

The Slavic Scene

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- 2 **Letter From The Chair**
- 3 **Highlights**
- 4–5 **Congratulations Graduates**
- 6 **Undergraduate Focus**
- 7 **Graduate Student Focus**
- 8–9 **Feature**
- 10–11 **In the Classroom**
- 12–13 **In Print**
- 14–15 **Staying Connected**

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES



The Slavic Scene

Letter From the Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mikhail Krutikov".

Dear Friends,

It's a great honor for me to be appointed the new Chair of our renowned Slavic Department after Herb Eagle and Jindrich Toman did such a great job by making it a very dynamic and exciting place to work. My own area of expertise is Jewish culture in Eastern Europe, particularly Yiddish literature, and I hold a joint appointment with the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. My research interests and teaching profile fit very well with the conceptual framework of our department which prides itself on teaching an impressive array of five Slavic languages and covering a large geographic area from East-Central Europe to Central Asia. Thanks to our dedicated and knowledgeable faculty, we are expanding our cultural and spatial range by teaching new courses, such as Literature and Empire, Russia in Central Asia (Professor Olga Maiorova), and the Cultures of the Baltic Countries (Professor Sofya Khagi). Next winter, Professor Michael Makin will offer an exciting new course: Sport in Russia.

Despite the overall negative trend in the Humanities across the country, we have seen an increase in the number of Slavic majors—this year we had six students graduate with a Russian major and one student graduate with a Polish major—and we expect a robust class of seven in 2017. Our Ukrainian program is also growing: we now offer three years of language and a selection of courses on literature and culture taught by our dedicated lecturers Eugene Bondarenko and Svitlana Rogovsky. Svitlana was recently awarded the ACTFL OPI Full Tester Certification in Ukrainian. The mini-courses and first-year seminars in Polish and Roma culture taught by our lecturers Piotr

Westwalewicz and Ewa Malachowska-Pasek are traditionally popular among a diverse body of undergraduate students.

This year we expect five of our graduate students to defend their dissertations. Our recent graduates have done well in the current tough academic market: Vlad Beronja (PhD '14) has landed a tenure-track position at the University of Texas, Austin, and Jessica Zychowicz (PhD '15) received a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto.

This academic year has been productive in terms of research and publications. Olga Maiorova coedited a comprehensive collection, *Dostoevsky in Context* (see article on page 12), published by Cambridge University Press; Benjamin Paloff published a translation of *The Game for Real*, a novel by the Czech avant-garde author Richard Weiner, as well as a collection of his own poetry (featured in our last issue, Fall 2015); Jindrich Toman curated an exhibition of the prominent Czech artist and designer Zdeněk Rossmann at the Moravian Gallery in Brno and prepared a comprehensive catalogue of his works. A collection *Children in Yiddish Literature: from Early Modernity to Post-Modernity*, edited by my colleagues and myself, was published by the Legenda Press in Oxford.

We have enjoyed an exciting and busy year around the department. Have a relaxing and productive summer ahead,

Mikhail Krutikov

Chair, and Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Judaic Studies

The Slavic Scene

Highlights

Department Hosts Guest Speakers and Student Events

During the 2015–16 academic year, our Department hosted a number of stimulating talks by invited lecturers and also co-sponsored a few exciting events.

In **October**, Dr. Polina Barskova, a professor of Russian at Hampshire College and a well-known Russian poet, had an engaging conversation with Professor Benjamin Paloff about the ways in which archival academic research interacts with their poetic creativity. Responding to Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievich's Nobel Prize, our faculty organized two panels for students where they read and discussed her works in Russian and English. Members of our faculty actively participated in the symposium co-sponsored by our department, "Resistance in Red: Soviet Jewish Combatants in World War II." A highlight of the symposium was a screening of the 1965 film *Eastern Corridor*, which was banned by Soviet censorship and was seen for the first time outside the former Soviet Union here at U-M.

In **November**, Dr. Kirill Ospovat, a visiting lecturer at Princeton University, shared with our faculty and graduate students his new original interpretation of Nikolai Gogol's classical tale, "Old-World Landowners." Students also enjoyed our annual Russian Fall Social, which highlighted Joseph Brodsky's poetry, and our annual celebration of St. Andrew's Night, a Polish holiday.

In **December**, Dr. Michal Frankl, the deputy director of the Prague Jewish Museum, and Northwestern University Professor Benjamin Frommer discussed the reactions of the Czechoslovak government to the refugee crisis caused by the expulsion of Jews from Nazi-occupied Austria in the summer of 1938.

