Нова къща, нов късмет
Addiction, Improv and Angels
Museum Standards: A Look Ahead
Bulgaria’s Refugee Crisis
The Fulbright Bulgaria Newsletter is a biannual magazine published by the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange (Fulbright) in print and electronically. Opinions expressed by the authors are their own and do not necessarily represent those of the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the material in this publication, the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange does not accept liability for any errors or omissions.

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- The University of Oklahoma
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Nov dom, nov kusmet! According to this Bulgarian saying, a new home brings new luck. The Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission feels very lucky indeed to have moved into its new premises at 12 Vitosha Blvd in August of 2016, thanks to the hard work, support and cooperation of our partners from the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, the US Embassy in Bulgaria and the US State Department’s Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs. We invite all of our alumni, friends and partners to come visit our new fifth-floor and to admire in person our brand-new “tattoo wall” when they are in Sofia.

However, as this issue of our newsletter shows, our new office is hardly the only novel development at the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission over the past six months: we formed a new partnership with the American energy company ContourGlobal to support an ETA in Galabovo, where their power plant is located; we hosted our first Migration Specialist, Bill O’Keefe, to examine the Bulgarian refugee crisis; along with our partners from the Bi-National Commission for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of Bulgaria, we organized the international conference “Museum Standards: A Look Ahead,” Fulbright Bulgaria’s first foray into the field of museum studies; our Fulbright Training Center launched a new series of Project Management Training courses – and all this while welcoming a record number of American grantees to Bulgaria for the 2016-2017 academic year.

On behalf of the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange, I wish all of our alumni, friends, partners and grantees a wonderful holiday season and hope that the New Year brings all of us success, joy, good health and good luck!

Angela Rodel
Bulgaria has a rich and varied cultural heritage, ranging from prehistoric pottery to Thracian gold treasures to folk art to contemporary paintings. How do Bulgarian museums present this heritage? What new techniques and technologies could help them reach even wider audiences, at home and around the world?

The conference featured US museum experts as keynote speakers. Kara Blond, Director of Exhibitions at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, talked about the future of museum exhibitions at her institution as well as around the world. Dr. Adam Nilsen, Head of Education and Interpretation at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, shared his experience on “humanizing” museum exhibits by using the stories of real individuals, by engaging the local community in creating exhibits, and by making transparent the role of the real humans (i.e. curators) who create a given exhibit. Nathalie Ryan, Senior Educator & Manager, Department of Gallery and Studio Learning, at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, shared her institution’s experience with “cultivating curiosity” in museum audiences of all ages and walks of life.

“Museum Exhibits and Standards: A Look Ahead” on November 28-29, 2016, held in Sofia. The conference was organized by the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange and its partner organizations from the Bi-National Commission for the Preservation of Bulgaria’s Cultural Heritage.

The bi-national commission and the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission hope to make use of the momentum and connections created and to continue its work with a publication of conference proceedings and practical seminars with American experts for cultural heritage and museum specialists.”
The conference and US guests were met with great interest from Bulgarian audiences and institutions, as the packed auditorium showed. Dr. Adam Nilsen and Kara Blond as well as Fulbright ED Angela Rodel were featured guests on the popular morning show “The Day Begins with Culture” on Bulgarian National Television, where they discussed the conference and their work.

The US Ambassador to Bulgaria, HE Eric Rubin, and Dr. Boni Petrunova, Bulgaria’s Deputy Minister of Culture, opened the conference, noting that the preservation of cultural heritage and the sharing of museum best practices for presenting this heritage was a sphere where the United States and Bulgaria could cooperate more closely. The first panel “Best Practices in Designing Events and Educational Programs Dedicated to Cultural Heritage” provided examples of successful educational programming from US and Bulgarian museums ranging from art galleries to science centers to history museums. One question that arose during the discussion was to what extent such programming should be aimed primarily at children or should try to encompass families or multi-generational audiences.

“The Future of Digital Expositions and Mobile Applications for Stimulating Cultural Tourism” introduced participants to new technologies that are being developed and used in Bulgaria and around the world, with an emphasis on low-cost ways for museums to receive training in such technologies and to make their collections digitally available. In “Contemporary Tendencies in Museum Exhibition or How to Impress Visitors of All Ages,” Bulgarian and American speakers offered advice and examples of successful programming, which sparked a lively Q&A session. Bulgarian museum specialists were keen to ask questions of their American counterparts or to provide examples from their own experience.

On the evening of November 28, all conference participants enjoyed wine and refreshments at a cocktail reception held in the stunning main hall of the National Archeological Museum, where Deputy Chief of Mission from the US Embassy Martina Strong greeted the audience.

After the conference, the Municipality of Plovdiv graciously hosted the US lecturers on a day-trip to the city, where they visited the newly renovated Archeological and Natural History Museums, as well as toured the historic Old Town of Plovdiv. Deputy Mayor for Culture Amelia Gesheva hosted the group for lunch and a discussion of the city’s cultural heritage and museum programming, especially in connection with its upcoming role as European Capital of Culture in 2019.

The Bi-National Commission for the Preservation of Bulgaria’s Cultural Heritage was established as an outgrowth of US Secretary of State John Kerry’s visit to Bulgaria in January of 2015. During this visit, Secretary Kerry announced that education and culture was one of a number of key areas in which the US and Bulgaria would engage in strategic dialogue. The goal of the cultural preservation commission is to bring together experts from diverse fields dealing with tangible and intangible cultural heritage and to identify projects worthy of preservation and to work with American specialists to identify and recommend best practices for such preservation efforts. The new commission was placed under the auspices of the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange. Its members include leading experts in tangible and intangible cultural heritage, museum directors, representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism, the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission, and US Embassy representatives. In the wake of the success of its first major undertaking and given the strong interest on the part of Bulgarian institutions in American best practices in the field of museum studies and cultural heritage, the bi-national commission and the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission hope to make use of the momentum and connections created and to continue its work with a publication of conference proceedings and practical seminars with American experts for cultural heritage and museum specialists.
In AY2016-17, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission for the first time has placed an ETA in the southwestern town of Galabovo, thanks to the support of the US energy company ContourGlobal, whose thermal power plant “ContourGlobal Maritsa East 3,” is located nearby.

The partnership with Fulbright is just one of ContourGlobal’s many CSR projects in Galabovo and the Stara Zagora region designed to help improve the living standards of its employees and the surrounding community.

