

Slavic Languages and Literatures

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Department Newsletter

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Letter from the Chair

Tomislav Longinović

Yet another academic year is behind us, and an exciting and eventful one it was at that. It was marked by the noteworthy accomplishment of our department, which has been chosen as a national Russian Language Flagship Center, thanks to the initiative of Professor Karen Evans-Romaine and the hard work of the team she gathered. Needless to say, this grant has reinforced the leading status of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Slavic Languages and Literatures department both nationally and internationally. This year, the department hosted Dr. Shun'ichiro Akikusa a post-doctoral scholar from the University of Tokyo, who added a significant dimension to the international reputation of our department. Thanks to the continuing support of our alumni and other benefactors led by the Lapinski and Zawacki families, we have been able to maintain and improve our mission of teaching and research in the areas of the Russian, Polish, Czech and Serbo-Croatian languages, literatures and cultures. Once again, alumni support has proven to be vital and we encourage you to continue your dedication to our program in the years ahead.

Our undergraduate students, Ryan Prinz, Matthew Regner, and Elizabeth Waugh, have distinguished themselves in the national ACTR Russian language essay competition with a variety of awards. This spring we had an unusually large class of graduate students completing the required



coursework and taking their preliminary doctoral exams. Our congratulations go out to David Houston, Sergei Karpukhin, Viktoriya Kononova, Melissa Miller, Stephanie Richards and Lisa Woodson for successfully passing their exams and achieving dissertator status. Besides that, Kathleen Scollins has secured a teaching position after completing her PhD, yet another proof that the department continues with its excellent record of graduate student placement. Beside her, new PhD degrees were awarded to Molly Peeney, Eric McDonald, Emily Shaw, and Anna Tumarkin. Naomi Olson has distinguished herself by winning the Humanities Exposed Award from the Humanities Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which has allowed her to

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teach Russian literature to the inmates in the Wisconsin prison system during the 2009–10 academic year. Judith Kornblatt's book on Divine Sophia was awarded the AWSS Prize for Best Translation in 2009 and our faculty has continued to excel in all areas of academic endeavor, as evidenced by the articles in the rest of the newsletter.

Our new class of graduate students looks very promising indeed and we hope to make their graduate school experience at the Slavic department a worthwhile and meaningful one. I am personally looking forward to the next year and hoping that we will maintain our high standards of scholarship, teaching, and service. I would like to thank the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and supporters for making 2009–10 yet another successful year at the Madison Slavic department.

Have a wonderful summer!

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New UW-Madison Russian Flagship Center Opens in Fall 2010

Karen Evans-Romaine and Dianna Murphy

UW-Madison Slavic Department alumni already know that ours is one of the strongest Russian programs in the nation, with outstanding students, faculty, and graduate teaching assistants. We hope that we are about to get even better.

We are pleased to announce a new Russian Flagship Center at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. This new Center offers a rigorous undergraduate program for highly motivated students of all majors to achieve a professional level of competence in Russian.

The Russian Flagship Center is directed by Slavic Department Associate Professor Karen Evans-Romaine, with Dr. Dianna Murphy, Associate Director of the Language Institute, as Associate Director, Dr. Anna Tumarkin as Assistant Director, and Slavic Department MA alumna Wendy Johnson as coordinator. The UW-Madison Russian Flagship Center is a joint program of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature and the Language Institute, with the Center for Russia, East Europe and Central Asia (CREECA) and the Doctoral Program in Second Language Acquisition. The UW-Madison Russian Flagship Center is supported by a grant from the Language Flagship Program of the National Security Education Program (NSEP) in the United States Department of Defense.

The UW-Madison Russian Flagship Center is one of four Russian Flagship Centers across the United States: others are housed at the University of California, Los Angeles; Portland State University; and Bryn Mawr College. It is one of two Flagship Centers on the UW-Madison campus; the other, directed by Dr. Antonia Schleicher, trains students in Yoruba. There are 23 Language Flagship Centers in the US offering instruction in the following critical languages: Arabic, Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Korean, Persian, Russian, Swahili, and Yoruba. (For more information see www.thelanguageflagship.org.)

The goal of the Russian Flagship Center is to enable undergraduate students with diverse academic and professional interests to achieve a

professional level of competence in Russian, measured as a Superior level of proficiency in Russian on the scale established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) or a 3 according to the governmental Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR).

How do students achieve this level of proficiency before receiving their bachelor's degrees? Russian Flagship students commit to a rigorous program of study. Requirements include completing the equivalent of first- to fourth-year Russian language courses as well as the following, some of which will be new offerings:

- two-semester Russian culture course in Russian;
- senior capstone course;
- three credits of advanced-level seminar work in Russian, with research papers in Russian in the student's major discipline;
- either two Russian area studies courses with a one-credit Russian-language component or two courses in the student's major with a one-credit Russian-language component;
- individual and small group tutorials.

A Russian Flagship advisor works closely with each student to design an individualized study plan tailored to the student's disciplinary interests and major degree requirements.

Students without prior knowledge of Russian commit to intensive study of Russian during the academic year or summer. The grant from NSEP provides scholarship funding for US citizens to support intensive summer study at designated Russian Flagship programs in the US and Russia. The UW-Madison will offer intensive second- and third-year Russian in a new two-semester sequence starting in Fall 2010 and as separate courses starting in Summer 2011.

