

Slavic Scene

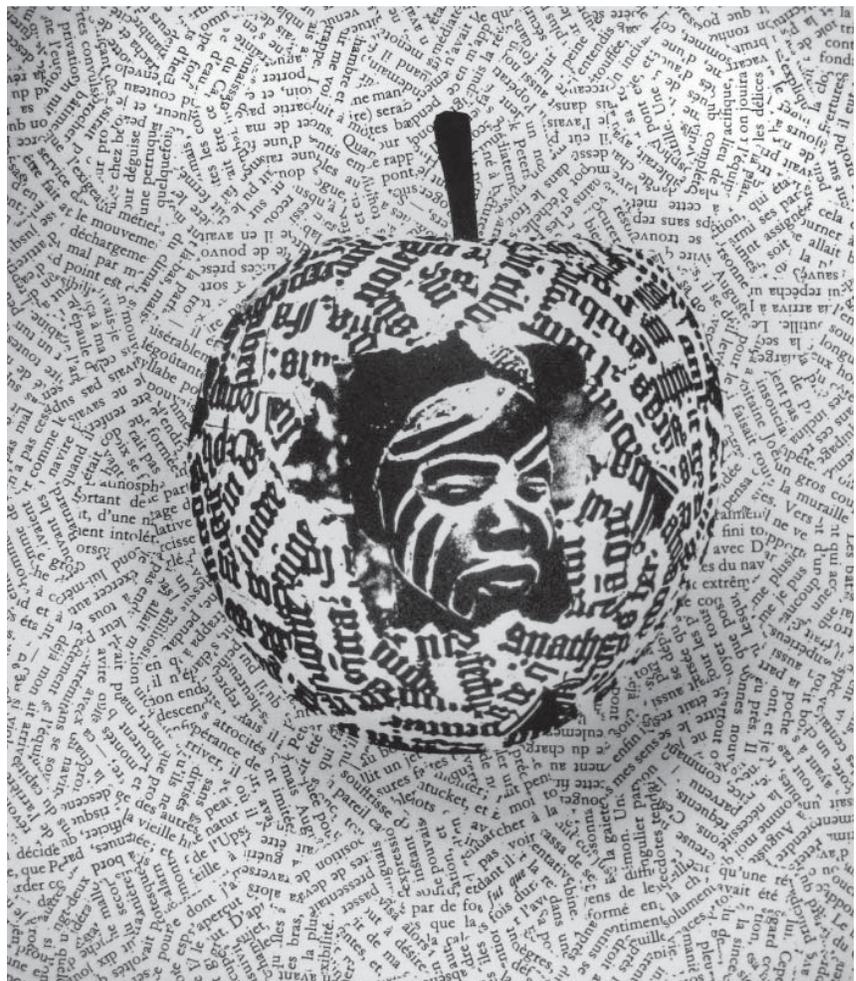
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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

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Artist unknown, cover image from *Image and Code*, an MSP publication

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Letter From the Chair

Dear Friends,



This year has been a very encouraging one in terms of enrollments and pedagogical innovations within the Department. Twenty-three students completed third-year Russian this Winter semester, the highest number to have achieved that level in decades; also, for the first time in several years, all three levels (first through third year) of our spring/summer intensive Russian language program have solid enrollment. Since word-of-mouth recommendations from friends are a significant factor in student decisions

to continue pursuing a language beyond the two-year requirement, our robust third and fourth-year Russian language enrollments are in large part due to the exceptional job that our lecturers and graduate student instructors are doing under Svitlana Rogovyk's pedagogical leadership in competency-based instruction. Nina Shkolnik's inspired teaching, which once again included her students' end-of-year presentation of a short play in Russian—this year Zoshchenko's *Svad'ba* (The Wedding), deserves special recognition—she taught many of those students who continued to the third-year (including those in our "Heritage Speakers" track), most of whom are now registered for what will next fall be our largest fourth-year Russian language contingent since the 1970s. Two of our graduate student language instructors were honored for their superlative teaching this year: Yana Arnold received the Rackham Graduate School's Outstanding Instructor Award (she was one of only six graduate students in all of the Humanities Departments to do so) and Sarah Sutter garnered the Slavic Department's Outstanding Achievement in Russian Teaching Award.

