

# *Slavic Languages and Literatures*

University of Wisconsin- Madison

Department Newsletter

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## Letter from the Chair David Bethea

This has been another very busy and productive year for the Slavic Department at UW-Madison. There have been changes, some difficult and some most welcome, but we continue on in our typically upbeat (yet hopefully realistic) manner. The three biggest changes affecting the immediate fate of the department are: the December departure from active teaching of Professor Yuri Shcheglov, the spring promotion to Associate Professor with tenure of Andrew Reynolds, and the imminent arrival as permanent new colleague of Assistant Professor Irina Shevelenko from the Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg. As many of you know personally, Yuri Konstantinovich has been a solid rock in our program's foundation for many years; a person of encyclopaedic interests and high scholarly standards, that rare individual who is capable single-handedly of covering topics from Old Church Slavonic to Ilf and Petrov, from Latin poetry to Hausa grammar, he will be sorely missed. As a wise man once told me, no one is ever really "replaceable"; the most we can do is fill a position with the best person we can at the given time and under the given circumstances. The good news is we have found an outstanding younger colleague in Irina Shevelenko, one with superb bi-cultural academic training (Tartu, Stanford), and one whose scholarly panoply across centuries and disciplines should enrich our program for years to come. For those of you who know Andrew Reynolds, we could not be happier for him or for us: with his exceptional erudition and taste, his kindness and accessibility, and his willingness to "flex" for the department in a variety of teaching and admin roles, he is truly one of a kind. До свидання, Yuri, добро пожаловать, Irina и поздравляю, Andrew!



*Professor David Bethea and  
Brian Johnson celebrate at the  
departmental awards  
ceremony.*

Other high points in this past year include: the arrival of a strong new grad contingent including Darya Ivashniova, Sarah Kapp, Sergey

Karpukhin, Ellen Polglaze, Nick Rampton, and (now in official capacity) Odette van Velsen; another highly

professional, well-organized and fully grad-run Wisconsin AATSEEL conference in the fall, at the conclusion of which Kat Scollins won the Shaw Prize for her terrific paper on the "kako" letter in Gogol's "The Overcoat"; sabbatical leaves granted to Professors Alexander Dolinin and Halina Filipowicz for part or all of academic year 2008-09; Sergey Karpukhin's passing of his MA qualifying exams in December; a grad

recruiting effort for fall 2008 that was spearheaded by Andrew Reynolds and that resulted in acceptances by leading candidates Alix Evans, Jesse Stavis (WARF fellow), and Katie Weigel; the awarding of a Lapinski academic year graduate fellowship to Darya Ivashniova, a Lapinski summer fellowship for study in Poland to Vika Kononova, Lapinski undergraduate scholarships to Magdalena Bojda, Tomasz Samek, and Agnieszka Szara, Zawacki prizes for outstanding achievement in Polish studies to Magdalena Bojda, Yolanda Stypula, and Vika Kononova, and FLAS academic year fellowships to Stephanie Richards and Odette van Velsen; the conferring of MA degrees on David Houston, Vika Kononova, Melissa Miller, Betsy Mulet, Naomi Olson, Stephanie Richards, and Lisa Woodson; the spring passing of prelims by Matt McGarry and Molly Thomasy; and the successful defense of his dissertation by Brian Johnson in May. Hurrah to all these people!

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It should also be mentioned that Anna Tumarkin has done another year’s worth of outstanding work as our Language Program Director and Undergraduate Adviser – her efforts have been instrumental in maintaining balance and rigor in the language program and in garnering for our undergrads a number of prestigious honors, prizes and scholarships. Professor Halina Filipowicz has conscientiously kept all our grads on track in her role as grad adviser, while Professor David Danaher, in addition to his always well-received teaching in linguistics and Czech, has continued to help out with various aspects – particularly advising – of our different programs. Also particularly helpful with the Polish program, including her work with “pani Halina” choosing Lapinski award recipients and revising the Polish curriculum, has been the ever-active Ewa Miernowska. On a less academic but equally happy human note, we extend our warmest congratulations to Emily Shaw for her marriage to (former Slavic grad) Gideon Stanton and the subsequent birth of their baby, to Stephanie Richards and Naomi Bethel for their marriages within the last year, and to Matt Walker and Odette van Velsen for the birth of their second son Sepp. The Madison Slavic Department continues to be the best baby-making program bar none!

Finally, false bravado and a knee-jerk rah-rah attitude are not in this old soldier’s bag of tricks. I would be being disingenuous with this audience if I did not mention one of the more pressing and dispiriting issues confronting us in recent years. The State of Wisconsin finds ways virtually every biennium to cut more money from the UW System’s and UW-Madison’s budget. We have long since arrived at the limit where ‘fat’ can be cut from the well-fed body, and for a while now it seems we have been on something closer to a starvation diet. Our colleague count (FTE or “full-time equivalent” in bean-counter terms) is significantly down from what it was in our hey-day 10 years ago, and for several academic years in a row now we have asked ourselves how we want to see the department configured if our somewhat smaller scale becomes permanent (which is definitely possible if not probable). We still of course want to have a historically rigorous literature and culture core and have strength, and possibly more depth and breadth, in our Slavic languages and cultures other than Russian. We want to be open to the future and to the changing face of academia without departing from our core values and mission. But like I said, this has become more and more difficult with the raining down of bad budgetary news – faculty salaries stagnating at embarrassingly low levels vis-à-vis our peers, graduate stipend packages (which we have started to improve, thanks in part to the good efforts of Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Studies Judith Kornblatt) that have a difficult time competing with those at the elite privates, etc., etc. Morale is thus fragile and we have to work hard to keep our heads up. The silver lining is we have been the beneficiaries in recent years of gifts that have helped our program materially: the very generous Lapinski endowments in Polish studies, which fund graduate and undergraduate scholarships in that area; the ongoing Gasiorowska fellowship,

also in Polish; the Pushkin Center funds, added to over the years by various parties, but especially by our own J. Thomas Shaw. These are what keep us going in hard times. If you can give, wonderful; it is always sincerely appreciated. If you can't, we understand; you are still always part of our extended family. This is just your old professor trying to 'tell it like it is' without being overly melodramatic.