Flagship students who complete the required curriculum, have studied at least 8 weeks in Russia at the high school or university level, and achieve an ACTFL Advanced (ILR 2) level of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening are eligible to apply to participate in an academic-year Overseas Russian Flagship Program at St. Petersburg State University, administered by American Councils for International Education (ACTR/ACCELS).

UW-Madison Slavic Department alumni have already participated in the Overseas Russian Flagship Program. Alumnus Michael Baumann (BA 2005), who just resigned from a position as a Foreign Affairs officer at the State Department in order to complete his MA in Security Studies at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, participated in the Flagship program in 2006–2007, and alumna Molly Peeney (PhD 2010) took a leave of absence from her position at the University of Notre Dame to participate in the program this past academic year.

On campus, the Russian Flagship Program provides additional opportunities for students to practice their Russian outside the classroom. Beginning in Fall Semester 2011, there will be a Russian floor, called simply Русский дом, in Adams House. The new Russian floor will be part of the International Learning Community (ILC), joining other language floors in Arabic, German, Italian, Japanese, Nordic languages (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish), and Spanish. (For more information on the ILC see: <http://www.housing.wisc.edu/ilc/languageprograms.php>.) While not required to live on the Russian floor, Russian Flagship students will commit to participating in extra-curricular activities such as a weekly Russian language table, workshops, lectures, films, and various social activities, some of which will be held in the ILC. Such activities will be planned for this coming academic year, even before the opening of Русский дом in 2011.

Applications for the Flagship program are accepted each year by 15 October and 1 March. This year we are offering a special early application deadline of 15 July, in order to accept our first cohort of students to begin work in Fall Semester 2010. Potential Flagship students can learn about the program and apply on-line at www.russianflagship.wisc.edu. Would you like to send students our way, but have questions? Please contact Professor Karen Evans-Romaine, UW-Madison Russian Flagship Center Director (evansromaine@wisc.edu, 608-262-3499). Interested non-UW students should contact Dr. Dianna Murphy, UW-Madison Russian Flagship Center Associate Director (diannamurphy@wisc.edu 608-262-1575).

Faculty News



David Danaher's 2009–10 included the teaching of a new course on Central/Eastern Europe, “The Culture of Dissent in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia.” He is grateful to the course’s many guest speakers as

well as to his remarkable teaching assistant, Naomi Olson, who were key in making the course work. Summer brings a conference in Amsterdam where he’ll present on Václav Havel’s metaphorization of ideology, and fall will bring two other conferences and an invited talk—all three on aspects of Havel’s writing.



Judith Deutsch Kornblatt is happy to have received a sabbatical for 2010–11, during which she will work on two collected volumes (one on Solov’ev and the other called *Rethinking Russian Religious Thought*), as well as take some time for

personal growth. Her book, *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov*, published in 2009, received the Heldt Prize from the Association for Women in Slavic Studies for Best Translation. She was pleased this past semester to get a chance to teach her course on Eastern Christianity/Russian Orthodoxy in a Global Context for the second time, and looks forward to doing it again soon.

As part of her recent sabbatical project, **Halina Filipowicz** has developed a new course, “Ethical Issues in Representing the Holocaust in Poland,” which she plans to offer in Spring 2011. In November, she was an invited speaker at an international interdisciplinary conference, “After the Wall Was Over: Performing the New Europe,” organized by the University College Drama Program at the University of Toronto to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. She has also been invited to serve on the editorial board of a new journal, *Polish Theatre Perspectives*, to be published in English

by the Jerzy Grotowski Institute in Wrocław and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Her articles published in 2009–10 include “School for Patriots? The Foundational Dramas of the American and Polish Revolutions Revisited,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes* (March–June 2010). On a more local note, she was recognized by the student residents of UW housing as one of the university’s outstanding instructors.



Irina Shevelenko reports that she has published a long article “Empire and Nation in the Imagination of Russian Modernism” in *Ab Imperio* quarterly (3, 2009) and presented portions of this article as guest lectures at Stanford and Berkeley

in the Fall 2009. She has also submitted a commissioned article on Tsvetaeva for volume 6 of the *Russkie pisateli, 1800–1917* dictionary; the volume should come out in 2011, and those who have never had courage to read Irina’s book on Tsvetaeva will be grateful for this drastically abridged version. Irina continues her work on a book-length project entitled “Modernism and Archaism: Nationalism and the Quest for Modernist Aesthetic in Russia,” and she is currently working on a related article on Russia’s representation at the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition, which expands on a paper delivered at an international conference “Russia’s Internal Colonization” in Passau, Germany in March 2010. On the home front, Irina is happy to report a big change brought about by Karen’s joining the family in August 2009. It is fun to be able to travel to California or Germany and to be graciously greeted with “Go to work, mama!” upon return. Misha has turned four recently, and he expects to turn five any day now.



