

# The Slavic Scene

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DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

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Russian Study Tour, 1961



# The Slavic Scene

## Letter From the Chair

### Dear Friends



Things have gone very well for us in the Slavic Department this past year. We graduated the largest number of undergraduate concentrators in nearly a decade, with the most significant increase coming from those majoring in Polish Language, Literature and Culture. The Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experience in the town of Vytegra in Russia's northwest, now in its second year, went splendidly. Professor Michael Makin and Lecturer Alina Makin introduced a new mini-course on the Russian Provinces to help prepare students for their work there. Another newly developed initiative for our department in the undergraduate area is the increased number (six) of First Year Seminars that we will be offering in the fall, on a variety of topics: Prague as a Cultural Space, Yiddish Love Stories, Introduction to Narratology, the Russian Rogue's Progress, South Slavic Short Fiction, and Monuments and Memory.

Our graduate students have many notable achievements for the year. More than half of them have been awarded fellowships for their next year of study and about the same number have delivered conference papers during the past year. This year we welcome three new students: Marianna Benenson, Amanda Getty, and Natalie McCauley. Their arrival will bring the number of graduate students currently in our program to seventeen, fifteen of whom will be taking courses and doing their research here in Ann Arbor this next year. We are looking forward to some lively intellectual interchange, given the broad range of interests across disciplines that our graduate student cohort currently represents.

In addition to their inspiring teaching, our faculty made notable scholarly and creative contributions over the past year. Zvezda publishers in St. Petersburg recently published *Chuzheliubie (Love of Strangers)*, a four-hundred page collection of critical, historical and biographical essays by Professor Omry Ronen, who also added ten more essays to his growing oeuvre on an amazing range of topics, including an article entitled "The Mystical Recension of S-F in Russia," which was awarded the 2010 International Portal Prize for the best essay on Science Fiction in 2010. Professor Jindrich Toman has spent most of the year at the University of Regensburg as a winner of a prestigious Humboldt Research Prize, working on the interactions between Czech and Jewish culture in the 19th century. His research has already yielded a couple of short articles and he is at work on a book length study. In addition to a number of critical articles and other writing, Professors Mikhail Krutikov and Olga Maiorova had major monographs published in the last year: Krutikov's *From Kabbalah to Class Struggle: Expressionism, Marxism and Yiddish Literature in the Life and Work of Meir Wiener* and Maiorova's *From the Shadow of Empire: Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology, 1855-1870s*. Both are already well into the writing of their next books (more about these in a future newsletter!). In addition, Professor Maiorova is about to begin a three-year term as Director of the Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies Center here. Also at work on his next book (with some studies toward it already published this year) is Professor Andrew Herscher, whose *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict* was also published last year. Professor Herscher was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure this year. In addition to several articles, Professor Benjamin Paloff published a collection of the poems of Andrzej Sosnowski in translation and a collection of his own poetry, *The Politics*. The department also held workshops, to which outside experts were invited, on the books recently written by Professor Tatjana Aleksic and by Professor Sofya Khagi. Both are putting the finishing touches on their manuscripts this summer.

We are also especially proud of the research being done by our graduate students on the topics of their respective dissertations. Most of them will be abroad this summer in Russia, Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, and the former Yugoslavia working on the various stages of their projects. This has been made possible, in no small degree, thanks to your generous help. Vladislav Beronja is the first recipient of an award that comes from the endowment we established in honor of Benjamin Stolz, our recently departed former chair who did so much to build our department; Vlad is doing research in the former Yugoslavia, an area that was central to Professor Stolz's research. Aleksandar Boskovic is pursuing his dissertation research in Russia and Jodi Greig hers in Poland, thanks to funds that you have donated in honor of another of our great department-building chairs, John Mersereau. Russian and Polish literature were key to Professor Mersereau's research. Thanks to all of you who have helped us honor our former department chairs in this way!