Next year the chairmanship will rotate to Toma Longinovic, our long-time friend, colleague, teacher, and internationally recognized scholar/professor, who is at present on well-deserved sabbatical leave. The department is in good hands, and we will move forward despite, but in the final analysis hopefully made stronger by, the challenges facing us.

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## Creative Writing and Creative Living: For David Bethea at 60

By Andrew Reynolds

In one of those “странные сближения” which, truth be told, is perhaps not so strange a coincidence in the circumstances, my first encounter with David Bethea the writer occurred just around the corner from his current “second home” (Oxford’s Wadham College – and not, of course, “The King’s Arms Public House”), when I spotted in Blackwell’s Bookshop the paperback of his Khodasevich book. For a second I assumed this addition to their meager Russian selection must have something to do with Tolstoy – the sky on the cover was surely Prince Andrei’s, though perhaps filtered through Bondarchuk’s or Woody Allen’s lens. I’d recently learnt, albeit at thirdhand via Martin Seymour-Smith’s *Guide to Modern World Literature*, that “Khodasevich is a thrilling poet, yet to be fully discovered in the West.” So I purchased the book with mixed feelings of excitement and disappointment – in my ignorance and naivety I wasn’t aware of the rich literature that already existed on Khodasevich, though to be fair such knowledge was not always shared with keen undergraduates by our Professors. This wasn’t the last time I’d get the feeling that David’s signature is the lit. crit. equivalent of “Kilroy was here”. What perhaps struck me less than it should have was that a Major University Press was publishing a

paperback edition on a Russian poet very few people had heard of, and that its author was only 35 years old.

In any event, I soon realized that not one but both of these guys were something special, and David’s first book became one of those volumes that most inspired me as a sixth-form student and beginning undergraduate, along with Bayley’s *Pushkin*, Brown’s *Mandelstam* and Steiner’s *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky*. It showed how a risk-taking work of literary criticism could satisfy the needs of the general educated reader and Russian specialist alike; that the language of exposition could also be poetic in its own right. Such an impression was of course reinforced when I read David’s other works: to this day I think that his book *The Shape of the Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* is one of the most significant studies of modern literature we have.

I did not have the pleasure of meeting David in person until late Spring 1995: channels of communication within Cambridge’s Faculty of Modern & Medieval Languages tended more toward the medieval at that time, otherwise I would have chased him up long before. I think he was pleased but also surprised to discover how well I know his works, and I rightly took this as proof of his genuine modesty. In any event, this

meeting set in motion a train of events that have permitted me to witness on a daily basis his devotion to his students and colleagues present and past, his loyalty to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and our Slavic Department, and his great love of most things Russian. When David is away from the department (at Oxford, for example), the levels of energy, enthusiasm, optimism and the decibel count all decrease noticeably; we may have to set up a permanent video link with Oxford, to have the best kind of Big Brother watching over us.

Sometimes even our Wisconsin undergraduates can get things wrong, but usually they make mistakes of the letter rather than the spirit, and that is certainly the case with this exchange about David found on the pages of one of our profession's guilty pleasures, [ratemyprofessor.com](http://ratemyprofessor.com):

"Best professor I've ever had. The man is hilarious. And surprisingly enough, I've heard that he's like in his 70's."

"What a great professor. I was surprised at the previous post, I think he looks WAY younger than 70 but I guess with that kind of enthusiasm it may keep you looking 15 years younger. He rocks!"

(As you can see, in the interests of accuracy I have not edited out the obligatory "like".) After all, David's publication list and service record are certainly already those of "lifetime achievement award" status, and he has done so much for the University of Wisconsin, that one can easily imagine that he must have been here for half a century. He is a born teacher and a superb administrator, and is probably overall the single most talented and productive all-round teacher, scholar, colleague and cheerleader for the profession of his generation. And then there is the small detail which would only add to our Salierian envies were it not for the fact that it disarms them - that he just "happens" to be a wonderful human being to boot.

The quality and quantity of the students and colleagues he has mentored, helped, advised or inspired in one way or another is attested to in part by the contributions to the two-volume Festschrift to be published by Stanford Slavic Studies under the editorship of Lazar Fleishman, Alexander Dolinin, and Leonid Livak. Many of the essays will no doubt address one of the constant themes of David's work - the problem of investigating that complex area where life and literature intertwine, and will follow David's example in combining the best traditions of Russian and Western philology with a revisionary approach to influential literary theorists (in David's case, the latter list includes figures such as Lotman, Jakobson, Bloom, Freud, Kermode, Lipking and many others). Each of his four major monographs is one of the best things written on its subject or subjects in any language; each has been based on a superb knowledge of the material and on intellectual debts scrupulously acknowledged, while at the same time each has managed to be genuinely groundbreaking. Indeed, I think it would not be inappropriate to talk about a specifically Bethean approach to the great geniuses of Russian poetry, and we all are eager to see what a creative biography of Pushkin that treats with the appropriate subtlety the outer and the inner man, the literary and social context, and the art itself, will look like.

Of course it is first and foremost his contribution to scholarship and the profession and his influence on other scholars through his life and work that the various publications and responses to David's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday are celebrating, and his influence on - probably unparalleled for an American Slavist - the study of Russian poetry in particular. We are also celebrating David the bridge-builder or uniter: the scholar eager to find a way of finding ways of combining Russian and Western approaches to the questions of influence and intertextuality (as he notes in his *Realizing Metaphors*, "while thinking through the problem of Derzhavin's "shade" and Pushkin's simultaneous attraction to and "swerving" from it, I became convinced that larger issues ("the life of

the poet") and other methodologies (something between "psychology" and "philology") had to be engaged in order to get at this economy"); and the publisher and supporter of major scholarly projects dedicated to "Russia's everything", Pushkin.