In **February**, Ilya Kukulin, an associate professor at the Higher School of Economics and a well-known Russian poet and critic, presented two events. Our students and faculty had an opportunity to discuss the impact of the internet on contemporary Russian poetry with him in a relaxed setting,

and to hear a thought-provoking public talk about the transformation of avant-garde stylistic devices from Sergei Eisenstein to Alexandre Solzhenitsyn.

In **March**, Dr. Maria Maiofis, an associate professor at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, discussed the impact of the "Thaw," the post-Stalin liberalization of the late 1950's, on the development of Soviet children's literature.

In **April**, University of Maryland Professor Mikhail Dolbilov gave a lecture exploring the historical contexts of Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*. As part of the final project in fourth-year Russian, students presented a play in Russian entitled *Office Romance*, adapted from the play *Coworkers*, written by Emil Braginskiy and Eldar Ryazanov, to a delighted audience of faculty and students.

We look forward to exciting guest speakers and events in 2016–17!



Students after the Joseph Brodsky reading at the Russian Fall Social in November



Students used flashlights for wax fortunes at St. Andrew's Night in November



Students participated in Maslenitsa activity in February



Students used traditional Slavic egg decorating techniques to make pysanka in April

The Slavic Scene

Congratulations Graduates

2016 Slavic Graduates



Russian Majors:

Professor Michael Makin, David Zenkel, Mia Kataisto, Catherine Doyle, Cameron Bailey, Department Chair Mikhail Krutikov
not pictured: Ekaterina Weir-Witmer, Maize Woodford*



Polish Major:

Lecturer Piotr Westwalewicz, Natalie Jaszcza*, Lecturer Ewa Malachowska-Pasek
not pictured:



Russian Minors:

Professor Michael Makin, Trevor Picard, Alexis Springer
not pictured: Alisa Aliaj, Delaney Danca**, Polina Fradkin, Dylan Kossek, Mackenzie Moug*



Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian Minor:

Milos Giljen, Lecturer Marija Rosic

not pictured:

Ukrainian Minors:
Katerina Chekhovskiy
Maxym Tkacz

Polish Minors:
Dennis Smythe
Nicole Wilkins

PhD, Slavic Languages & Literatures:
Meghan Forbes**
Eric Ford**
Jodi Greig**

* denotes December 2015 Graduate
**denotes August 2016 Graduate

The Slavic Scene

Departmental Award Winners



Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian Language Studies Award:
Eva Fall, Katarina Vickovic,
Lecturer Marija Rosic



Czech Language Studies Award:
Lecturer Ewa Malachowska-Pasek, Alexis L'Esperance



Polish Language Studies Award:
Lecturer Ewa Malachowska-Pasek, Gabrielle Wasilewski
not pictured: David Cichocki



Russian Language Studies Award:
Lecturer Svitlana Rogovsky,
Mark Dovich
not pictured: Marah Brinjikji



Ukrainian Language Studies Award:
Tara Bayer, Lecturer Svitlana Rogovsky
not pictured: Natalie Drobny



Essay Award:
Professor Michael Makin,
Yimeng Zhao
not pictured: Aliya Brown



Go to <https://www.facebook.com/umslavic/> to view the complete photo album from our graduation reception.

The Slavic Scene

Undergraduate Student Focus

Third-Year Polish Student Receives Copernicus Award

By Ewa Mooney



My name is Ewa Mooney, and in January 2016, I was lucky enough to receive a Copernicus Tuition Grant to help me take a 300-level Polish class during the winter semester. I am a graduating senior majoring in Classics and English, and this grant allowed me to continue working on my Polish language skills, an interest very much outside my normal course of study. Although I grew up in a Polish speaking household, I became very rusty and knew that I would have to study Polish in order to reclaim any kind of fluency. At the beginning of this semester, I was facing a dilemma: I wanted very much to continue with my Polish studies, but as an out-of-state student, the

tuition increase from adding my Polish class to an already full plate of classes was prohibitive. By receiving the Copernicus Tuition Grant, it was possible for me to continue with my study of Polish. I am very grateful to receive this grant and particularly to keep working with the wonderful Pani Ewa Pasek. My classroom experience, supported by textbook reading and conversation and enriched by videos, the news, and supplemental material, has been rewarding as well as fun. Last semester the theme of our class was poetry; this semester, the college experience; it has been a lovely way to wrap up my own college experience!

Slavic Department and Copernicus Program in Polish Studies Offer Language Scholarships in Polish and Czech

The Slavic Department is pleased to partner with the Copernicus Program in Polish Studies to offer scholarships to eligible undergraduate students for Polish language study in summer 2016, as well as the coming academic year. These competitive scholarships are designed to assist in funding students' continued study of the Polish language here at U-M.

A selection committee evaluated the applications received for summer and two students were funded to begin their study of Polish abroad. Students enrolled in Polish at U-M will be eligible to apply for a \$500 scholarship in each academic term in 2016–2017 to continue their language study.