The Alternative Spring Break learning experience led by Alina Makin brought thirteen of our students to Vytegra (the largest number in the three years of this program) to volunteer their services at the local museum, to assist in English-language instruction in elementary and secondary schools, and to pursue their own short research projects during their week-long stay in this remote town in Russia's far northwest. At our graduation ceremony in April, we were treated to two very interesting student presentations based on survey research undertaken in Vytegra: one on local opinions about the significance of big-city political demonstrations, in the context of the presidential election; and another on Russian students' favorite English-language authors.

Many students continued their study of Polish language at the advanced levels, thanks to the sustained efforts of Ewa Pasek and Piotr Westwalewicz. Ewa entirely revised the third-year Polish language courses, introducing a new textbook and gathering and creating complementary teaching materials. She also completely revised our second-year Czech course and next year will be "beaming" a newly-designed first-year Czech course to the University of Illinois as part of our CourseShare initiative with the Slavic Department there—CourseShare makes possible language courses where students here are joined in "real time," via video and computer,



U-M RUSLAN students pictured with their peers in Vytegra.

continued on next page

with students at Illinois. To establish a personal rapport with her Illinois Czech students, Ewa is planning a short trip to Urbana before the fall semester begins here (they start a week earlier at Illinois). Piotr created a new course on "Poland Today," which deals with contemporary Polish culture in the context of social and political developments. Both Piotr and Ewa have also been working to create and promote co-curricular events for students learning Polish and Czech.

Marija Rosic has been a pioneer in approaches to teaching Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian-Montenegrin, sharing her recent experiences and strategies with participants in a conference this spring. Teaching a class which includes both new learners and students with a range of "heritage" exposure to the language is a real challenge in the face of the new countries' positions on their respective languages, which linguists used to consider a single SerboCroatian language. In working with students from all four backgrounds, Marija must get them to communicate in their common-

language, but with some awareness of its regional variations in pronunciation and vocabulary. In addition to revising our first-year Intensive Russian language course this spring and introducing a new textbook for it, Svitlana Rogovyk has continued her work in developing materials for the teaching of intermediate and advanced Ukrainian and in nurturing our new minor in Ukrainian by devising and teaching minicourses on Ukrainian culture. Professor Omry Ronen introduced a new course on 20th century Ukrainian poetry as well. Our department has in recent years become a leader in the teaching of Ukrainian language and culture in the U.S., a critical mission in terms of the very large numbers of speakers of this language.

We will need your help in future years to maintain, and hopefully to expand, our excellent language programs. Our teaching of Slavic languages is in part supported by grants from the U.S. Department of Education, funding which Congress this year cut substantially (see the article on page 10 for details). The future remains uncertain in terms of federal and foundation support. Thus, as you will learn from the article, we are, in collaboration with the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, launching a drive to endow named lectureships in each of the five languages that we teach. This would effectively guarantee that these languages will be taught at the University of Michigan in perpetuity, even if government funding for them is cut entirely. If you are in a position to help us with this absolutely crucial mission by contributing substantially to an endowment for a permanent lectureship in one of our languages, and are interested in further discussions about doing so, please contact me directly!

Best wishes for a healthy and enjoyable spring,


Herbert (Herb) Eagle hjeagle@umich.edu

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In the Classroom

A Residency of Two Major Theater Artists from Moscow

By Kate Mendelhoff



Playwright Maksym Kurochkin (left) and translator, dramaturge, and critic John Freedman (right) were Visiting Artists in Residence at the Residential College in March 2012.