ETA Nina Matsumoto, a native of Seattle, has brought her prior experience abroad and creative teaching methods to the Professional School of Energy and Electrical Engineering in Galabovo. During the Fulbright staff visit in November, we heard rave reviews of Nina’s work there – the principal, her fellow English teachers and students all exclaimed: “We want to keep her for another year!” The lesson we observed was full of laughter and smiles, as Nina drew a chart to help her tenth-grade class understand the difference between “always”, “usually”, “often”, “sometimes”, “occasionally”, “rarely”, “never”, and played a game where she asked the students a question, and depending on their answer they had to move to a corner of the classroom where the respective word was taped to the wall. They highly enjoyed running around and explaining why their answer would be “never” or “sometimes” to questions ranging from “how often do you read books” to “how often do you listen to chalga”. Given her success in the classroom, Nina has been invited to co-lead extra English classes under the “Tvoiat Chas” project launched by the Ministry of Education this year. She has also joined a local folk dance club, started a cooking club and BEST speech and debate club for her students, and is ready to support other extracurricular activities both with students and members of the local community.

Fulbright Bulgaria thanks ContourGlobal for their support of the ETA program and hopes this partnership will continue to develop in future years.

Fulbright Bulgaria Proudly Announces New ETA Partnership with ContourGlobal

by Angela Rodel
“If you pick one quote from me to use for this piece, it should be ‘Fulbright changed my life,’” community psychologist Ron Harvey says with a smile as our interview comes to a close. Those are strong words coming from a man who is no stranger to life changes – in 2001, after nearly two decades as a successful IT manager in the investment banking sector, the Illinois native decided he was burned out. He took a severance package and packed his bags for... no, not Tahiti, but Russia and Ukraine. This may not sound like everyone’s dream destination, but Ron explains that his fascination with Eastern Europe began at a young age: “I grew up as a Cold War kid, so the only exposure we got to this part of the world was the Olympics. I remember seeing the Russian hockey players, the Romanian gymnasts, the Bulgarian weight lifters and wrestlers and thinking that on the one hand, they’re so different from us, but on the other, they look like us. It was always the place in the world I was most curious to see.”

A three-week tour stretched into another three months in Russia, and before he knew it Ron had spent two years in Ukraine. Afraid of getting stuck in another rut, Ron headed back to Chicago, where he decided to finish his BA. The question was: in what field? He didn’t want to do business, he’d had enough of IT, and the only thing that piqued his interest was psychology. After finishing his undergraduate degree, he went to grad school, first finding himself rather overwhelmed and unhappy in University of Illinois – Chicago’s lab-based program. “I wanted to do fieldwork,” Ron explains – so he started crashing brown bag lunches hosted by the DePaul psychology department and found himself at a presentation by community psychologist Gary Harper, the first of many guardian angels to cross his path: “His first slide was a picture of him in Kenya surrounded by colleagues and students – this is what I wanted to do!” He transferred to DePaul and plunged into the community psychology program – but again the question was, what to focus on? “The only thing I was...
clinically interested in was substance abuse. If you go to Russia you literally see little kids carrying four-liter bottle of beer, smoking cigarettes, I saw needles all over the place.” Searching for a way to combine his interest in Eastern Europe and addiction recovery led him to DePaul psychologist Leonard Jason, who studies Oxford Houses, a type of substance abuse recovery home. However, unlike standard halfway-houses, the house is run democratically by the residents, who all are required to contribute to the financing and the governing of the house, which gives them much more of a sense of ownership over the process. Also, there are no time limits; residents may live in an Oxford House as long as they like, as long as they stay sober. Thanks to the bonds of friendship and sense of self-reliance created in Oxford Houses, their success rates are much higher than other recovery homes.

“I wrote to Lenny [Leonard Jason] on New Year’s Eve, not expecting to get an answer, and I got an answer in two hours, inviting me to join his research group!” Ron exclaims. Since his return to Chicago, Ron had kept going back to different parts of Eastern Europe, and as luck would have it in the summer of 2007, he had booked a trip to Bulgaria and Romania. Ron’s mentor/guardian angel Lenny Jason put him in touch with a colleague who had just been in Bulgaria. To Ron’s delight, he said: “I think Oxford Houses are a natural in Eastern Europe, but we’ve made no progress.” That sentence really stuck in Ron’s head, and during his trip to Bulgaria he met with professionals working in the field of addiction recovery. The picture they painted was grim: there are an estimated 30,000 heroin addicts in the country, while recovery services are minimal: a seven-day hospital stay (essentially detox) followed by methadone treatment. The few recovery programs that do exist are small and privately run, hence unable to meet demand. As Ron recalls, “I asked them ‘Do you think an Oxford House would work in Bulgaria?’ And they said, ‘Yes, we need them, we have nothing like this.’ That planted the seed.”

Upon returning to DePaul, yet another guardian angel in the form of a fellow grad student tipped Ron off to the Fulbright – and in 2009-2010 he spent ten months here on a student research grant studying whether the necessary factors for an Oxford House could be found in Bulgaria. “It was a great Fulbright project, because all I did was talk to Bulgarians from all levels of society, from top government officials to people who had just entered into recovery. The basic answer that came out of this was, yes, with some difficulty, you could create something very close to an Oxford House in Bulgaria.” But it wouldn’t be easy, considering the stigma against addiction in Bulgaria: “One thing I realized very quickly was that here no one has seen or knows of a famous person who has recovered from addiction. … Recovery is so mainstream in the US, we watch it as entertainment – a US president has admitted to cocaine and alcohol addiction, we’ve seen sports figures, pop stars… One of the nasty problems about addiction which Oxford Houses are trying to address is that the relapse rates are very high – for some drugs it is 80-90%. Typically there is a relapse rate of 50-70% after the first treatment. So of course you don’t think recovery is possible if you’ve never seen it.”

With a clearer view of the challenges and possibilities for Oxford Houses in Bulgaria, Ron returned to DePaul to write his dissertation, which he finished in 2014. But he didn’t want to leave his idea of East European Oxford Houses in the realm of theory, so he returned to Bulgaria in 2016 on a Fulbright Scholar grant to do a feasibility assessment. However, his first couple months were frustrating,
as Ron recalls: “I kept hearing ‘Oxford Houses are a great idea, good luck! – but no one was willing to help.” But in April, his feasibility study turned into an implementation plan: Ron met Father George from Varna, an Orthodox priest who runs a recovery program through his church and who was willing to give the idea a try. The toughest part would be finding real estate: in the US, all Oxford Houses are rented stand-alone houses – a type of housing difficult to find in Bulgaria. And even if they did find something suitable, Ron wasn’t sure the owner would agree to rent to recovering addicts, given the stigma in Bulgaria. With these concerns in mind, Ron went with a woman from Father George’s church to see a small cottage in Varna’s Asparuhovo neighborhood. When he suggested they perhaps not explain what they really wanted it for, she replied: “I am a Christian, if God wants us to have this house, we need to tell the landlord exactly what we’re going to do.” And indeed, the owner turned out to be yet another guardian angel – she had a good friend struggling with addiction and wholeheartedly supported their efforts! “Look for help and collaborators appear everywhere!” Ron laughs. “If you put the right energy out, guardian angels will show up.”