As I have already indicated, David is not only a great and generous scholar and colleague, but also one of the really good guys. In addition to the scholar with his brilliant arguments and the subtle poetry of his writing, another - and also the real David - exists - the family man and the true Packers and Badgers fan, the friend and colleague always concerned about others, the optimist always seeing the glass half full rather than half empty (except when the latter provides an excuse for ordering another round.) True, he can sometimes seem tempted by the claims of the kakangelists of the literary world claiming that things ain't like they used to be, but his own work surely gives the lie to that fear, and his mentorship and sponsorship of some of the best work in our profession surely serve as guarantees of continuity. Above all, whenever one reads one of his works, one always jumps up and ruffles one's hair. Indeed, his work is so good that - and here I must make a shocking confession - that I've sometimes speculated, and not completely in jest, that David must keep some other "David" locked up in his cellar writing his works day and night, while our David goes about his everyday business. But then you start talking about literature, or Russia, or life with him, or read his comments on your draft article, and you realize that it is the same guy who writes the books and not some Peter the Great-type changeling.

The problems of writing and living creatively are not just David's main scholarly focus, but are his aim for himself and for others, and as such are a central part of many of his greatest triumphs as man and scholar, son and husband, father and friend. Living creatively and passionately necessarily entails a few missteps along the way, as these are unavoidable in a full

life. True, David's kind, open and trusting nature and his tendency to see the best in people can encourage a few to take advantage of him, but, thankfully few in or outside our profession who know him well would ever dream of doing such a thing.

Though we all know that David is loved and respected throughout our profession and that he is one of our field's leading lights, we also know that he is no prima donna, and that he is a team player, incredibly generous with his time, energy and money. As I mentioned, the everyday David seems too nice and, yes, too normal to be the author of so many wonderful works; but he likes to say that he too has his "тараканы"; so perhaps one of the reasons why he is so fascinated by the question of how the art and the life interact in Pushkin is because of his gratitude that whichever Muses still feel themselves welcome in Academia (for some strange reasons known only to them) continue to pay him so many visits. The main reason why he is struck so often by creative lightning, of course, is that these visits are the payback for the hard work he has put in over a lifetime, though he should give his own spirit of genius some of the praise too rather more often than he does. Nor should we forget that in this amazing creativity, as in so much else, David owes an unpayable debt to Kim and Emily.

As fulsome praise does not come naturally to Brits, some of the above may have turned out unconvincing or overstated, whereas in fact I am sure that I much undervalue David in these lines. I for one owe him an unpayable debt. As we probably won't see his like in the near future, we should indeed cherish and celebrate him more than we do, because we have perhaps started to take him for granted. Still, in conclusion, and for the sake of the professional proprieties and also because, as David knows, I'm a Piscean and always see (at least) two sides of any issue, I must now turn to his faults... (What do you mean, "exceeded your word limit"?)

## Irina Shevelenko: New Assistant Professor

I always move to the US in the fall of an election year. It happened first in 1992 when I came to Stanford as a PhD student. The second time, after two post-PhD years in Russia, I came back in 2000 to teach for a year as a visiting professor at UW-Madison. Since I learned from my work on Tsvetaeva that “accidental repetitions that persist mean fate,” I started packing my suitcases already in the Fall 2007, as I was sending out job applications. Thanks to Tsvetaeva (in many different ways), I am now returning to Madison to teach as a tenure-track professor. Since my previous pre-election arrivals caused rotation of parties in power, this, according to Tsvetaeva, should happen again. I can neither take credit nor responsibility for that.

In the years that have elapsed since my first teaching at Madison, I published a book devoted to Tsvetaeva’s literary career (2002) and co-edited the first complete critical edition of her correspondence with Pasternak (2004). In 2004-2006, I spent almost two academic years doing research in Munich, Germany, thanks to the generous support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. I started my work on a new major project there, *Modernism as Archaism: Nationalism and Archaizing Aesthetics in Russian Modernism*. Since 2002, I have been teaching Russian literature and literary theory at Smolny College of St. Petersburg State University, the first liberal arts college in Russia, where I also have been a dean of international students and worked on the development of the Bard-Smolny program for US students.

As I prepare to move to Madison, I am excited about reviewing Old Church Slavic grammar, immersing myself in the realm of saints’ lives, and re-reading some of the good old thick-as-a-brick novels for my teaching. This is a necessary remedy for the destabilized psyche of a Modernism scholar.

My two-year old son Misha will accompany me to Madison in August, and we hope that the third member of our family joins us next fall.



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*New assistant Professor Irina Shevelenko and her son Misha will be joining the UW-Madison Slavic community this fall.*

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## Andrew Reynolds: Newly Tenured Professor

The tenure process at the UW-Madison, to my mind at least, really does pay due attention to the three key and interconnected components of one’s role as scholar, educator and university citizen – research, teaching, and service. As is only right and proper for a world-class institution and department, the bar is set high, but expectations are fair and reasonable. It could be argued that some scholars work at a different pace and that the tenure timetable might discourage scholars from taking the long view in their research and instead focus on producing whatever magic number of articles and/or books

is required, but it is difficult to imagine what alternative could be devised.

For the process to end successfully, the help and advice of many people along the way is essential. Above all I'd like to thank my mentor David Bethea for encouragement, patience and hard work above and beyond the call of duty, Alexander Dolinin and Gary Rosenshield in their rotating roles as Chairs and Overseers of the process, and indeed all my other colleagues here past and present for their help and support. I'm also most grateful to the outside reviewers of my work who put so much time and effort into weighing up the pros and cons of my case. Our grads have also been invaluable in providing much-needed moral support when the going got tough.

I'm now working on a new book that is a natural successor to my work on Mandelstam and Pushkin: a comparative study of the poetry of W. H. Auden and Joseph Brodsky. I wish to examine in particular how Brodsky tried to reconcile the various tensions both within and between the Russian and Anglo-American poetic traditions. In particular, how could a poet who subscribed to the Mandelstam-Tsvetaevan line that "poetry is power" have such an elective affinity with the author of the words "poetry makes nothing happen"?

#### PARODY OF BLOK

By Stephanie Richards' second-semester Russian class, spring 2008

Москва, улица, телефон-автомат  
Миша звонит кому-то  
У Смирновых живёт чужой человек  
его любит кто-то

Письмо, театр, Браун и Питер  
но Оля и Денис навсегда  
Всё хорошо, что хорошо кончается  
улица, телефон, Москва



*UW-Madison alumna Shannon Spasova is currently teaching at Dalhousie University.*

## Shannon Spasova: PhD, 2007

I am teaching at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. It is a small department within a fairly large university. I teach all levels of Russian language as well as a survey course on twentieth-century Russian literature. There is a very active Russian student society that hosted poetry nights and the annual Russian Night, where students from the language classes performed as well as the Russian Choir. Students also played an instrumental role in preparing enough Russian food for 150 people! I also have some time designated in my schedule for curriculum development, which is something that I really enjoyed doing while working on the RAILS project at UW-Madison. I hope to continue to develop new materials and new ideas for my language classes. I have also begun to do some research on using social-networking tools and digital simulations in language teaching.