During the week of March 12th–16th, 2012, the University of Michigan Residential College and the Slavic Department hosted two important figures in contemporary Russian theater. Maksym Kurochkin, a cutting-edge playwright, and John Freedman, his translator and the theater critic for *The Moscow Times* are both centrally involved with “The New Drama Movement” and are part of DOC Theater in Moscow. These artists were sponsored by Kate Mendelhoff of the Residential College Drama Concentration and LSA undergraduate Drama major. Kate had met Maksym and John in Moscow in 2009, when they hosted her students for a workshop at DOC Theater. She and her colleague Leonora Ivanitsky brought them to Ann Arbor in 2010 and produced workshop versions of two of Maksym’s plays. These were the first English language productions of these works.

During this recent residency, on Monday night the 12th, undergraduate students from an RC mini-course focused on Maksym’s work staged five short plays that had just been translated. Maksym and John were able to see these brand new pieces and to make notes for revisions. At the end of the week

these mini-course students joined with students from RC Hums 281 to do a production of Kurochkin’s comedy “The Schooling of Bento Bonchev” at the Keene Theater.

During his time in Ann Arbor, John Freedman participated in several events in the Slavic department. He visited Nina Shkolnik’s upper level Russian course and was the featured speaker at the Thursday night colloquium for faculty and graduate students. His informal talk was about contemporary Russian theater and politics.

Freedman and Kurochkin are part of an important cross-cultural exchange supported in part by the Center for International Theater Development. In 2010 the artists came to University of Michigan as part of a longer series of visits, including to Humanafest in Louisville, Kentucky. This latest visit was coordinated in collaboration with a residency at The Breaking String Theater in Austin, Texas. Funding was contributed by the Slavic department, the Residential College, Arts at Michigan and The Center for World Performance Studies.

Meet Visiting Scholar, Jesper Reddig

I couldn't have expected a better place to spend a couple of months for in-depth study and new life impressions. After spending time abroad in metropolitan Montreal and Vienna, suburban Ann Arbor with its liberal tradition, local art scene, and a strong subculture presence has introduced me to yet another form of city dynamics. While its downtown district strikes me as typically American, in a number of ways it also parallels my German home town of Münster, where I am also enrolled in graduate school: both blend a modern urban center with a host of sights and buildings that speak of centuries-old tradition (Münster, founded in the Middle Ages, has obviously an even more historic touch to it); in both you have countless cultural events on the doorstep and scenic landscapes right in the vicinity (Ann Arbor in the world-famous Great Lake State has a major bonus here); and both are essentially university towns – with students and the academy exerting a notable impact on alternative lifestyles.

In institutional terms, the first characteristic I noted about the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures was its outspoken interdisciplinary policies. As a former philosophy and English major, now working at the intersections of American, Slavic, and Jewish studies, I particularly value this orientation. However, my attempt at working with a diverse set of approaches has in turn also revealed my own

scholarly limitations. It is for this reason that I am so thankful to Mikhail Krutikov for inviting me here. He noted that my project could benefit from systematic teaching in his fields of expertise, introduced me to new contact persons and discussion groups, and in fact repeatedly took extended intervals out of his schedule to provide valuable feedback. I must also mention that the administrative staff coordinating my stay have been of exceptional help in matters both academic and personal.

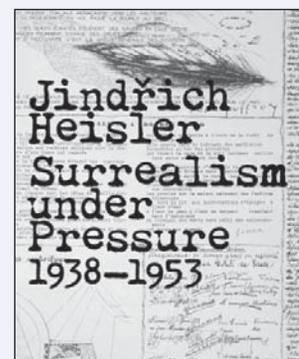
My time as a visiting research student in Ann Arbor is truly invaluable, shaping the course of my graduate studies in a significant way. It has already put into perspective and enriched my primary text analyses. And it will doubtless set the stage for a successful return to Münster in the summer, when I shall revise, and of course present to my supervisors, my overall project contextualization.



