

The Slavic Scene

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www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

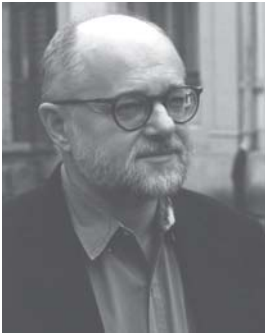


An image by J. Ehm from *Photography Sees the Surface*, an MSP publication

The Slavic Scene

Letter From the Chair

Dear Friends:



The present issue of the Slavic Scene is addressed to the broad community of our alumni and friends. In addition to features about departmental life that you will find here, my letter will also give some sense of the Department from a more sober administrative point of view. As you probably know, one of my foremost duties as chair is to keep the head count—and, indeed, there have been some changes in the faculty since I wrote my letter for the spring Slavic Scene. For one, our Russian Program has lost one of its members, Professor Andreas Schönle, who was successfully recruited by the University of London. This change puts us on the spot and has already generated some productive discussions about creative ways to replace him. A short term solution will be a one-term visiting appointment by Professor Boris Kats (European University, St. Petersburg) in winter term 2006. Professor Kats has been visiting professor here several times already and his presence in the Department has always been a great experience for our students and faculty. Please read a short feature about him on page 7. Next semester will also mark another change—Professor Vitalij Shevoroshkin will retire after 27 years of service. He came to U-M in 1978 and has held a joint appointment between Slavic and Linguistics. And, finally, I am also entering my last year of service as chair—but more on this, perhaps, when I am finishing the next term. There are not only retirements and departures to report—beginning this semester we have been joined by a new junior faculty member, Professor Andrew Herscher, whom we share with the School of Architecture and Urban Planning. Read about him on page 3.

On the graduate student side I am very happy to highlight here a major accomplishment—Christopher Becker has been awarded Rackham's Outstanding GSI Award. This is the fifth year in a row that one of our Graduate Student Instructors has received this prestigious and highly competitive award. Obviously our students are not only academically outstanding, but have very strong potential as future teachers. We are extremely proud of such accomplishments. Our good news also includes a successful defense by Annie Fisher in her dissertation about the culture of Il'f-and-Petrov editions. Annie is currently at Michigan as a lecturer in Great Books. A number of graduate students will be presenting this fall and winter at AAASS and AATSEEL conventions—Vadim Besprozvany, Marina Madorskaya, and Sergei Sychov. Linguistics students are also active—Christopher Becker will present at AATSEEL on his dissertation, and Andrea Stiasny will give a presentation on the acquisition of clitics by children at the Linguistic Society of America meeting in Albuquerque.

In the area of undergraduate education we are very happy to see a modest, yet nonetheless distinct increase in enrollments—our Arts and Cultures of Central Europe continues to be attractive and full of excellent undergrads and Professor Maiorova's Survey of Nineteenth Century Russian Literature has nearly sixty students. We have also succeeded in creating a Russian language course with the School of Engineering; Scientific Russian. We largely owe this opportunity to one of our Summer Language Institute students, NASA Scientist Kathy Clark and Professor Kauffmann of the School of Engineering. For more details see page 9. And another piece of good news about our undergraduate program—thanks in part to the combined efforts of our language coordinator and undergraduate advisor, the department can now boast of the largest number of concentrators we've had since 1997.

Finally, I encourage our readers to make use of the gift envelope in the middle of this issue. We continue to need and appreciate your generosity and readiness to support our programs through monetary gifts. These gifts are primarily used to support graduate and undergraduate education and activities. Thank you.

Jindrich Toman
ptydepe@umich.edu

The Slavic Scene

Feature

Welcome New Faculty Member — Assistant Professor Andrew Herscher

Welcome to U-M. What is it about the University of Michigan that attracted you?

Although my training is in architecture and architectural history, I see myself more as a cultural historian for whom buildings and cities are cultural protagonists. U-M appealed to me because of its interest in sponsoring and furthering interdisciplinary work. My appointment is shared between Architecture, Slavic Studies, and the International Institute. I'm looking forward to forming new connections between these departments in my teaching.

I had the opportunity to visit one of your graduate classes, **Reconstruction: Architecture after Disaster**. You asked your students to describe trauma. Do you find that discussing destruction, violence, and trauma is difficult?