Shannon can be reached via Facebook or at [Shannon.Spasova@Dal.Ca](mailto:Shannon.Spasova@Dal.Ca)

## Faculty News



**Alexander Dolinin's** Russian book *Pushkin and England* published in Moscow in summer 2007 was well received in Russia. The international jury of the European University in St. Petersburg awarded it a bi-annual Efim Etkind prize in the nomination "The Best Book on Russian Culture." Alexander Dolinin also co-edited the collection of scholarly articles *Russian Literature and the West* in honor of David Bethea (Stanford University Press, 2008) and the annotated edition of Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. Three scholarly articles of his have been published this same year and five more are forthcoming. After successfully teaching at Yale as a visiting professor, he came back to Madison and resumed teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses as well as supervising numerous dissertations.



On November 3, 2007, **Jennifer Tishler**, together with husband Bill, welcomed Mary Elizabeth Tishler into their family. Mary joins big brother James (now four years old). Jennifer returned to part-time work at CREECA in February 2008 and will be resuming her regular teaching responsibilities in Slavic in fall 2008 with Lit Trans 233: Russian Life and Culture to 1917. Jennifer is eager to teach this class again, as she began her

maternity leave just as the class was getting to a favorite topic: the Decembrists. Jennifer is very grateful to dissertator Ben Jens, who taught the second half of Lit Trans 233 last fall. In spring 2008, Jennifer contributed to an online lifelong learning course on Imperial Russia, sponsored by the Wisconsin Alumni Association (WAA) and the Division of Continuing Studies. This summer she will be the study leader for the two-week WAA trip across Russia to Mongolia on the Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express.



**Judith Deutsch Kornblatt** has been active this past year in her new position as Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Education in the Graduate School of UW-Madison, but has not neglected her teaching or scholarship along the way. Her book on *The Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* will be published by Cornell University Press next winter, representing the culmination of much of her work to date on Russian religious thought. In addition, she has been fortunate to participate in several conferences and Festschrifts to honor her many mentors, and to continue to pass on their wisdom to undergraduates and graduate students alike.

**Halina Filipowicz** continued to serve as the Graduate Advisor in the Slavic Department and to chair the Humanities Subcommittee of the University-wide Committee for University Book Store Excellence Awards. Her current projects include a book to be titled *Democracy at the Theatre: Patriotism, Transgression, and Polish Drama, 1786-1989*, and another to be called



*Drama after Auschwitz*. In addition, she completed several articles in English and in Polish, and published annotated entries in *Women and Gender in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (2 volumes, 2007), ed. by Mary Zirin, Irina Livezeanu, June Pachuta-Farris, and Christine Worobec. She has accepted an invitation to share her scholarly methodology with the faculty and students at the Jagiellonian University, Krakow, in October.



**David Danahe** has two articles on Havel in press and is still at work on his book. He commutes a lot to Boston.



**Toma Longinovic** was on sabbatical leave for spring 2008.



This has been an eventful year for Professor **David Bethea**. In May he turned the ripe old age of 60, but before that he had to pass through a kind of belated rite of passage he would have sooner skipped. Here is his story, which he reprises in the first person (easier) and he leaves to his former students to decide what is *фабула* and what *сюжет*:



**Andrew Reynolds** has enjoyed a busy, stressful but ultimately productive year, not least in connection with the various demands of the tenure process. He managed to get a dreadful pun into print with his article in *SEEJ* "Feathers and Suns: Joseph Brodsky's 'Daedalus in Sicily' and the 'fear of replication'", and has a number of articles on Mandelstam and Pushkin awaiting publication. His book manuscript *Death and the Poets: Osip Mandelstam, Alexander Pushkin and the Poetics of Influence* has been accepted by the UW Press and is at present undergoing its final edit.

*In late October, while in Petersburg on routine scholarly business related to the new Pushkin edition I have been working on for the last decade, I had dinner with one of my favorite former grad students and now professor at Vassar, Dan Ungurianu, and Dan's wife Lioba. (Dan, Lioba, and their two girls were in Petersburg directing Vassar's academic program there.) We had a lovely dinner at a local restaurant and then a "на посошок" beer (or two) at the Туньков Brewery pub/restaurant near Nevsky. All was fine. But then on the way home to my hotel on the Petrogradka side I was foolish enough to get into an unmarked cab driven by someone identifying himself as an "Armenian." We struck up a conversation talking about our kids and the benefits of moving from the south to a big city. Anyway, as many of you probably know by now I*

accepted a cup of coffee from the cabbie, who told him me he had to work all night and needed to stop off at a “Кофе Хайс” (it’s a chain) to get his caffeine fix for the evening. This was very stupid of me and I broadcast it now so that those of you out there who travel to Russia can stick to the rule, as I do now, of using only official metered cabs, especially at night. The short version is: I was drugged with a date-rape type concoction, twenty or so minutes after which I passed out in the seat; all I recall vaguely after that is that I was driven to a vacant area of a large park, pulled out of the car by several of the cabbie’s helpers (who showed up out of I don’t know where), stripped off anything of value from my person (watch, wedding ring, cell phone, wallet, but most important my leather jacket – again, it was almost November and the temperature was high 40’s, low 50’s), and dumped. There I lay for approximately 12 hours until a policemen found me (thankfully, when I didn’t show up the next morning at a conference where I was scheduled to appear my Petersburg friends and Dan immediately sprung into action and alerted the police and the American Consulate). I was taken by ambulance to a local hospital (foreigner’s ward) where I spent the next 24 hours in the emergency room (“реанимация”) and the following eight days in bed under round-the-clock care. Apparently the cabbie had given me a very strong dose of the drug which came close to an overdose (afterwards we discovered

that this gang’s m.o. caused the death of two off-duty policeman who had been comrades together in Afghanistan, which fact immediately upped the ante, provoked an all-out dragnet, and eventually the arrest of the culprits). Anyway, my enzyme levels were dangerously high and my liver had been seriously damaged, although through the whole ordeal I never felt any fear or threat, just curiosity as to why all this was happening. The care I got was excellent, the flushing out slowly began to work, and fortunately I was able to, as they say, dodge a bullet (“пронесло” my Russian friends kept saying). I still had to go in the hospital when I eventually got back to Madison (how I got back is yet another saga), but slowly but surely I began to get my strength back.