I wish you the very best of summers—relaxing and engaging. Stay in good health,

  
Herbert (Herb) Eagle [hjeagle@umich.edu](mailto:hjeagle@umich.edu)

# The Slavic Scene

## Feature

### 100 Years of Russian at Michigan: Into a New Century

Continued from *The Slavic Scene*, Volume 17:2 and Volume 18:1

By Svitlana Rogovyk

This is the conclusion of a 3-part series on the long and successful path of Russian Studies at the University of Michigan.

In response to the successful launch of Sputnik in 1957, University of Michigan's President Harlan Hatcher requested that the Board of Regents establish a program to observe Russian instructional methods in the Soviet Union<sup>1</sup>. President Hatcher himself led the first group of Michigan educators to Russia in 1961. Through collaboration with other departments, the Slavic Department continues to conduct a Summer Study Tour to Russia for advanced Russian-language students selected from throughout the United States.

During this same time, the University of Michigan Press embarked on a program to publish Russian language materials. Their first undertaking was Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago* as well as Pasternak's poems and collected works.

Since the 1960s, the number of students studying Russian language and literature at Michigan has doubled. Student enrollment for the 2010-11 academic year was nearly 1,000. Spring and summer sessions total nearly 50 students.

Ardis Publishing, founded in 1971 by U-M's Russian Professor Carl Proffer and his wife Ellendea, was the foremost Western publisher of Russian and Soviet literature. Ardis published approximately 200 titles in Russian of such prominent authors as Nabokov, Brodsky, Mandelstam, Sokolov, Bitov, Dovlatov, Aksyonov, Iskander and others. "The Proffers had two goals for their publishing house. The first was to publish in Russian the 'lost library' of twentieth-century Russian literature that had been censored and removed from Soviet libraries [...]. The second was to bring translations of contemporary writers

working in the Soviet Union to American scholars and the West."<sup>2</sup> The Ardis Publishing archive is housed at the Special Collections Library at the University of Michigan.

Professor Proffer also facilitated Joseph Brodsky's coming to teach at the University of Michigan in 1972. Read more about this incredible story on our website: [www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/aboutus/ourhistory/josephbrodsky](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/aboutus/ourhistory/josephbrodsky).



The first U-M Russian Study Tour, 1961

In 2007, the Slavic Department announced two new Russian Concentration tracks—"Heritage Speakers" and "Culture." These tracks were created to answer to the needs and interests of our dynamic student body. In 2010 Project RUSLAN (Russian Service Learning in Action Network) launched, bringing U-M students to St. Petersburg and Vytegra.

Nearly 1,000 students study Russian language & literature each year at the University of Michigan. Their 21st century motivations are not far from what they were in the 19th century—curiosity, challenge, and cultural intrigue. Now in its centennial year, the Russian language & literature program continues to focus on graduating students who will become experts in their chosen fields of Russian studies and will continue the legacy of excellence of the 100 year old Russian language program at The University of Michigan.

1. Proceedings of the Board of Regents (1957-1960), p. 716

2. From <http://www.lib.umich.edu/events/back-ussr-ann-arbor-s-ardis-publishing-and-russian-literature>

# The Slavic Scene

## Classroom Spotlight

### Ukrainian Culture Mini-Course Inspires

By Svitlana Rogovyk

The "Introduction to the Ukrainian Culture" mini-course was taught for the second time in the Winter 2011 semester with 33 students enrolled.

Students were attracted to this class through a general interest in Ukrainian culture. After surveying their reasons for taking the class, I chose to restructure the syllabus in order to allow the students more freedom to examine topics of interest to themselves.

During the 7-week mini-course students were exposed to various research perspectives on the cultural traditions of Ukraine, the second largest country in Europe with more than 1,000 years of colonial heritage. We examined major components of Ukrainian culture: history, language, literature, religion, science, music, and art. These were presented as "cultural mapping" of Ukrainian lands and its people, who were widely influenced by a variety of other cultures, yet never lost their own identity.