Karen Evans-Romaine knew that her first year at the UW-Madison Slavic Department would be exciting, but she didn’t expect quite this much excitement! After resigning from her position at Ohio

University and as Director of the Davis School of Russian at Middlebury College, she arrived in Madison and within a few weeks began intensive work, together with Russian Program director Anna Tumarkin, Associate Director of the Language Institute Dianna Murphy, and CREECA Associate Director Jennifer Tishler, on the grant proposal that would six months later become an award to the University of Wisconsin–Madison to establish a Russian Flagship Center, one of four in the United States. (See separate piece on Flagship in this newsletter.)

When not working on Flagship, Karen has been teaching third- and fourth-year and graduate-level Russian, as well as Literature in Translation 202 (Twentieth-Century Russian Literature) while Andrew Reynolds has been on sabbatical, and working on her recertification as an ACTFL Oral Proficiency Tester, a process she successfully completed in May. Outside Van Hise Evans-Romaine has been happily settling in Madison with partner Irina Shevelenko and their four-year-old son Misha, who really enjoyed the department picnic in September and looks forward to the next one.



Tomislav Z. Longinović has published “Epic Masculinity Among ‘the serbs’: Mourning the Nation in the Post-Oriental Condition” in *Balkan Literatures in the Age of Nationalism*, eds. Murat Belge and Jale Parla (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2009), 91–129 and contributed

to “East-Central European Literatures, Twenty Years After” in *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 23 (Nov 2009), 552–581, a special issue edited by Michael Henry Heim. Early in 2009, he embarked on a lecture tour of Japan, where he delivered papers on popular South Slavic music and his theory of Slavic culture as a borderline cultural construct. He was invited to lecture at Brown and Columbia and to participate in a Radcliffe Seminar at Harvard last year.



From June 22–24, 2010, **Jennifer Tishler**, a lecturer in Slavic and associate director of CREECA, participated in a US-Russia Civil Society summit, held in tandem with the official meeting of President Obama and

President Medvedev in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by IREX, this parallel Civil Society summit aimed to encourage Russian-American civil society engagement and peer-to-peer collaboration by convening nine working groups on topics such as community development, public health, human rights and law, and higher education. Jennifer served as the rapporteur (a fancy term for “recording secretary”) of the higher education working group. The group presented its recommendations to the Obama-Medvedev Bilateral Presidential Commission and stated as one of its objectives the creation of international service learning projects for Russian and US students.



Andrew Reynolds has been on sabbatical.



David Bethea reports that he enjoyed another busy year and sends his warm regards to all former students and colleagues. Special kudos go out this year to Kat Scollins and Emily Shaw for defending their dissertations while juggling numerous other balls in the air. Both theses were superb: Kat showed how different major examples of the Petersburg Text feature heroes who become linguistically

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liberated through their different forms of social and political rebellion, while Emily developed a new model of the Tolstoyan moral hero that explains why other-oriented behavior is doomed to failure without sufficient self-fulness and ego involvement. The departmental grapevine also informs us that other of Mr. Bethea's dissertators have been busy with their current projects: Molly Thomasy Blasing is making significant progress on her photography-and-modern Russian poetry thesis during her Fulbright year in Moscow; Amanda Baldwin has won a dissertation fellowship from the Graduate School for next year and has almost finished a full draft of her work on Pushkin's female characters and their relevance to the poet's creative thinking; and Keith Blasing has continued his work as a translator and played an instrumental role (together with Emeritus Professor James Bailey) in bringing to press Thomas Shaw's career-crowning volume on Pushkin's rhyme. Last but not least in this connection, Mr. Bethea welcomes as a new dissertator Lisa Woodson, who has begun work on the fascinating topic of the changing myth of Kitezh in modern Russian culture.

On a personal note, David Bethea taught his usual undergraduate survey of nineteenth-century literature (Littrans 201/203) and a graduate course on Symbolism in the fall. These courses continue to be a great source of pleasure and stimulation for him; UW Slavic has excellent students on all levels and we are fortunate to be able to teach them. In the spring Mr. Bethea again lectured in Oxford; his lecture topics: Pushkin's prose, Brodsky's poetry, and Symbolist prose. In November 2009 Academic Studies Press brought out selected new and old essays by Bethea: *The Superstitious Muse: Thinking Russian Literature Mythopoetically*. With regard to our department in Madison, Mr. Bethea feels that, despite ongoing budgetary concerns, our operation is in excellent hands and is moving into the future with confidence; especially welcome has been the presence of Irina Shevelenko and Karen Evans-Romaine—both of these colleagues have made a huge difference in our overall atmosphere and rapport, with their efforts, including the new Flagship Pro-

gram and graduate recruitment, translating into very concrete successes. Thanks to them!

The last thing Mr. Bethea would like to bring to the attention of our larger UW Slavic family is the new project he is proposing under the aegis of the Russian World (Russkii mir) Foundation. If successful, the program would bring together the resources and teaching and mentoring experience of Chicago State University, University of Wisconsin-Madison (including its Center for Pushkin Studies and its recently instituted national Flagship Program), St. Petersburg State University, the "Pushkin Project" cultural organization/NGO in St. Petersburg, and the Pushkin Family Estate and National Preserve at Mikhailovskoe (Pskov Province, Russia). Simply put, the goal of the program is to provide a transformative educational experience—in this case, an intensive summer of study in Mikhailovskoe organized around a "Pushkinocentric" curriculum—for select Chicago State students (Chicago State is 80% African American) that would allow a group of these students to enter the Flagship Program on the Madison campus the following academic year and thereby graduate university with an enhanced skill set capable of launching them into exciting careers nationally and internationally.