This event (back to third person) obviously colored Professor Bethea’s 60<sup>th</sup> year more than any other, and now he reports that he is just grateful to be here and, well, hopefully a little more focused on the “big picture” and the aspects of life that matter most. Other than that, Professor Bethea’s professional life – his various Pushkin projects, a very stimulating Pushkin seminar in Oxford in July 2007, teaching his undergrad and grad courses, chairing, advising, writing letters of recommendation, working with his excellent current dissertators, corresponding with former students who are now successful colleagues, etc. – goes on as before.



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#### Slavic Department Running Club

Keith Blasing, Molly Thomasy, and Lisa Woodson together completed the Madison Marathon -- Keith ran a half marathon, and Molly and Lisa each ran a quarter marathon. Here they are post-race looking very hot (and sweaty) indeed. They’ve formed an unofficial Slavic department running club, which in some races include families of department people and former department people. Their first race was, appropriately, the 5K Run for Literacy last fall.

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# Passing PhD Prelims

Congratulations to Matt McGarry and Molly Thomasy for promotion to ABD status! Matt and Molly share some reflections on what it takes to pass the PhD prelims.

If you would like to share your experience with passing the prelims or have advice for these newly minted dissertators on their projects, just email David at [dsdanaher@wisc.edu](mailto:dsdanaher@wisc.edu), and he'll be sure to include your wisdom in next year's newsletter and pass on your comments.

**1.** How much time did you spend studying for the prelims? When did you start?

MMc: I really have been prepping for prelims since I entered the program. Obviously, that does not mean that I passed unscathed, but I am not the type to cram. (Nobody makes it through prelims unscathed. They are what they are.)

MT: You're always studying for prelims. Taking courses is a great way to build your knowledge base and explore writers and topics that will help you to do well on the exams. However, one still needs at some point to sit down and start to systematize what you know and fill in some of the gaps. I did a lot of reading of longer works the summer before I took the exams, continued to read during the fall semester, and really kicked into high gear over winter break. I spent the final weeks and days (hours, minutes!) before the exams reviewing character names, plot summaries, important dates, and other "detail work."

**2.** What was the most difficult part for you?

MMc: The most difficult parts of prelims were the ID sections. You really cannot totally prepare for these sections – but make sure you know your poetry!

MT: Well, I think that Matt and I will probably agree that we got hit pretty hard with the 19th century IDs. Still, it's amazing what you can come up with when you take a step back and look for clues embedded in the questions. But I do have to wonder how many full professors in our field would have been able to identify the Batushkov quote. And the question about a conversation in which one character discusses cutting off the other's nose...clearly it's Gogol, but it's from neither "The Nose" nor "Revizor." Do you know whose nose knows?

**3.** Do you have any advice or wisdom for future pre-learners?

MMc: From the moment you enter the program you should be prepping. Picking the right courses goes a long way to passing your exams. That means staring down the demon and taking courses that you may not like or that may not be up your alley.

MT: I would recommend that whenever you begin to study a new author, start by reading a good encyclopedia article about him or her. The *Dictionary of Literary Biography* and Cornwell's *Reference Guide to Russian Literature* were definitely my best friends throughout the whole studying process, and they provide good models for the encyclopedia article section. Two more good pieces of advice from those who are older and wiser than I: 1) make sure you really know the major works. If you miss an ID on Batushkov, no one will be surprised. But if you haven't read *Anna Karenina* since college and you can't quite recall Anna's lover's name, you've got trouble; 2) try to do some practice writing in the week or two before the exams.

**4.** What is the tentative title and topic of your dissertation?

MMc: "Defenses of the Self: Tolstoyan Subjects in the Works of Bulgakov, Pasternak, and Bitov." Very tentative, and it really could and probably will be narrowed down to something focusing on Tolstoy and Historicism.

MT: "Russian Poetry in the Age of Photography." I'll be exploring how Russian poets have transposed visual images in verse since the invention of the daguerreotype and modern photography. I'm interested in the ways that photography has changed and modified the way we see, the way we capture (and distort) memories, and its place in the spectrum of other visual arts. I'll be researching how these issues are present in works by Russian poets from Fet to Brodsky.

#### 5. A final word?

MMc: Use your time wisely, and remember that at this level, you are responsible for your own education.

MT: I want to thank everyone who was so supportive, encouraging and kind to us during prelims, especially those fellow grads who left goodies in our boxes after the exams--this is such a great tradition! Who knew that Melissa Miller makes the best sage cornbread in the world?

#### NEWS FROM KEITH BLASING

Congratulations and best wishes to dissertator Keith Blasing as he begins a new job as a full-time translator and editor at RussTech, a Tallahassee-based translating and interpreting firm.

#### NEWS FROM MOLLY THOMASY



Molly published a book review of Manon van deWater's *Moscow Theaters for Young Audiences* in *SEEJ* 51.4 as well as translations of a number of poems by two contemporary Russian poets from Tver' (Sviatislav Mikhnia and Marina Batasova) in *Yellow Edenwald Field* (Vol. 3), a Buffalo-based poetry and arts journal. She presented the paper "Rewriting Pushkin's Death: Tatiana Tolstaia's *Siuzhet* in Literary and Cultural Context" at AATSEEL-Wisconsin in October and AAASS in New Orleans in November and a research poster "Second Language in Second Life: L2 Identity and Interaction in a Virtual World" at the first annual SLA Graduate Student Symposium in Madison in April. She will be teaching this summer at the Middlebury Russian School (along with Brian Johnson, Shannon Spasova and Vika Ivleva).