Jesper Reddig (Münster University) is a visiting research student at U-M's Slavic and Judaic studies departments. He works on contemporary Russian Jewish migrant novelists in the United States.

Jindřich Heisler

Students of Czech language and culture traveled with Professor Jindřich Toman to the Art Institute of Chicago to view the exhibit that he curated, "Jindřich Heisler: Surrealism under Pressure" on display now through July 1, 2012. This exhibit is the namesake of Professor Toman's most recent book, "*Jindřich Heisler: Surrealism under Pressure, 1938-1953*" published by the Art Institute of Chicago.



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Congratulations

Our Ph.D. Candidates: Jodi Greig and Sarah Sutter

Jodi Greig and Sarah Sutter have successfully passed their Preliminary Examinations. In the Spring Term Sarah is teaching Russian and Jodi will continue her

research in Poland, concentrating on her dissertation proposal, while Sarah will be conducting research on musicology.



More Graduate Student Activities and Awards

- **Yana Arnold** received Rackham's Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award for 2011-2012.
- **Vlad Beronja** was awarded a Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship for 2012/2013.
- **Aleksandar Boskovic** won the Jean Monnet Graduate Fellowship for the summer 2012. He presented papers at the 2011 ASEES conference and at CLIFF. Aleksandar has been also accepted to the Museum Studies Certificate Program.
- **Paulina Duda** received a CRIF summer research award and Rackham Travel Grant to attend a conference in Kaunas, Lithuania where she will present a paper on Polish popular cinema. She also gave two talks as a guest speaker in Polish cinema class on Tadeusz Konwicki's cinema and was a finalist in the International Institute's photo contest.
- **Meghan Forbes** presented papers at the 2011 ASEES conference and the 2012 Yale German Department Graduate Student Conference. This summer, she has a publication forthcoming in the journal *Estrangement*, issued by Cambridge Scholar's Publishing. Meghan has also begun publication of a bi-yearly, hand-made literary journal, *harlequin creature*; the first issue was released in October 2011 and the second in April/May 2012. Special Collections at the University of Michigan has acquired both copies. Meghan's work this past academic year was made possible with generous support from FLAS.
- **Sarah Sutter** received the Outstanding Achievement in Russian Teaching Award for 2011-2012.
- **Jessica Zychowicz's** article: "Two Bad Words: Femen and Feminism in Independent Ukraine, Notes from the Field" was published in *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Fall 2011. She also presented two papers: "Femen in Independent Ukraine: Performing Politics," at the U of Toronto Munk School of Global Affairs Graduate Symposium "Ukraine in Global Context" in January, 2012, and "Performance Feminism: How Femen is Going Global" at the U of Illinois "Discourse Across Borders" conference in February. Jessica has been admitted to the Community of Scholars Program at U-M Institute for Research on Women and Gender (includes an \$8000 summer fellowship). She served as Student Representative on the CREES Executive Council, and also gave a presentation on Women's Activism in Ukraine at the Girl Scouts of Ann Arbor presentation on Poland & Ukraine, Community Outreach to: UNWLA (Ukrainian National Woman's League of America Chapter 50).

Faculty Congratulations

The College of Literature, Science and the Arts has recommended the promotion of **Michael Makin** to the rank of professor. The Board of Regents approved his promotion at its May 17, 2012 meeting.

Congratulations to **Piotr Westwalewicz**, now Lecturer IV, on his successful major review. His contributions to our Polish language and culture program are invaluable, as is his role of the Polish program's concentration (and minor) advisor. **Piotr** will be teaching a new course in the fall, Polish 215: *Heart of Europe-Poland Today*. His very popular Polish 214 course, *Polish Rock Poetry*, continues to enroll more than 40 enthusiastic students.