We also had several guest speaker presentations to incorporate the course topics. Anatoly Murha, the Detroit-based Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus Director and former student of the University of Michigan, introduced students to bandura—the Ukrainian folk instrument, which he called "the heart and soul" of Ukrainian culture. For the class, Murha presented information about the Bandurist Chorus, which has been performing around the world, playing both traditional and modern compositions, and promoting the musical traditions of Ukraine. The 55-member all-male ensemble has been intact for more than five decades.

Three incredible women shared their immigration experiences with students. Life stories of Professor Emerita Assya Humesky; The Head of Ukrainian Women's League of Ann Arbor, Oksana Posa; and Wayne State University Professor Olena Palyvoda inspired students to consider their own experiences as citizens. Each woman introduced the students to their personal legacy of carrying on Ukrainian traditions, customs, and language while living away from their homeland.

For their final projects, students were able to choose one major component of Ukrainian culture and explore its deep structure within the culture. Students then described the significance of the cultural component and why its preservation should be continued. Topics of students' papers ranged from St. Sophia Cathedral Graffiti to the Holodomor's (famine's) impact on Ukrainian culture. The students chose topics that appealed to their sensibilities and were simultaneously exploring Ukrainian culture and its impact.

The collection of students' work in this course will be introduced as an online "Virtual Reference to the Elements of Ukrainian Culture" in the near future.



## Course Design: A Juxtaposition

Occasionally graduate students are asked to redesign an upper-level course that has been taught previously. The graduate student may reconfigure the content, presentations, and/or assignments. They collaborate with faculty to determine the best methods for teaching the newly designed course. The following are the experiences of graduate students Yanina Arnold and Vlad Beronja.

**Yana Arnold** In the 2010 summer semester, I taught a survey course of 19th century Russian short prose. I was very excited: it was my first opportunity to devise a course for my favorite century of Russian literature! Luckily, a similar course was taught the year before by Professor Olga Maiorova, who shared her



syllabus and advised me throughout the process of organizing my course. Upon brainstorming a few ideas with Professor Maiorova, I added more authors to my syllabus, thus reducing the amount of reading for each individual author (alas, some of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky had to go!). I also lengthened my “nineteenth century” by one decade. My principal idea was to offer a very dynamic vision of the nineteenth century. Gradually, my syllabus grew to include Alexey Tolstoy’s vampire story, Vladimir Odoevsky’s dystopian novellas, short prose by women-writers Karolina Pavlova and Evgeniia Tur, and the short masterpieces of Russian neo-realism. The sheer number of authors in my reading made teaching this course a challenge: for every class meeting I had to situate a new author within his/her respective historical, cultural, and artistic context. This experience was difficult yet illuminating: it forced me to crawl out of the “cocoon” of my own graduate research and to look at “my century,” along with my wonderful summer students, from a more panoramic perspective.

**Vlad Beronja** In the winter semester 2011, I had an opportunity to redesign and teach an upper-level course in the Slavic department, titled *Nobody’s Home: Po-ethics of Exile*. The goal of the course was to introduce students to the major prose works of 20th century Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian authors, while asking broader theoretical questions about exile and global immigration in their literary and ideological manifestations. This was a very edifying experience in terms of testing



various pedagogic techniques in a small seminar setting, especially since graduate students rarely get to teach an upper-level course in their field of research. Since I was working with a relatively small group of students, I wanted to make the seminar more interactive, thus encouraging participation in a collective and—ideally—non-hierarchical intellectual endeavor. Along with two seminar papers and a creative writing exercise, the students were asked to write a weekly post on a class blog (<http://bcs436.blogspot.com/>). The seminar also featured two guest visitors—an artist from an MFA program, Michael Borowski, and a local writer-in-exile, Zoran Rosić—in an effort to connect the content of the course to other disciplines and non-academic settings. I’d like to thank Prof. Eagle and Prof. Aleksić for their wisdom, mentorship, and encouragement during this time, and my students for their contributions and enthusiasm.

