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Dear Friends:

When I came to Michigan in 1987, I never thought that a large part of my academic life here would be filled by an administrative function—I became the chair of the Slavic Department in the second half of 1995 and have continued with a few breaks until the end of this academic year. Thus this is the last of a series of privileged opportunities to address our alumni and friends through this newsletter.

In retrospect, the past decade was one of continuous change—we have seen changes in the Department, the University, and, above all, in the field. The last point is the most obvious. Slavic studies changed substantially after the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe, but one should be careful of monicausal explanations—all language-based disciplines, and the humanities in general, have been changing in the same period…and perhaps all over the world. It may be only the task of a future historian to provide a reasoned account. Our recent graduates, however, do not have the luxury of grand historical vistas—and, indeed, they give us outstanding examples of how to cope with challenges in a proactive and innovative manner—see Joe Peschio’s account of his teaching experience in this issue (page 6) and Kelly Miller’s remarks in the last Slavic Scene. Dedication to undergraduate teaching and the importance of digital media in the humanities is emphasized by both. Indeed, we can boast of impressive students, both graduate and undergraduate. Their numbers may have changed, but the quality has not.

Turning to the immediate past, Annie Fisher has received a honorable mention in the Distinguished Dissertation competition for academic year 04/05, and Marina Madorskaya and Andrea Stiasny successfully defended their dissertations (page 5). Furthermore, Brad Damaré is our most recent Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor—he is our seventh graduate student to receive this prestigious award in six years. And our undergrads repeatedly impress us with their enthusiasm and engagement—this year, we can again boast of an impressive number of undergraduate essay prizes (page 5). Our faculty continues to offer an innovative array of courses and produce a significant volume of research. Just this academic year, faculty published close to twenty academic articles; it is most promising to see junior faculty significantly represented in this number. Also in this academic year, several visitors were able to benefit from the Department’s teaching and scholarship (pages 3 and 7) and our Annual Workshop in Czech Studies took place in April (page 9). And, last but not least, important news for the Russian program—Dr. Sofya Khagi has accepted our invitation to teach in academic year 06/07. She is a recent Ph.D. from Brown University and her presence will strengthen the Russian program significantly. We will bring more details on her in the next newsletter, which will appear under my successor—I thus have the pleasant duty to wish The Slavic Scene, our alumni and friends, and the entire department much luck in coming years, and wish to express my sincere thanks for many years of support.

Jindrich Toman
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Interview with Charles Clover—Scholar of Eurasianism

What brought you to the University of Michigan?

I work for the Financial Times of London as a journalist, and was very lucky to be awarded a fellowship by the Knight-Wallace Foundation, which gives grants to mid-career journalists to pursue a study program at the University Michigan for an academic year. My study program is to write, or at least begin writing, a history of the Russian movement of Eurasianism.

Where did your interest in Russia originate?

I was originally trained as an Arabist in college and graduate school, but when I graduated in 1995 with a MA in Middle Eastern Studies, the most interesting job offer I got was to be a free lancer for the Financial Times of London in Kazakhstan. Not a lot of money, but great adventures. I stayed in the former USSR region, moving to Ukraine and Russia, for 5 years, until 2001. Since then I have come on staff at the Financial Times and been based in Afghanistan, Iraq, and most recently London as the Middle East/Africa News Editor. But throughout, I have always had a nostalgia for Russia and the former USSR. Russia is sort of like my “hobby” now, I read about it whenever I can, and I hope to be posted there again. And I have been very lucky to take a seminar with professor Olga Maiorova, “Russia between East and West" this semester. It’s really interesting.

Why Eurasianism?