With the cottage secured, Ron and his partners set up a GoFundMe and in twelve days raised money for furniture, housewares and other expenses. On August 1, 2016, “Pioneer House” the first Oxford House in Eastern Europe, opened with four residents, all graduates of Father George’s program. Ron has remained very involved in the project, having found a way to stay in Bulgaria and continue his work here – he was invited by the American University in Blagoevgrad to teach psychology courses in 2016-17 and to help them develop a psychology program. “I have a long-term interest and commitment to Bulgaria,” Ron explains. “Because if Oxford Houses work in Bulgaria, they can work in the rest of Eastern Europe.”

So how does Ron keep his spirits up when working in the difficult and often frustrating field of substance abuse, with its high relapse rates and negative stigma? Luckily he has another passion besides community psychology to help keep him feeling positive: improv comedy! “Anyone who has written a dissertation knows it’s a lonely, miserable thing to do. A friend of mine in Chicago said ‘You’re horrible to be around, so please find something fun to do.’” Luckily for Ron, Chicago just so happens to be the world capital of improv comedy – on any given night there are dozens of performances and workshops all across the city. So he started taking classes in short-form improv, which is essentially adult games, and later-got into long-form, which is essentially creating a 20-30-minute play out of a suggestion from the audience. Soon Ron was hooked, going to shows almost every night: “Improv exercises a different part of the brain, it teaches you to respond to other people honestly and immediately and without preconceptions. And that’s really an amazing skill to learn that most people never get a chance to learn, ever.” Community psychology and improv comedy may seem like a strange combination, but actually they have a fair bit in common, as Ron explains: “The characteristics that make for a very good improv group also make for a very good recovery community: shared vision, trust, and reciprocal relations.”

Before leaving for Bulgaria again in 2015, another guardian angel crossed Ron’s path: “In the summer, the improv schools in Chicago have summer intensive – intense courses lasting 10-12 hours a day for four weeks. One instructor put me in touch with a Bulgarian student of his from a summer intensive, Zlatin. I agreed to bring Zlatin a new book on improv when I came to Sofia. I got there on Sunday, met him on Monday, and by Wednesday I was onstage performing a monologue with his group.” English-language improv is only just getting started in Bulgaria – thanks in no small part to Ron, along who with three friends from Chicago, put on the first English-language improv performance at @lma @Iter Theater at Sofia University in March of 2016. Coordinating with Fulbright/ABF ETAs, he has also conducted a number of improv workshops for high school students around the country. Best yet, he plans to start improv group at AUBG next semester – the first college improv club in the Balkans.

Indeed, Fulbright changed Ron Harvey’s life – and now he is giving back to Fulbright and Bulgaria by changing the lives of so many of his friends, patients, colleagues and students through his community psychology and improv comedy work. I think we can all agree that Ron is a Fulbright guardian angel!
The first word that comes to mind when meeting Professor Dobrinka Georgieva is “passionate” – indeed, this speech language pathology (SLP) and logopedics expert is every bit as devoted to her cause as Knights of the Round Table were to the Holy Grail! While visiting her in her office at South-West University in Blagoevgrad, I spied a prominently displayed photograph of a handsome man and asked if he was perhaps her husband? “Of course not!” Professor Georgieva exclaimed. “He is the only disfluent MP in the Bulgarian Parliament!”

Dr. Georgieva’s teaching, research, and clinical interests are in the area of fluency and voice disorders. She has authored numerous research and clinical papers, chapters in books and books on stuttering, stuttering intervention and voice disorders. She is also the main editor of the Bulgarian Journal of Communication Disorders. Last decade she was a founder and director of the University Stuttering Research Center at SWU, a true SLP “shining spot” in Bulgaria. As part of her mission to help Bulgarians with speech disorders receive the support they need, as well as to train a new generation of speech-language pathologists, she currently coordinates many international and national projects and initiatives at South-West University (World Bank project; National Science Fund; Erasmus+ and Fulbright). Georgieva was the lead person developing the Bulgarian Logopedics specialty in the field of Public Health. Given her extensive international experience, it is not surprising that she served as SWU’s Deputy Rector of International Relations (2004-2011). Since 2011, she has served as Head of the International Relations Office.

When and where was your Fulbright scholarship?

In 2013 I had the privilege of conducting a Fulbright specialization at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) – one of the three most prestigious research children’s hospitals in the US. Part of my time I spent at the University of Cincinnati Medical School, Barrett Head and Neck Center. I was deeply excited to see the important work being done at Cincinnati Children’s Speech Language Therapy Clinics – the biggest one in the States. I was very grateful to and humbled by the many others who invest in SLP work and research related to voice assessment and therapy.

For a five-month period, I was part of the team of Professor Dimitar Deliyski, who then led ENT’s world-renowned voice lab. Deliyski’s state-of-the-art lab was the largest in the US and one of the most technologically advanced for laryngeal imaging. His team of leading specialists focused on improving voice disorders, which can have a tremendous impact on the lives of patients from different age groups.

After your Fulbright grant in 2013, were you able to build your own “Camelot” here in Bulgaria?
After my stay in the States one of the main goals of my administrative, educational and research work has been to continue expanding the communication disorders program in SWU’s Public Health Department through the creation of a national speech and voice center. I especially emphasize the adoption of a public health approach to SLP practice in my work. Over the last decade, the drive to integrate population approaches and public health education into university-degree programs for allied health professions has been growing in the USA and EU countries. There is an increasingly popular belief that allied health professionals, including speech-language pathologists, should develop skills and knowledge in population approaches and public health as part of their core education.

The second concept I am trying to implement in SLP clinical practice in Bulgaria is an evidence-based practice approach, which emphasizes that the provision of services for clients with different communication disorders should be based on scientific evidence. A clinical education program must include skills and tools for the student to explore, inquire and develop assessment and intervention practices that meet the appropriate levels of evidence in the profession. We must emphasize the need to integrate patient values and preferences along with the best current research evidence and clinical expertise in making clinical decisions.

**What is the present state of logopedics in Bulgaria? How can people with communication disorders improve their quality of life?**

There are 350-400 speech therapists in Bulgaria, working predominantly in educational settings. Nationally, there more than 150,000 people who stutter and two-thirds of them have no access to speech therapy services. Unfortunately the Bulgarian healthcare system does not offer speech-language treatment for adolescents and adults with severe communication disorders such as aphasia/dysphasia, neurologically-based communication disorders in children, severe voice disorders....