Throughout the semester, various Slavic events occur within the MLB. Clockwise from the upper left: Polish 122 Fortune Telling; singing at the Maslenitsa celebration; Russian 202 Cook-off; Pysanka; and scenes from “The Suicide,” a play by Nikolai Erdman as performed by Russian 402 students. Their video may be viewed on YouTube. Search for ‘UM Russian 402’.



# The Slavic Scene

## Congratulations

### Our Ph.D. Candidates: Eric, Renee, and Jessica

Eric Ford, Renee Scherer and Jessica Zychowicz have successfully passed their Preliminary Examinations. In the Spring Term they are teaching Russian, and during the summer they will begin working on their dissertation projects. Eric will concentrate on

his dissertation proposal, while Jessica will be conducting research on women's movement in Ukraine and Renee will be studying advanced Yiddish at the Tel Aviv University in Israel.



### More Graduate Student Activities and Awards

- **Yana Arnold** presented a paper at ASEES and at MASC 2011 in NYC; presented a dissertation chapter at the Russian/Soviet History Workshop; lectured at the U-M Institute for the Humanities; published a translation from Andreevsky's *The Book of Death* in the Toronto Slavic Quarterly.
- **Vlad Beronja** won the East European Studies Writing Dissertation Fellowship for 2011-2012. He also received a Summer Mellon Dissertation Writing Fellowship; published a translation of M. Krleza's essay in *The Journal of Croatian Studies*; attended the AATSEEL and ASEES Conferences
- **Aleksandar Boskovic** won a Rackham Pre-Doctoral Award for the 2011-2012 academic year. He also received a Summer Mellon Dissertation Writing Fellowship; and won a Rackham International Student Fellowship. Aleksandar presented "Constructivist Paper Movie" at ACLA; presented at the Grad & Undergrad Student Presentations at the Weiser Center and at ASEES.
- **Meghan Forbes** received a summer FLAS. She also presented a paper at the Brown University Estrangement Conference. She has received a FLAS for 2011-2012.
- **Jodi Greig** presented a paper at the Polish Conference in September. She also presented at the Midwest Slavic Visual Symposium, and presented a paper at the 1st Global Conference on Queer Sexualities.
- **Jamie Parsons** received a summer FLAS for language study in St. Petersburg.
- **Sarah Sutter** presented at ASEES Convention, and made several presentations to local high school Russian classes.
- **Marin Turk** presented a paper entitled "Satirical Journals During Catherine the Great's Reign: 'Vsiakaia Vsiachina' and 'Truten' – Agreeing to Disagree" at ASEES.
- **Jessica Zychowicz** received a CREES CRIF award for 2011. She also presented papers at the Polish Conference (September); U.S. Department of State Transatlantic Dialogue Young Leaders Conference; ASEES; and the Midwest Slavic Association Annual Conference, as well as a CREES Presentation for the International Women's Day Centenary.

### Faculty Awards



**Olga Maiorova** has been appointed director of the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (CREES) for three years. She is an Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature, and has served as associate director of CREES and as a member of the CREES executive committee. She has been at the U-M since 2001, and during her time here has earned several prestigious teaching awards and has amassed an impressive record of scholarship.



In May, the Regents approved **Andrew Herscher's** promotion to Associate Professor with tenure.

# The Slavic Scene

## Congratulations Graduates

### Slavic Graduates

**Claire Abraham** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Megan Berkobien** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Louis Campana** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Eric Chen** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Megan Cheslock** Minor in Culture & Literature of Eastern Europe

**Cameron Dean** Bachelor of Arts, Russian

**Katarzyna Franczyk** Bachelor of Arts, Polish

**Alena Gerasimova** Bachelor of Science, Russian

**Chelsey Green** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Bryn Hauk** Bachelor of Arts, Russian

**Lisa Hebda** Minor in Polish Language, Literature, & Culture

**Kristy Lukaszewski** Bachelor of Arts, Polish

**Monika Martusiewicz** Minor in Polish Language, Literature, & Culture

**Boris Milter** Bachelor of Arts, Russian

**Olivia Nedorezov** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Jenna Ritten** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Samuel Smolkin** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Alicja Sobilo** Bachelor of Science, Polish