Not many people know about this movement, and it is something I chanced onto in 1998, meeting some far right wing activists in Moscow for a story I was doing that ultimately got published in the journal Foreign Affairs (March-April ‘99). Eurasianism began in the 1920s as a political movement of post-revolutionary Russian emigres, and never found an audience. But after the collapse of communism, Eurasianism was revived by a group of writers with close ties to the so-called ‘siloviki’ or security services. It is a conservative, neo-imperialist ideology, but is quite interesting and connected to broader currents in the Russian philosophical tradition. I just felt someone should do the history of this movement, which is both fascinating and disturbing.

How did you find these writers?

In 1998 when I was doing research, most of these people were on the absolute margins of politics. Now they are on TV, radio, giving interviews in mainstream newspapers. Last summer, when I went to talk to members of the Eurasianist organization, I spoke to former ambassadors and former generals. Some enjoy being found—they are quite keen to gain publicity for their ideas. Others are a bit more hesitant, especially the military and former military, they were purged following the 1993 attempted coup in Moscow and are very reluctant at first to discuss anything. It’s like “Meet me in the park, if my newspaper is folded you can approach me” kind of thing.

How long were you in the Middle East?

The Middle East was my main field of study while in university, and it is tragic that the only chance I got to apply it to my work was in covering wars. I spent the better part of 2002 based in Kabul. And in 2003 I was what they called “embedded” with the US military during the invasion of Iraq, attached to a paratroop regiment, the unit that stormed the city of Najaf. After the war I stayed in Baghdad for a year covering the quote unquote reconstruction though we have long ceased to call it that. I have never seen anything like it: the height of arrogance and utter stupidity. If anyone is interested I put some of my articles, mainly from Iraq and Afghanistan, but also Russia and Ukraine, on my university web hosting: www.umich.edu/~cclover. I’d appreciate any feedback!
Classroom Spotlight

Professor Herb Eagle

Herb Eagle exemplifies the Slavic Department’s commitment to liberal arts education, interdisciplinarity, and collaboration with other units in LS&A. For fourteen years he taught one of the university’s largest courses on American film (American Film Genres), mentoring graduate students in the American Culture Program who were specializing in cinema study. Eagle says of the time he was active in the American Culture Program: “What I learned through teaching American film had an impact on my own research, as I was able to investigate some intriguing parallels between American genre film in the 1930s and the Socialist Realist genres which emerged in the Soviet Union during that decade, particularly the musical.”

From 1981 to 1988 Herb was Director of the Program in Film and Video Studies and he saw it grow from an interdepartmental program which relied on faculty from several departments (in the Schools of Engineering and Art as well as LS&A) to put together its curriculum into what has recently become the Department of Screen Arts and Cultures. This department will be welcoming its first Ph.D. students next fall to augment a vigorous undergraduate concentration and a graduate certificate program. He is currently serving his second three-year term on the Screen Arts and Cultures Executive Committee.

Herb is also a dedicated member of the University’s Residential College, which offers students the best of a small college approach to undergraduate education, yet with all the resources of a major research university. The RC offers intensive study of six languages (including Russian), has a broad array of courses in the arts (offerings in studio arts and music, full concentrations in creative writing and theater), offers an innovative curriculum in science and society, and has substantial programs in literature, arts and ideas, and the social sciences (the latter two offering concentrations). He served as Director of the Residential College from 1988 to 1996, and has returned for brief stints twice as Acting or Interim Director, most recently in fall 2005. He remains intensely involved with the life of the Residential College, teaching First Year Seminars there in addition to his courses on Russian and on Central European Cinema (which are cross-listed with the RC), and serving on a number of key committees, including the Curricular Planning Committee and the Executive Committee, on which he was recently elected to his third consecutive three-year term. In addition to teaching his film courses in the Residential College, over the years he has also taught courses there on Central European Prose, modernism and structuralism, literature of the absurd, and Czech literature.

Last but certainly not least, Herb Eagle has remained a very active participant in the activities and planning of the Center for Russian and East European Studies, serving on its Executive Committee several times. For the past several years, he has been the concentration advisor for undergraduate majors and minors, and the graduate student advisor for those pursuing masters degrees and dual degree programs in CREES.