The shape of the program would look like the following: 1) in spring 2011 CSU students (12–15) take 8 weeks of intensive language instruction (2 hours/day) on Chicago campus, followed by a 1-week orientation on Madison campus; 2) summer 2011 in Mikhailovskoe: 2 hours/day of Russian instruction (native Russian teacher + advanced American grad student tutor), Pushkin as a Phenomenon of Russian Culture (1 hour/day), Pushkin and the African-American Experience (1 hour/day), The Russian World (History, Politics, Economy, Geography) though Pushkin (1 hour/day) (NB: the summer's activities will be videotaped by the students and made into instructional materials); 3) having successfully completed Mikhailovskoe, a subset of students (approx. 5) could apply to the Flagship Program and come to the Madison campus for the following academic year (2011–12):

in fall/spring they take 2 hours/day of Russian plus additional coursework; 4) academic year 2012–13: the students continue with advanced-level Flagship coursework and apply to participate in the academic-year advanced program in St. Petersburg during the following academic year (2013–14), at the conclusion of which they possess a unique skill set.

Finally, the Mikhailovskoe program would, if successful, also involve our graduate students as teachers/mentors. A grant application for the first summer of the program has been submitted, with the results to be announced in June 2010; additional funds are being sought intramurally and extramurally to enable the program to become ongoing.

Teaching Russian Literature in Prison

Naomi Olson

Several years ago I heard about a professor who directed a production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in a maximum-security prison. The compelling story stayed with me for years, but I never imagined that I would undertake such an endeavor. A Center for the Humanities flyer calling for applications to the Humanities Exposed (HEX) program got me thinking seriously about ways I could make my skills as a scholar useful to the general public. As a PhD candidate in the Slavic department writing my dissertation on the law in Russian literature, I am very interested in themes of justice and prosecution. One of my literary heroes, Anton Chekhov, had similar interests, so much so that he undertook a dangerous and improbable journey to the convict island of Sakhalin in Russia's far east to report on the conditions of its inhabitants. I thought that teaching Russian literature in a local prison would be an interesting challenge for me as an instructor, and potentially a way for me to access different perspectives on literature and on the law.

I received a HEX grant in the fall of 2009. While attending a training session for volunteers at Oakhill Correctional Institution in Oregon, WI, I met two UW creative writing fellows, Chris Mohar and Michael Sheehan, who were interested in establishing a creative writing course at Oakhill. We de-



Naomi Olson and Michael Sheehan

cided to combine our skills in a hybrid reading and writing course; I would bring in short stories that we would read and analyze, and then Michael and Chris would approach the text from a craft standpoint. Every week we would use a Russian literary text as inspiration for a writing exercise prompt to be completed and discussed the following week. The combined approach draws participants interested in gaining access to great literary works in order to improve their own writing. It also makes the class more dynamic—we not only read published masterpieces, but we also discuss the inmates' own fictional works in progress. Our class began in October and will continue next year and hopefully for years to come.

There are several challenges to teaching a weekly literature class in an all-male minimum security prison that differ from those in a college classroom setting. The prison class requires a lot of forethought: I must clear the stories I choose for class with the administration in advance, arrive early enough to get my class supplies through the metal detector and x-ray machine, attach a security whistle to my pocket, etc. There are a lot of rules

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guiding interactions between instructors and class participants at the prison that simply do not exist on the college campus—subsequently the rapport instructors establish with prison participants is of a very different nature.

Because inmates can be transferred with very little or no notice, or may have to serve time in solitary confinement, or may be released or have work schedules change, I can never be sure how many participants will be in a class on any given week. Therefore teaching a prison class demands a much greater level of spontaneity and adaptability. And while the level of respect and appreciation is often much higher in the prison classroom, there are no incentives such as grades or academic credit to keep the level of attention high. It is a challenge for me to find short enough pieces that do not require too much background context that most of the inmates will find relevant and appealing. There are many such works in Russian literature to choose from. Aleksandr Pushkin is by far the favorite writer among the prison inmates I have taught. The stories that have generated the most lively debate in our prison discussions are Anton Chekhov's "The Bet" and "In Exile," Pushkin's "The Shot" and Mozart and Salieri," and Nikolai Gogol's "Diary of a Madman."

Partly because of these new challenges, teaching this class has been a very rewarding experience. A diverse student body comprised of middle-aged Vietnam war veterans as well as young men from inner city neighborhoods has provided me fresh perspectives on many familiar texts. Looking at these texts not only from a reader's, but also from a writer's point of view has also had a profound effect upon my own understanding of some of these works. Many Public Scholarship projects can seem like a distraction or an extra obligation for already-overwhelmed graduate students, but this type of project, which has benefits for both the scholar and instructor-in-training, is something I look forward to every week. I encourage anyone to seek out ways to supplement their graduate education with work outside the boundaries of academia.