**Joanna Solarewicz** Bachelor of Science, Polish

**Landon Thomas** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

**Xin Yuen** Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture



**Claire Abraham**



**Alena Gerasimova**



**Lisa Hebda**



**Kristy Lukaszewski**



**Olivia Nedorezov**



**Joanna Solarewicz**

### Undergraduate Award Winners

**Christopher Chrobak**  
*Excellence in Polish Language Studies Award*

**Monika Harmsen**  
*Prize for Best Work in Other Media*

**Caitlin Harrington**  
*Excellence in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian Language Studies Award*

**Anya Nona**  
*Excellence in Ukrainian Language Studies Award*

**Scott Templin, Radhika Gurumurthy, and Katherine Hacala**  
*Slavic Dept. Prize for Best Paper Written in a Student's Native Language*



**Christopher Chrobak**



**Monika Harmsen**



**Caitlin Harrington**



**Anya Nona**



**Scott Templin**

# The Slavic Scene

## Highlights

### **Manuscript Workshop, *The Sacrificed Body: Literature, History and the Nation in the Balkans***

By Tatjana Aleksic

I find the level of institutional and collegial support for pre-tenure faculty at the University of Michigan excellent and much needed in preparation for this career milestone after which, I hope, life gets at least a little less stressful. The time to write and concentrate almost exclusively on the manuscript is the most precious form of support offered at this institution. I decided to apply for “nurturance leave” after three years of teaching, which to me was the right time to finally sit down and consolidate the many ideas and various directions in which my writing was going after extensive research I had done on the subject of my book. While I believe most scholars do extensive alterations on their dissertations before they publish them in some form later, I decided to do a complete makeover of my dissertation material, so that this manuscript and my dissertation barely resemble each other. This shift happened as a result of the more profound interest I developed in specific aspects of my previous work and I thought I should elaborate more upon those aspects rather than adhere to the original concept. I am currently using the final months of my leave and the manuscript is almost ready to be sent to potential publishers for preliminary reviews.

The other important form of assistance I received in the process was the manuscript workshop, which was jointly organized by my two departments, Comparative Literature and Slavic Languages and Literatures. Workshop is one of the most useful phases in the writing process and it should be organized when the manuscript has already undergone a few revisions by the author, when it is coherent enough to be read by others. For me this was much needed help, not only because of the fact that after months and months of solitary thinking and working on the text I was beginning to lose the thread of my discussion, but also because I come from an academic culture in which public presentations and assessments of one’s work are not only common, but mandatory for every step in the career. Manuscript workshop reminded me very much of my MA thesis defense at the University

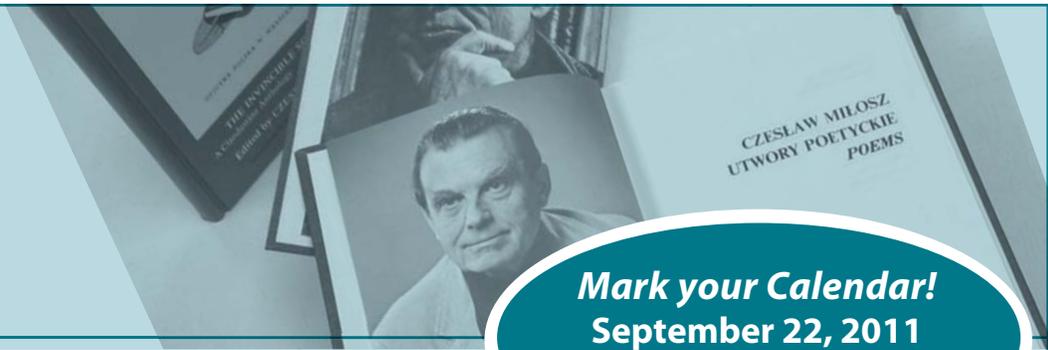
of Niš, Serbia, due to the identical process of making the text available to the public a month before the event and the discussion which took place in front of a full auditorium. This public aspect of academic work is something that I have missed since coming to the States, as I believe that there is not enough of it here. We present at conferences and lectures, but I feel there is more need for this type of scrutiny, where people would be motivated to read the work of others and then make constructive suggestions. A colleague from the Greek department called it “grilling,” and it is a kind of grilling, but in a good sense. I was lucky to have had three designated manuscript readers and a discussant. After consulting with me and several other colleagues in the field, my department chairs selected the two guest readers among scholars whose work was related to mine but who had not



