

# The Slavic Scene

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

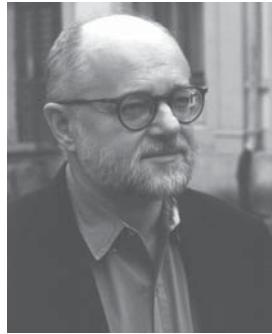


J. Funke, A Plant's Structure, from *Photography Sees the Surface*,  
a new publication by MSP (see page 11)

# The Slavic Scene

## Letter From the Chair

Dear Friends:



result of the latter project is before you.

As you will see, we have good news to report. Among other things, we are again growing in academic terms. We have succeeded in creating and filling the first of our new joint positions—a position in Jewish-Slavic cultural contacts. We have high hopes for this kind of appointment in general and this position in particular. Professor Mikhail Krutikov, who has been appointed to the new position, describes its function and scope in the feature article below.

We are also proud to boast of the continued excellence of our Polish program, currently the strongest in this country. It draws its strength from many unique sources. Ewa Malachowska-Pasek and Piotr Westwalewicz's classroom highlight provides some insights.

We also have a strong Czech program that has just played host to the Fifth Michigan Workshop in Czech Studies. This initiative is unique to Michigan and its success owes much to cooperation with other units, above all the Williams Davidson Institute for the Research of Transitional Economies.

The Russian program remains our core. It attracts most of our students, graduate and undergraduate, it has the largest population of alumni, and its development merits our intensive attention since this is an area that needs to grow further. In the future we hope to

strengthen it through joint positions similar to the Jewish-Slavic position. We also need to bring many more undergraduates to our Russian classes, and are already making good progress in this direction.

Speaking of the alumni—this is the first time in many years we can present voices of our former undergraduates in *The Slavic Scene*. After a "discovery" of a whole pocket of our alumni in California on the occasion of our Fiftieth Anniversary Activities, we are now proud to hear from Jill Dougherty (Moscow) and Jeremy Fisher (Maine) and keen on having news from more of you. Your voice is important—it provides information to our students, graduate and undergraduate, and will aid them in making their professional choices.

Many things are changing, but many things remain similar, if not exactly the same. Our economic health is one perennial problem. We launched a modest fundraising campaign last fall by creating the Anniversary Fund, and I am proud to state that this was a good start, one that surpassed our expectations. Nonetheless, we need to continue in our fundraising efforts—unlike a number of Michigan departments or our peer departments across the country, we are not the home of any major endowment and are thus substantially dependent on the University's General Fund. This is a situation we need to change, and we will use the Slavic Scene as one of our tools in our fudraising efforts.

We hope you enjoy receiving our "New Slavic Scene" and will find time to browse through it and stay connected.

Jindrich Toman  
[ptydepe@umich.edu](mailto:ptydepe@umich.edu)

# The Slavic Scene

## Feature

### New Faculty on Board

Up to the Holocaust, Central and Eastern Europe was home to the largest and most diverse Jewish population in the world. While states, borders and political regimes were changing, the Jewish communities in large cities and small towns flourished for centuries, producing original literature in Yiddish and Hebrew. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a boom in Jewish creativity in local vernaculars. In Russia, Boris Pasternak, Isaac Babel, and Ossip Mandelshtam, each in his own way, influenced the development of Russian culture. Modern Polish literature is unthinkable without Bruno Schulz and Julian Tuwim. And the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Monarchy offers additional examples. One need only think of the unique group of authors who emerged from German-and-Czech speaking Jewish Prague to perform the difficult, yet culturally important act of balancing their Austrian-Czech-Jewish identity in linguistic and other cultural terms.

The Department has long sought to stress the significance of this rich interaction, seeing here an important opportunity for the study of multiethnic communities in the context of nationalism, totalitarianism and war. In the end, we teamed up with the Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies to request a new position in this area. The proposal was successful and we can now boast a new faculty member, Professor Mikhail Krutikov.