Yes, of course these are difficult subjects to think and talk about. However, the university might be one of the best places to critically discuss these sorts of concerns. More specifically, subjects like violence are often taken as self-evident—we think we know how to identify it, we think we know what it is. But, as a cultural phenomenon, violence has to be interpreted, in just the same way that we need to interpret other cultural phenomena like literature or art. The humanities offer many tools to interpret culture—I'm very interested in applying these tools to subjects hitherto unexplored such as destruction, trauma and violence.

I suppose it's really kind of the opposite of celebrating the successes of a city. You must look at the city at its lowest point, usually during violence or destruction, then where did it go after that? How was it built back up, if at all? What are the required parts?

In my course this semester, we're seeing how disasters are not singular events that disturb or destroy stable and peaceful cities, but are events that expose chronic vulnerabilities and instabilities in cities. We're also seeing how the events that are usually scripted as "reconstruction" often involve their own violence and destruction. For example, more people were killed on construction sites during the reconstruction of Chicago after the Great Fire than during the fire itself, and similar dynamics mark urban reconstruction elsewhere.



Assistant Professor Andrew Herscher discusses trauma with his Architecture 603 class.

What do you hope to impart to your students?

Most generally, to think critically. In the world we live in today, we're often asked to assent to what others tell us is true or good or desirable. That automatic assent certainly doesn't help us negotiate the complexities of life, and I believe that an ability to think critically does help us in those negotiations. I hope that, no matter what I teach, the necessity for critical thinking comes through.

As mentioned earlier you are involved with the International Institute—tell us more about that.

Much of my work revolves around issues of violence, cultural memory, social justice and human rights in the former Eastern Europe. My involvement with these issues began while working in the former Yugoslavia after the war. In Bosnia, I worked on urban reconstruction projects in the city of Mostar, and in Kosovo as an investigator of the wartime destruction of cultural heritage for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and then for the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo as a cultural heritage officer. I also cofounded a NGO, the Kosovo Cultural Heritage Project, which is sponsoring the reconstruction of war-damaged historic buildings. All these experiences are helping to form a series of seminars I'm coordinating at the International Institute. The series is entitled "International Perspectives on Human Rights," and it comprises a forum for interdisciplinary reflection and discussion of work in progress on human rights issues.

I look forward to participating in these events, as well as sharing my experiences with U-M Slavic students.

Email Andrew at herscher@umich.edu or visit www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/facstaff/faculty/

The Slavic Scene

Classroom Spotlight

Outstanding GSI's Are A Frequent Occurrence for Slavic



2004-05 Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor
Christopher Becker

Exactly twenty Graduate Student Instructors are selected annually from nominations throughout U-M's schools and colleges to receive this highly competitive award. To quote Dr. Pat McCune's congratulatory letter to the recipients, "...take pride in knowing that, as the recipient of an Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, you exemplify the highest values of graduate education by combining superb scholarship and a passion for learning with a selfless dedication to teaching, mentoring and service."

The Slavic Department is privileged to have had six of our Graduate Student Instructors receive this award over the last five years. Our most recent winner is Christopher Becker. Christopher is a Ph.D. candidate in the joint Slavic and Linguistics program. He was

awarded Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor for the academic year 2004-05. Courses that Christopher has taught include First- and Second-Year Russian, Russian Film, and Aspects of Meaning (Linguistics 316). We also congratulate our past winners: Mila Shevchenko (2004), Joseph Peschio (2003), Vera Eremeeva (2003), Ewa Wampuszyc (2002), and Margarita Nafpaktitis (2001).

Recipients' photos and names are displayed in Rackham Auditorium for the entirety of the academic year. They also receive a monetary award. Earl Lewis, provost of Emory University and former Dean of the Rackham Graduate School presented the awards on October 10th. The event was hosted jointly by the Rackham Graduate School and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching.



2004
Outstanding GSI
Mila Shevchenko



2003
Outstanding GSI
Joseph Peschio



2003
Outstanding GSI
Vera Eremeeva



2002
Outstanding GSI
Ewa Wampuszyc



2001
Outstanding GSI
Margarita Nafpaktitis

Summer Language Institute Sizzles

Offering twelve languages, U-M's Summer Language Institute (SLI) provides a way to increase fluency in a second or third language, prepare for study abroad, or discover a new language.

As an experiment, Polish was offered for the first time during 2005's SLI—providing First-Year Polish in two 7-week semesters. Three of the four students continued with the second 7-week semester, proving the experiment successful. Two of those students are now enrolled in Second-Year Polish for the fall semester. Having smaller class sizes facilitated a higher degree of interaction—students were able to speak

and listen more frequently, which in turn helps them learn and comprehend the language.

