

American Literature's Global Circulation

Harris Sockel – C.A.U.R.S. Abstract Submission – March 27, 2009

My project examines the contemporary translation, re-interpretation, and reception of post-World War II American fiction in Western Europe, the Maghreb, India, and China. The project uses this information to paint a picture of America's contemporary global image. In this way, my research re-examines America's place in an increasingly globalized world through the re-publication and reception of some of its most widely read postwar stories. Analyzed works include *The Catcher in the Rye* (J.D. Salinger), *On The Road* (Jack Kerouac), *Goodbye, Columbus*, and *The Human Stain* (Philip Roth). Through a close reading of these novels' international editions (cover art, introductions, notes) and evidence drawn from a series of interviews with international publishers and booksellers, this project examines American culture's international promulgation through a literary lens.

Research for this project was conducted during a three-month around-the-world trip (June to September, 2008) funded by the Circumnavigators Club Foundation, during which I interviewed numerous publishing executives and booksellers, in addition to visiting various international book fairs and literary festivals. Upon returning from my travels through Western Europe, Morocco, Tunisia, India, and China, I completed a sixty-eight-page report and delivered a speech on my research results to the Circumnavigators Club.

Interview questions for publishers, booksellers, and consumers of fiction included:

1. How do you choose which American texts to translate? Which works are most frequently translated and/or re-published?
2. Which work of post-World War II American literature would you consider most popular in your country right now? Or, if not a specific work, which author?
3. What is your favorite American novel? How has it changed your view of America?

The answers to these questions, along with a close reading of international editions of originally American texts, point toward certain international views of America, and the ways these views differ from one another.

For more information on this project and my around-the-world travels, visit <http://www.chicagocircumnavigators.org/ScholarHarrisSockel.html>