Professor Eagle teaches courses on Russian and Central European cinema, serves on the Curricular Planning Committee, the Executive Committee, Graduate Advisor, and is Interim Undergraduate Advisor for the Slavic Department.

Professor Eagle’s office is located at 3014 MLB. He can be reached via email at hjeagle@umich.edu, or by telephone at (734) 647-2139.
Congratulations Slavic Ph.D. Graduates!

Andrea Stiasny, Ph.D. in Linguistics and Slavic Languages and Literatures. Her dissertation title is "The Acquisition of Clitics in Croatian and Spanish and Its Implications for Syntactic Theory"

Marina Madorskaya, Ph.D. in Slavic Languages and Literatures. Her dissertation title is "A. P. Chekhov in Soviet Film Culture: Tactics of Dissent"

Annie O. Fisher, Ph.D. in Slavic Languages and Literatures. Her dissertation title is "I. Iľľf and E. Petrov's Ostap Bender Novels: The (Re)Production of Anti-Soviet Soviet Classics"

Our Seventh Outstanding GSI

Brad Damaré is the honored recipient of the 2005/06 Outstanding GSI Award. He will be a Ph.D. candidate in the Slavic Languages and Literatures program. Brad has taught Russian I and II, Second year Intensive Russian, and Great Books.

Brad’s name and photo will be displayed throughout the year in Rackham Auditorium. Congratulations Brad!

Congratulations Slavic Graduates!

Edward Decker, BA in Russian and Philosophy, Prize for Essay in English

Courtney Greyson, BA with Polish Minor

Galina Radunsky, BS with Russian Minor

Nicole Rivett, BA in Russian

Not pictured:

Krzysztof Fidler, BA with Polish Minor; Kevin Kuczek, BFA with Russian Minor; Peter Larson, BA in Russian; Nicole Miller, BA in Russian; Pilar Parish, BA in Russian.

Undergraduate Award Winners

Annette Arendt, Excellence in Polish Language Studies

Vladislav Beronja, Alfred G. Meyer Award

Emily Lawrence, Prize for Essay in a Slavic Language

Erin Lichenstein, Prize for Essay in a Slavic Language

Kirstin Swagman, Excellence in BCS Language Studies

Karen Yeen Pei Tee, Honorable Mention, Prize for Essay in English
In August 2004, just a few very short weeks after my dissertation defense, I was appointed Adjunct Assistant Professor of Russian at University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee. I soon discovered this is not the typical adjunct professorship that I daydreamed about as a graduate student (heavy on the teaching, light on everything else). As the only full-time staff member in Russian, I do carry a full teaching load, but I have also been charged with rebuilding a near-defunct Russian program from scratch. It is a daunting task, to be sure, with a huge amount of both freedom and responsibility. “I’d say you can do whatever you want with the Russian Program, provided it’s not illegal,” one of my supervisors told me the second day on the job. Luckily, I appear to have been at least somewhat successful, and without breaking any laws. A year and a half later, enrollments have doubled, the UWM Russian major is back up and running, and the Program looks to be on the rebound.

It goes without saying that the teaching has been a lot of fun. Besides the standard courses on Russian language that I have been teaching since I was in graduate school, I am also getting to design and teach courses in Russian literacy for native/heritage speakers, as well as courses on contemporary Russian culture and 19th-century Russian literature. Much to my surprise, the administrative work is not without its amusements either. In the course of mapping out and implementing plans to rebuild the UWM Russian Program, I constantly find myself doing things that I never pictured myself doing, but that, as it turns out, can be very interesting—curriculum planning, budgeting, recruiting staff, training TAs, arguing with the administration, negotiating study abroad agreements, and on and on and on.