Professor Mikhail Krutikov, originally from Moscow, received his doctorate in Jewish literature from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and taught at the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow, the Oxford Institute for Yiddish Studies, and the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies. Before joining our faculty, he served as a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. *"I am fascinated by the unique opportunity to work in the field of Jewish-Slavic cultural relations – says Professor Krutikov – During the twentieth century, writers, artists, and thinkers of Jewish origin were highly visible in the cultural landscapes of Eastern and Central Europe. Some of the names, such as Ossip Mandelshtam, Marc Chagall, Franz Kafka, are well known today. Much less known is the rich and diverse context in which they lived*

*and worked, the dynamic interaction between languages, cultures, and religions. None of the cultures of this region can be fully understood and appreciated in isolation, and the role of the Jews is highly important because they acted as mediators and facilitators in the process of cultural exchange."*

A number of new courses, both at the introductory and the advanced level, explore the new area of study. *Contact and Conflict: Jewish Experience in Eastern and Central Europe* (Slavic 270/Judaic 317) offers an introduction into a "world that is no more," to borrow from the title of the memoirs by Israel Joshua Singer, a once famous Yiddish writer whose fame has been recently overshadowed by that of his younger brother Isaac Bashevis Singer. A large array of literary texts and historical sources, many of which are barely remembered today, guides the students into the intricacies of daily life in the traditional Jewish family and elucidates the problems and challenges young Jews had to face in order to find their place in the uneasy situation of the rise of authoritarian regimes in Eastern and Central Europe.

Literary and artistic representations of the shtetl – the Yiddish word for a small market town in Poland and Russia – provide the material for a freshman seminar. The shtetl was not only the familiar setting of many classical works of Yiddish and Hebrew fiction created in Eastern Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it also has left a lasting impression on the Jewish immigrant imagination in the United States, as the recent revival of the Broadway musical *Fiddler On the Roof* can testify. By analyzing the ways in which shtetl life was represented both within and outside Eastern Europe, one can learn about the intricate process of construction and destruction of cultural myths, the invention of a "usable past", and its implications for the way we see and imagine things today. Jewish writers and artists from Eastern and Central Europe made a highly important contribution to the development of modernist culture in all its forms.

*continued on page 8*

# The Slavic Scene

## Classroom Spotlight

By Ewa Malachowska-Pasek  
and Piotr Westwalewicz

### Polish Studies: A Dynamic, Growing Program

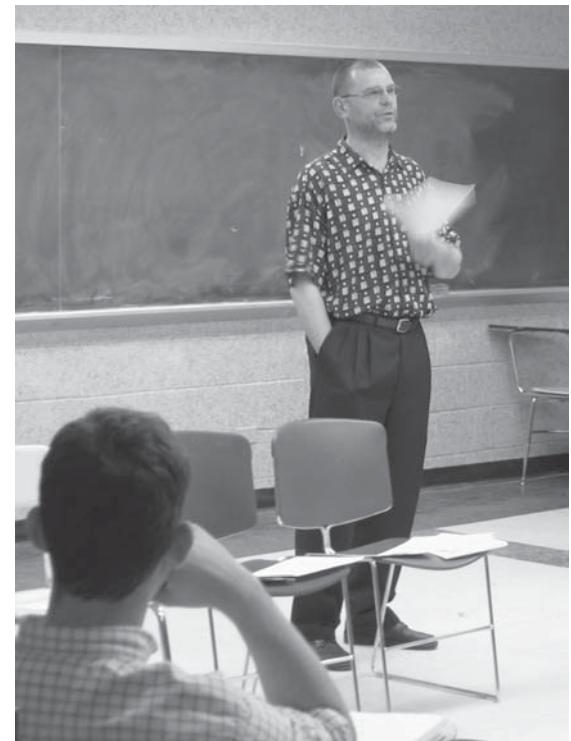
Saying: "Dobranoc, pchly na noc, karaluchy pod poduchy, a szczypawki dla zabawki" may tie your tongue in knots, but this seems not to have deterred students from enrolling—over the last few years enrollment in Polish classes has doubled. The program, perhaps the strongest in the country, attracts students from throughout LS&A, the School of Engineering, and the Business School, and its structure has been reorganized and significantly expanded with the addition of fourth year Polish in the fall of 2002. A dynamic, growing program within the UM Slavic Department, it introduces undergraduate and graduate students to a culture so different and at the same time so similar to ours.

Nobel Prize winners, politicians, communist leaders, poets, freedom fighters, punk rockers, cartoonists, sports icons, kings, queens, pop idols, philosophers, rebels: you meet them all in classes on Polish literature, cinema, popular culture, and language. "When reading the lyrics to songs written by Maanam, Republika... I can't help but compare them to the lyrics of modern day songs in America... the songs we studied are rich in metaphors and symbols and definitely create a poetic feeling." This was written by one of the students in an essay on Polish popular culture and the fall of Communism. Another student wrote: "I was impressed by how the bands we listened to in class... were... influenced by U.S. and U. K. bands... still regarded as some of the coolest and the most influential... the Talking Heads... Joy Division... Nick Cave... very hip!"