The Slavic Department is also pleased to announce a scholarship established in the 2016–2017 academic year for the study of Czech here at U-M. Eligible students will be awarded \$250 for their continued Czech language study. We are thrilled to be able to provide this support for students. Stay tuned for stories of our scholarship awardees!

These scholarships are possible through the support we receive from you, the friends and alumni of the department and Copernicus Program. Thank you!

The Slavic Scene

Graduate Student Focus

Paulina Duda Receives Rackham's Outstanding GSI Award

Slavic Department PhD candidate Paulina Duda received an Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) Award in April 2016 from the Rackham Graduate School. Each year Rackham recognizes the efforts and talents of GSIs whose teaching activity and curriculum development are far beyond the norm. Paulina taught First-Year Polish in 2015–2016, and has previously taught sections of courses on Polish and Central/East European film. Paulina writes of her teaching experience:

"My teaching philosophy—no matter whether I teach Polish language or Central and East European film and cultures—reflects an enduring desire to help students acquire useful skills for outside of the classroom. These skills include: open-mindedness and appreciation of other cultures, the ability to write in different genres, and articulating oneself in situations of disagreement or anxiety.

"In my effort to help students clearly communicate in real life, I use methods that focus on critical thinking and ways of overcoming anxiety barriers. For example, when talking about conversational topics depicted in Polish films (such as patriotism and gender roles), my students facilitate class discussion by sharing sample opinions on an online

forum before entering into class debate. This way they are familiar with alternative viewpoints and have had a chance to experiment with some ideas before they are forced to defend a point in class.

"Creating the bridge between the classroom and the community is the key to achieving my major learning objective concerned with appreciation of other cultures. For example, my students participate in film screenings organized by the Ann Arbor Polish Film Festival (AAPFF), which are followed by Q&A sessions with Polish filmmakers as well as conversations with members of the local Polish community. Last year it became clear that my students recognized the relevance of sharing Polish culture: some of them invited their entire families to participate in the event!

"I believe that students learn better when they can responsibly engage with alternative viewpoints and see the connections between their scholarship and the community. In short, I am always looking for ways to help my students acquire the real-life skills needed to pass the most important tests—those outside the university walls."



Photo: Alexander Holmes

Congratulations to our Graduate Students degree conferral date: August 19, 2016

Meghan Forbes



Meghan Forbes will defend her dissertation, "In the Middle of It All: Prague, Brno, and the Avant-Garde Networks of Interwar Europe," on June 23, 2016.

Eric Ford



Eric successfully defended his dissertation, "Revolving Beast: Identifying the Animal in Post-Revolutionary Russian Literature," on April 26, 2016.

Jodi Greig

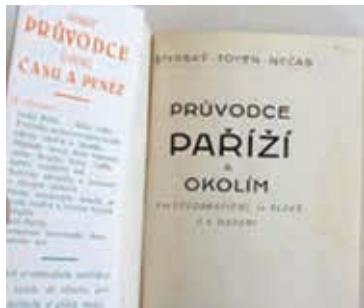


Jodi will defend her dissertation, "The Sandbox of History: Historical Play and National Narratives in Polish LGBTQ Culture," in July.

The Slavic Scene

Feature

A Postcard from Paris



On the afternoon of November 13, 2015, I set out from my apartment to John F. Kennedy Airport, Europe-bound. By the time I reached JFK many subway lines later, passed through security, and sat down to wait for my outbound flight, the sad news had made its way to me that there had been coordinated attacks across Paris that evening. But my flight to Prague left on time, and when I arrived in that city the following morning there were no perceivable special inspections at customs or an increased visibility of guards on the ground.

As I made my way from Prague to Paris via Berlin a month later, though, the train on which I crossed the Czech-German border was held for passport inspection, something I had not experienced in several years. A Czech friend had told me a few days earlier, too, of his train being detained at the German border while headed in the other direction, back into the Czech Republic. The recent events in Paris, unfortunately, have been used to strengthen resistance across Europe to welcoming refugees, namely from the Middle East and Africa. While it is estimated that Germany (led by Angela Merkel) took in over one million refugees in 2015, countries like the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary have been leading opponents to this "liberal" policy. The Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico has said following the attacks in Paris, "We have been saying that there are enormous security risks linked to migration. Hopefully, some people will open their eyes now." But a tightening of border controls within the EU impacts not only refugees, but EU citizens, who have enjoyed ID-free travel within the so-called Schengen area for decades now.

About the Author:
Meghan Forbes (PhD '16) has accepted a Czech lecturer position at the University of Texas at Austin for fall 2016.