Ways You Can Become Involved in Public Scholarship

Despite a palpable chasm between the highly educated academic community at the UW and underserved groups in the local area, there are several ways for interested scholars to make their scholarship relevant to the community at large. If you are interested in getting involved in public scholarship, there are some resources you can consult, including projects that are already established in the Madison area:

- **The Odyssey Project:** http://odyssey.wisc.edu/new_web/

This is a free weekly college class taught by UW Madison professors. Participants earn academic credit and become eligible for scholarships and further education at MATC and UW. Contact Emily Auerbach at eauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu if you are interested in volunteering as a tutor for this incredible program.

- **Publicly Active Graduate Education:** <http://pageia.com/>

This organization supports graduate students pursuing publicly engaged academic work in arts, humanities, etc. They also put on an annual conference called Imagining America—applications are due June 1!

- **HEX Humanities Exposed Grant:** <http://www.humanities.wisc.edu/programs/hex/about.html>

Apply for a \$2000 grant to implement your own project through the Center for Humanities HEX grant.

Naomi Olson is a PhD candidate in Slavic Languages and Literatures. She is currently writing her dissertation on the law and legal themes in nineteenth-century Russian literature.

Slavic Department Awards

Czech Awards

Nathan Fierst received the Outstanding Undergraduate Achievement in Czech Prize which is sponsored by the November Fund.

Russian Awards

The department's undergraduate students distinguished themselves in many ways this year. **Tyler Valkoun** received the department's award for Outstanding Progress in Advanced Russian Courses, while **Virginia Armour** was similarly recognized for Outstanding Progress in Intermediate Russian Courses. This year's J. Thomas Shaw Prize for Undergraduate Excellence went to **Cecilia Leugers** in recognition of her accomplishments.

The department's undergrads also continued what has become a tradition of high performance on the ACTR Annual Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest. **Ryan Prinz** won silver in the Non-Heritage Level 3 category, **Matthew Regner** took silver in Non-Heritage Level 4, and **Elizabeth Waugh** was Honorably Mentioned in Non-Heritage Level 3.

The Dobro Slovo National Honor Society welcomed **Tomasz Samek** into its ranks.

Polish Awards

Edmund I. Zawacki Award

Thanks to the generous support of the late Mrs. Helen Zawacki, we were able to honor **Tomasz Samek** for Outstanding Achievement in the Study of the Polish Language, Literature, and Culture. This prestigious award was established by Mrs. Zawacki in 1995 in memory of the late Professor Edmund I. Zawacki, who taught in the Slavic Department at UW-Madison from 1939 to 1978 and served as department chair from 1939 to 1960. The students and faculty of our department express their gratitude to the Zawacki family for sponsoring this award and supporting the Polish program.

Michael and Emily Lapinski Awards

The new recipient of the Michael and Emily Lapinski Graduate Fellowship is **Olga Permitina**. Michael and Emily Lapinski Undergraduate Scholarships were awarded to **Margaryta Bondarenko, Sebastian Jankowski, Catherine Kuzmicki, and Magdalena Bojda**. These awards are made possible by the uncommon generosity of the late Leona Lapinski Leute. She established the Michael and Emily Lapinski Endowment in 2002 to improve the knowledge of the Polish language, literature, and culture among students at UW-Madison. The gift honors her parents, Michael and Emily Lapinski, and memorializes their quest for knowledge and their Polish heritage.



Ewa Miernowska's Polish students treat the awards ceremony attendees to a presentation

Graduate Student News

Degrees Conferred

The department was giving away degrees this year like they were going out of style. Receiving their MAs were **Ellen Polglaze**, **Dasha Ivashniova**, **Sarah Kapp**, **Katie Weigel**, and **Jesse Stavis**. **Erik McDonald**, **Molly Peeney**, **Kat Scollins**, **Anna Tumarkin**, and **Emily Shaw** all completed their PhD. Best of luck to the new doctors!

While not a degree strictly speaking, it bears mention that the ordeal of PhD prelims proved insufficient to stop the progress of **Sergei Karpukhin**, **Vika Kononova**, **Lisa Woodson**, **Melissa Miller**, **Stephanie Richards**, and **David Houston** toward the completion of their advanced degrees.

Graduate Honors

Ben Jens and **David Houston** were recipients of special Chancellor's Fellowships intended to enhance professional development among the department's graduate students. **Colleen Lucy** received the Stanley F. and Helen Balcerzak award through Polanki, the Polish Women's Cultural Club in Milwaukee. **Stephanie Richards** took home the coveted J.T. Shaw Prize for best paper at the AATSEEL-WI conference for her paper, "Rumor and Oath in Pushkin's Treatment of Boris Godunov." **Amanda Murphy** received a dissertator fellowship, and **Sarah Kapp**, **Lisa Woodson**, and **Ben Jens** were awarded summer FLAS grants. **Naomi Olson** and **Dasha Ivashniova** were among those honored by the student residents of UW Housing for outstanding instruction. **Melissa Miller** earned admiration if not amazement for organizing both this year's AATSEEL-WI conference and the visit of folk ensemble Zolotoi Plios.

Still Better News

The department community sends its heartfelt congratulations to Lisa Woodson on her engagement.