The challenge and the fun of mastering a language this complex is met with expertise and humor by the Lecturers, Ewa Malachowska-Pasek and Piotr Westwalewicz, who continue to develop new and

interesting materials and teaching aids for their students. Authentic texts, films, jokes, songs, games and contests are all part of the instruction. The intricate hidden meanings and obscure inspirations behind the works of the great Polish Romantic poets become as simple as A, B, C, when presented by Professor Bogdana Carpenter, a noted scholar and translator, author of works on the Polish avant-garde poets of the 1920's, as well as translations of Zbigniew Herbert's verse. Finally, seeing is believing in classes on Polish cinema taught by Professor Herbert Eagle. His selection and presentation of Polish films are, arguably, among the most memorable experiences for many UM graduates who have the privilege of attending his lectures and discussions.

There are many rewards to enrolling in classes in Polish Studies at the UM Slavic Department, but the most important is the opportunity to discover a different culture and gain an improved understanding of our world.



Piotr Westwalewicz

## Graduate Students Present Their Research

The Graduate Student Symposia are a forum where our students present their research, receive feedback from peers and faculty, and demonstrate the level of research conducted within our department.

The symposia for the fall semester 2003 were held on October 17<sup>th</sup> and December 4<sup>th</sup>. The October symposium was organized in conjunction with the Slavic Department's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Graduate student Brad Damare presented his paper, "Scriabin: the Structure of Ecstasy." This presentation outlined conclusions from Damare's ongoing work, an interdisciplinary project that exploits his background in music. The symposium of December 4<sup>th</sup>, featured the work of graduate student Ewa Wampuszyc, who presented a paper entitled "The Narrative of Noble Decline and the Discourse of Money in Saltykov-Shchedrin's *Gospoda Golovlevy*." Wampuszyc then gave this paper at the 2003 AATSEEL conference in San Diego. It represents part of her dissertation research.

The Graduate Student Symposium for the spring semester was held on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004, and served as

the opening event of our Recruitment Weekend for prospective graduate students. We had the opportunity to hear the work of Vadim Besprozvanny and Joe Peschio. Besprozvanny presented his "Vladimir Narbut and Anna Akhmatova: Towards the Problem of Literary Dialogue." He will be presenting this paper at the upcoming Mid-Atlantic Slavic Conference on March 27<sup>th</sup> at Columbia University. Peschio's paper, "Taboo and Text in The Green Lamp" discussed the 19th century poet Arkadij Rodzianko and "The Green Lamp" literary circle, topics from Peschio's dissertation. Peschio represented the department at the 2003 AATSEEL conference with a presentation on related topics.

We'd like to thank everyone who presented papers and attended the symposia. Special thanks go to Mila Shevchenko and Elek Lehoczky for organizing these events.

## Graduate Student Success

Our graduate students continue to be successful in landing scholarships and jobs. Annie Fisher was awarded a Graduate Student Fellowship by the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Michigan for 2004-2005 academic year. The Institute for the Humanities is a center for innovative, collaborative study in the humanities and arts. It brings together those who create—artists, musicians, actors, writers—with those who analyze these art forms. Annie Fisher will work in the Institute on her dissertation on Ilf and Petrov. Marina Madorskaja has succeeded in obtaining a Rackham predoctoral scholarship for work on the final stage of her dissertation. Further, Mila Shevchenko has been named a Center for the Education of Women Scholar. The scholarship will aid her in her predoctoral research. And finally, Victoria Dearman was awarded a FLAS for 2005/06, an important support for her pre-MA curriculum.

These all are competitive awards that testify to their recipients' hard work and dedication.

The Department's congratulations go as well to recent graduates for their success in obtaining jobs: Ewa Wampuszyc has accepted a Polish lecturer position at the University of Florida at Gainsville; Laura Miller-Purrenhaege will be Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies at Kettering University in Flint, tenure track; and Margarita Nafpaktitis will be Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Virginia, tenure track. And last but not least, Joe Peschio will be an Adjunct Professor of Russian at The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The Department congratulates all these new colleagues in the profession and welcomes them to the alumni community!