By Meghan Forbes

Traveling around Europe in the midst of all this, conducting dissertation research on the Czech interwar avant-garde and its relationship to other major artistic centers of that period, I could not but think about renewed border controls in the EU territory within the context of, and in comparison to, travel in the period between the two World Wars. At that time, Europeans (as well as travelers from further afield) enjoyed a newly open, post-war terrain. The physical movement of bodies, facilitated also by new and faster modes of travel, helped to open up an unprecedented level of exchange between artists and intellectuals of diverse backgrounds and languages. In that brief window of freedom of movement between the two World Wars, Paris was a hub of such traffic, and many visitors came from Prague.

In a tour guide to Paris for Czech travelers, written by the artists Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen (who permanently emigrated to Paris after World War II), with the journalist Vincenc Nečas, the most direct route from Prague to Paris is provided in the opening "Practical Section." This route includes no less than eight stops through Germany before reaching the coveted destination, with a travel time of twenty-seven hours. But this journey, about ten hours longer than the train trip takes today (or twenty-five hours longer than a non-stop flight), did not deter the wander-lusting Central European of some means. The 800-plus page tour guide provides ample motivation to make the trip, with images of the Eiffel Tower (affectionately dubbed the "Eiffelka"), sumptuous maps of the city, a full section dedicated to "Paris by Night," and even a listing of the home addresses of some Parisian (though not necessarily French) writers, including Henri Bergson, Jean Cocteau, and Tristan Tzara. *(continued on next page)*

This article was originally published February 10, 2016, in *Michigan Quarterly Review*.

The Slavic Scene

Štyrský and Toyen were part of the Czech avant-garde group Devětsil, and many of its other members, too, made the journey, to stroll through the Luxembourg Gardens, visit the music halls, galleries, and salons, and meet with other artists and writers from around the world residing in Paris, such as Pablo Picasso and André Breton. Two of Devětsil's most prominent members, the artist and theorist Karel Teige and the poet Jaroslav Seifert (who would ultimately receive a Nobel Prize for Literature), made their first visit in 1922, in their early twenties. In his autobiography, titled *All the Beauty of the World*, Seifert recalls their time in interwar Paris affectionately. "When I was with Teige in Paris," he writes, "we would stroll daily to the entrance of the Louvre at our leisure." They had had new suites made from the finest English textiles in preparation for their trip, but, as Seifert recounts, "The Eiffel Tower, to which we had made our pilgrimage, looked upon us unmoved."

The characteristically blasé reception by Paris did not deter the enthusiasm of these young Czech travelers. In a letter by Teige to his friend Emý Häuslerová he reminisces a year later about that 1922 trip, where they also had the occasion to meet up: "Paris is an absolutely beautiful city, there is real life there, and where there is life, there is everything, beauty, industriousness, intensity, everything, everything. It is certainly not by chance that this city has bred the most exquisite forms of modern art: but, as you know, that art, however interesting, isn't anywhere near as beautiful as that life. The Louvre and purveyors of modern pictures are definitely something ce qu'il faut voir but nothing more."

Increased restrictions on travel in the name of stemming immigration in France and across Europe (not to mention the United States) now threaten to inhibit the life that Paris has at

times managed to foster by enfolding into its milieu citizens of diverse cultures and experience (though this is not to paint a utopianist portrait of Paris-past, a city that is also a dominant center of western hegemony, with its own fraught imperialist history). And there is no small element of irony that a country like the Czech Republic, whose citizens have enjoyed easy passage to Paris, and in recent memory also experienced what it is like to have their freedom of movement stymied from behind the Iron Curtain, would now join in efforts to limit the movements of others.

In his autobiography, Seifert, by then an old man in communist Prague, waxes nostalgic about the Paris he had visited in his early twenties: "In Paris it is beautiful, even when it rains. Not to mention when the weather is fair. [...] Farewell, Paris! You'll never again be so charming!"

Last year was a rainy one for Paris, a city still beautiful despite the armed guards that were a regular fixture of the winter month I spent there. They stood in front of churches at Christmas, strolled near the boulangeries and libraries I frequented, and—most ominously—were posted outside of apartment buildings. An extended state of emergency was declared in France in the days following the November 13 attack, and Prime Minister Manuel Valls has maintained that it warrants "temporary restrictions on liberties." The state of emergency is scheduled to expire at the end of this month, but, despite public protests and "accusations that officials were unfairly targeting binational citizens," the French government seeks to extend it now.



Cover of *Průvodce Paříží* [A Paris Travel Guide] by Štyrský, Toyen, and Nečas (Prague: Odeon, 1927). Image reproduced from artbook.cz.