The research component of my work makes an attempt to introduce a gold standard into logopedical practice and applied research to measure the quality of life of persons with fluency disorders (stuttering) and voice impairments. Quality of life is a modern multidimensional construct that covers health, medical, psychological, social and economic factors. Severe communication disorders can affect many aspects of a person’s life. The specific concept of the quality of life of persons with a stuttering disorder is the core of the clinical logopedical practice in the SWU University Stuttering Research Center. There is a paucity of empirically based research concerning stuttering treatment outcomes in adults in Bulgaria. An objective evidence-based evaluation of the effectiveness of some treatment approaches in SLP in Bulgarian conditions was done over the last few years. This is one of the items we are developing together with Professor Yaruss from the US – one of our former Fulbright lecturers.

**Besides your own scholarship to the US in 2013, how else has the Fulbright program helped your research?**

I have received enormous help using Fulbright Program opportunities, developing six Fulbright Specialist projects. Leading American specialists have been involved in the teaching process at the SWU Logopedics program: Dr. Judith Custer (Mankato University), Prof. K. O. St. Louis (West Virginia University), Prof. Edward Conture (Vanderbilt University), Assoc. Prof. J. Scott Yaruss (Pittsburgh University), Assoc. Prof. Bernice Klaben (Cincinnati University), and Prof. Robert F. Orlikoff (East Carolina University). The Fulbright program not only strongly shaped my professional development, but created a new contemporary model of university academic culture.

Last year I was very concentrated on expanding Fulbright opportunities and combining them with the European Union Erasmus+ program. In 2016-2017 we developed very useful SLP collaboration with Michigan State University and Pittsburgh University. The first visitor within the program was Professor Deliyski last September. The next researcher we are looking forward to hosting this academic year is Dr. J. S. Yaruss. The Fulbright program is an ideal instrument for the internationalization of educational, scientific and cultural products originated by a creative university milieu.

**Tell us more about your most recent Fulbright Specialist visit?**

In September of 2016, Professor Orlikoff introduced topics related to voice disorders and instrumental voice assessment. I was very impressed by this internationally recognized scientist, whose work focuses on the acoustic and physiologic characteristics of normal and abnormal voice production. Currently, he serves as a dean of the School of Allied Health Sciences at East Carolina University, Greenville. This extremely fruitful Fulbright visit was the second such visit by a leading research scientist in the clinical voice area and positively impacted our knowledge base about the nature and treatment of different types of voice disorders.

**My students and I had the honor and opportunity to be touched by Professor Orlikoff’s generous scientific spirit within the Fulbright program.**

Without any doubt the Fulbright program will continue to support fruitful collaborations between American and Bulgarian academics.
Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees
Academic Year 2016-2017

Visiting Scholars

Dr. Valentina Georgieva
Field of specialization: Teaching English as a Foreign Language
Home Institution: Rakovsky National Defense Academy
Host Institution in the U.S.: Texas State University-San Marcos, TX
Spring, 2017

Dr. Vyara Kalfina
Field of specialization: Literature
Home Institution: Sofia University
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Massachusetts at Amherst, MA
Spring, 2017

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoyan Karakashev
Field of specialization: Chemistry
Home Institution: Sofia University
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Illinois at Chicago, IL
Fall, 2016

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Radostina Petrova
Field of specialization: Engineering
Home Institution: Technical University – Sliven
Host Institution in the U.S.: Cornell University, NY
Spring, 2017

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivan Tchalakov
Field of specialization: Sociology
Home Institution: University of Plovdiv
Host Institution in the U.S.: Georgia Institute of Technology, GA
Fall, 2016

Graduate Students

Maria Androushko
Field of study: Film Studies
Home institution: Bard College Berlin
Pursued degree: MFA in Screenwriting
Host Institution in the U.S.: New York Film Academy, LA, CA

Ivaylo Dimitrov
Field of study: Law
Home institution: University of National and World Economy
Pursued degree: LLM in International & Comparative Law
Host Institution in the U.S.: George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

Lyuba Manoilova
Field of study: Archaeology
Home institution: New Bulgarian University
Pursued degree: MA in Classical Studies
Host Institution in the U.S.: Brandeis University, MA

Alexandra Milcheva
Field of study: Public Policy
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Pursued degree: Master in Public Policy
Host Institution in the U.S.: Harvard University, MA

Dilyana Popova
Field of study: Economics
Home institution: University of Essex, UK
Pursued degree: MS in Applied Economics
Host Institution in the U.S.: The University of Maryland, College Park, MD

Atanas Sabev
Field of study: Law
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Pursued degree: LLM in Law
Host Institution in the U.S.: Harvard University, MA

Mirena Taskova
Field of study: Law
Home institution: University of National and World Economy
Pursued degree: LLM in Law, Science & Technology
Host Institution in the U.S.: Stanford University, CA

Non-Degree Research Grants For Doctoral Students

Katerina Klinkova
Field of study: Literature
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Host Institution in the U.S.: New York University, NY, Fall, 2016

Kristina Stefanova
Field of study: Law
Home institution: University of National and World Economy
Host Institution in the U.S.: Florida International University, FL, Fall, 2016

Hubert Humphrey Fellows

Ivaylo Vesezkov
Field of specialization: Journalism
Home institution: bTV Media Group
Host Institutions: in the U.S.: University of California, Davis, CA; Arizona State University, AZ
Length of Program: 12 months, starting June 2016
U.S. Fulbright Grantees
Academic Year 2016-2017

Scholars

David Austill
Field of Specialization: Business Law
Home Institution: Union University, Jackson, TN
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia

Gene Berryhill
Field of Specialization: Art History
Home Institution: University of Maryland, College Park, MD
Host Institution in Bulgaria: National Academy of Arts, Sofia

Jeremiah Chamberlin
Field of Specialization: Creative Writing
Home Institution: University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor, MI
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, and Elizabeth Kostova Foundation, Sofia

Michael Musial
Field of Specialization: Music (Piano)
Home Institution: Russell Sage College, Troy, NY
Host Institution in Bulgaria: New Bulgarian University, Sofia

Traci Speed
Field of Specialization: Linguistics
Home Institution: Self-employed
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Shumen University “Konstantin Preslavsky”, Shumen

Graduate Students

Elizabeth Bews
Field of Specialization: Archaeology
Project Title: Politics and Archaeology in the Middle Strymon River Valley
Host Institution in Bulgaria: New Bulgarian University, Sofia

Laura Leddy
Field of Specialization: Art History
Project Title: Historical Topography, Memory, and Identity in Sofia
Host Institution in Bulgaria: National Academy of Arts, Sofia

Kate Mower
Field of Specialization: History
Project Title: Apollo Coming into the Light: Compiling the History of Thracian Apollo Worship
Host Institution in Bulgaria: New Bulgarian University, Sofia

Delaney Nolan
Field of Specialization: Creative Writing
Project Title: The Hills Next Door: Magical Realism in the Rhodope Mountain Border
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Elizabeth Kostova Foundation, Sofia