As for research, I continue my work on early 19th-century literature, retooling some of the research I did for the dissertation, and moving in entirely new directions as well. My most recent articles and conference papers deal with familiar territory like The Green Lamp and the poet Arkadii Rodzianko—who I’ve been working on for four years now. My new projects are more in the vein of book culture and trade, including a study of censorship in the early 19th century and an analysis of relative publication frequency for the main verse genres of the period. And I also continue my work in academic digital publishing. As an editor at The Fundamental Digital Library of Russian Literature and Folklore (http://feb-web.ru), the biggest and best library of its kind, I work with Russian specialists on the cutting edge of digital humanities and computational linguistics, whose commitment and work are a constant source of inspiration.

Milwaukee has been treating me and my wife, Elena, very well. Besides the attractions familiar to every viewer of “Laverne and Shirley”—the friendly people with strange accents, the lake, beaches, breweries, festivals, cheese, etc.—Milwaukee is also home to a Russophone community of nearly 30,000 people, as well as an innovative and thriving cultural scene. There’s something interesting going on every weekend at one or another of the many clubs, galleries, and theaters in our neighborhood, and I’ve already got a new punk band rumbling in our basement and bound for stage and studio in March.
What brought you to the United States and Ann Arbor in particular?

An interest in my colleagues in the field of Slavistics. I am interested to see how Slavistics is dealt with in the US and how it is taught. I first went to Columbia and then to Ann Arbor, both of which are well-known centers of Slavic studies. And here in Ann Arbor, I am particularly keen on reviving the agreement of cooperation we had between the University of Lausanne and the University of Michigan. The agreement provides an excellent possibility to exchange ideas, and also to exchange people—faculty and students. In the past not much activity has been visible, so now I am exploring ways to organize a joint workshop between our Slavic Departments. It is extremely important that our students get in touch with one another, network, exchange ideas and perhaps work on common projects. I hope to include Columbia University’s Slavic Department as well.

What areas would you like to address in particular? We assume that they will be related to your research in one way or another.

Slavistics has to leave its old tradition of focusing only on literature and philology. These remain important fields, but they need to be complemented by other perspectives, one being the history of humanistic and social sciences in conjunction with the history of ideas. Russia and Eastern Europe provides an enormously interesting field for research, but traditional Slavistics mostly ignores it. Of course, the field is full of paradoxes. We know that Russia and Eastern Europe is not another planet, but at the same time we often fall into the trap that has been set up by the Slavophiles, namely that Rossiju umom ne ponjat’—Russia cannot be understood by reason. I am sure that it is possible to study Russia by rational methods and that it is even our intellectual duty to do so. There are a lot of practical consequences for our understanding of contemporary Russia. I would dare to say that they reach all the way down to contemporary Russian reactions to international politics—and even to such things as the price of oil and gas.

Do you think the idea that Russia is a unique world is a driving force also in Russian Slavistics?

Well, everything local is unique, there is no doubt about it. But the idea of uniqueness is often used as an excuse for isolationism—and not only in Russia. That is, the insistence on uniqueness is an expression of pure intellectual laziness that gives one an opportunity to reject any attempt of comparison.
Professor Greene, how did you first get involved in music?

Well, that goes back as far as I can remember. We had a piano in our house growing up, and I started playing around five and taking lessons at six.

You’re known for your interest and work with Russian and Slavic composers – how did that develop?

I’ve always had an attraction to them, partially because I had a mysterious grandfather who I never met, but I knew he was Russian, although later I found out he was actually from the Ukraine. But I knew I had some kind of Slavic blood in me.

But also because I found their music the most sympathetic; it matched my emotions the best.

Any particular composers?

Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Tchaikovsky, for example.

You gave, as part of the St. Petersburg festival, a concert of all-Russian music. How did you go about selecting the works for that concert?

Well, at minimum, they all had to be St. Petersburg composers, although there’s a fine line there. For example, the Tchaikovsky Conservatory is actually in Moscow, although Tchaikovsky was a St. Petersburg composer.