The Slavic Scene

Congratulations Graduates

Slavic Graduates

Lindsey Bander

Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

Jeremy Gendron (summer graduate)

Bachelor of Arts, Russian

Ian Godofsky

Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

Caitlin Grimes (December graduate)

Bachelor of Arts, Russian

Paulina Kolczykiewicz

Minor in Polish Language, Literature, & Culture

Erika Mayer

Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

Lydia McMullen-Laird

Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

Ryan Rigda

Minor in Czech Language, Literature, & Culture

Andrew Rosati

Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

Joanna Smulska

Minor in Polish Language, Literature, & Culture

Julia Solarewicz

Bachelor of Science, Polish

Ethan Stockdale

Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

Jill Szydloski

Bachelor of Arts, Polish; Bachelor of Arts, Russian

Masha Zilberman

Minor in Russian Language, Literature, & Culture

Undergraduate Award Winners

**Abagael Adair, Samuel Gladstone, Alexandra Herstein,
Sean Houchins, Jeffrey Lemanski, Jude Palmer**

Excellence in Russian Language Studies Award

Robert Fuller

Best Paper Written in a Slavic Language Learned at U-M

Viktoria Krislaty

Excellence in Ukrainian Language Studies Award

Jeffrey Lemanski

Excellence in Polish Language Studies Award

Matthew Pinos

Best Paper Written in a student's Native Language

Kristina Pingston

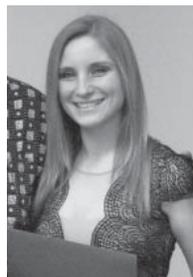
Prize for Creative Work and Work in Other Media

Anthony Tesija

Excellence in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian Language Studies Award

Christine Vanek

Excellence in Czech Language Studies Award

Jeffrey Lemanski**Christine Vanek****Viktoria Krislaty****Julia Solarewicz****Joanna Smulska****Matthew Pinos**

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Highlights

AGIG Presents at Rackham Graduate School Centennial Research Symposium

2012 marks the centennial anniversary of Rackham Graduate School. As part of the celebration, Rackham hosted a research symposium in mid-February which enabled Michigan's graduate students to present in a forum their creative ideas and push research in new directions to engage critical problems in every field of advanced study. The Symposium highlighted the global impact that graduate students make through their research, and displayed the quality, breadth, and diversity of graduate education at Michigan.

Two of our graduate students, Aleksandar Bošković and Meghan Forbes, represented Avant Garde Interest Group (AGIG) along with Mikey Rinaldo (Comparative Literature). Their poster displayed abstracts of their respective dissertation and research projects. Aleksandar Bošković's *The Birth of the Avant-Garde Photopoetry Book*, covers the

interwar avant-garde practice of combining poetry with photo montage. Meghan Forbes' *Mapping the Interwar Avant-garde* provides insight into the rich network of European avant-garde discourse and the cross-cultural interchange. Mikey Rinaldo's *Doodle: Poetics of the Mark in Later Twentieth Century* cuts into the tissue of indeterminate mark-making in the North American post-World War II literature.

Rackham Centennial Symposium visitors expressed interest in the examination of diverse practices and examples of interdisciplinarity, illustrated by the AGIG poster.

The participants experienced a warm atmosphere amidst engaging intellectual exchange with a number of schools, departments, and disciplines. AGIG was honored to be part of Rackham Graduate School's centennial celebration.



In Memory of Vaclav Havel

The University of Michigan community was deeply saddened to learn that Václav Havel, first President of the Czech Republic, passed away on December 18, 2011. As we reflect on the life and work of this profound poet, playwright, and political figure, we remember the strong connections Havel had with the University of Michigan.

Václav Havel came to Ann Arbor in September 2000 to accept an honorary doctorate from the University of Michigan. This was an occasion to welcome not only a playwright and a politician, but a friend whom we knew very well from his writings. While Havel was imprisoned in the early 1980s, Professor Ladislav Matejka obtained his "The Power of the Powerless" from Havel's Canadian friend and translator, Paul Wilson. He subsequently printed Havel's writings in *Cross Currents*, a "thick journal" focusing on Central Europe. Alongside other East European dissidents, Havel figured prominently in *Cross Currents*

throughout the years. Matejka and Havel met for the first time on the occasion of Havel's honorary doctorate. This was a warm encounter between an author and his American promoter, albeit in a situation completely different from the 1980s. We keep Václav Havel, our friend and author, firmly in our memory.