# The Slavic Scene

## Staying Connected

By Jill Dougherty

### News From Moscow and CNN

In the fall of 1963 my twin sister Pam and I walked into our first Russian language class. We were 13 years old, freshmen at Central High School in Scranton, Pennsylvania.



Jill Dougherty is a LSA graduate and CNN's Moscow Bureau Chief and correspondent

The first word to fall on our innocent ears was "zdravstvuite!" We both decided that, if that was how you said "hello" in Russian, more horrors surely awaited us.

Our teacher, a buzz-cut former military man, was Mikhail Peregrim, son of Russian immigrants. His native language was Russian and he conducted his classes completely in the language. The only time he deviated from this was when a student would goof off. "Shape up or ship out!" Mr. Peregrim would bark – in English.

He never barked at us.

For some strange, incomprehensible reason we both took to Russian. Perhaps it was because it gave us a chance to speak a foreign language that our parents couldn't understand. Perhaps it was our competition with each other. Maybe it was thanks to the Cold War after all, Sputnik had been launched just six years before.

By senior year Pam and I were Mr. Peregrim's only fourth-year students. He gave up his free period to teach us on his own time. Thirty years later, sitting at my desk in Moscow as CNN's bureau chief, one of the first things I did was write him a letter of thanks for helping me get there.

In 1967 we enrolled as Russian language and literature majors at Emmanuel College in Boston. Our teachers were excellent but, with the background we had in Russian, we needed more specialized studies.

In 1969 we transferred to the University of Michigan. We chose Michigan because of its reputation as a center for Slavic studies and we were not disappointed.

Our teachers were excellent, especially Asya Humesky, who remains an inspiration to me. We were able to

live in a Russian-speaking dormitory where, in addition to learning to deliver toasts over glasses of vodka, we also perfected our knowledge of perfective and imperfective verbs.

While at Michigan we were also able to take advantage of the federal government's loans for studying foreign languages (National Defense Foreign Language fellowships) and we headed for Leningrad State University's philological faculty.

Being in Russia, living in a dorm with Russian students, surviving the Leningrad winter, trudging through the snow across the Neva River from the Hermitage and Palace Square...I was hooked. It's a feeling I think I share with others who study Russian and Russia, a pull, an attraction, that digs deep in your soul.

In the early 1970's Pam and I returned for another semester at Leningrad State University. (Yes, President Vladimir Putin was studying there at the time but our paths never crossed.)

We later worked as guides on U.S. Information Agency exhibits that toured the Soviet Union, answering endless questions of Russians eager for any information they could get about the outside world.

My sister Pam went on to a career in business with the Soviet Union and then on to academic pursuits in linguistics. She racked up two Masters degrees and a doctorate, all in Slavic Linguistics.

My knowledge of Russian led to a job at the Voice of America in Washington, D.C., broadcasting news, music, book reviews and cultural programs. That, in turn, led to a job in television with the NBC affiliate in Chicago. That position had nothing to do with Russia, but I kept my hand in, returning to the Soviet Union by leading academic tours in my spare time.

In 1984 I joined CNN in Chicago as a correspondent and, since I knew Russian and had some experience

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in the country, I traveled to Moscow several times, helping to cover some key events: the 1991 Coup, Yeltsin's firing on the White House in 1993, the Georgian Civil war. In 1997 I became CNN's Moscow Bureau Chief and correspondent.

For me, this is the dream job, working for a company that takes international news seriously, that devotes time to the story of Russia's transition from Communism. After seven years here, I still find it as exciting as I did when I first set foot on Red Square 35 years ago.

## Letter From the Editor

We hope you enjoy this new version of *The Slavic Scene!* We look very new and fresh but *The Slavic Scene's* ethos has not changed since the day it began. Our goal is to produce a newsletter that will demonstrate some of the wonderful things going on in the department and encourage you to stay connected. To this end I ask our readers to write us with whatever relevant news you might have, story ideas, or special memories from your time in the department. I would also like to invite feedback and constructive criticism in order to further improve our appeal to you, our reader.

In addition to a new look, beginning with this issue we are initiating a bi-annual schedule, with a fall volume in October and spring volume in April. We want to stay in touch with you!

Another significant change in the department is our website. It is currently undergoing a major re-design in order to better cater to our alums, faculty, emeriti, graduate and undergraduate students. Assuming everything goes according to schedule, the new site should be up and running by the end of the fall 2004 term, packed with new features, information, and resources for students and teachers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our readers. I hope everyone is enthusiastic about the progress that has been made collectively over the last year within our department and in the field of Slavic Studies.