The Slavic Department also offers three years of intensive Russian language instruction through SLI. Providing an intensive, in-depth experience, summer courses are offered in a combination of two summer half-terms, or one spring/summer term. Classes are comprised of students ranging from undergraduates to lawyers and even a NASA Scientist.

For 2006 SLI information, please contact Gretchen Andrews at andrewsg@umich.edu, or (734) 764-5355.

By Piotr Westwalewicz

NEW this Winter!

Rock Kills Communism and Revolution in the Attic

The 1980's in Poland were a decade of social and political turmoil and transformation. The rise of the Solidarity Trade Unions, the imposition of martial law in 1981, the gradual resurgence of anti-government sentiment and activity, and, finally, the collapse of communism shaped not only the mentality of people who lived through these events but also the ultimate balance of the post-cold-war world.

What was the role of counter-culture in the process of dismantling the Soviet empire and its control over Central Europe? Did the rebellious artists create an impetus for this successful drive for freedom? Did the decline in the military, economic, and ideological power of Moscow and its loyal regime in Warsaw allow such remarkable expression of liberal and even anarchistic ideas, in the Soviet ruled Central Europe?

A series of two mini-courses offered by the Slavic Department and Center for Russian and East European Studies will be taught by Piotr Westwalewicz, "Revolution in the Attic" (The Tradition of Counter-culture in Poland) and "Rock Kills Communism" (Dismantling of the Totalitarian State in Poland), investigates the above questions. Both courses, the first focusing on performance and visual arts (in particular, Orange Alternative and Zbigniew Libera) and the second focusing on the rock and roll boom of the 1980's (Maanam, Perfekt, Republika), are designed to acquaint the students with an impressive variety of artists and

a large number of authentic materials. Special emphasis is placed on the relationship between art and everyday life. Rock and roll lyrics, descriptions of punk rock festivals, graffiti, cartoons, accounts of Orange Alternative street events, works of photographers, sculptors, painters, and film makers, create an extensive panorama of "defiant art" and bring back the atmosphere of the exuberant quest for freedom, honesty, and hope.

The material is discussed in the context of European tradition of non-conformist and avant-garde art. Students are encouraged to conduct independent research and to design and produce small group projects that involve the principles of the artistic rebellion of the 1980's in Poland (happenings, street theater, etc). All materials are presented in Polish with English translation.

For more information please contact Piotr Westwalewicz at pwestwal@umich.edu.



Still images from music videos created by student Elizabeth Oetjens for Slavic 490.



Nazi's invade Polish border gate, 1939 (left) and a remake by artist Zbigniew Libera entitled *The Bikers*, 2003 (right).



In January 2006, the Copernicus Endowment and the School of Art and Design are planning a comprehensive exhibition of the work of Polish visual artist Zbigniew Libera. It will be the first comprehensive exhibition of his work in the US. Libera has been invited to be artist-in-residence for the month of January.

The Slavic Scene

Staying Connected

By Kelly Miller

Slavic Alumna Receives CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship for Scholars in the Humanities

This fall I began a postdoctoral fellowship that promises to send my career in a slightly unexpected, but innovative direction. Sponsored by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), this fellowship provides an opportunity for new scholars in the humanities to gain a working understanding of challenges facing academic research libraries. Pressing issues in the university library environment include the developing role of digital scholarship, the changing landscape of academic publishing, and the fate of small, specialized print collections in a highly user-driven climate. As a CLIR Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Virginia, I also serve as a consultant to develop strategies for the university library to better respond to the needs of researchers and teachers. The goal of the CLIR fellowship is to create a hybrid

Kelly Miller in Moscow, 2005



scholar-librarian, who is able to contribute to her profession, while simultaneously facilitating collaboration between university faculty and the library. The CLIR fellowship program, which currently sponsors four fellows, is in its second year of existence. In addition to the University of Virginia, other participating institutions are UCLA and UC-Berkeley. I am now based in the Fiske-Kimball Fine Arts Library at Virginia, where I am focusing on three areas: print and digital image collections, library instruction methods, and information resources management. My goals this year include developing the foundation for a Russian art digital image collection, drafting a course on information resources for Slavic graduate students, and assessing the status of Virginia's

Slavic collection. Beginning in the spring, I will work in a new department in the Humanities and Social Sciences Library dedicated to facilitating digital scholarship. In the next academic year ('06-'07), I will put my scholarly training and library experience to work in an appropriately hybrid position as affiliate librarian and lecturer on Russian literature and art in UVA's Slavic and Art History Departments. This interdisciplinary position uniquely synthesizes my training in Slavic languages and literatures, my interests in Russian visual art, and my commitment to exploring possibilities for digital scholarship. I am excited about the opportunities this new hybrid academic track offers for an expanded range of contributions to scholarship, teaching, and the collection and preservation of Slavic resources.

