



## WELCOME TO THE UNION

### CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

with Dr Mike Phillips OBE and Guests: Dr Alex Drace-Francis, Dr Wendy Webster, and Dr Ruxandra Trandafoiu

Friday 14 November 2008

19.00, The Contemporary Urban Centre, 41-51 Greenland Street, Liverpool L1 0BS • [See map](#)  
Tel. 0151 708 3510.

Free Entry. Further details from [mail@profusion.org.uk](mailto:mail@profusion.org.uk)



**Welcome to the Union** is part of the **Romanian Connections** programme, the first major exercise in promoting Romania in North West England. **Romanian Connections** is centred on two theatre shows of the 'Radu Stanca' National Theatre of Sibiu (see full programme at [www.romanianculturalcentre.org.uk/connections](http://www.romanianculturalcentre.org.uk/connections)). In order to create the basis of a better understanding of the richness of the Romanian cultural phenomena, The Ratiu Foundation / Romanian Cultural Centre in London, in partnership with ProFusion International Creative Consultancy, have initiated a series of connected events, of which this debate on contemporary Romania is the first.

Dr Mike Phillips OBE, Dr Alex Drace-Francis (University of Liverpool), Dr Wendy Webster (University of Central Lancashire), and Dr Ruxandra Trandafoiu (Edge Hill University) tackle the issues of contemporary Romania in the European context in front of a Liverpoolian audience. Join us for a

fascinating and important debate.

“The status of Capital of Culture has become a new icon of European culture, a display window for European identity. On the other hand, current rhetoric about culture and the arts ignores a myriad of issues and problems, notably the cultural role and identity of accession states like Romania.

The problem is that the process by which the accession states have entered membership has been discussed in terms largely dominated by politics and economics. In the last two years the issue of migration has moved to centre stage, but, once again, its importance has been framed in economic terms. In the meantime the cultures on both sides of the continent continue to be misunderstood and misrepresented, as if the closer the two parties approach, the more obscure and difficult their true natures become. Even more interesting the invention of mythologies about the nation become more and more frenzied as each one feels the impact of the other.

The case of Romania and the EU is the platform for this discussion, which sidesteps the fog of acquisition and competition, and takes the understanding and exploration of cultural faultlines as its starting point. How do we understand the history of cultural interaction and what does it mean? In cultural terms, which is more important - an encounter with a migrant worker, or the high profile artist tour? What do we believe (or more important, what do we feel) about each other? How do these attitudes affect, migrants and migration, political and social responses and the culture of Europe as a whole?” - *Mike Phillips*

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#### **DR MIKE PHILLIPS OBE, FRSL, FRSA**

Author Mike Phillips was born in Georgetown, Guyana. He came to Britain as a child and grew up in London. He was educated at the University of London (English), the University of Essex (politics), and at Goldsmiths College London (education).

He worked for the BBC as a journalist and broadcaster between 1972 and 1983 on radio and television programmes including *The Late Show* and *Omnibus*, before becoming a lecturer in media studies at the University of Westminster. He has written full-time since 1992. He is best known for his crime fiction, including four novels featuring black journalist Sam Dean: *Blood Rights* (1989), which was adapted for BBC television, *The Late Candidate* (1990), winner of the Crime Writers' Association Silver Dagger Award, *Point of Darkness* (1994) and *An Image to Die For* (1995). *The Dancing Face* (1998) is a thriller centred on a priceless Benin mask. His novel *A Shadow of Myself* (2000) is a thriller about a black documentary filmmaker working in Prague and a man who claims to be his brother.

Mike Phillips co-wrote *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (1998) to accompany a BBC television series telling the story of the Caribbean migrant workers who settled in post-war Britain. His book *London Crossings: A Biography of Black Britain* (2001) is a series of interlinked essays and stories, a portrait of the city seen from locations as diverse as New York and Nairobi, London and Lodz, Washington and Warsaw. Mike writes for the Guardian, is a former trustee of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund, and now serves as an expert panellist. Mike is a former curator at Tate, and is now working as an independent curator in the international arena.

In 2007 he was awarded the OBE for his services to broadcasting.

#### **DR ALEX DRACE-FRANCIS**

Alex Drace-Francis is Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Liverpool. He is the author of a book, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture* (2006), and with Wendy Bracewell has recently edited a bibliography and a volume of studies on East European travel experiences in Europe from the sixteenth century to the present. His articles, chapters and reviews on Romanian and Balkan history, literature and identity have appeared in a wide variety of periodicals and reference works.

#### **DR WENDY WEBSTER**

Wendy Webster is Professor of Contemporary British history and works particularly on questions of gender, 'race', ethnicity, imperialism and national identity. She teaches a number of modules in these areas and welcomes enquiries from research students interested in exploring any of these questions, or the history of post-war British film.

Her major recent project, funded by research leave from the AHRB, was on the impact of loss of empire on British and English culture and identity. Published as *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965* (Oxford University Press, 2005), it won the prize for the best work in the field of media and history from the International Association for Media and History in 2006. The judges commended *Englishness and Empire* as 'an engaging history of the relationship between the British people and their Empire during the years of transformation, 1939-65, as seen through the prism of the media ... It is an excellent example of the value of media evidence for historians and will remain a standard text for years to come'. Wendy was presented with the prize at the IAMHIST conference in Amsterdam in July 2007, where she gave a plenary address.

Wendy is currently a Leverhulme Research Fellow, working on a project on 'Englishness and Europe, 1940-1973' which explores the significance of Europe to English identity in the period from Dunkirk to Britain's entry into the

EEC. She is also reviews editor for *Women's History Review*, and a member of its editorial board.

**DR RUXANDRA TRANDAFOIU**

Dr Ruxandra Trandafoiu teaches media and communication at Edge Hill University. A former journalist in Romania, she left the country in 1997 to pursue several postgraduate research projects at Central European University, the University of Edinburgh and Westminster University, culminating with a PhD charting the link between the national press and nationalist ideologies. Her main research interests are diasporic communication, online social networks, globalisation culture and identity, the post-communist transition and the European Union. She is currently co-writing a book on globalization culture and media and also working on a British Academy funded project researching the communicative and political potential of online diasporic networks in Europe and North America. Recent publications and conference papers have also focused on the issue of European identity and Euroscepticism.

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This debate is organised by the Ratiu Foundation/Romanian Cultural Centre in partnership with ProFusion International Creative Consultancy.

**Romanian Connections** is under the patronage of Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008.



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