Sincerely,  
Holly Furgason



Jeremy Fischer is a 2002 LSA graduate and is serving his first term in the Maine Legislature. Elected at the age of 22, he is the institution's youngest member.

## News From the Maine Legislature

I graduated in April 2002 from the University of Michigan, College of LS&A with a degree in political science. In 2002, I was elected to the Maine Legislature where I am the youngest member.

During my undergraduate years I took four semesters of Russian and scored A's across the board. All the instructors were very helpful and understanding of the difficulties in learning a complex language like Russian. I can remember how fascinating and bizarre some Russian traditions and sayings seemed to me when I first began studying the language. As I completed my fourth semester of Russian, however, they seemed very normal.

The two predominant languages spoken in Maine are French and English. I think the advantage I gained from studying Russian at U-M was the ability to understand minority cultures in general and relate to the diverse challenges they face trying to adjust to American culture, language, and customs.

I've never been to Russia, unfortunately, but hope that the next time Representatives are sent on an exchange to Russia with the National Conference of State Legislatures, I will be chosen to go.

The most important skill I learned from studying Russian was the ability to think in a pluralistic manner. If I ever make it to the United States Congress, I think my experiences studying Russian will serve me well.

# The Slavic Scene

## Highlights

### Prof. Carpenter Nominates Outstanding Writer For International Prize

Our faculty member, Bogdana Carpenter, was instrumental in the nomination of Adam Zagajewski of Poland for The Neustadt International Prize for Literature. The Neustadt Prize is a biennial award sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and *World Literature Today*. Established in 1969, it is the first international literary award of this scope to originate in the United States and is one of the very few international prizes for which poets, novelists, and playwrights are equally eligible.

Bogdana Carpenter called Zagajewski "a leading poet of his generation." He "continues the best traditions of Polish postwar poetry as established by poets such as Czeslaw Milosz (1978 Neustadt Laureate and 1980 Nobel Prize Laureate for Literature), Zbigniew Herbert and Wislawa Szymborska," writers whose works are "characterized by intellectuality, historical awareness, a strong ethical stance and formal sophistication."

"At the same time," Carpenter added, "Zagajewski has found his own distinct voice, not to be confused with any of his illustrious predecessors. In his poetry, he manages to combine tradition and innovation,

participation in a poetic community and staunch individualism." She added that the fabric of his poetry "is made of disparate elements: reality and dreams, keen observation of reality and imagination, artistry and spirituality, erudition and spontaneity of emotions. Culture and nature share equal space in it."

Carpenter will formally introduce Zagajewski as the 2004 Neustadt Prize winner at a ceremony in Norman, Oklahoma on October 1, 2004.

Adam Zagajewski is the second Polish poet to win the Neustadt Prize; the first was Czeslaw Milosz in 1998, who was nominated by Joseph Brodsky.

(Excerpted with permission from *World Literature Today* website.)

To read more about the Neustadt International Prize and *World Literature Today*, please visit their website at <http://www.ou.edu/worldlit/>.

### Continued From Feature Page 3

These and other courses reflect the variety of academic and cultural interests of Professor Krutikov. As a regular contributor to the New York Yiddish weekly *Forverts*, he covers in his column the contemporary Jewish cultural scene in Europe and the Former Soviet Union. He is also involved in educational and cultural projects supporting Yiddish studies in France, Sweden, Germany, and Russia. Yiddish remains the primary focus of his research. Having completed a study of Yiddish literature in the period between the First Russian Revolution and World War I (*Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity, 1905-1914*, Stanford University Press, 2001), he has now moved on to the post-World War I period. His current project is an intellectual biography of Meir Wiener, a Galician-born Austrian Expressionist poet, literary critic and scholar of medieval Jewish mysticism who became a communist during the 1920s and left Austria for the Soviet Union, where

he became the most prominent scholar of Yiddish literature. The enigmatic figure of Wiener attracted the attention of several scholars, but no comprehensive study of his life and work can be done without access to his archives, now in the possession of the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem. Meir Wiener, who wrote in German, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian, and was active in the most diverse areas of cultural and political life, embodies the brilliant and contradictory nature of Jewish intellectual life in Eastern and Central Europe before the Holocaust.