Kelly Miller (M.A. '96, Ph.D. '02, Slavic Languages and Literatures) is currently working on a study of Anna Akhmatova's art historical scholarship, including her 1933 translation of *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*. She spent the summer of 2005 in Moscow on an Advanced Research Fellowship, sponsored by the American Councils (ACTR/ACCELS) Title VIII Research Scholar Program. Miller's most recent publication is "Anna Akhmatova's 'An Old Portrait' and the *Ballets Russes*," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 47: 1-2 (March-June 2005): 71-94. In the past year, Miller has served as an external contributor to the online research archive, *Russian Visual Arts: Art Criticism in Context, 1814-1909*, hosted by The Humanities Research Institute at Sheffield University, <http://hri.shef.ac.uk/rva/index.html>.

For more information on the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship, please see www.clir.org/fellowships/postdoc/postdoc.html.

By Boris Kats

Boris Kats Returns to the University of Michigan

Thus it happened—for the fifth time I am going to visit my favorite city, Ann Arbor, and meet my colleagues and students in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. In fact, I am going to see old friends from my four previous visits to this very cozy city and splendid university. I enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the university community, and specifically of the Slavic Department.

I deal with a cross-disciplinary field within the Humanities, the so-called "Mutual Illumination of Arts," which stresses the interaction between music and literature. It is the main subject of my nine books and more than 100 papers. In Russia—my home country—I run the Department of Art History at the one of the newest (it is merely 10 years old) and, I dare say, best Russian universities—the European University in St. Petersburg. Some professors and students at U-M know this University very well—quite a few of U-M's scholars have visited us, and many of our professors visit U-M. It is thanks to this collegiality between our two universities that we are going to repeat, in collaboration with CREES, the Study Tour to St. Petersburg (a program that introduces Russian culture to U-M undergraduate students) in May 2006. This program was begun in 2004, and I hope all the participants have kept good memories of their trip to Russia.

During my upcoming visit I plan to teach two courses (in the winter semester 2006). One of them (taught in English) is devoted to the interrelation among Russian literature, history, and music as it is reflected in the mirror of Russian opera. The fiction and the historic documents, the decorative arts and the art of singing and staging, as well as some other kinds of art and genres (say, composers' mastership and libretto), will be involved in the discussion.

The other course "Love Stories in Russian Short Stories" is one I have taught previously at U-M—but in English, with readings in translation. This time I plan to deliver a similar course in Russian with original readings for those students who have a good command of Russian. Surely it is much more enjoyable (though not easier, of course) to read Pushkin, Tolstoy, Chekhov and Bunin in their native language than in translation. And for me it is much more interesting to elucidate the subtleties of these and other great Russian writers by demonstrating their virtuosity in dealing with words, rather than trying to correct the mistakes (often inevitable but nonetheless annoying) of the translators.

So I am looking forward to coming to the hospitable University of Michigan, entering my classroom and saying to my audience: "Nice to see you!"



Dr. Boris Kats will return to Ann Arbor in January 2006. He will offer two courses at U-M; Love Stories in Russian Short Stories, and Russian Literature, History and Culture as Reflected in the Mirror of Opera.

Slavic Studies Need Your Help!

We ask you to support the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures gift funds. Your gifts will ensure:

- Continuation of exceptional programs such as the Ruins of Modernity Conference and graduate student seminars.
- Increased support for the Department's research and fellowship programs, which support student and faculty projects.
- Enhancements to the teaching and learning of less commonly taught languages such as Czech, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Polish and Ukrainian.

Please consider giving generously to our effort to build the Department's future financial security. A gift of \$10,000 or more would create an endowment in your name for a purpose which will ensure the future of the Department and aligns with your interest in Slavic studies. In these tight budgetary times your support is all the more critical.

Please complete the envelope found in this edition of *The Slavic Scene* and return it with your gift to the Department.