U-M President Lee Bollinger (left), Ladislav Matejka (center) and Václav Havel (right), Ann Arbor, September 2000

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Staying Connected

Slavic Language Pedagogy Workshop Welcomes Benjamin Rifkin (Ph.D. '90), Professor & Dean

By Svitlana Rogovyk

For more than two decades the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures has invited its graduates, recognized researchers, teachers, and authors to the annual Slavic language pedagogy workshop to share their philosophy and experience in language teaching. This year, we welcomed Benjamin Rifkin (Ph.D. '90) as our guest speaker. Benjamin is a Professor of World Languages & Cultures, and Dean of the School of Humanities & Social Sciences at the College of New Jersey.

Slavic language faculty and graduate student instructors participated in the lively and productive discussion of topics in a communicative approach to second language acquisition.

The last decade has seen significant development in the direction of implementing American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) language proficiency guidelines into foreign language curriculum in general and more specifically in the teaching of Slavic languages. Considering Professor Rifkin has more than 20 years of experience teaching Russian, and has researched the areas of foreign language pedagogy; foreign language teacher education; applied linguistics; and second language acquisition. The group tasks offered to the workshop participants were focused specifically on the development and assessment of learners' abilities to perform tasks in a foreign language, a common measure that can be recognized across all Slavic languages.

Workshop participants were engaged in creating poem-based reading, listening, and speaking activities, then presenting and debriefing on the outcomes.

Professor Rifkin also met with Slavic graduate students for an informal discussion of the current job market from the perspective of a dean and a member of search committees.



Professor Rifkin presenting to our graduate students in the MLB (top), and (bottom) on campus in New Jersey

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Development

Exploring the Future—Tomorrow's Students Need Us Today

There is no question that these are challenging times for Slavic studies in the United States. Washington's recent budget cuts to the Department of Education's Title VI program translated into 47 percent cuts in the operating budgets of all Title VI area centers for the current fiscal year. The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures in cooperation with the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (CREES) has relied upon Title VI support for 53 years in order to teach the Slavic region's less commonly taught languages (LCTL). Specifically, Polish, Czech, Ukrainian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS) as well as a fifth year of Russian have all been supported with Title VI funding over the past few years. We are still hoping the cuts will be restored in current or future Congressional budget negotiations but we must prepare for the very real possibility that federal funding for area and language studies will be much reduced for years to come.

For over 100 years, U-M has been a prime North American site where the study of Russian culture, history, language, politics and society is an integral part of the curriculum. Our internationally-esteemed faculty includes more than 30 experts teaching and conducting research related to Russia. We offer 35- 40 courses focusing on Russia's past and present, including five levels of Russian language, as well as special courses for Russian heritage speakers, are taught each year. Russian language is studied by more than 100 students each semester, and 500 students enroll in courses on Russian culture, history, politics and society.

Our Department offers an undergraduate major in Russian and an undergraduate minor in Russian Language, Literature, and Culture. In addition, graduate and professional school students specialize in Russian affairs in a variety of fields including anthropology, comparative literature, history, law, political science, sociology and of course, Slavic languages and literatures, amongst others. Since 1990, 140 graduate students have completed doctoral dissertations on Russian topics.

Language instruction is central to a meaningful and effective understanding of the countries and cultures of the Slavic region. The availability of Russian language instruction from introductory to advanced levels is a key element in the success of U-M's Russian program. Given the cuts in Department of Education Title VI grants as well as state cuts in higher education funding, maintaining U-M's stature in Russian studies is at risk.