Valentina Tomov
Field of Specialization: Cultural Anthropology
Project Title: Afterlives of Protests and Imagined Political Futures in Bulgaria
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia

English Teaching Assistants

Jillian Anderson
Field of Specialization: Biology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kardzhali, Bulgaria

Anna Brainerd
Field of Specialization: Integrative Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Gabrovo, Bulgaria

Boris Busov
Field of Specialization: Biomolecular Science
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sliven, Bulgaria

Erin Coggins
Field of Specialization: Anthropology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Smolyan, Bulgaria

Lewis Collins
Field of Specialization: Theological Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Razgrad, Bulgaria

Hannah Combe
Field of Specialization: English
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria

Kenneth Cortum
Field of Specialization: Russian, Mathematics
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pravets, Bulgaria

Kate Cowie-Haskell
Field of Specialization: Anthropology, Art History
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Montana, Bulgaria
U.S. Fulbright Grantees
Academic Year 2016-2017

Morgan Ellison
Field of Specialization: History, Russian and Eurasian Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dobrich, Bulgaria

Emily Enquist
Field of Specialization: International Business, Anthropology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Reid Furubayashi
Field of Specialization: Philosophy, Politics, Economics
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Lauren Gieseke
Field of Specialization: History, Political Science
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Shumen, Bulgaria

Anna Hernick
Field of Specialization: International Political Economy
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pazardzhik, Bulgaria

Hannah Leib
Field of Specialization: Psychology, Media Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Andrew Malin
Field of Specialization: History, International Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Zachariah Martinez
Field of Specialization: Biology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vratsa, Bulgaria

Nina Matsumoto
Field of Specialization: Sociology, Spanish
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Galabovo, Bulgaria

Marcus Michael
Field of Specialization: ESL, Linguistics
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kyustendil, Bulgaria

Caroline Murphy
Field of Specialization: Secondary Education
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pernik, Bulgaria

Rachel O’Hanlon
Field of Specialization: Psychology, Japanese
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria

Molly O’Keefe
Field of Specialization: Theatre
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

Robin Parrish
Field of Specialization: Second Language Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

Emily Paxson
Field of Specialization: International Studies, German
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Lovech, Bulgaria

Amanda Petersen
Field of Specialization: English Language Arts Education
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pleven, Bulgaria

Alexa Price
Field of Specialization: International Studies, Government
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

Maksim Rusev
Field of Specialization: Accounting
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Dominick Sansone
Field of Specialization: Kinesiology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vidin, Bulgaria

William Smeal
Field of Specialization: Linguistics, Spanish
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vidin, Bulgaria

Rebekah Straneva
Field of Specialization: Philosophy, East European Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Helena Tatgenhorst
Field of Specialization: Geosciences, Biological Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Ruse, Bulgaria

Bria Trosclair
Field of Specialization: Anthropology, English
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Ruse, Bulgaria

Wilhelmina van den Berg
Field of Specialization: History, Education
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Jeremy Yeaton
Field of Specialization: Linguistics, French, Chinese
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Haskovo, Bulgaria
“Any of Us Could One Day Become a Refugee”:

Fulbright Specialist Bill O’Keefe on the Refugee Crisis in Bulgaria

by Angela Rodel

Six months before my June, 2016 Fulbright Specialist grant experience in Bulgaria, I happened to meet in Athens an Afghan man whom I had met six years before. At the time, we were both working for Catholic Relief Services—still my employer—and I was in Herat visiting our Afghan team.

He was a highly educated and experienced professional. The chance occurrence in this park in Athens was obviously unlikely, but I shouldn’t have been surprised when in response to my inquiry about what he was doing there, he told me he was a refugee. The story made real what I already believed: that any of us could one day become a refugee. When I applied to visit Bulgaria to exchange knowledge about refugee integration and policy, I hoped to communicate my own experience and expertise, learn about the unique complexities of the refugee situation in Bulgaria and help inspire greater empathy knowing that any of us could one day be a refugee.

Migrants and refugees streaming into Europe from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia have presented European leaders and policymakers with their greatest recent challenge. During the winter and spring of 2016, EU border countries, such as Bulgaria, were especially challenged because of the then in-force Dublin protocol. On the one hand, the EU expected Bulgaria to register, provide asylum, resettle, or return (as appropriate) refugees crossing across its borders. On the other hand, most of the refugees wanted to find ways to transit through Bulgaria to Germany, Sweden, or the UK.

In this context, the objective of my specialist project were: (1) to allow students and faculty of Bulgarian academic institutions to reflect on the moral, humanitarian, security, political and other questions of the refugee crisis in Bulgaria, from the perspectives of the American refugee experience, the international human rights framework, and other refugee crises, (2) to exchange experiences and perspectives on refugee integration with Bulgarian institutions and stakeholders actively responding to the panoply of needs of refugees in the country, and (3) to deepen the understanding of the global refugee crisis from the perspective of Bulgaria.
to inform the global context of policy discussions on the asylum and migration issues.

At New Bulgarian University and Sofia University, I challenged assumptions about refugees and refugee integration, especially in terms of human rights and the potential benefits to society of successful integration. These are critical issues for the future of Bulgaria and I felt honored to contribute to the good faith efforts of students to figure out what to do! I told stories of refugees I had met in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States and provided legal, ethical, and political perspectives while being clear I had no simple answers to the practical and policy dilemma that Bulgaria had to figure out. We had very engaged discussions with lots of probing questions, which I was led to believe is not the norm in Bulgarian university settings.

For the many service providers and advocacy groups I met, my most valuable contribution was providing an opportunity for committed and capable staff to hear the experience from the United States and reflect together about its relevance to Bulgaria. Some seemed to take solace in the realization that the United States faces challenges in integrating refugees and migrants, and--especially as relates to the 11 million undocumented in the U.S.--has serious unresolved problems. Others took the opportunity to brainstorm ideas. All generously gave of their time, experience and expertise so that I could take back a deeper understanding of Bulgaria and the many factors impacting its ability to host refugees. I am deeply indebted to the Bulgarian Red Cross, the Bulgarian Office of the International Office of Migration, Caritas Bulgaria, and numerous other groups and individuals for facilitating my project.

During other recent travels in Eastern Europe, I have seen how the failure of the EU to address comprehensively the massive flow of Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan and other migrants has strained the smaller, poorer border states. Due to its location and poorer economic status relative to Western Europe, Bulgaria has very specific challenges. The most vexing is how to integrate refugees who do not at first want to be integrated, but rather seek a way to Germany. The service providers I met were committed to helping refugees integrate into Bulgarian society, but had to endure the frustration of watching successive refugees come and disappear when smugglers offered a path West.