The Slavic Scene

In the Classroom

Literature and Empire: Nineteenth-Century Russian Prose

This winter, I offered a new course on the Russian empire and nineteenth-century literature to engage students in conversations about imperialism, racism, and gender while exploring literary masterpieces by Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Leskov, and Chekhov. Teaching a new course is always a mixture of excitement and challenge. But teaching a class on literature and empire involves a more specific conundrum. When we think of Russia, past or present, we associate it with imperialist ambition, brutal military conquests, and abrupt annexations. But in terms of its contributions to the world, we think

of Russia as home to a unique culture, universally acclaimed for its humanistic ethos, empathy, and psychological depth. Unpacking this conundrum and exploring the connection (and tensions) between the imperial project and literary developments in a classroom full of self-motivated students made this course truly thrilling for me. Students quickly grasped and began to analyze the empire-literature entanglement—something that scholars began to study relatively recently. We probed the ways in which the imperial drive influenced—and was artistically meditated by—nineteenth-century literature. We

examined Russia's textual encounters with its remote borderlands as well as works that offered no explicit treatment of the periphery, but were informed by the imperial project. We asked difficult questions about whether or not Russia's brutal projection of sovereign authority over others relates to artistic issues of genre, style, and subjectivity. This broad approach helped us to understand how dramatically Russian literature was shaped by the political, historical, and imaginative demands of the empire.

By Olga Maiorova

Polish Drama in Context: Page to Stage, Street to Screen



Teatr Ósmego Dnia (Theatre of the Eighth Day) performing *The Files* (*Teczki*)

This past semester saw the happy coincidence of two major undertakings centered on Polish theater. The first, a new course in the history of Polish drama, taught by Benjamin Paloff, reflects the Slavic Department's ongoing commitment to offering new, dynamic approaches to the study of Polish literature and culture, as well

as to exploring structural alternatives to the traditional, period-based literature survey. The second, a two-week residency by the renowned Theatre of the Eighth Day (Teatr Ósmego Dnia, based in Poznań), included performances of *The Files* and culminated in the annual Copernicus Lecture, delivered this year by Ewa Wójciak, the company's director. During their residency, actors from the Theatre of the Eighth Day also worked closely with students in a concurrent course offered by Vince Mountain and Malcolm Tulip in the School of Music, Theatre and Dance.

This afforded students a wonderful opportunity to apply different disciplinary approaches to a single object of study and to interact with

that object of study directly. Among the most important theatrical texts to emerge from Poland in the last twenty years, *The Files* features actors reading from dossiers kept by the Communist-era Security Services on the very same actors now performing the text. Students in the drama survey read the script early in the semester, reverse-engineered the development of Polish theater by reading major plays in reverse chronological order, and were finally able to meet and work closely with some of the artists who had established the course's themes. Visiting lectures by Joanna Trzeciak Huss (Kent State University) and Beth Holmgren (Duke University) rounded out the semester-long program.

By Benjamin Paloff

The Slavic Scene

Ukrainian Program Highlights: At the Movies

By Svitlana Rogovsky

In the 2015–2016 academic year, the Slavic Department's Ukrainian program events were headlined by the screening of four celebrated Ukrainian films: *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1965) by Sergei Paradjanov; two internationally recognized and awarded films, *The Tribe* (2014) by Myroslav Slaboshpytsky and *Winter of Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom* (2015); and an animated adaptation of Ivan Kotliarevsky's *Eneyida* (1991).

All four films are from different times and genres, but each of these symbolic films has critical significance for understanding Ukraine's national history and the culture of its people, as well as the reality of life in contemporary Ukraine. By depicting Ukrainian Hutsul culture, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* has introduced a new style of poetic cinema. Today, in light of the new narrative of Ukrainian history, the film opens a fresh avenue of research on Hutsuls as part of the broader Rusyn ethnic minority in Ukraine.

Before the screening, students in the second-year Ukrainian language course read passages from the original novel by Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky and later wrote essays about the magic of Carpathians, reality of Hutsul life, and symbolical and metaphorical dimensions ingrained in their folk culture. Currently, an internship in the film museum in the village of Kryvorivnia, the film's production site, is available for interested students.

In October 2015, the Slavic Department funded a student visit to the Detroit Institute of Arts for a screening of the Ukrainian film *The Tribe* (*Plemya*), winner

of multiple awards at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival. The Wall Street Journal describes the "anxious confusion" this film generates, because it is produced entirely in Sign Language and contains no subtitles or translations: "...it's as if we were profoundly deaf, trying to understand what's going on and trying to break out of isolation." The film is not easy to watch, but students were pleased to have the opportunity to see an award-winning film from Ukraine on the big screen and the chance to interact with the community about this work. "Even though the film was challenging to watch, it has proved to be a significant contribution to the international film scene," one of the students mentioned.

Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom, an Oscar-nominated Netflix documentary, was screened in February 2016. It commemorated the Heavenly Hundred Heroes, protesters who were killed during the Maidan upheavals of late 2013–early 2014 in Kyiv by riot police controlled by Ukraine's President at that time, Viktor Yanukovych.

The last Ukrainian film screened this year was a Ukrainian literary adaptation of Ivan Kotliarevsky's *Eneyida* in March. It was part of SLAVANIME, the second Slavic Animated Festival hosted by the

department. Studies show that people see animation as an art form—more than just an entertaining cartoon. Literary animated adaptations from Croatia, Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, and Ukraine shown as part of this event brought together a diverse community of viewers. Each screening included introductions of the animated films from Slavic Department faculty members which inspired lively discussions in the audience. Next academic year, this exciting experience with diverse Slavic animation culture will be developed into a new mini-course.

Many formal and informal lectures, round tables, and conversations on present-day Ukraine were organized at U-M during the 2015–16 academic year. Next year, a course on Ukrainian poetry as well as three levels of Ukrainian language courses will allow the department to continue to educate students about current developments and cultural moments in Ukraine.



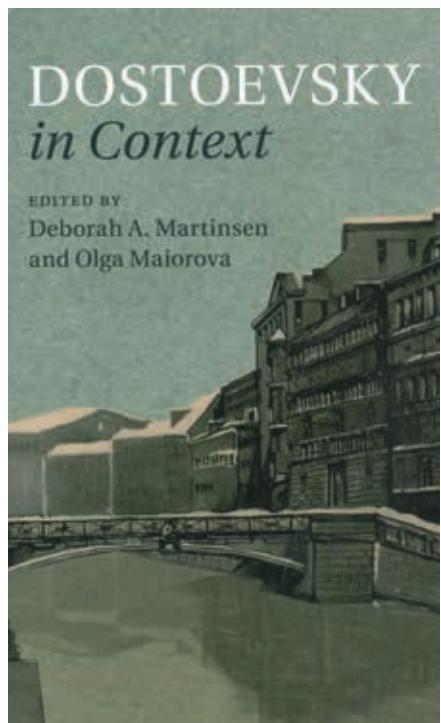
Photo: Village of Kryvorivnia, Ivano-Frankivsk Region, Ukraine
The Museum of the Film *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*

The Slavic Scene

In Print

Dostoevsky in Context

By Olga Maiorova



Cambridge University Press, 2016

Five years ago, when my colleague and friend Deborah Martinsen (Columbia University) invited me to work together on this book, we did not know that Dostoevsky would be the first non-English writer featured in Cambridge University Press' series "Writers in Context." How could we examine the many worlds—artistic, ideological, political, religious, social, and economic—in which Dostoevsky lived? How could we, as the series required, introduce his masterpieces along with these diverse contexts to a general readership, as well as to a professional audience not necessarily specializing in Russia? We realized that we would need to put together a glossary to explain some specific Russian cultural phenomena and institutions. The most important decision we made in implementing the project, however, was to make it interdisciplinary. We invited a group of literary scholars and a group of historians of imperial Russia to contribute to the book and organized a workshop where these scholars from different fields could work out a common language—a language that would be comprehensible to readers outside our disciplines, as well. It was a rewarding experience to talk across the disciplinary divides and this is the spirit that we wanted to animate our project, because we planned, as we emphasized in the Introduction, "to focus not only on the Russia depicted in Dostoevsky's works, but also on the Russia that he and his contemporaries experienced: on Russian social practices and historical developments, political and cultural institutions, religious beliefs, ideological trends, artistic conventions, and literary genres." The almost forty contributors to our volume explored these many worlds and offered fresh insights into how we might understand Dostoevsky in relation to them.

Of course there is nothing new in studying Dostoevsky in historical context. Context-based approaches to his masterpieces have been practiced by generations of specialists; we are continuing this well-established scholarly tradition. But we also tried to contribute something fresh to this type of research. As we stated in the Introduction, "while scholars usually examine Dostoevsky's artistic and philosophical meditations on the phenomena of his age," in our volume we wanted to examine the phenomena themselves and situate them, as well as Dostoevsky's treatment of them, in a larger historical frame. We also wanted to introduce new and emergent contexts that were previously understudied but have become increasingly important in our own age, such as Islam, empire, race, childhood, and symbolic geography, to name just few. We hope that our project can contribute to the perpetual process of re-reading Dostoevsky—and so we tried to re-read him by examining the contexts in which he lived from our modern perspective. If our volume succeeds, it is because of our outstanding group of contributors—leading experts in the worlds illuminated in the book.

