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The first time I met Josef was in 1986, at one of the biennial conferences of the European Association of American Studies in Budapest, the first one ever to take place in what was then “Eastern Europe.” Werner Sollors pointed him out to me as one of the foremost European scholars in the field of African American literature and culture, and a connoisseur of jazz. He looked at me benignly—as he still looks now (in fact, I remember his face as a constant beyond change and time, as always having that warm and friendly expression, no matter what color hair or beard it may now have). A man who trusts, even though he knows himself to be part of a world that cannot be trusted. If memory does not deceive me, I met him again some ten years later at Werner Sollors’s house in Boston—probably in connection with the ASA conference that took place there in 1996 (or was it in 1994?). I seem to remember, in any case, a long night of drinking and talking—a convivial unity of souls that made his benign face a body-feeling of kindred-spiritedness. When he joined the Board of the EAAS shortly after I had become its president, it dawned on me that he would be an ideal successor—a symbolic bridge connecting the newly united but still divided Europe, his presidency marking the symbolic shift within the European Association to a new center, from Western to Central Europe. (By then, I had also heard of his heroics vis-à-vis the Russian army in Olomouc and knew of the extraordinary role that he, an academic for whom academia was never quite enough, played in the political dramas of the new Czech Republic.) I was, of course, romanticizing and anticipating a Europe that even Josef Jařab could not bring about. It will take more time and patience; *and* wisdom; *and* an understanding of differences historically grown and suffered that can only be overcome in mutual tolerance via patient and insistent acts of communication. This is what Josef Jařab has always represented for me: a kindness that knows of hatred; an openness of spirit that knows the price paid for repression, and a humaneness that knows of suffering. For me, he is a great communicator and the representative of a Europe still to come.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### PERSONALIA

*Marcel Arbeit and Michal Peprník*  
Living Cultural Plurality: A Tribute to Josef Jařab ..... 5

*Heinz Ickstadt*  
Josef Jařab ..... 13

### ARTICLES

*Marcel Arbeit*  
Josef Jařab: A Comprehensive Bibliography, 1966–2009 ..... 15

*Werner Sollors*  
Not On Native Grounds ..... 49

*Šárka Bubíková*  
Multicultural Optimism or the Potential Joys of Otherness ..... 55

*Stanislav Kolář*  
Ethnicity and Some Other Aspects of Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* ..... 67

*Petr Kopecký*  
Jazz, Poetry, Ethnicity, and Democracy in the Work of Gary Snyder ..... 81

*Alexandra Hubáčková*  
Breathing Out the Words of a Different World: American Indian Authors  
Writing in English ..... 89

*Tomáš Pospíšil*  
Frictions in the City: Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* vs. Paul Haggis's  
*Crash* ..... 101

### BOOK REVIEWS

*Time Refigured: Myths, Foundation Texts & Imagined Communities*  
edited by Martin Procházka and Ondřej Pilný (reviewed by Radek  
Glabazňa) ..... 113

*Conformism, Non-Conformism and Anti-Conformism in the Culture  
of the United States*, edited by Antonis Balasopoulos, Gesa  
Mackenthun, and Theodora Tsimpouki (reviewed by Jan Burda) ..... 116