A few more additions have also been made to the cohort of UW-Madison Slavic kids. Silas Benjamin van Velsen Walker was born to Odette van Velsen and Matt Walker on August 27, 2009. Sophia Aaronovna Schuck joined the family of Dasha Ivashniova and Aaron Schuck on June 7, 2010.



Sophia Aaronovna waves a bemittened hello

Madison Is Not Deserted

Shun'ichiro Akikusa

In August 2009, I came to Madison, the capital of the Badger State, as an "honorary visiting fellow." Just before completing my doctoral degree at the University of Tokyo in March 2009, I had had the good fortune to meet Prof. Tomislav Longinović, who was visiting Japan for a special lecture. He willingly agreed to invite me to his university, visiting which had been a dream of mine.

One of my most crucial reasons for wanting to come here was Prof. Alexander Dolinin. For many years, I have respected him as my mentor. Four years ago, in the Vladimir Nabokov International Summer School (Nabokov 101) at the Nabokov Museum in St. Petersburg, I had the opportunity to hear his lectures. He even kindly heard my poor English presentation and advised me on the details of a paper of mine which lately appeared in Nabokov Studies.

To tell the truth, I knew almost nothing about the city of Madison before I came here. The Bosnian writer Aleksandar Hemon, in his story

“The Conductor” from his latest book, *Love and Obstacles*, describes his protagonist’s visit to Wisconsin’s capital. Having come to the city for a reading of his own books he sees Dedo, his former poetry “conductor” and the leader of the poetry group to which he had once belonged in Bosnia. However, the subsequent reunion is a bitter experience: Dedo has aged and forgotten the protagonist. The writer is disappointed. And Madison, the city where Dedo moved from Bosnia, also seems to lose its luster: “Later I bought ... a series of drinks at a bar full of Badgers pennants and kids in college-sweatshirt uniforms, blaring TVs showing helmeted morons colliding head-on.” The Chicagoan writer Hemon even let his protagonist writer say, “Madison was deserted.”

However, I found another aspect of the city: when I arrived here, the airplane was delayed 6 hours due to a combination of thunderstorms and poor maintenance. Nonetheless, Prof. Longinović patiently waited for me in the airport. The grad students were very friendly and invited me to gatherings every weekend; the professors generously allowed me to sit and listen in on classes; the staff always helped me through annoying procedures; Prof. Dolinin discussed Nabokov with me after classes... I will never forget my appreciation for them all. So, definitely, I affirm that “Madison is not deserted” as long as the Slavic department is here!

Shun’ichiro Akikusa just completed a year as Honorary Research Fellow at UW-Madison (2009–2010).

Book Announcement

Co-authors Nina Familiant and Sara Dedic are excited to have published their children’s adventure story, *Siberia John and the Mystery of the Amazing Zoo*, through Three Towers Press. The book is available from amazon.com.

From Our Alumni

Surviving and Flourishing in the First Year

Brian Johnson

The past year was immensely challenging, but also more rewarding than I had imagined it could be. This May marked the completion of my first academic year at Swarthmore College where I am a Visiting Assistant Professor with a 2/3 load. Teaching two courses a semester (let alone three) is not simply “twice” as much work as teaching one course as a graduate student. It requires an entirely different mindset: the realization that you are in charge of every aspect of the course, including publicity, administrative tasks, navigation of a new bureaucracy, and fulfilling students’ expectations. The first year on your own, and the first semester in particular, can be overwhelming.

Fortunately, the courses I inherited for the fall—first-year Russian and “The Russian Novel”—were familiar to me, and my graduate teaching experience was of invaluable help. The excellent pedagogy program in the UW Slavic Department, coupled with my language teaching experience there and at the Middlebury College Russian School, more than prepared me to handle teaching the first-year Russian sequence. Additionally, my experience as a literature TA at UW helped prepare me to tackle “The Russian Novel,” a writing intensive course which covers both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I drew upon UW’s 19th- and 20th-century Russian Literature courses to develop both the reading list and the writing assignments.

The spring posed even greater challenges. In addition to continuing the first-year sequence, I was in charge of two more inherited courses, “Dostoevsky” and “Russian Fairy Tales.” The Dostoevsky course was manageable and a thrill for me to teach (I am a Dostoevsky specialist), but I knew next to nothing about Russian fairy tales and had to undertake an enormous amount of reading and prep work. On top of this, our department hosted the folk music ensemble Zolotoi Plios and the Mid-At-

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(*Surviving and Flourishing continued from page 11*)

lantic Slavic Conference, where I gave a paper examining the nature of coincidence in *Crime and Punishment* entitled “Synchronicity and Dostoevsky.”

It was a terribly busy time, rivaling that of the final weeks of the dissertation defense, yet in the end everything fell into place. “Russian Fairy Tales” culminated in a live performance of selections from Afanas’ev, interpreted very liberally and humorously by our students and a guest director. For the Dostoevsky course, some of my students opted to undertake creative projects as half of their final project. They included a striking collage representing the dual nature of Myshkin and Raskolnikov, a short film depicting Raskolnikov’s state of mind as he contemplates murdering the old pawnbroker (with music by Philadelphia’s own “Stinking Lizaveta”), a short story with a modern take on “Notes from Underground,” and the Facebook pages of Devushkin and Varvara of *Poor Folk*. (The Facebook pages are still up. If you would like to access them, log into facebook using malexyevitch@gmail.com or vdobroselov@gmail.com. The password for both is “keepitreal.”) The level of engagement and depth of understanding displayed by these projects simply blew me away.