previously served on committees involving my work, so that their evaluation could be as objective as possible. The third reader and the discussant were in fact my two department chairs, who are very knowledgeable about

***continued on page 11***

The manuscript workshop for Tatjana Aleksic’s *The Sacrificed Body: Literature, History and the Nation in the Balkans* took place on January 21, 2011. Discussants were Professor Stathis Gourgouris, Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, Columbia University; Dr. Zoran Milutinović, Department of South Slav Literature and Culture, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London; and Professor Herbert Eagle, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan.



**Mark your Calendar!**  
**September 22, 2011**  
**at Rackham Auditorium**

## **Miłosz: Made in America, A Tribute to Czesław Miłosz** **Annual Copernicus Lecture in the Zell Visiting Writers Series**

June 28, 2011 is the 100th anniversary of the birth of Polish poet Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004). The Nobel laureate had close ties to the University of Michigan, where his first major collection of poems to appear in North America, *Utwory poetyckie*, was published in 1976 by Michigan Slavic Publications, and where he received an honorary doctorate in 1977. Two weeks after receiving the 1980 Nobel Prize in Literature he returned to Michigan to lecture, becoming the Visiting Walgreen Professor of Human Understanding in 1983, and he was a frequent visitor to the campus until his final Copernicus Lecture and poetry reading in 1993. *Miłosz: Made in America* is a conversation about Miłosz's development as a poet in the U.S. and his continuing influence on contemporary poetry. The panelists, all celebrated poets and translators as well as long-time Miłosz collaborators, will offer their insights about this complicated man and his work and their own roles in the "making" of both.

**5:10 pm** **Film:** *The Magic Mountain: An American Portrait of Czesław Miłosz*

**7:00 pm** **Symposium:** *Miłosz: Made in America—A Conversation with Robert Hass, Robert Pinsky, and Lillian Vallée*

## **Polish Film Fest Review**

By Jodi Greig

The Ann Arbor Polish Film Festival gives both the Polish community of southern Michigan and film buffs alike a glimpse of the vibrant, exciting world of contemporary Polish cinema. The festival is organized annually by the Polish Cultural Fund-Ann Arbor in collaboration with the Polish-American Congress Ann Arbor Chapter, the U-M's Polish Club, and the U-M. In tandem with film screenings, the festival hosts famous Polish directors, actors, and other members of the Polish film community. Last year's offerings included two dramas, a romantic comedy, four documentaries, and a thriller, as well as discussions with two directors, Anna Ferens (*What Can Dead Prisoners Do*, documentary) and Agnieszka Wójtowicz-Vosloo (*After.Life*, thriller).

*A Wonderful Summer* (2010), directed by Ryszard Brylski, opened the festival. Described as the "first Polish romantic dark comedy," its protagonist is a young woman negotiating first love, as well as her relationship with her father, an alcoholic still mourning the death of his wife. Peppered with fantastical elements, the film is set largely in a funeral parlor, where the family lives, hence lending it a slightly macabre feel. However, the film ends up more touching than terrifying, and resolves in a quirky and heart-warming manner.