The transient nature of the refugees makes important programming around domestic and gender-based violence, trauma, health, and children much more difficult. Through conversation, I discovered structural barriers to integration beyond the reticence of many--but by no means all--Bulgarians to accept refugees and some politicians to demagogue about them. Various less obvious perverse incentives in housing, education, and employment practices make it difficult for refugees who might want to stay. These practices are reinforced by the experience that most of the refugees do not actually stay so landlords, schools, and employers wonder why giving refugees a chance makes sense. Bulgarian refugee service providers have to fight these practices and assumptions as they try to do their work.

American history--especially the diverse character of the population and collective refugee experience--certainly predisposes the United States to refugee integration. Conflict, population pressures, climate change, and rising expectations in Africa and the Middle East will drive many more refugees to flee to Europe in the future. The countries that figure out how best to integrate them will have a better chance of maintaining social cohesion and succeeding economically. I hope Bulgaria will be one of those countries.
I also had the opportunity to use the painting and the printing studios, as well as I had a private room provided especially for my writing in the art department of the University of Hawaii at Hilo. I was very inspired by Hawaii’s natural landscape, culture, tradition, people and reality.

Aside from my writing, I also had the energy to create many paintings, try different printing techniques and assist Professor Michael Marshall in creating a theatre set for the play “Dragon Slayer”.

I did a lot of sketches, which I then used for my canvases. I sketched Hawaiian landscapes, abstractions inspired from the Hawaiian flora and portraits of the people of Hawaii.

I met many friends and did portraits (oil on canvas) of eight of them: I met Remy who is student at the University of Hawaii at Hilo and Rosella who graduated from there. I met Kauai who graduated from the same university. I met Keenin in my first days on Hawaii, on the Coconut Island at Hilo downtown, he became my first Hawaiian friend. Keenin introduced me to his friend James.
who also became one of my models for a portrait. Mya was my flat mate, whom I also portrayed. I met Royce through Anna, whom I met through Meidor, who also posed for a portrait. I met Kea in the bar while hanging out with Stephen. I also did portraits with charcoal on paper of my friends: Stephen, Meidor, Moody and others, but I did not have enough time to create painted portraits of all my models, because the time of my stay was limited and I could not manage to paint everyone I wanted to. All the paintings I created are oil on canvas, and all of them were created through sketches with charcoal on paper, which I was constantly drawing wherever I was on the Hawaiian Islands.

Before I had to leave Hawaii I gave some of my works to my friends and I also managed to donate eight of them to the Bay Clinic in downtown Hilo. First thanks to Professor Michael Marshall who invited Harold, the owner of the clinic, to see my works and chose seven portraits of my friends and one abstraction which now are on permanent display there (the portraits of Rosella, Kauai, Keenin, James, Mya, Royce, Remy and the abstraction “Hawaiian Jungle III”). When Harold saw my portraits he asked me if all these people who I portrayed live on Hawaii. I said yes, they do. So he said that this is what he likes best, after the fact that my paintings are so colorful, because he wants to put in his clinic art that is near to people. Art that makes you feel good.

I am especially thankful to the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange and to Professor Michael Marshall who both made my residency at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo possible. I am also thankful to all of my new Hawaiian friends, who posed for me in the portraits and to the others who helped me with everything they could during my residency. Hopefully someday I will again visit Hawaii and continue my artistic work and collaboration with the people there. Mahalo!
The Stara Zagora region ranks third among the 28 regions in Bulgaria in terms of the Human Development Index and economic activity. Its industrial sector, services and agriculture are highly developed. In October 2004 FDI Magazine, a project of the Financial Times awarded the Stara Zagora Region – alongside the Zurich Region in Switzerland – First Prize for best quality of life in Europe, thanks to its newly built homes, low prices, and rich historical and cultural heritage.

Founded in 1995, Trakia University brought together several long-standing universities: the Higher Institute of Zootechnics and Veterinary Medicine, the Higher Institute of Human Medicine, the Human Medicine College, and the College for Training of Children’s Teachers, and the Technical College in Yambol.

Almost 600 highly qualified professors and guest lecturers educate over 8,000 students from Bulgaria and abroad in over 60 accredited BSc and MSc degrees and more than 90 PhD programs. At present, the university’s structure includes the following departments: Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Human Medicine with University Hospital, Economics, Pedagogy, Technology, Medical College, and Information and Teacher Training.

In recent years Trakia University has consistently ranked around fifth or sixth place in the ratings of 51 universities in Bulgaria and is member of the European Association of Universities (EUA) and the International Association of Universities (IAU).

Practical training is carried out on the university’s campus and in the region on experimental fields and animal farms; at the University Hospital; in veterinary clinics; in the Regional
Veterinary and Animal Breeding Centre; in elementary schools and kindergartens; in social welfare institution; as well as in financial institutions, private companies, and state enterprises.

In the last five years the university faculty has worked on a total of 440 research and educational projects in the frame of Erasmus+; Horizon 2020, 7 FP, COST, Marie Curie, Fulbright and on a number of national and university projects. Priority areas of research are in the fields of biotechnologies, food and health, ecology, biodiversity and natural environment, cultural and historical heritage, national identity, educational strategies, agricultural sciences, social environment, informational and communication technologies. The university publishing house publishes educational and scientific literature. Five scientific journals issued by the university in Bulgarian and English language promote the research results.

Trakia University has signed bilateral agreements for with over 60 universities and organizations worldwide. An excellent example is the collaboration with Agricultural and Veterinary colleges of Iowa State University of Science and Technology on various educational and research activities – a study abroad program, the faculty exchange program, the Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellowship program and the Fulbright program.

The university infrastructure includes modern lecture and computer halls, seminar rooms, labs and clinics and specialised diagnostic labs for education and research. In 2012 the new campus was opened - one of the most modern in country. The new America for Bulgaria National Center for Professional Training and Competence was created with ABF support in 2015 as a basic scientific and practice-oriented unit of Trakia University. It is a place for research, consulting and innovation in the dairy cattle and sheep farms, in close collaboration with Iowa State University of Science and Technology (USA) and with universities from member-states of the EU. The center also coordinates practical training of students in various international exchange programs.

The Informational Centre and Department Libraries hold over 300,000 volumes of literature and specialized periodicals in Bulgarian, English, French, German and Russian. Domestic and international book exchange is carried out with 35 countries and 108 universities. There is continuous access to databases such as SCOPUS, Science Direct, ISI Web of Knowledge, Pro Quest Central, EBSCO; CAB Abstracts; Springer Link, and AGORA. Guests to Trakia University can also visit the Museum of Horses and Equestrian Sport, as well as the Museums of Agricultural Education and Veterinary Medicine in Bulgaria.