Brian Johnson received his PhD at UW-Madison in May of 2009. He is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at Swarthmore College.

Reflections

Eliot Borenstein

Every few months, I dream that I’ve moved back to Madison to finish the PhD I somehow neglected to complete, and that it’s too late to secure funding for the following year. The rest of my life seems strangely unaffected by what amounts to seventeen years of academic fraud—even when I was chair of my department, my unconscious mind still transported me back to Van Hise and the unfinished thesis that by rights should have undermined my credibility.

I like to think of this as a nightmare not about graduate school, but about everything that

comes after; here, Madison plays the role of safe haven. This is probably because doctoral study at the UW-Madison was far more pleasant than graduate school is supposed to be (and certainly never produced the horror stories that provide such entertaining dinner conversation for my colleagues from other programs). And I also hope that I’ve managed to bring some of Madison’s easygoing collegiality with me since leaving the nest.

After getting my PhD, I spent some time at academic institutions whose atmosphere was decidedly un-Madisonlike. I navigated the various workplace dramas and quasi-ideological disputes largely by not taking them seriously: could this really be how departments are run in the outside world? Perhaps my graduate program could have prepared me better if it had deliberately modeled dysfunction (и борьба с ней, as the Soviets liked to put it).

I was lucky enough to land a job at New York University, where I’ve spent the past fifteen years, and where demographics afforded me a fantastic opportunity. After six years, I became Chair and got tenure (almost in that order), and aimed to bring the collegiality I remembered from graduate school to a department that was about to be completely transformed. NYU’s Russian & Slavic Department had lost its doctoral program decades ago and occupied a marginal status at the university. Now we have a rejuvenated faculty and a budding interdisciplinary PhD program together with History and Comparative Literature. I often walk through the department halls and marvel that I get to work with such great colleagues. But now that we have graduate students, maybe I’ll start the occasional unprovoked shouting match just to round out their education.

Eliot Borenstein (PhD 1993) is Professor of Russian & Slavic Studies at New York University. At NYU, he served as department chair for six years, and spent four years as Director of the Morse Academic Plan, the undergraduate general education program for the College of Arts and Sciences. His first book, *Men without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917–1919*, won the AATSEEL award for best work in literary scholarship in 2000. In 2007, he published *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian*

Popular Culture, which received the AWSS award for best book in Slavic Gender Studies in 2008. Recently, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to finish the companion volume, *Catastrophe of the Week: Apocalyptic Entertainment in Post-Soviet Russia*.

Life After Graduate School

Alyssa Dinega Gillespie

In contrast with our own culture of relativism and superficiality, Russian poets' hyperreal life-creation in verse is an exhilarating aesthetic game with a profound ethical bite. Ever since my wonderful years of graduate study at Madison, my encounters with poets' creative myths, their daring life-or-death poetic testaments, their risky commitment to creative freedom in the face of societal hostility and political repression have kept me hooked. In all my work, therefore, I have been interested in understanding the poetic psyche: why and how poets come to write what they do, how they conceive of inspiration and take responsibility for their art, and how their poetic thought is encoded, mythologized, or otherwise inscribed in the literary texts they produce. These interests have given rise to both my first book, on the way gender constraints shape Tsvetaeva's inspirational myth, and my current book project, a study of Pushkin's understanding of poetic inspiration as a necessarily transgressive impulse.

Finding, and being able to articulate clearly, succinctly, and compellingly, a core set of motivating scholarly interests is, in my opinion, a key ingredient of success in academia: not only because it allows one to muster conviction in job interviews, tenure statements, and grant applications, but also (and not least) because it allows one to muster conviction when talking to that most important audience: oneself! In other words, having an intellectual focal point provides continuity and motivation from project to project and serves to anchor one's sense of purpose over time. This is especially helpful for those of us who land in positions, like my own at the University of Notre Dame, that are centered on undergraduate teaching and involve a great deal of administrative work, both of which, while rewarding in many ways, can serve to dilute

the clear sense of scholarly direction that we take with us straight out of graduate school. Maintaining intellectual focus, excitement, and internal drive over the long term is, I think, the primary challenge of an academic career.

In my eleven years at Notre Dame, I have published two books (one an edited volume) and scattered articles and poetic translations (I'm now working on two more books); taught numerous courses at all levels of our curriculum, in translation and in Russian, from Beginning Russian to Russian Romanticism to Post-Soviet Russian Cinema to One Thousand Years of Russian Culture; presented conference papers too numerous to count; created five websites, the most recent one directed at improving the hiring and retention of women faculty at my university; completely retooled our long-dormant program in Russian and East European Studies, which I now co-direct; served on a vast multitude of committees, some not very time-consuming and some extraordinarily so; worked for a year as Executive Fellow in the Dean's Office; and mentored a large number of fine young men and women along the pathways of intellectual exploration.

