report the departure of our longtime associate Joe Hlubucek from the Fulbright Commission. Volunteering to fill his shoes during the search for a successor, our primary correspondent Lyndell Wilson, a six-year veteran, volunteered her help and the Commission board has invited her to serve as Acting Executive Director until a successor is in place.

Bulgaria.* The Elizabeth Kostova Foundation in Sofia (EKF) aims to strengthen Bulgarian literary democracy: after post-Cold War birth-pangs, the new nation recognizes that its writers need help transcending borders and engaging with the world of international letters. Roth Endowment contributions include funding translation prizes and helping support the annual Sozopol Writers' Workshop. We are alert to assisting with unexpected issues; our *ad hoc* help in publishing Bulgaria's first writing-craft text, for example, has resulted in a text now finding wide use in schools around the country. We welcome earmarked contributions to the Bulgarian sub-fund.

The first prize, for translation from English into Bulgarian, was established in 2007 and has been awarded three times thus far. The third Dyankov Prize (\$2000), named for an iconic translator and given at the Sofia Book Fair in December 2009, was shared by Nadezhda Radulova, for her translations of *Firmin: Adventures of a Metropolitan Lowlife* by Sam Savage and *The Human Stain* by Philip Roth, and Milen Ruskov, for his translations of *Money* by Martin Amis and *De Niro's Game* by Rawi Hage. A second Dyankov prize, for translation from Bulgarian into English, is planned for the near future.

June 2010 brought to life the third annual writers' workshop in Sozopol (formerly the Greek colony of Apollonia), Bulgaria. With top-caliber faculty and two groups of five Bulgarian- and English-language writers, the seminar welcomes writers, translators and publishers in an atmosphere of collegial sharing, close personal interchange, and constructive criticism. In 2010, the seminar was even more sought-after than in 2009, with 30 candidates applying for each seat. This year the Endowment's Chair was invited by the embassy to lecture on cultural diplomacy at the Foreign Ministry and in the embassy's cultural center, and was thus able to participate in the Sozopol meetings; he reports an experience beyond his high expectations. Meanwhile EKF's success, including the publication of fiction under its logo in the English-language magazine *Vagabond*, has led to the founding of a new English-language website on Contemporary Bulgarian Writers (www.contemporarybulgarianwriters.com).

We are pleased that our early assistance to the programs pioneered by EKF has now been augmented by support from other sources, including the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, the US Embassy, the Institute for Culture, the Bulgarian American and America for Bulgaria Foundations, the Fulbright Commission and Bulgaria's American University.

Denmark. The Roth-Thomson Award for 2009-10 (\$1500), administered in cooperation with the American Scandinavian Foundation, went to Nigel De Juan Hatton of Stanford University for his research into the philosophical dimensions of the creative freedom that two African-American artists—William H. Johnson and Cecil Brown—found in Scandinavia. His research will provide the basis for two chapters of a book tentatively entitled *Scandinavian Landscapes, African-American Escapes: Black Artists and Freedom in Denmark, Norway and Sweden*.

Finland. Two Fulbrighters to Finland won Roth-Thomson awards of \$1500 in 2009-2010. Alicia Viani's research into mental health aspects of the sexuality of adolescent girls resulted in an unanticipated development as new qualitative interview techniques increased participants' self-awareness and confidence. Julia Stein, a multi-media performance artist, developed several events, alone or in collaboration with other artists, that grew out of her project to explore the boundaries between the psychological and physical worlds.

Italy. * The Rome Center for American Studies proposed no program of common interest. Even with shaky markets, the sub-fund has passed \$17,000. We are offering an annual contribution of \$2000 for a joint project. We persist in wishing to honor our longstanding commitment to the Rome Center, despite tempting alternative proposals.