Trakia University students live either on campus or in Stara Zagora, where they can enjoy numerous restaurants, bars and shops. The university also has its own sports facilities for over 15 different kinds of sports: football, basketball, volleyball, tennis, track and field, aerobics, martial arts, bodybuilding, and more. Students have opportunity to practice and improve their talents in Bulgarian Folk Dance, Latino and Sport Dances, vocal ensemble singing and theater. In these activities, Trakia University students perform very well at the regional and international level. The Student Council has initiated various types of charitable, volunteer, and sports activities.

With its young age but deep roots in education and science Trakia University- Stara Zagora offers its students a great place for education, sports, entertainment and success after graduation.
On September 27, 2016, the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange held a ceremony for the official opening of its new office at 12 Vitosha Boulevard in Sofia. The US Ambassador to Bulgaria, HE Eric Rubin, took part in the ceremony and gave a short speech highlighting the international importance of the Fulbright educational exchange programs.

Angela Rodel, Executive Director of the Commission, expressed gratitude to former Minister Todor Tanev and his team for their active support for the provision of the necessary office space by the Bulgarian side and read a greeting address by Meglena Kuneva, current Bulgarian Minister of Education and Science. Professor Boyan Dobrev of the National Art Academy presented his new work, a 2.2 x 6 meter mural in the new Fulbright board room, which represents the Fulbright exchange program as a “spiritual bridge” between cultures. The mural was created using the "TATTOOWALL" digital printing method, which is being applied for the first time in Bulgaria, and was a gift to the Commission by the professor, who is a two-time alumnus of the Fulbright program. Commission board and staff, as well as alumni, partners and guests enjoyed a cocktail reception the same evening to celebrate the new space.
Shelby Carvalho, Fulbright ETA in Targovishte in 2012/2013, is currently working at the World Bank on education and labor issues. This year, she worked with the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (chaired by Gordon Brown) to produce the “Learning Generation” report. This report is a global review of the state of education and identifies innovative pathways to improve access to education and learning outcomes for all, with a specific focus on those furthest behind. Her work focused primarily on developing the cost projection and finance model which outlines historical trends in spending for education and mechanisms to help donors and countries finance education systems and initiatives that have the potential to get all students learning at the secondary completion level by 2030. The report was presented and well-received at the UNGA in September. Irina Bokova and Ban Ki Moon were part of the UNGA panel discussing the report and seemed very pleased with the report and recommendations.

Fulbright alum and great friend of Bulgaria, ethnomusicologist Professor Timothy Rice from the University of California at Los Angeles was awarded the honorary degree Doctor Honoris Causa of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. The ceremony took place in the Main Hall of Sofia University on May 10, 2016, followed by a lecture by Professor Rice.

After 12 years spent at the American University in Bulgaria as a senior faculty member, Professor Miroslav Mateev, 2001 Fulbright scholar, is now the Acting Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs of the American University in the Emirates, Dubai. Recently he published a new research textbook titled: *Mergers and Acquisitions in Europe: Comparative Analysis of the UK and Continental Europe* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2016).

The prestigious publishing house Routledge has just published Sofia University Professor Plamen Makariev’s monograph *The Public Legitimacy of Minority Claims: A Central/Eastern European Perspective* (2016). An important part of this study was conducted in Washington, D.C. during his Fulbright visit in 2012, as he kindly notes in the book’s Preface.
Professor Petya Osenova, 2009-10 Fulbright scholar, published a book based on her research in computer linguistics at Stanford University. The is book called *Grammatical Modeling of the Bulgarian Language* and contributes to Dr. Osenova’s professorship title at Sofia University, awarded in morphology, syntax and corpus linguistics. The Foreword gives special thanks to the Fulbright Commission.

In February 2016, University of Brunei Professor Kong Ho, who was a Fulbright Scholar at the National Academy of Arts in 2009-2010, published a new book called *Larger Than Life: Mural Dreamscape*. In the book, he presents the impact of community mural on community in terms of educational, social, cultural, historical and technological contexts through his Fulbright Scholarship in teaching mural painting in Bulgaria and his community mural projects in Brunei Darussalam. The cover of the book features the mural Professor Ho developed with his students from the National Academy of Arts, and which can still be seen in the main building of the Academy. The book can be purchased through Amazon.

In April 2016, Brian Farrell, Fulbright Scholar at Sofia University in 2012/2013, was an invited expert for the annual doctoral seminar of the Irish Centre for Human Rights in Galway, Ireland, where he delivered a talk titled “World Habeas Corpus Revisited”. In June 2016, Brian was awarded the Iowa State Bar Association Young Lawyers Division’s 2016 Award of Merit. He was also recently appointed to serve on the Iowa Supreme Court’s Access to Justice Commission. His book *Habeas Corpus in International Law* will be published by Cambridge University Press in the next few months.

George Siedel from the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business, Fulbright Specialist at Sofia University in 2001 and FISI professor (2002-2014), recently developed a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) entitled “Successful Negotiation: Essential Strategies and Skills.” To date, close to 400,000 learners have enrolled in the course. George has also developed a free app that provides planning tools for negotiation and contains information about the course: negotiationplanner.com. His recent books *Proactive Law for Managers: A Hidden Source of Competitive Advantage* and *The Three Pillar Model for Business Decisions: Strategy, Law and Ethics* are available for sale on Amazon.

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Professor Temenuzhka Seizova-Nankova of Shumen University, who was a Fulbright scholar in 2008-2009 at Ohio State University, published a 340-page monograph entitled *Lexicogrammar of V_hand(s) Collocations. A Corpus-driven Analysis* (Konstantin Preslavsky University Press).
OF THIS NEW WORLD:
A Conversation with Allegra Hyde
by Angela Rodel

In September of 2015, Allegra Hyde was plunged into a new world— that of a Fulbright/ABF English Teaching Assistant in Haskovo. The Williams College graduate, who also holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Arizona State University, taught English at the Professor Dr. Asen Zlatarov Language High School, where she also created an extra-curricular student club for creative writing, which culminated in the publication of a volume of student works funded by the Fulbright Commission.

In this edition of “Fulbright Fiction,” Allegra Hyde talks to ED Angela Rodel about her new book and reflects on her experiences in Bulgaria.

All of the stories in Of This New World are connected by the theme of utopia. What makes this topic especially relevant now?

On a purely historical note, 2016 marks the 500th anniversary of Thomas More’s Utopia, the book responsible for the word’s coinage. Linguistic lore suggests the word was meant to be a pun, meaning both “good place” and “no place.” A paradox by definition. My book takes this paradox to heart by exploring the strained coexistence of lofty ideals and practical concerns. In a global society evolving as rapidly as ours—technologically, demographically,
environmentally—the way in which we navigate these issues is of increasing significance. Of This New World explores some of the ways in which individuals and communities do that navigating.