I feel that my studies at Madison provided excellent preparation for all these aspects of my job, with a good balance of coursework covering all the major authors, movements, and periods of Russian literature having allowed me to experience the tradition both deeply and broadly; strong attention to foreign language pedagogy and teacher preparation; and an emphasis on early professionalization and service to the profession. This diverse training comes in handy on a daily basis and has helped me to excel in the three major areas my university evaluates: research, teaching, and service. In retrospect, if I were to do anything differently in my career, I would probably choose to be somewhat more protective of my research time than I have been formerly and take on fewer service assignments, which can sometimes be draining and disappointing in their outcome for reasons beyond one's control. Academia provides a great deal of flexibility and freedom—and this is both its beauty and its peril. It is tricky to balance the civic urge against the solitary one; it is similarly challenging to balance fam-

ily obligations against professional ones. Indeed, if there is anything stable about my life, it is the fact that it is a constant acrobatic dance to keep all the metaphoric balls I juggle up in the air where they belong. Nevertheless, I can say with certainty that the vibrant intellectual climate and nurturing, caring environment in the Slavic Department at Madison both fed my desire to do it all, and whet my appetite for more. Although I certainly have bad days, a few heartfelt words of thanks from a grateful student or a quiet day of scholarly insight makes it clear to me again and again that I couldn't imagine my life any other way.

Alyssa Dinega Gillespie (Ph.D. 1998) is Associate Professor of Russian Language and Literature and Co-Director of the Program in Russian and East European Studies at the University of Notre Dame. She is the author of *A Russian Psyche: The Poetic Mind of Marina Tsvetaeva* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2001) and is currently writing a book entitled "Dangerous Verses: Alexander Pushkin and the Ethics of Inspiration."

2009 AATSEEL Wisconsin Conference

Karen Evans-Romaine

The annual AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference was held on October 16–17, 2009 at UW-Madison's Pyle Center. The keynote speaker for the event was Dr. Anna Frajlich, poet and senior lecturer at Columbia University. She spoke on "The Ghost of Shakespeare in Szyborska." Shakespeare made a second appearance on Saturday, in Amanda Murphy's paper on "Shakespearean Models for Pushkin's Marina Mnishchik." Another frequent visitor to the conference was Chekhov, who appeared in polemics with Tolstoy in a paper by conference organizer Melissa Miller ("Story of an Unknown Man: Chekhov's Unknown Response to Tolstoy"), in a study of "Degeneration and Madness in Chekhov's 'Black Monk'" by Maria Hristova, Yale University, and in theatrically reconstituted form in a paper by Jessica Wienhold-Brokish, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign ("Revisiting Moscow and Chekhov: Postcommunist Reframing in Olga Mukhina's *YoU*").

Conference presentations covered a vast

range of nineteenth-century literature and even broader territory in Russian history and spirituality. Stephanie Richards, winner of the J. Thomas Shaw Prize for best presentation, discussed "Rumor and Oath in Pushkin's Treatment of Boris Godunov." David Houston presented on "Lermontov and the Problem of Self-Repetition: 'To the Memory of A. I. Odoyevsky' and *Sashka*." Darya Ivashniova examined "Song as Flight to God in Gogol's *Dead Souls*." Jesse Stavis analyzed Tolstoy's "Refutations of Refutations: Tolstoy, the 'Landmarks Men,' and *Resurrection*." Victoria Kononova explored the question of "A Dying Breed or a Spiritual Model for the New Russia? Vladimir Korolenko's Writings as a Transitional Moment in the Intelligentsia's Perception of Old Belief."

Twentieth-century Russian literature was reflected in Professor Alexander Dolinin's thoughts on the "Joys of Annotating" (Nabokov) and in Sarah Kapp's study of Brodsky in "The *Veshchnost*' of a Poem: A Look at Heidegger's Notions of (Non) Being and Time in Brodsky's 'The Butterfly' and 'The Fly'."

Finally, a number of presentations examined intersections in literature and the visual arts: Yelena Lorman, Northwestern University, presented on "Poet, Portraiture, and Power," and Katherine Hill Reischl, University of Chicago, on "Projecting Inward: Leonid Andreev and the Autochrome Photograph."

2010 AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference
22–23 October 2010
Call for Papers

Abstracts for 20-minute papers on any aspect of Slavic literatures and cultures (including film, visual and performing arts, and language pedagogy) are invited for the 2010 conference. Comparative topics and interdisciplinary approaches are welcome.

The keynote speaker for this year's conference will be Professor Alexander Levitsky, Brown University, with a lecture on "Russia and Orientalism: The Case of G. R. Derzhavin."

Recent conference programs and guidelines for preparing abstracts are posted on the AATSEEL-WI website at http://slavic.lss.wisc.edu/new_web/?q=node/7.

To present a paper at the AATSEEL-WI conference, please submit a proposal by 31 August 2010. A complete proposal consists of the following:

1. Author's contact information (name, affiliation, postal address, telephone, email address)
2. Paper title
3. 300- to 500-word abstract
4. Equipment request (if necessary)

Please send proposals by email to Jesse Stavis, conference organizer, at jstavis@wisc.edu. All submissions will be acknowledged.

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Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
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