I also picked works that I thought were beautiful, but not played very often: Balakirev’s “Islamey”, for example.

Are there any other pieces that you feel are particularly undervalued, and should have greater exposure?

Well, right now I’m doing a recording with my wife, Solomia Soroka, who’s a Ukrainian violinist, of pieces by Nikolai Roslavets. He was a Ukrainian composer and follower of Scriabin in the late 1910s, played piano and violin, and continued writing music until his death in 1944. He actually wanted to be accepted by the Soviets, and thought he was writing music for the future, and for the people; but the music’s so complicated and difficult. He died in complete obscurity in Moscow. That’ll be coming out on the Naxos label some time in the future.
With nearly thirty participants, this year’s Czech Workshop, officially The Seventh Michigan Workshop in Czech Cultural Studies (April 21-23, 2006), was the largest so far. The program continued the well-established tradition of a mix of panels devoted to history, literature, cinema, art history, and similar culturally oriented topics. One could easily consider this program a template for a department or institute defined by interdisciplinarity. This year’s keynote speaker was Professor Claire Nolte, Chair of History at Manhattan College. Her address “From Fraternity to Community: The Role of Voluntary Associations in the Czech National Movement of the Nineteenth Century” was closely related to her research of many years—the Czech Sokol organization.

So in the end, the position boils down to the idea that you cannot understand Russia if you are not Russian, which means that it is possible to know only oneself. And that is the collapse of any intellectual activity. Imagine, in the last International Congress of Slavicists (2003), I was criticized by Russian linguists for not accepting without question the idea of “the uniqueness of our national linguistics” (samobytnost’ nasego otechestvennogo jazykoynaniya). This is really nineteenth century. The continuity of this slavo-centrism, in and of itself an imitation of German romanticism, is simply amazing.

Which brings us to your research in the history of Russian linguistics.

Yes, this is my main field. Russian linguistics has a lot to give to us, and its history is, unfortunately, not well known and what is known remains a highly specialized matter. For instance, Slavophile grammarians in the 1860s invented the so-called dependency grammar, i.e., seventy years before Lucien Tesnière.

But there is a more general aspect to it—Russian linguistics gives us a window on understanding Russia. Russian discourse on language, as seen in the Russian grammatical tradition, is an important cultural phenomenon. In it, you see the presence of a deeply Platonic idea—that the goal of scientific investigation consists in revealing what is concealed beneath the surface of empirical reality. To paraphrase Saussure, the possibility that the point of view creates the object is not considered. I dealt with this in my book Structure et totalité (1999) and I am now expanding this research to new fields. For instance, the relationship of linguistics to biological and geographical sciences in Russia exploits a number of metaphors that point to a local continuation of a Romantic tradition of holistic science. I would be happy if these and similar themes could become the subject of our joint investigations in the future. In fact, I have already benefited from such research done in Ann Arbor in the past.

Thanks for your time—merci beaucoup!
1945 marked the end of World War II. For those whose families were directly impacted by genocide or war itself, it marked the start of a prolonged period of searching for family members or information about their fate. In 2005 Irene Orawiec Gysczynska presented the Library with several unique documents telling the story of her family and its fate during World War II. They include a photograph of her brother, Mieczyslaw, a German work release card for her, a letter in German from her brother in Dachau to her mother in Cracow, the death certificate for her brother sent by the Dachau Commandant to her mother. There is also a color postcard of Dachau, and a book entitled Zmarli Polacy w Dachau, 1939-1945 published by Edmund Chart in Dachau in 1942.

Mieczyslaw Orawiec was a mason, who lived with his mother and sister in Krakow at the start of the war. It is not known why, but he was taken by force from his family home, and brought to the Dachau Concentration Camp. On November 1, 1942 from Dachau he wrote his mother and tried to console her with his acceptance of his fate which was “in God’s hands”. The family received a death certificate from the Commandant of Dachau, documenting Mieczyslaw’s death on November 3, 1942. Most death certificates were issued in the first years of the Holocaust, when people were still being registered as inmates of the camps, and their absence had to be accounted for. If families continued to reside at the same address, the certificate reached them. As the war progressed more people were displaced, reducing any likelihood that certificates would have reached “home”. Moreover larger numbers of people were taken to the camps, and were killed prior to being registered as inmates. Their deaths were not documented for their families.