The Slavic Scene

Highlights

Welcome Visiting Associate Professor Martin Stary

As a non-Communist faculty member at Charles University in Prague, Martin Stary was asked many times to change his mind. Then in November of 1989 the Velvet Revolution occurred, bringing peaceful transition to the Czech Republic and Slovakia from the Soviet authority. Professor Stary recalls "there was an excitement, an energy, on campus. Everyone was enthusiastic, eager to be involved with society and its reform. There was a lot of excitement about the possibilities within the country. Students were working to spread the messages for reform and it was really an exciting time."

After earning his undergraduate degree, Martin spent a mandatory year in the armed services where he felt fortunate to secure a position as Assistant Librarian, instead of the Tank Leader position he had been told would be his assignment. In 1987, he accepted an Assistant Professor position at Charles University. He subsequently earned his Ph.D. in Czech Language

and Teaching Methodology, English Language and Teaching Methodology, English and American Literature, and Language Materials Development.

Having first visited the US in 1991 as a student at Johns Hopkins University and American University in Washington, D.C., he studied American English and Culture. His second visit, in 1998, was to Princeton as a Fulbright Scholar, Visiting Lecturer, and lastly Visiting Fellow. After five years of teaching in Prague, he has returned to an American academic setting as Visiting Associate Professor. Martin is teaching First- and Second-Year Czech, as well as Directed Reading. His other interests are jazz music, sports, and travel.



Visiting Associate Professor Martin Stary and the Czech Republic flag

Email Martin at mstary@umich.edu, or visit www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/facstaff/faculty/

Berlin Hosts the Seventh World Congress of ICCEES



This year's conference was organized by the German Association for East European Studies (DGO) and delivered approximately 1,500 scholarly presentations. The International Council for Central and East European Studies (ICCEES) was established in 1974 and is held every five years.



The Congress included an impressive number of panels focused on the imperial dimension of Russian history. As a paper-giver and a commentator I participated in two panels devoted to national identity and language of imperial self-description in tsarist Russia. My paper explored how the Russian cultural elite struggled to redefine the nation and to develop new interpretations of the "nation-state" nexus in response to fundamental changes brought about by Alexander II's reforms in the 1860s and by the extension of Russia's borders into Central Asia. Analyzing cultural idioms and historical myths as a powerful tool for fostering a new sense of national identity, I sought to specifically trace the role of the memory of Russia's

This year's Congress commemorated the end of WWII and in many ways interacted with Berlin's monuments, museums, buildings, and streets. The Historical Museum, the Holocaust Memorial, Checkpoint Charlie, along with many other sites, underpinned the spatial and historical approaches to this year's theme, "Europe—Our Common Home?"

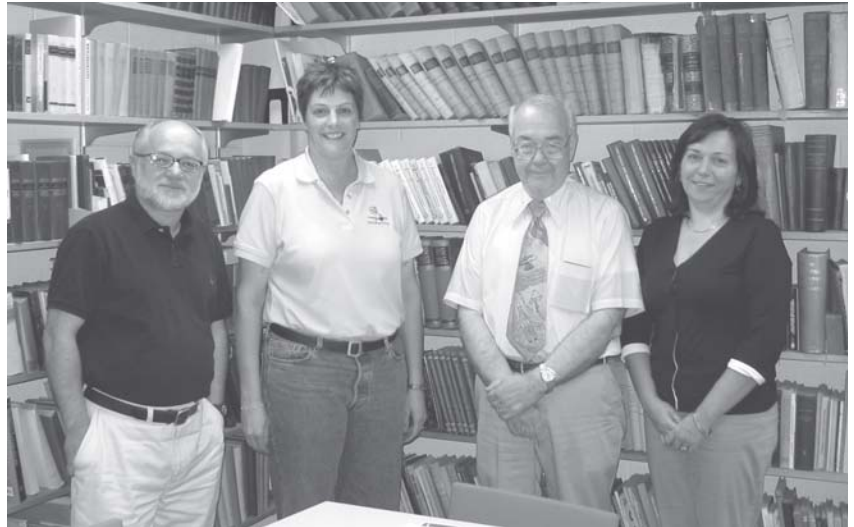
triumph over Napoleon (1812-1815) as a source of legitimacy for a new vision of the nation.