The Russian-speaking Jewish diaspora in the US, Israel, and Germany also attracts Professor Krutikov's interest. He has published a number of critical surveys of contemporary Russian-Jewish writing and hopes one day to write a comprehensive study of the subject.

## Workshop in Czech Studies

On March 26-28, 2004, the Department hosted the Fifth Workshop in Czech Studies. The Workshop first met in 2000 and since then an average of fifteen participants come to Ann Arbor each year to present their research. The event is geared towards doctoral students and junior faculty working on Czech topics, providing them with a forum for discussion of their current work. Every participant has a one hour slot, a large part of which is used for discussion. In past years the foci have included art history, literature, music, modern history, and social issues. This year we added a panel on Czech-Jewish issues for the first time and the papers presented proved so interesting that it will be continued next year.

Complete programs of all Workshops can be found on the departmental website under the rubric "Czech Workshop." Here is an impressionistic selection of the papers presented this time. Kevin Johnson, a doctoral student at the University of Washington, talked about the work of Karel Lamac, a Czech movie director, who was drifting between Czechoslovakia and Germany in the interwar period. Johnson's topic transcends cinema history, raising issues of Czech German symbiosis in interwar Czechoslovakia—how did the film industry deal with their multilingual audiences in the era of sound film? Tara Zahra, a doctoral student at Michigan, also talked about Czech-German issues, tracing the ways children from multi-lingual families were assigned to schools in the interwar time. And Darren King, another Michigan student, talked about the interaction of Czechs and Jews in Volhynia, placing a special focus on World War Two, an era when many Volhynian Jews were rescued by Czech settlers. Post-1948 history was also a strong focus—topics ranged from the fate of the Stalin statue in Prague (Hana Pichova; Austin, TX) to current projects in oral history (Miroslav Vanek; Prague/Chapel Hill).

Every year the workshop features an invited keynote speaker. Past speakers were the musicologist Michael Beckerman, the Danish historian Peter Bugge, the literary scholar Caryl Emmerson, and, last year, the author of *The Coasts of Bohemia*, the historian Derek Sayer. This year's speaker was Professor Michael Kraus (Middlebury College), a political scientist specializing in Eastern Europe and the author of *Irreconcilable Differences: Explaining Czechoslovakia's Dissolution*. He reviewed the last ten years of Czech political development, i.e., the decade since the Czechs and Slovaks separated.

The Workshop is a unique construction and its success owes much to other units of the University of Michigan, above all the Williams Davidson Institute for Transitional Economies and, this time, the Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. It will meet again next year.



Peter Bugge and Miroslav Vanek



L/R: Brian Locke, Marek Nekula, Brian Rohlik, Jonathan Larson, Ryan Hudson, Darren King, Jindrich Toman, Naomi Hume, and Peter Zusi.

# The Slavic Scene

## In Print

By Margarita Nafpaktitis



More information on Tales of Galicia can be found on the Twisted Spoon website [www.twistedspoon.com](http://www.twistedspoon.com)

Margarita Nafpaktitis received her Ph.D from the Slavic Department in the fall of 2003. She will be an Assistant Professor of Slavic Lang. and Lit. at the University of Virginia beginning in the fall of 2004.

### The Perfect Translation for A Homesick Pole

Not until I began work in earnest on the translation of Andrzej Stasiuk's *Tales of Galicia* (Opowiesci galicyjskie, 1995) did I have even the haziest notion of the difference between a Zuk van and a Fiat Combi, or what *alpaga* was (it's cheap fruit wine), or that Tsar Paul sent a contingent of Don Cossacks over unmapped territory to invade India. One of the reasons why I chose to work on the *Tales* was because I wanted to find out more about contemporary Polish life outside of the country's major urban centers, and Stasiuk's text offered a one-of-a-kind primer of provincial culture that I had not found in other authors. What I hadn't quite anticipated was the degree to which I would further my education in Russian history and philosophy and explore the works of other authors (notably, Cortazar and Roussel) while looking for keys to the dense network of allusions that Stasiuk weaves through his work.