**How did you become interested in utopianism?**

When I was seventeen, I made my mother drive me two hours to the site of Fruitlands, a short-lived proto-vegan community in Harvard, Massachusetts. Ostensibly, I was writing a history paper. Really, I was fascinated by the sheer bravado of these antebellum utopianists who planned to live off fruit through a New England winter. The whole enterprise seemed admirably courageous, but also inexplicably foolish. I was hooked. Since then, I have continued to study and even participate in numerous utopian endeavors. I worked at an eco-community in the Bahamas, for instance, and backpacked through New Zealand hippie communes (the country has more per capita than anywhere else). I am continually captivated by utopianism in part because it can be considered on such a large scale—in relation to nation-building, civilization—but also because it has profound implications for our inner lives. As individuals, we constantly have to reconcile our expectations for ourselves with our abilities and circumstances.

**Do you think utopianism is particularly American?**

Definitely. When Christopher Columbus arrived in the would-be Americas, he described the land as Edenic. In his letters to Ferdinand and Isabella, he even goes so far as to say he was close to locating Biblical paradise itself. Columbus was, of course, a megalomaniac who massacred indigenous people, but this initial conception of America as the Promised Land has stuck. My collection steers, roughly, through a large span of the American imagination. Starting with a retelling of Genesis, the stories touch on everything from Puritan colonizers to hippie communes to life in a futuristic Mars Colony. So much of what makes Americans American is that we believe paradise is possible if only we work harder, push farther, continue believing in our dreams. This is, if anything, fiercely utopian.

**Many Bulgarians, especially in the early years of the “Transition,” also saw America as the Promised Land, an escape from post-socialist “Dystopia” – did you encounter this attitude among your Bulgarian students and acquaintances during your Fulbright experience? How is the Bulgarian take on utopia different from the American one?**

Bulgarians seemed to approach the prospect of utopia with greater caution. That said, there was variation within age groups and socioeconomic status. Some students certainly saw America—or the UK—as the Promised Land in terms of education. Overall, though, the Bulgarians I met seemed to put the most stock in what might be called “micro-utopias.” They looked for a slice of paradise in an afternoon spent at a café with friends and family, talking and drinking espresso. It’s a smaller-scale utopia, perhaps ephemeral—but it’s also much less pie in the sky.

**While in Haskovo you led a student creative-writing club. What sorts of topics and themes were of most interest to your students?**

Just like American youths, my Bulgarian high school students were interested in writing about their forays into first love. This is, I imagine, universal territory for teenagers. They also wrote some wonderful pieces about growing up in Bulgaria, the experience of trying to fit in, and the importance of family. Lastly, some of the older students did great work with satire, including a memorable piece that asked “Why Give a Damn?” and made a compelling case against apathy.

**Has your Fulbright experience in Bulgaria influenced your writing or future choice of themes in any way?**

I have been writing about utopianism for a while now, and living in Bulgaria strengthened my resolve to continue exploring the ramifications of utopian-thinking. What keeps the human imagination fixated on paradise? When and how do utopian visions go wrong? I am still processing much of my experience on Bulgaria—there’s a lot of material to unpack—and I have no doubt it will continue to play a role in future writing. It’s such a fascinating country, both historically and in the ways it continues to evolve. I’m excited to see how it will shape my writing as I move forward.
After the beginning, even seven days out, my husband still made me crazy.

We had been given a pile of sheepskins upon our expulsion—that was all. That and the promise of eternal suffering.

My husband seemed unable to get over this. Seven days out, and by midmorning he still lay sprawled across the fleecy blankets lining our lean-to. I had built the lean-to; I had set pine-boughs against a low branch to suggest some semblance of separation between the wilderness and us. A weak defense against new dangers (Yes, I still remember when there was only one danger), but a defense nonetheless.

By noon, though, the pine-boughs could not keep out the sun. Light jabbed between branches, waking my husband. He groaned and stretched his legs. His thigh muscles quivered.

“Put something on,” I hissed, adjusting my own leafy apron.

He tugged a sheepskin across his lap and looked away, still unwilling to speak to me (Yes, I remember disregarding that first danger).

Even so, I told him I’d found a place to cultivate some food. I told him that without his labor we would never survive. I told him that he had to—he needed to—get up. He still said nothing.
I decided to be good then: to feel shame and be bent by it.

* 

My daydreaming made this difficult. I could not gather reeds or collect firewood or mend the lean-to without drifting into other places: to that lush ambrosial garden, the once warm cavern of my husband’s embrace. All morning I swatted flies and images. To concentrate, I clutched tight to my guilt. I gave myself more chores. And yet, even as I wove reeds in the lacy shade of apple trees (*They were everywhere, those trees, growing wild and wormy like unfunny jokes*), I could not resist looking across the field to where my husband stood, head bowed. Lost in his thoughts.

“Gardens don’t grow on their own,” I called. A reminder, I suppose, that neither of us needed.

My husband stabbed a stick at the soil, ignoring me. I gave up on weaving reeds and went back to fetching firewood.

All day my husband tilled the soil, sulkily. By late afternoon, his skin had turned red and raw from the sun. His flesh was glossed with sweat.

“At your rate,” I said, “maybe we’ll have something to eat in three years.”

“Graah!” he yelled at last, throwing the stick down and striding into the forest.

Even as he disappeared, even as my own fingers bled from dryness and blisters, I dreamed. I thought about the intersection of our bodies, of shadows blooming in the sticky convergence of hip to hip.

* 

My husband returned at nightfall, bruised, bee-stung, covered in mud. Empty-handed.

I wanted to laugh at the mess, the way we used to giggle at everything. There was a time when a bee string would have been hilarious, even beautiful.

My husband slunk into the lean-to and curled up among sheepskins, silent.

There were only apples to eat. We had been eating them raw for seven days. This must have been part of our punishment: to find ourselves nauseous from the sweet flesh, to start hating the snap of teeth through skin, the bite once wrongly desired. But there was nothing else to eat, so that night I mashed the fruit together and placed it on a flat rock near the fire.

“We should name this,” I said, presenting the warm mush to my husband. Words, in those days, could still be plucked from the air. “How about . . .” I paused, awaiting the mouth-tingle of a new sound “. . . how about ‘pie’?”

He smiled—an expression I had not seen in days—and chewed slowly.

This was the first thing we had named since our expulsion.

I watched my husband, his face illuminated by our bonfire, his eyes tracing the arc of my collarbone, the curve of my breasts. The nakedness he’d only recently learned to see.

*I will be good. I will feel shame and be bent by it.*

That night we lay together on the pile of sheepskins, alone in a forest of shrieks and howls. I listened to the creatures outside—clawed and toothed—among which I’d once roamed freely. There were so many dangers now. So many clefts and cracks in the walls of our lean-to. So little we could do.

That night, our limbs entwined, my husband breathed softly, deeply.

And me: I dreamt of fields of grain and wicker baskets and paradise.