New Zealand. * The 2009-2010 recipient of the Robin and Avril Winks award (\$1500) was Dan Bidois, from Auckland, who is already close to completing a Harvard Masters degree in Public Policy, focusing on urban, social and economic policy. Alumna Bethany Edmunds, after completing her MA in Visual Culture and Costume Studies at New York University, returned to Auckland in August where she is already developing an exhibition of works drawing on her US experience; she plans a tour of the North Island to visit different weavers and communities. Thanks to a gift from Avril Winks, the supporting sub-fund has passed \$3000.

Norway. A single award of \$1,500 was made in 2009-10 to new Williams College graduate John Nelson for his research into collective environmental values in the Norwegian welfare state. Meanwhile, at the US-Norway Fulbright Foundation for Educational Exchange, Petter Naess replaced Sonia Noronha Mykletun as Director in August 2010. We thank Sonia for her years of productive engagement with us and offer our best wishes to her and to Petter in their new work.

Russia. Funding crises reflecting the times continue to present difficulties for this partnership with the National Peace Foundation, but we look forward to the resumption of this fine project.

Sweden. * Having moved successfully to a post-arrival application procedure, the

Swedish program awarded grants to two Fulbright scholars in 2009-10. First, photographer Erika Larsen received support for an exhibition on the heritage of the Sámi people. Work from this series has already appeared in the Norwegian magazine *D2*, in an exhibit of experimental new media in Moscow, and in an exhibition at the Etnografiska Museet in Stockholm; a solo exhibit, with film screenings, will open in Korea, at the Seoul Center of Visual Art BODA, in November 2010. Our second award went to Arizona State University computer scientist Rob Trevino for his work on the genetic pathways of breast cancer. Although the Endowment normally focuses only on the arts, humanities and social sciences, it seemed fitting to support innovative research by Trevino and his Lund University colleagues into the disease that took Lois away.

Turkey. * In spring 2010, our program with the university system in New York (SUNY) took a programmatic turn. In the first two years, the project, launched by Myriam Hallock in memory of her Turkophile husband, helped fund the presence on the Binghamton campus of two eminent Turkish social scientists. This year, it turned to enriching the US experience of the large contingent of Turkish students at SUNY. Responding to their curiosity about the complex system of US federal government—a subject that is highly relevant for the governance of Turkey—we helped a group from Binghamton travel to Albany, where they spent the day learning about the workings of state government, guided by sophisticated participants and scholars. SUNY is slowly developing a graduate dimension in Turkish and Eastern Mediterranean Studies, for the 5000 Turkish double-degree undergraduates added over the last decade on both continents--US students began studying in Turkey in 2009.

Henry and Judith Millon Award*

The excellence of candidates for the Millon Award in 2009-10 has delayed final selection, but the process is under way—a report will follow on our website. Meanwhile, a fine paper on the building of Brunelleschi's dome in Florence by last year's grantee, Margaret Haynes, appeared in CASVA's annual report and will shortly be the subject of an appreciation in our website. A supporting sub-fund mounts steadily.

Lois Roth and Ilchman-Richardson Awards Department of State*

In FY 2008, after a two-year gap, the Lois Roth Award for Cultural Diplomacy abroad came back to life; it was joined by the new Ilchman-Richardson Award for domestic support staff, honoring the late Alice S. Ilchman and John Richardson, former directors of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). These paired awards, which will not be given until spring of 2011, reward excellent performance at home and overseas. The prizes of \$1500 each are designed to lift the morale of the foreign-service and civil-service staffers who carry out cultural diplomacy in the Department of State and abroad and bring unique private recognition to excellence in American cultural

diplomacy. Both prizes are well supported by growing sub-funds: the Roth Award, now in its 21st year, has passed \$20,000, while the newer Ilchman-Richardson award is supported by two growing funds totaling \$4000, with generous help from the Ilchman family and John Richardson over the years.

