

The European Association for American Studies — Transatlantic Grant Report
By Stephan Delbos

My research visit to the Poetry Collection at the State University of New York at Buffalo was absolutely invaluable to the research I am conducting for my dissertation in post-World War II American poetry, and would not have been possible without the generous assistance of the EAAS. Because of the grant, I was able to accommodate near the university, where I spent each day immersed in the rich collection of manuscripts and correspondence from poets and editors who are central to my research, including Donald Allen, Cid Corman, and Robert Duncan. In addition, I had access to hundreds of first editions of rare books that I would not have been able to read otherwise. The research I was able to complete during my stay in Buffalo has fundamentally altered my conception of this period of American poetry, as well as my approach to it. I was able to read and skim thousands of pages of documents during my visit, and I came away with a much clearer conception of my knowledge base as well as a concrete path for moving forward from research to completion of my dissertation.

At the library, Dr. Michael Basinski and Dr. James Maynard were both extremely helpful, not only accessing books and documents, but also pointing me in specific directions I might not have recognized otherwise. These guides to the collection not only increased its general accessibility, but also supplemented my research with their enthusiasm and knowledge.

One unexpected result of my research stay was the humanizing effect it had on my conception of the poets I am researching. Reading through these poets' notebooks and original correspondence transformed my ideas about them. No longer do I consider them isolated and abstract literary figures, but I recognize that each of these poets were individuals, with personal lives, aspirations and concerns. While I'm not sure that this realization will be clearly evident in my dissertation, I have no doubt that it has positively contributed to my sensibility, allowing me a wider range of appreciation, and a fuller sense of the basic humanity of even the most sublime authors.

Visiting a literary collection as rich as the Poetry Collection is simply overwhelming. The one piece of advice Dr. Basinski gave me before my arrival was to have a clear idea of what I wanted to do there. The collection contains so much intriguing material that a researcher can go in any number of directions. This advice proved invaluable, as I did indeed find myself tempted to study various documents and manuscripts for reasons of pure personal interest. Thankfully, I was largely able to resist this temptation, and I stayed focused on the task at hand with positive results.

I cannot adequately express my gratitude to the EAAS for allowing me this research opportunity. As George Orwell wrote, "Good writing is clear thinking." I believe this research trip has allowed me to undertake both activities — writing and thinking — with a clearer sense of purpose, clearer goals, and an increased facility.