With this in mind we have set a goal, in partnership with CREES, to establish at least four, potentially five, endowed lectureships in order to ensure that the teaching of these languages will endure for the foreseeable future. A single or combination of many gifts amounting to \$750,000 - \$1,000,000 will result in a named lectureship in one of the region's languages (Russian, Polish, Czech, BCS, and Ukrainian) ensuring it will be taught at the University of Michigan in perpetuity.

Over the next few newsletters we will outline the benefits that each of the LCTL's taught by the Slavic Department bring to the University and beyond. We need the support of you, our alumni and friends. Please help us as we embark upon this campaign by sending a gift in the enclosed envelope or by contacting Herb Eagle, Chair, directly. Indicate the language you are interested in endowing on the enclosed gift envelope. Please consider how you can help open a door to the future: allow tomorrow's student to explore their future.



The launch of Scientific Russian, vol 13:2, Oct. '05



Dr. Valentin Cukierman ('76) recognized for his Excellence in Teaching, vol 19:1, June '11



The Longans ('92) at the Council on International Educational Exchange's (CIEE) St. Petersburg program, vol 15: 2, Nov. '07



Russian Service Learning in Action Network (RUSLAN), vol 18:1, May '10

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In Print



Omry Ronen Receives Award

Omry Ronen received the International Science Fiction Portal-11 award, Best Article for Naiznanku [Inside Out], published in *Zvezda* 2010/2011. The Portal SF Convention was held in Pecherska Lavra in Kiev.

A scholarly version of this paper appeared in *Arbor Mundi: Comparative Studies of Culture*, #18, Moscow 2011.



Professor Jonathan Bolton ('01): *Worlds of Dissent*

Worlds of Dissent analyzes the myths of Central European resistance popularized by Western journalists and historians, and replaces them with a picture of the struggle against state repression as the dissidents themselves understood, debated, and lived it. In the late 1970s, when Czech intellectuals, writers, and artists drafted Charter 77 and called on their government to respect human rights, they hesitated to name themselves “dissidents.” Their personal and political experiences—diverse, uncertain, nameless—have been obscured by victory narratives that portray them as larger-than-life heroes who defeated Communism in Czechoslovakia.

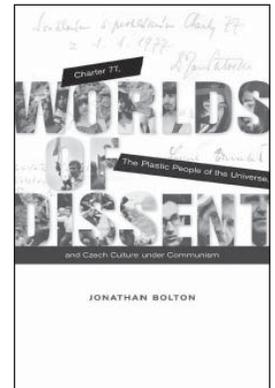
Jonathan Bolton draws on diaries, letters, personal essays, and other first-person texts to analyze Czech dissent less as a political philosophy than as an everyday experience. Bolton considers not only Václav Havel but also a range of men and women

writers who have received less attention in the West—including Ludvík Vaculík, whose 1980 diary *The Czech Dream Book* is a compelling portrait of dissident life.

Bolton recovers the stories that dissidents told about themselves, and brings their dilemmas and decisions to life for contemporary readers. Dissidents often debated, and even doubted, their own influence as they confronted incommensurable choices and the messiness of real life.

Portraying dissent as a human, imperfect phenomenon, Bolton frees the dissidents from the suffocating confines of moral absolutes. *Worlds of Dissent* offers a rare opportunity to understand the texture of dissent in a closed society.

*Taken from Harvard University Press,
with permission from the author*



About *Image and Code*

Image and Code is a compilation of papers that were delivered at the International Conference on the Semiotics of Art, held in May, 1978 in Ann Arbor. It is edited by Wendy Steiner, Richard L. Fisher Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, past Chair of the Penn English Department, and Founding Director of the Penn Humanities Forum. It may be purchased from Michigan Slavic Publications (MSP) by calling 734.763.4496, or emailing michsp@umich.edu.



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Mary Sue Coleman (ex officio)

Around the Department:

Top row: Russian Cook-
Off Competition, Russian
202

Bottom row: Pysanka
egg painting; Maslenitsa
party; decorative clothing