Literary Translation, Language Education

MLA-Roth Award for Literary Translation.* For the first time, due to the excellence of candidates, two prizes were granted for translations into English at the December 2009 award ceremony of the Modern Languages Association. Adnan Haydar (University of Arkansas) and Michael Beard (University of North Dakota) received the MLA-Roth Award for their moving translation of *Mihyar of Damascus: His Songs* by the Palestinian poet Adonis. Michael Berry (UC Santa Barbara) and Susan Chan Egan received an honorable mention for their translation of Wang Anyi's *Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*.

MLA-Roth Awards are granted biennially. The obvious appeal of this award, the excellence of its laureates, and its de facto trend to designate translations into English from non-European literatures make us eager to expand its impact. While we would like to move to annual awards, the costs to the MLA are onerous; we are thus seeking ways to alleviate these. A sub-fund is in place.

American Institute of Iranian Studies.* The American Institute of Iranian Studies has chosen its ninth annual translation laureate for an award of \$1500: Sholeh Wolpe for *Sin: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad* (University of Arkansas 2008, preface by Alicia Ostriker). AIIS President Franklin Lewis notes that this musical and compelling version draws the reader along and catches the exquisite balance and pacing of the poet's language. He hopes that Wolpe's translation will help Farroukhzad claim her rightful place in the international canon, while opening the doors to fresh versions of classical and contemporary Iranian writing. Lewis' full citation will be available on our website. A sub-fund is slowly building but is a long way from being able to sustain the second award we would like to offer.

Prix Maurice Coindreau.* In December 2009, the Prix Coindreau (\$2000) was awarded to Serge Chauvin for his translations of *Apex* and *The Colossus of New York* (Gallimard) by the New York novelist and MacArthur Fellowship recipient Colson Whitehead. In December 2010, the next annual Prix Coindreau will be awarded, at a ceremony in the Hotel de Massa in Paris, to Laurence Viallet for her fine translation of Junot Diaz' *The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Riverhead Press, Pulitzer 2008). The jury's deliberations were long, as three separate votes were needed before consensus was reached. One juror reports that the novel—published in France by Plon, in its *Cross-Fire (Feux Croisés)* collection—“is a strange book bursting with life, touched by madness and phantasmagoria, and based on the history of the Dominican Order.” We are working to double our Coindreau sub-fund to permit raising our contribution to this valuable prize, still suffering from the weak dollar.

Jeanne Varney Pleasants Award. * The 2009-10 laureate of the Jeanne Varney Pleasants Award is Johanna Magin, who began teaching in the fall semester of 2009 and is now in her second year of graduate studies. According to her supervisor, “She has been a spectacular instructor. She and last year's laureates, Aleksandra Perisic and Casiana Ionita, are now teaching intermediate courses in the department.” One of Ms. Magin’s students put it more simply: “Throw out the book. Clone Johanna.”

(* denotes projects supported by sub-funds)

The Lois Roth Endowment supports ideals and values that run deep in US education at its best and works to enhance their impact through cross-cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy. Nearly a quarter-century of patience since Lois’ death in 1986 has convinced us of the value of our work, yet we are constantly made aware of how much more there is to do.

We thank you for your past support and hope that you will be able to give generously this year as well. Continued contributions and bequests are essential to keeping the Endowment growing in quality and scope into the future.

In a few months, the Roth Endowment shall enter its 25th year. These decades have taught us to adopt an open-ended commitment to unpredictable futures and made us more certain of our mission than ever. We need your help in shaping tomorrow.

Our lifeblood has been your generosity, demonstrated anew in 2009. Now, more than ever, contributions are vital: many of you must know individuals who are seeking worthy channels for their charitable activities, or small foundations eager to help groups like ours move towards greater stability.

We also need new kinds of help. For example, we need your help in expanding our mailing list—if each of you could send us ten new names of people concerned with US cultural exchange and relations, our mailing list would soar. We also need help locating some of our alumni; young people move around, marry, take new jobs, and get too busy to stay in touch—yet they are our link to the future.

Thank you for your continued support.