## News from the Graduate Student Organization

The Slavic GSO once again had a productive year of activity. In the fall semester, GSO members Molly Thomasy, Vika Kononva and Melissa Miller, with much appreciated guidance from Professor Filipowicz, organized the annual AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference (see article below). The GSO also began a graduate writing workshop this year in order to support one another in our efforts to improve our writing skills and publish our work. Furthermore, the Advanced Russian Language Workshop, under the skillful direction of Lisa Woodson, continued to provide a weekly forum for Russian conversation practice, as well as vocabulary and grammar development at the advanced level.

In addition to professional development, the GSO has been working to secure funding to expand our activities. For example, during the winter, they raised over \$3500 in grant funding to host a concert at UW by the Russian folk music trio Золотой Плес, who toured the US in early February. With assistance from graduate student Naomi Olson, the group is also planning to sell Slavic department and Russian language T-shirts in the near future as a fundraiser for Jean's Fund, and also as a way of raising campus-wide awareness about our program. The shirts will be pan-Slavic and include the department's name. For information on ordering a t-shirt, contact Naomi Olson at [nbethel@wisc.edu](mailto:nbethel@wisc.edu).

As a final note, the GSO recently elected new leadership. After three years as head of the GSO, Molly Thomasy is passing the baton to Lisa Woodson and Melissa Miller, who will serve as the Chair and Vice Chair of the group.

## Jean's Fund Update

By Judith Kornblatt

I am happy to report that the Jean Hennessey Fund is up and running, and has already supported several community-building activities between students, staff, and faculty in the department. Our plans for the fund are even grander, however. Beginning in the fall, I plan to convene a monthly lunch gathering over pizza in 1418 Van Hise. This will be a time for current and former students who are in Madison, dissertators, academic and administrative staff, and professors to get together informally, to touch base, discuss work, contemplate the future of the department, and just generally relax. Who knows, we might even be able to get a certain jlh to make guest appearances.

If you remember Jean fondly, or if you have only a small amount to give and want to help the department build a flexible fund for its professional development, community-building, and recruitment initiatives, please consider sending a contribution to UW Slavic Department (Jean's Fund).



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*Jean Hennessey and Professor Judith Kornblatt smile at the mere mention of Jean's fund.*

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# Awards, Honors, and Recognitions

## Polish Awards

With the generous support of the late Helen Zawacki, the Slavic department was able to honor three students with the Edmund I. Zawacki Award for outstanding achievement in the study of the Polish language, literature, and culture: **Magdalena Bojda** and **Yolanda Stypula**, both of whom are B.A. majors in Polish, and **Vika Kononova**, a graduate student in Slavic.

This prestigious award was established 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 the Chair of the Department from 1939 to 1960.

The 2008 recipients of the Michael and Emily Lapinski Undergraduate Scholarships are: **Magdalena Bojda**, **Tomasz Samek**, and **Agnieszka Szara**. The Lapinski Graduate Fellowship went to **Darya Ivashniova**, and the Lapinski Summer Fellowship for study in Poland was awarded to **Vika Kononova**.

These awards are made possible by the extraordinary generosity of the late Leona Lapinski-Leute. In 2002, she established the Michael and Emily Lapinski Endowment to improve 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.

**Jessica Pikorz** and **Erica Steele** received recognition for outstanding progress in the study of four semesters of Polish language, **Adam Pala** and **Adam Pankratz** were recognized for excellent work in Polish language studies, and **Catherine Kuzmicki** and **Shannon Staszak** received recognition for

great effort and class participation in Polish studies.

The Polish Women's Cultural Club of Milwaukee recognized **Yolanda Stypula** with the Polanski College Achievement Copernicus Award. **Peter Burzynski** received the Janet Dziadulewicz Branden Memorial Award, also sponsored by the Polish Women's Cultural Club of Milwaukee.



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*Polish student Magdalena Bojda received the Lapinski undergraduate scholarship at the annual Slavic department awards ceremony.*

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## Undergraduate Awards

UW-Madison was well-represented this year at the National Russian Essay Contest. **Matthew Regner** placed second in level two, **Tyler Henderson** and **Cecilia Leugers** received honorable mention awards in level three, and **Edward Chien** placed third in level four.

**Magdalena Cerrina** was recognized for outstanding progress in intermediate Russian and **Jan Van Tol** for outstanding progress in advanced Russian; **Emma Post** received the award for highest achievement in Russian among non-majors. Dobro Slovo Slavic National Honor Society welcomed five new members: **Liv Anderson**, **Edward Chien**, **Tyler Henderson**, and **Brett Schilke**.

**Edward Chien** received the J.T. Shaw Prize for Undergraduate Excellence in Russian, **Rebecca Yale** the November Fund Prize for Undergraduate Achievement in Czech, **Agnieszka Szara** the Rita Kaczorek Memorial Award, and **Zach Kelly** the University Book Store Academic Excellence Award.

**Alec Luhn** was awarded the U.S. Department of State Critical Languages Scholarship for summer study in Nizhnii Novgorod, Russia.

## Graduate Awards

**Kat Scollins** received the J.T. Shaw Prize for best graduate student paper presented at Wisconsin AATSEEL conference for her paper “*Како Сделан Акакий: Letter As Hero in Шинель.*” **Lisa Woodson** was also recognized for her paper, “Learning How to Sing in a Strange Land.” The Jury would like to congratulate **Molly Thomasy** for the excellent organization of the AATSEEL conference.

**Molly Thomasy** and **Brian Johnson** received graduate student travel grants. **Stephanie Richards** and **Odette van Velsen**

each received FLAS grants for the 2008-2009 academic year, and **Ellen Polglaze** received a FLAS grant for summer study. **Kat Scollins** was presented with a dissertator fellowship for the 2008-2009 academic year.

## Degrees Conferred

**David Houston**, **Vika Kononova**, **Melissa Miller**, **Betsy Mulet**, **Naomi Olson**, **Stephanie Richards**, and **Lisa Woodson** all completed their M.A. coursework this year.

Congratulations go out to the department’s latest doctor, **Brian (Rufus) Johnson**, who successfully defended his dissertation “The Art of Dostoevsky’s Falling Sickness” in May 2008.

David Bethea mentioned marriages and babies in his Chair’s letter, but the department happily relays this breaking news: Erik McDonald and Tami McDonald announce the birth of Vivian Joy McDonald on May 31st, 2008, in Chapel Hill, NC. Welcome, Vivian!