*Little Rose* (2010), directed by Jan Kidawa-Błoński, takes place in a painful year for Poland—the year 1968, when Communist authorities cracked down on protest movements and state-sponsored anti-

Semitic sentiment forced many Jews to leave the country. A beautiful woman spies on a famous writer and suspected dissident, betraying him to the Communist government...until her feelings for him become complicated. Błoński skillfully portrays an era of fear and dissent, while foregrounding a compelling and tragic love story.

Documentaries screened include *Warsaw Available* (2009), directed by Karolina Bielawska and Julia Ruszkiewicz; *What Can Dead Prisoners Do* (2010), directed by Anna Ferens; *Mom* (2010), directed by Krzysztof Piotrowski, and *They Took His Love Away* (2008), dir. Bożena Garus-Hockuba. Lively discussions followed the films.

The last film screened was a chilling thriller starring Christina Ricci, Liam Neeson, and Justin Long and was directed by Agnieszka Wójtowicz-Vosloo. During the post-screening discussion, director Wójtowicz-Vosloo described the film as a meditation on the nature of death, and of "after-life". She revealed that the film grew out of her own experience of the death of her father. Many questions were asked about the director's experience with the making of the film, and fascinating anecdotes were given in reply. Wójtowicz-Vosloo also spoke about her experiences as a Polish director working outside of Poland, and had many insights about the current state of Polish cinema. All in all, it was the perfect end to an excellent film festival.

If you'd like more information about the festival, you can find it on their website: <http://www.annarborpolonia.com/filmfestival/home.htm>.

# The Slavic Scene

## Staying Connected



Dr. Cukierman was awarded AATSEEL's Excellence in Teaching at the Pre-College Level. He built the Russian program at Langley High School in McLean, Virginia, where he began teaching 22 years ago. From a student body of 2,000, 240 are enrolled in 1 of the 9 sections for next fall. Out of the 6 languages offered, Russian is the second most popular at Langley.

### Dr. Valentin Cukierman ('76) Recognized for His Excellence in Teaching

Valentin Cukierman was born in Russia and grew up in Poland. His mother, a native Russian, taught Russian language in high school in Poland. She was an annual recipient of a national "distinguished teacher award." Valentin Cukierman came to the U.S. as a stateless political refugee in May of 1970. In September of 1970, three months after his arrival, he was enrolled at the University of Michigan. In Ann Arbor, he found a place where the pursuit of ideas was paramount. He still feels that the best four years of his time in the U.S. were at U-M. He thrived in the environment of academia, with its focus on research and the quest for knowledge. Guiding him through this time were advisors Assya Humesky, Deming Brown, I. R. Titunik, and Chairs John Mersereau and Ben Stolz.

In 1974 Val accepted an Assistant Professor position at the University of Connecticut. The region was very bucolic and pretty, but he missed the intellectual intensity and the socio-cultural energy of Ann Arbor. In addition, his department was suffering. There was no chance for tenure; faculty would leave or retire and not be replaced. He began thinking about this as an opportunity to do something else, to move away from academia and "to confront the real America". He moved to Washington D.C. hoping to land a job with the FBI, CIA, or a similar national security agency. He began this process, and, after a few months, he was told he couldn't continue because his parents were not U.S. citizens.

Meanwhile, Russia had become more prominent in world events. Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev were working toward ending the Cold War and perestroika was underway. In August of 1989, Dr. Cukierman received a call from Fairfax County Public School in Northern Virginia, where he had applied for a high school teaching position. He was extended an offer and jumped on it. However, in order to make him full time, he had to teach Russian in three different schools every day. Langley High School has the fortune of being near Washington, D.C., a city rich in Russian culture. It is located half a mile from the CIA headquarters and many parents work for the government. He started with one section of Russian with 22 students. In his first year at Langley,

Dr. Cukierman organized and led a student exchange trip to St. Petersburg. The trips that include Moscow and St. Petersburg are taken annually. This year he celebrated its 20th anniversary trip.