Confirming Mieczyslaw Orawiec’s death is the book Zmarli Polacy w Dachau, which documents the deaths of Poles interned at Dachau. The records kept by the concentration camp were the basis for this book. The author describes it simply as “a list of Poles who perished in the Dachau Concentration Camp.” It confirms the correct date of birth, prisoner number, religion, profession and place of birth for Mieczyslaw. The book gives the date of his death as October 15, 1942, contradicting the date on the certificate, and casting some doubt on the exact date of his death. All the same it does confirm that Mieczyslaw Orawiec perished in Dachau some time in autumn, 1942. The story embodied in these items is one that was told with some variation, millions of times over between 1939 and 1945, and therefore contributes both a very real personal and historical perspective to our collection.
A Sample From The Slavic and East European Library Collections

A. Frantisek Palacký, Joseph Dobrowsky’s Leben und gelehrtes Wirken, 1833.
B. M. Rasic, S njegovom velicanstvom kraljom Milanom na istoku. 1892.
C. Editor in Chief Mate Ujević, Hrvatska Enciklopedija (Croatian Encyclopedia), 1941.
D. Editor Vlaho S. Vlahovic, Manual of Slavonic Personalities (Past and Present), 1940.
E. Konstantin Vaginov, [Poems], 1926.
G. N. Marr, Drevnegruzinsko-russkii slovar k 1-2 glavam Evangeliia Marka (Ancient Georgian-to-Russian dictionary to the 1st-2nd chapters of the Gospel according to Mark), 1913.
I. Census and statistics from the province of Kosovo, early 1900.

The Slavic and East European Division of the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library maintains one of the nation’s outstanding collections of materials in all formats from and about Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Its permanent staff of two librarians and three technical library assistants helps researchers use the collection, one that is especially strong in history, political science, economics, sociology, ethnography, geography, literatures, linguistics, art history, and bibliography. The best-represented languages are Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Polish, Czech and Slovak. For additional information, please visit www.lib.umich.edu/area/Slavic/

New from Michigan Slavic Publications: FASL 14, The Princeton Meeting

Michigan Slavic Publications is proud to announce the volume of proceedings from last year’s FASL meeting at Princeton University in May 2005. FASL, the most up-to-date publication on modern Slavic linguistics, is now looking back at more than fourteen years of history. The present volume consists of 24 studies on semantics, syntax and phonology of Bulgarian, Croatian, Russian, Slovenian and other Slavic languages.

The volume also includes presentations by last year’s guest speakers: Roumyana Pancheva (Phrasal and Clausal Comparatives in Slavic), Gilbert Rappaport (Toward a Theory of the Grammatical Use of Lexical Information), and Edwin Williams (Subjects of Different Heights), all of which are included in the volume.

FASL 14 is available for purchase from Michigan Slavic Publications for $35. Please email michsp@umich.edu, or telephone (734) 763-4496 to order your copy today. View the table of contents online at www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/msp/
Shostakovich Centennial Festival Continues in October

Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–75) wrote 15 symphonies which represent one of the 20th century’s most important bodies of symphonic exploration.

Join us for the second part of this Festival, continuing with three concerts on October 20–22, 2006.

Celebrate Maslenitsa!

In March, students, lecturers, and faculty celebrated Maslenitsa—or Pancake week. A joyful celebration welcoming winter’s end. Popular Maslenitsa activities include dancing, parties, music, and of course bliny.

Students pictured from left to right are Andre Zelikov, Dani Gill, and the Maslenitsa bear.