Through the process of translating Stasiuk's book-length text into English, tracking down his multifarious and eclectic allusions, and gathering every review, interview, and critical article I could find, I engaged in some of the most three-dimensional scholarship I have done thus far. The benefits have been far-reaching and deeply rewarding. Foremost among them were discussions with Professor Bogdana Carpenter about Polish literature in general and Stasiuk in particular, as well as her guidance as I put together the proposal for the Fulbright that made it possible for me to spend a year at Jagiellonian University in Krakow working on the project. While I was in Poland, I had access to several of the best libraries in the country, and I also met translators and scholars who shared my interests in contemporary Polish literature. This in turn led to invitations to publish excerpts from my translation in both Polish and American literary journals and to invitations to participate in conference panels at home and abroad on recent developments in Polish literature. And I garnered first-hand experience of the piquancies and pratfalls of translating a very much living author.

Working with editors (among them Ewa Malachowska-Pasek) and readers (particularly in Professor Carpenter's translation workshop, which included Rachel Harrell and Ewa Wampuszyc) gave

me invigorating experience in articulating my views on both the form and content of a literary work and provided numerous object lessons in how productive collaboration can be.

Even before embarking on a translation of the *Tales*, I decided to take the approach that it would be a valuable project in and of itself, regardless of whether it would ever be published. I sent proposals to several publishers whose lists looked like they would be hospitable to Stasiuk and received several polite rejections. Fortunately, Professor Carpenter suggested that I write to Howard Sidenberg, the editor of Twisted Spoon Press in Prague, who was a friend of one of the students in her literature class. Twisted Spoon, whose mission is publishing contemporary Central European literature, was the ideal home for the *Tales*, and the translation was published, along with translator's notes and an afterword, in the beginning of 2003.

Since then, I've enjoyed seeing how other readers have responded to the book (and this is another advantage of literary translation that shouldn't be underestimated: its capacity to reach readers outside academia). The dozen or so reviews that have come out are uniformly positive, and the fact that my work as a translator is largely invisible in those reviews is the best kind of compliment. The most exciting commentary came from the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* (28 December 2003), a paragraph by the author, John Berger, in which he cites the *Tales* as one of his favorite books of the year, because it "describes the soul of a village community with more authenticity than anything else I have read."

I've also discovered that, by publishing an afterword with the translation, I have shaped the critical response to Stasiuk in English to a degree that I did not anticipate. Not only is the afterword one of the only critical commentaries on Stasiuk that has been published in English, but most reviewers have borrowed from it liberally.

*continued on next page*

There have also been some amusing reviews, like this endorsement in *The Guardian* (28 June 2003): “the perfect gift for the homesick Pole in your life,” and a five-star reader review (23 November 2003) submitted to amazon.com with the subject line “best book ever, dawg”: “such a strange and beautiful novel in stories. Andrzej is the man. that’s all I got to say.”

Taking up a literary translation as part of my graduate work at the University of Michigan rounded out my scholarship and my professional experience in more ways than I could have imagined. I was fortunate in the encouragement I received from the Slavic Department and the Center for Russian and East European Studies as I pursued the project. And I’m looking forward to continuing to work on translation as part of my future research.



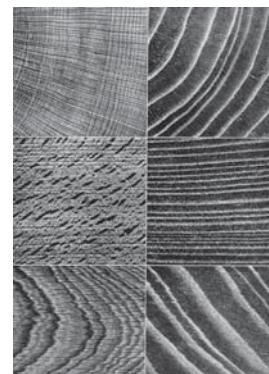
Reunion of translation workshop (front row L-R: Rachel Harrell, Brona Danielova, Zdenka Brodská, Ewa Malachowska-Pasek, Ewa Wampuszyc, Anne Marie Smith; back row L-R: Margarita Nafpaktitis, Kelly Miller, Bogdana Carpenter).

## New From Michigan Slavic Publications: *Photography Sees the Surface*

**Ladislav Sutnar and Jaromír Funke, *Photography Sees the Surface***

Translated by Matthew Witkovsky

This volume revives a major contribution to modern Czech photography, originally published in 1935. It includes 14 full-page photographs by Funke, Josef Ehm, and their students at the progressively-minded State Graphic School in Prague. Explanatory notes by a variety of contemporary experts accompany the images. The project was driven by pedagogical considerations, and as such it reveals the wide reach of photography in education, scholarship and culture. An afterword by Matthew Witkovsky and Jindrich Toman sets this important publication in historical context for the first time, explaining the advances and limitations of modernist photography in the official culture of interwar Czechoslovakia.



Photographs from *Photography Sees the Surface*



## Michigan Slavic Publications

For more information about this book and others, go to our website at [www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/msp](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/msp).



# LSA

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