The Slavic Scene

The Sacrificed Body: Balkan Community Building and the Fear of Freedom Goes on Tour

Some time ago, the publisher of my book *The Sacrificed Body: Balkan Community Building and the Fear of Freedom*, University of Pittsburgh Press, offered me a chance to present my book to an audience at another university of my choice. Finally, this February, I managed to combine invitations to give talks at the Sorbonne in Paris and the Universities of Copenhagen and Oslo in a single trip and organize what I liked to glamorously call my European Book Tour. Eight flights, three cities, three public lectures and two student seminars later I returned, exhausted but very happy with the entire experience and the interest the audiences showed in my book and the variety of material I discussed in it.

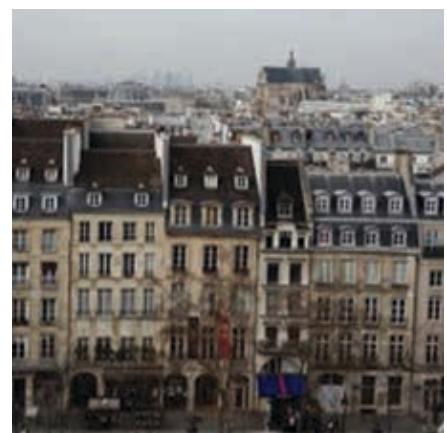
All three institutions were carefully selected as being small bases for the study of Balkan exotica and having solid programs in BCS. Programs, it is also true, that I learned were threatened by various bureaucratic and financial entanglements, but somehow still maintaining healthy enrollments (to an extent aided by heritage speakers) and doing interesting work. In addition to a public lecture, the colleagues at Copenhagen and Oslo scheduled workshop sessions with undergraduate and graduate students, respectively, which allowed for more time and a better engagement with the material in and beyond my book that I asked them to read. Among many other new colleagues I met, I was introduced to Višnja, a super sharp doctoral student from Croatia, who is doing groundbreaking work on metaphors employed by the national discourse in relation to language (anything with language being threatened, dying, imprisoned), for which so far there has been no precedent in literature; the undergrad Alex with a unique Greek origin from Montenegro; the BCS lecturer Martin Madsen, who speaks more beautiful Serbo-Croatian than I ever have and who shared materials about sacrificial immurements from his native island of Bornholm. Martin said that the Danish, when frustrated with their sluggish bureaucracy, claim that Denmark is the Balkans of Scandinavia—and methinks that strange sacrificial connection between Bornholm and the Balkans may not be totally accidental then and will need to be explored at the first opportunity.

Thankfully, the schedules of presentations and seminars left me with sufficient time to walk around and enjoy the beautiful cities and good food in the jovial company of new friends. No glamour attached whatsoever but an exhilarating and beautiful experience nevertheless.

By Tatjana Aleksić



Tatjana Aleksić during the tour

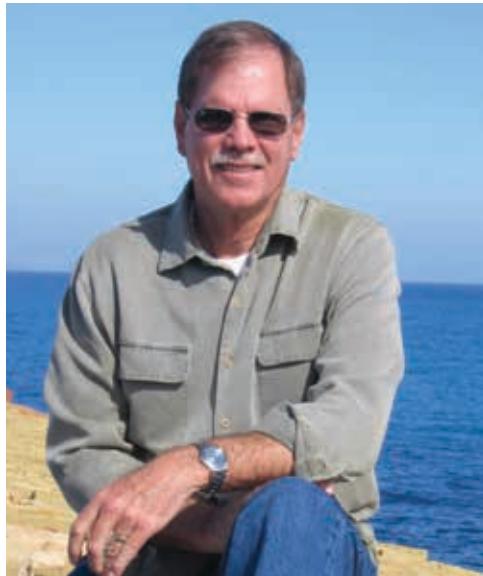


Paris skyline with the Serbian Cultural Center (center building with red vertical banner)

The Slavic Scene

Staying Connected

Dr. Lewis Bagby (PhD '72)



ranks to full professor, from 1989–92 he served as chair of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, and from 1995 to 2006 administered international programs for the university. During his time as director, he formed university relations with partner institutions on six continents in order to

Lew Bagby enrolled in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at U-M in 1968 and left ABD in 1970 to build the Russian program at the University of Wyoming. Under John Mersereau, Jr.'s guidance, Bagby completed his dissertation on Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's prose fiction and defended in 1972. In Wyoming, where Mersereau and his brother came to fly fish with him, Lew taught Russian language, 19th and 20th century Russian literature, and special topics courses on individual Russian authors, periods, and themes. After moving through the academic

foster student, faculty, staff, administrative, government, and citizen exchanges. In 1998 Bagby received an honorary doctorate from University of Wyoming's partner institution in Russia, Saratov State University, with which he initiated both academic and state/province relations in 1991. Lew's most recent publication is *First Words: On Dostoevsky's Introductions* (Academic Studies Press, 2016), a work he completed in retirement after putting it on hold during his years of administrative service.