As a commentator I dealt with fascinating papers presented by the editors of the journal *Ab Imperio* and some of the contributors to this international quarterly (Marina Mogilner, Alexander Semyonov, Marina Vitushnovskaja). Although I very much enjoyed their innovative papers, it seems to me that anthropological, geopolitical, and social approaches to nationalist and imperial discourse overshadow the cultural and literary ones. As a whole, political, economical, and social issues prevailed in the Congress, although its foci have included art history, literature, and music. I believe it is the task of a new generation of literary scholars and historians to make cultural studies more visible, valuable, and influential in the Slavic field.



Space Exploration — Knowing Russian Will Help Get You There

From the space station the world appears smaller. Communicating this to your fellow Cosmonauts should be easy. "It's easy if you know Russian," says Dr. Kathy Clark, former Chief Scientist for NASA—and Russian language student. Part of Dr. Clark's work involves postflight interviews with Cosmonauts and astronauts to examine biological effects during space flight. "Being able to converse, however simply, with a cosmonaut allows a deeper level of understanding and trust", states Dr. Clark. In July, between attending Russian language courses and the launch of space shuttle Discovery, the enthusiastic Dr. Clark presented her experiences with the Russian Space Agency and shared her passion for exploration at a lunchtime presentation. In attendance was Dr. C. William Kauffman, U-M Professor of Aerospace Engineering.



In 1991 Professor Kauffman was involved with U-M's US/Russian student exchange program sponsored by the US Information Agency and Gregory Guroff. The program, although successful, has been inactive since

1995. Not only did this program provide students with an immersive experience by living in Russia, it produced engineers that were employed by Lockheed Martin, Hughes, and Jet Propulsion Laboratories. Of course, not all student interests were narrowly scientific — other graduates became



Svitlana Rogovyk and Kathy Clark at Discovery's launch site, July 2005.

translators, policemen, real-estate developers, and stockbrokers. Dr. Kauffman realized that if an opportunity were to surface again for the exchange of students between Russia and the US, priority must be placed on learning the Russian language.

A tripartite effort of the Aerospace Engineering Department, the Slavic Department, and (yet to be determined) Russian universities, the goal is to develop a program that provides scientifically inclined students an opportunity to develop Russian language skills in parallel with their scientific skills. The language skills will enhance their scientific understanding and provide a framework for success as an exchange student.

Scientific Russian, the first course offered through this collaboration, is being taught by Russian lecturer Tatyana Kondratyeva. She is teaching 15 undergraduate students Russian with a scientific base. Of the 15 undergraduates, 10 are aerospace engineering concentrators, two are nuclear engineering students, and one each is from chemistry, Russian, and Physics/EECS. All of them were encouraged by Professor Kauffman to learn Russian. Professor Kauffman notes that 2007 marks the 50th anniversary of the very first satellite—Sputnik—whose success embodies the Russian commitment and ability to excel in space exploration. Encouraged by the development of this new program, one cannot help but wonder how much smaller the world will appear after the next 50 years.

Slavic Chair Jindrich Toman, Dr. Kathy Clark, Professor C. William Kauffman, and Russian Language Coordinator Svitlana Rogovyk discuss the launch of Scientific Russian.

A poster for the "SCIENTIFIC RUSSIAN" course. At the top, it says "RUSSIAN 121/521 • RUSSIAN 122/522". Below that, "SCIENTIFIC RUSSIAN" is written in large, bold letters. To the left of the text is a stylized drawing of a space shuttle. To the right, it says "FALL 2005/WINTER 2006", "2166 DOW", and "M and W, 5-6:30pm". Below this, there is a small star icon and a paragraph of text: "This course is designed for students in science and/or engineering with no previous knowledge of Russian, as well as for students with minimal exposure to Russian who wish to augment their knowledge of the language in the scientific spheres. The course will concentrate on the rapid acquisition of reading comprehension in Russian. Work consists of reading and translation of a wide variety of scientific texts with specific emphasis on communication in a scientific environment." At the bottom, it says "THINK OUTSIDE THE SPHERE. LEARN RUSSIAN." and "Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures www.isa.umich.edu/slavic".

The Slavic Scene

Remembering Milosz

By Bogdana Carpenter

Czeslaw Milosz: the Poet and the Professor

Czeslaw Milosz, a Nobel Prize Laureate, passed away August 14, 2004. Milosz's place and importance in Polish literature can be compared only to that of Adam Mickiewicz. His death has closed an entire era in Polish 20th-century poetry. This short reminiscence is in memory of a poet Joseph Brodsky called, "one of the world's greatest 20th-century poets."