Dr. Cukierman also takes students to Brighton Beach, New York, invites guest speakers to his classes, and encourages student interaction with Russian exchange students and "live Russians". His students are active and successful in both the ACTR Olympiada of Spoken Russian and the National Russian Essay Contest. He is an active participant in a group of Washington area teachers of Russian that meets regularly to share and discuss curriculum and materials. He is a true master teacher who takes advantage of professional development opportunities such as the ACTR institutes for AP® Russian teachers (from [http://www.aatseel.org/about/awards\\_2005167/](http://www.aatseel.org/about/awards_2005167/)).

Of course, the fact that he is now a celebrity after his Excellence in Teaching Award, has given additional incentive to Dr. Cukierman to, as he puts it, "continue creating kids for college."



Far right,  
Dr. Cukierman and his  
students touring Russia

# The Slavic Scene

## In Print

### Sosnowski's Poetry Translated

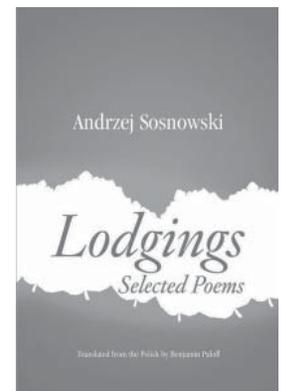
With *Lodgings*, translator Benjamin Paloff has made an important contribution to the body of Polish poetry currently available to readers in English. Complete with a translator's note, a conversation between Sosnowski and Paloff, and poems that span Sosnowski's entire career to date (1987-2010), *Lodgings* offers an unusual glimpse into a polyphonous, expansive, and chameleonic strain of Polish poetry. The poems included are pulled from nine of Sosnowski's collections (including *Life in Korea*, *A Season in Hel*, *Lodgings*, and the most recent *poemas*), and they are presented, with two exceptions, in their original order. [...]

It is a daunting task to carry over into English Sosnowski's language, which is a language marked by abrupt shifts in register and suggests an obsessive and ongoing rumination on various literary influences. Paloff has rendered a superb, tonally consistent volume, and has effectively stretched

Taken from E.C. Belli's review on [wordswithoutborders.org](http://wordswithoutborders.org)

the barriers of his own language. With this English-language Sosnowski, he has contributed a new voice to the canon of writers descended from [John] Ashbery and [James] Schuyler, and, in the process of establishing such lineage—here, across international lines—he has helped further define the bounds of poetic language. In their exchange, Sosnowski recognizes the arduousness of Paloff's enterprise. He says, "I write in an utterly fallen, scrambled language, and it's possible that somewhere in this language of mine, in the language of these poems, there remains some fallen spark of revelation... You translate my fallen language into an equally scrambled and fallen American idiom, and your only essential task... is to discover and lift up this lost spark." A task Paloff accomplishes *avec brio*.

Read more: <http://wordswithoutborders.org/book-review/andrzej-sosnowskis-lodgings/#ixzz1NBszn5DT>



### Manuscript Workshop, *The Sacrificed Body*

*continued from page 8*

my work, a fact that added a balanced perspective to the entire process of critiquing the manuscript. Other colleagues and even some graduate students who found time in their schedules read the manuscript and offered very valuable suggestions both during and after the event, as we continued our correspondence.

I found the suggestions received from all of the readers and discussants very useful and I have been working hard on implementing them. In the four months since the event, I have made serious alterations to the chapters that the readers thought needed attention, looked more carefully into some slips or gaps in the argument, etc. Readers' different perspectives on the subject I wrote about

helped me fortify, or at times even alter points in my argument. But the merit of the workshop should not be assessed solely from the point of usefulness of the comments that the author obtains on the text, but also with respect to the value their work has for the community based on the interest the community demonstrates for it. It is intended as a bilateral exchange and the author should not be the only side benefitting from the experience. I was very happy to hear the suggestions from the floor and there were some really direct comments coming from the audience that jolted me into action. You know, like when somebody points to something so obvious that you simply could not discern for all the words on the page? Well, it was that kind of feeling.

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