Lew writes, "I could hardly have been prepared better for a fulfilling life in the field had it not been for the mentoring, friendship, and balance of mind and heart I encountered in the productive and caring members of the Slavic Department's faculty." A classmate of Herb Eagle in a time of civil and campus unrest and excitement, he recalls with special feeling Professors Mersereau, Asya Humesky, Deming Brown, Horace Dewey, Irwin Titunik, Ladislav Matejka, Ben Stoltz, and Karl Kramer. On the first day of Lew's written exams, a Saturday, he watched from the department windows as students marched down the streets, shouting "Open it up, or close it down!" U-M opened up.



Congratulations to **Vlad Beronja** (PhD '14), who accepted the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Austin! He'll begin teaching in fall 2016

in the Department of Slavic & Eurasian Studies.

Alumnus Aleksandar Boskovic (PhD '13), now a lecturer in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian at Columbia University, was quoted in *The Guardian*: "The clear-cut binary fiction/nonfiction distinction in English, is, in Slavic languages, differently coded."



The Slavic Scene

Mark Dillen (AB '73)

Since receiving my BA ('73, Russian, Russian and East European Studies), I have drawn extensively and intensively on my University of Michigan experience. As a U.S. diplomat, I worked in the world I once studied in Ann Arbor, using Russian and then learning several other Slavic languages (Serbian/Croatian, Bulgarian and Ukrainian) during State Department postings in the region (Belgrade, Moscow, Sofia). Along with my wife, Michigan alumna Anne Chermak (AB '73), I now reside in San Francisco and Rovinj, Croatia, where we assist in business and media development. Most recently, I lectured as a Fulbright Specialist in Ukraine, working

with the journalism faculties at universities in L'viv, Uzhgorod and Zaporizhzhia.

I fondly recall Carl Proffer's class on Gogol and Joseph Brodsky's lectures and am particularly pleased to see the continued commitment to teaching the languages and literatures of the Slavic world and the evident excellence with which this goal is pursued.



In Memoriam

Sharon Libby Leiter (AM '74, PhD '76)

Sharon Libby Leiter, 73, of Charlottesville, Virginia, passed away on Saturday, January 16, 2016, at Hospice of the Piedmont Center for Acute Hospice Care after a long, courageous struggle against cancer.

Sharon was born August 12, 1942, in Brooklyn, New York, where she grew up with her parents, Albert and Selma Sherman, and her sisters Linda and Naomi. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by Darryl Leiter, her husband of fifty years.

As the daughter of Russian-Jewish immigrants, Sharon was inspired by her heritage and by her love of language. She earned a degree in comparative literature at Brandeis University, where she met Darryl. The couple would go on to share not only a life, but also a life-long mission as writers, educators and intellectual explorers.

After earning her doctorate at the University of Michigan, specializing in Russian literature, Sharon taught at the University of Virginia from 1976 to 1983. She went on to a career as a government analyst in Russian affairs, and,

later, as a consultant for the Washington think-tank RAND. She returned to the Charlottesville area in 1994 and, until the end of her life, taught literature and creative writing in the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies Program at UVA.

An acclaimed poet and fiction writer, Sharon published three volumes of poetry: *The Lady and the Bailiff of Time* (1974), *The Dream of Leaving* (2007) and *The Night Heart Knows Every Word* (2012)—all dedicated to her beloved Darryl. Her writings have been variously described as “clear-eyed and tender,” “filled with keenness and surprise,” and “questioning and probing with a lyric intelligence that is not easily satisfied or easily dismayed.” She served as poetry editor of *Streetlight*, a journal of art and literature, and her honors include a 1990 Virginia Award for Fiction. Her notable contributions to literary scholarship include books on Russian poet Anna Akhmatova and American icon Emily Dickinson.

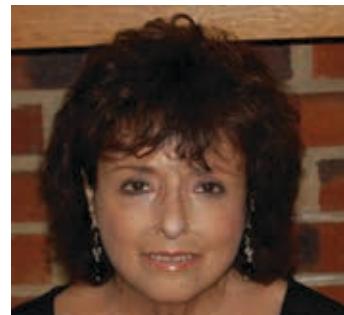


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The Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures
3040 Modern Lang. Bldg.
University of Michigan
812 E. Washington Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1275
(734) 764-5355

Chair and Editor:
Mikhail Krutikov

Assistant Editor & Layout:
Annie Varner

The Regents of the University of Michigan
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We'd love to hear from you!

If you're an alumnus or friend of the department, email slavic@umich.edu or complete our online form: <https://lsa.umich.edu/slavic/alumni-and-friends.html>

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