# News from the Language Programs

## Russian

2007-2008 has been a great year for the Russian Language Program. Enrollment in First-Year Russian increased by almost 10% compared to academic year 2006-2007, and enrollments in higher levels of Russian were equally strong. Because of the large first-year cohort this year we were able to open a third section of SL 203 in the fall semester of 2008. We hope that our enrollments will continue to flourish in the years to come and we thank are current students as well as our alumni for spreading the good word about Russian at UW-Madison.

Our undergraduate students have demonstrated their enthusiasm and dedication to the study of Russian language and culture in many different ways. Four students participated in the ACTR study abroad program this year and four more are planning to go to Russia in September. Several UW-Madison students were admitted to intensive summer programs in Middlebury College and Beloit College. Twelve students participated in the ACTR National Post-

Secondary National Russian Essay Contest and four won awards (see p. 15)!

UW students have also been successful this year competing for national scholarships. Alec Luhn won the US Department of State Critical Languages Scholarship for summer study in Nizhnii Novgorod, Russia. Cecilia Leugers was selected as an alternate for the National Security Education Program Fellowship. We wish both of them the best of luck as they pack their suitcases to go to Russia. Cecilia and Jan Van Tol were also awarded prestigious U.S. Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Scholarships for 2008-09: congratulations to them both!

The success of undergraduates is due in many ways to the work of Teaching Assistants. This year our first and second year classes were taught by Stephanie Richards, Naomi Olson, Dasha Ivashniova, Emily Shaw, Matt Walker and David Houston. Thanks to all of our wonderful TAs for their hard work, patience, and dedication to teaching, and also to Molly Thomasy for her excellent work as the language program PA.



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*Much appreciation goes out to the Slavic department's excellent TA's: Emily Shaw, Darya Ivashniova, Naomi Olson, Stephanie Richards, Ben Jens, David Houston, Matt Walker, Natasa Basic, Betsy Mulet, Matt McGarry, Kat Scollins, and Brian Johnson.*

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## Polish

The UW-Madison Slavic Department was created as a Polish Department, and the Polish program at UW-Madison is the oldest Polish program in the United States. We offer a rigorous academic curriculum that allows students to explore a fascinating and paradoxical culture with a turbulent history and vibrant literary tradition.

Advanced language classes open the door for a unique learning adventure: working on fiction, poetry, newspaper articles, Internet, movies, and Polish TV allows students to learn and discuss problems of today's Poland and exposes them to the authentic life of its inhabitants. Popular culture along with challenging literary texts provides the basis for study of the language. However we do not forget about grammar - painful declensions, illogical conjugations and those exceptions from exceptions for which the Polish language is famous.

Students have an opportunity to extensively study Polish literature. Prof. Halina Filipowicz offers a survey of Polish literature from the Middle Ages to Postmodernism. It provides an overview of historical and cultural contexts to help students gain a fuller understanding of "culturally different" texts. Students can also choose a topic course. A very popular one is on taboos in Polish literature, a course that offers a forum for an open-minded exploration of taboos in a comparative context.

Those who like to travel and discover a culture "hands on" can participate in study abroad programs in Warsaw or in Krakow. Students gain credits taking Polish language, literature and culture classes, but what they seem to appreciate most is life outside the classroom: trips, museums, clubbing, volunteer work, internships, and new Polish friends.

Most of the department's students have Polish roots. Those whose ancestors came around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century start with the first semester of language. They register for Polish courses because of some vague curiosity about their family past and very quickly they fall in love with the Polish language, culture and literature. Later they continue taking Polish classes whenever their schedule allows them to do so. The enrollments in the beginning classes are very satisfying – the department plans to have about 30 new students in the fall 2008 semester.

The growing population in advanced Polish classes is composed of children of immigrants from the 1980s. These students speak Polish well, so their main goal is to perfect their reading and writing skills. Most of them will add a BA in Polish to supplement their degrees in biology, engineering, international studies, and so on. Enrollments in advanced classes vary. 15 students have already registered for fall 2008. Finally, there is a small group of graduate students taking Polish as a second Slavic language.

Many wonderful students receive awards for their excellent work in Polish studies. The money goes for tuition, study abroad in Poland or personal expenses. Every award is very helpful to and appreciated by these students.

## Serbo-Croatian

The department would first like to congratulate Natasa Basic on the birth of a daughter, Anna, this May. Natasa was the TA for the second-year Serbo-Croatian course and also the leader of the Serbo-Croatian Table this past year. She was of great help for the program while Toma was on sabbatical. The first-year course had a relatively large class (16), with great students

signing up for a variety of reasons, including some veterans of the Rovinj, Croatia summer program. Many students have now signed up for Toma's Yugoslav literature course next fall while others are planning trips to the Balkans this summer, and the department wishes them all the best. Congratulations also go out to Laura Heideman, a grad student in Sociology, on receiving a FLAS for summer study in Croatia. After completing the first semester at UW-Madison, Laura spent the spring semester in Zagreb doing dissertation research.

## Czech

2007-08 coincided with first-year Czech, and the department is happy to report strong enrollments: 23 students in the first-semester course and 15 in second semester with three students studying abroad in Prague. Prospects for fall 2008 are looking good with eight dedicated students, including

a strong and multidisciplinary contingent of grad students from Music, Sociology, and (of course) Slavic Languages. Two of those grads will be studying Czech through FLAS grants. As of this summer, three former UW-Madison students will be living and working in the Czech Republic, and in that regard we congratulate Amanda Volbert for her Fulbright Assistantship award.

Thanks to Shannon Spasova and her co-workers at LSS, there is a new resource up on the web, the Czech Sounds Tutorial: <http://slavic.lss.wisc.edu/czech/sounds/>. For a survey of Czech materials, see the page of our extraordinary non-traditional Czech student, Josef "Bolo" Burger ([http://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~bolo/travel/learn\\_czech.html](http://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~bolo/travel/learn_czech.html)).

Contributions in support of Czech are, as always, appreciated, and thanks go out to those who contributed this year.



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*UW-Madison graduate student Molly Thomasy is pictured here with members of the Russian folk group Золотой Плес.*

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## 2007 AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference

The annual AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference was held on October 19-20, 2007 at UW-Madison's Pyle Center. Organizers from the Slavic GSO were excited to receive a record number of abstract submissions this year, many from outside of our department and university. The keynote speaker for the event was Dr. Marcel Cornis-Pope of Virginia Commonwealth University who spoke on the topic "Writing the History of East-Central European Literary Cultures: Transnational and Comparative Paradigms." The program also featured a diverse set of panels, with topics ranging from 20th century Russian literary text and intertext, Russian emigre narratives of love and memory, unique approaches to the writing process in Gogol, Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov, as well as topics in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian theater and television. Current grad students also welcomed back alumnus and professor of Russian at the Georgia Institute of Technology Stuart Goldberg (PhD, 2002) for lunch and conversation as part of the conference weekend; Stuart also delivered a paper on intertextuality in Mandel'shtam. The 2007 J. Thomas Shaw Prize for best graduate student paper went to Kat Scollins for her presentation entitled "*Како сделан Акакий: Letter as Hero in Шинель*."

## 2008 AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference

### Call for Papers

Abstracts for 20 minute papers on any aspect of Slavic literatures and cultures (including film, music, the visual arts, and language pedagogy) are invited for the annual conference of the Wisconsin chapter of AATSEEL (The American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages). Comparative topics and interdisciplinary approaches are welcome. The conference will be held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on Friday and Saturday, 17-18 October 2008.

Recent conference programs and guidelines for preparing abstracts are posted on the AATSEEL-WI website at <http://slavic.lss.wisc.edu/programs/abstracts.html> To present a paper at the AATSEEL-WI conference, please submit a proposal by **31 August 2008**. A complete proposal consists of:

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

Please send proposals by email to: Victoria Kononova, [kononova@wisc.edu](mailto:kononova@wisc.edu)

# Study Abroad News

## Studying Abroad in Poland

Patrick Peczerski

Greetings from Poland's capital! After studying in Madrid, Spain and currently in Warsaw, I highly recommend everyone to study abroad, especially in Poland. I've found studying in Poland is more exciting than in Western Europe because daily life is more of a challenge. Although the program offers interesting courses on Polish history, politics and literature, most of my learning took place outside of the classroom by traveling the country and meeting and befriending many Poles. Here in Poland cities radiate with history, whether it's beautiful renaissance architecture reminding of a more glorious past, housing built by cursing communist cement or modern buildings demonstrating

Poland's transition to a capitalist system. Perhaps due to a harsh history of two-faced communism Poles are refreshingly frank about what they think, which makes for fascinating conversations. Moreover, the majority of Polish students speak English well and are curious about life, politics and culture in the US. In fact, in the dorms your Polish peers will often invite you for tea or other refreshments where they'll also share their opinions. From them I've learned that although there is a sense of indignation with the current state of Poland, students are excited about Poland's membership in the European Union. If you want to visit your Polish roots, improve your Polish, or gain new experiences with memories that will last a lifetime, Poland awaits you!



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*UW-Madison student Patrick Peczerski enjoys time spent with his new friends during his study abroad experience in Poland.*

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## Notes from Russia

2007 UW-Madison graduate Zach Kelly

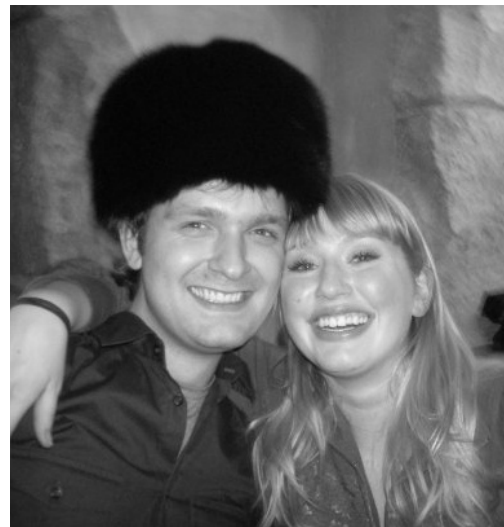
My Russian journey began in late August of 2007. I arrived in St. Petersburg on August 31<sup>st</sup> with a blank slate and enough naivety to assure anyone I was from Wisconsin. By Halloween I had adjusted and found some great friends that allowed me to feel like I was at home. Thanks to a scholarship from ACTR I was able to offset some of the costs to study abroad for the 2007/2008 academic year. Otherwise I somehow (in the как-то sense) financed an entire year abroad with a 27 day vacation throughout Western Europe.

My time in Russia was split between classes, friends, and Nevsky Prospect. I am happy to say that I finally understand Russian phonetics, especially palatalization, which helps when trying to order anything. My friends were a mix of mostly Europeans studying in St. Petersburg. Now I have connections to Iceland, Italy, and Finland. The Russian language is quite amazing since it really does help to define some of those vague points in English, such as 'to be sad' – грустить, скучать, тоскать – which would be much better explained by one verb in Russian, instead of a paragraph in English. But there was never a dull moment along Nevsky Prospect, especially in April when the tourists were starting to arrive and English became abundant (although no one really seemed to speak it). I loved the fact that I could be in Russia, speak Russian, and not pay extra for a car just because I didn't speak the language.

As a group we got along very well, having bonded on our cruise down the Volga River. One of my friends even invited me to Spain with her over Christmas break, which was part of my journey through what would help me break out of my shell during second semester. Upon arrival back to St. Petersburg,

when I was getting my visa processed, our assistant director came to me and I had one of the longest conversations in Russian of my life. It shocked me, but made sense, since I hadn't really spoken for the last few weeks while in Europe. The language started to make sense. Talking to the teachers was easier than before. I even got one of my teachers watching "Weeds" from Showtime, and then explaining to her English slang through Russian.

I owe a lot of thanks to my friend Kata, whom I met the first week I arrived in Russia and celebrated with the final night of my stay. Even though we spoke English together, she taught me how to be a foreigner while living like a Russian. I also learned a little Icelandic and met a lot of great Russians around my age with similar interests. It is really nice to know that no matter where I go in the world, I seem to always find someone that turns into a close friend. Now if only I had that trust fund so I could return and do it all over again.



*UW-Madison alumnus Zach Kelly  
poses with his friend Jessica.*

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