It was my great privilege to be a student of Czeslaw Milosz at the University of California in Berkeley during the stormy nineteen sixties and seventies. It was Milosz who led me safely through the reefs of student rebellions, as well as the intellectual pitfalls of

Czeslaw Milosz and
Bogdana Carpenter,
Cracow, 2004



literary theories from structuralism to deconstructionism that followed each other with dizzying speed. His lectures opened a whole new world; they were not only—as the official descriptions claimed—about Polish literature, but also about history, religion, philosophy, Freemasonry, the Kabbalah, eighteenth-century mysticism, Swedenborg. The digressions often surpassed, both in terms of time and interest, the subject itself. His open and unconventional approach put Polish literature in a new and unexpected light, far from the stereotype image of my Polish professors. They also were a dialogue, in fact a double dialogue: Milosz conversed not only

with us sitting around the table, but with the authors we were reading regardless whether they were our contemporaries or lived five centuries earlier.

His academic career was for Milosz a source of both amazement and pleasure. Amazement, because his degree was in law, not literature: "I don't understand how I, without a Ph.D., have become a professor"; pleasure because "being a professor is an ideal solution. You don't have to write for the market. You can write what you want." However, a slow path toward his recognition as a poet by American readers became for Milosz, with time, a source of considerable distress and a sense of schizophrenia, a split between his own self-image as a poet—confirmed by his reputation in Poland—and his American image: "I exist for an American reader in an oddly abridged form, I am someone else for them," he told his interviewer, Ewa Czarnecka.

When Milosz arrived in Berkeley in 1960, he was known to the American audience almost exclusively as the author of one book, *The Captive Mind*, translated in 1953. It was widely read and brought Milosz notoriety as one of the most important political writers of our time. In 1965 Milosz published an anthology, *Postwar Polish Poetry*, that contained a handful of his own poems. Instrumental in putting Polish contemporary poetry on the American scene, it did little for his own recognition as a poet. The same can be said of his translation of Herbert's *Selected Poems* in 1968. *The Native Realm* appeared in English in 1968, and *The History of Polish Literature* in 1969. All these works established Milosz's reputation as a scholar, critic, translator and a brilliant essayist, but not as a poet. As he ironically described it, "a Wrong Honorable Professor Milosz," "an item in the fourteenth volume of an encyclopedia / Next to a hundred Millers and Mickey Mouse" ("*A Magic Mountain*").

The first volume of Milosz's poetry in English, *Selected Poems*, appeared only in 1973, 13 years after his arrival in the US, followed in 1977 by *Utwory poetyckie*,

continued on next page

poems published by Michigan Slavic Publications under the editorship of Professor Ladislav Matejka. Recognition was quick to follow: an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Michigan (1977), the Neustadt Prize in Literature in 1978 and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1980. It is with pride and pleasure that I think of the crucial role our own Department played in Milosz's poetic career in America. The recognition of Milosz's importance by Professor Matejka, the editor of **Cross Currents**, followed by the efforts of other members of the Department to promote Milosz as the recipient of the University's honorary degree, paved the road for a career Robert Pinsky, American Poet Laureate, described as "unforeseeable, peculiar and glorious wonder." It is also Pinsky who in 1998 at the International Czeslaw Milosz Festival at Claremont-McKenna College in California, called Milosz "an essential American poet—perhaps even the most important living American poet." An extraordinary statement about someone who wrote exclusively in Polish, even though he realized that faithfulness to his "mother tongue" was a barrier between him and his American readers:

*Faithful mother tongue,
I have been serving you.
Every night, I used to set before you little
bowls of colors
So you could have your birch, your cricket,
your finch
As preserved in my memory.*

*This lasted many years.
You were my native land; I lacked any other.
I believed that you would also be a messenger
between me and some good people
Even if they were few, twenty, ten
Or not born, as yet.*

(from "My Faithful Mother Tongue")

Available From Michigan Slavic Publications

Piesn niepodlegla: The Invincible Song—A Clandestine Anthology (1981)

An anthology compiled by Milosz under the pen name Jan Syrkuc in Nazi-occupied Warsaw during WWII. And published by an underground publishing house in 1942. The authors of the poems were anonymous, but included some well-known Polish poets like Leopold Staff, Julian Tuwim, Wladyslaw Broniewski, Jerzy Zagorski, and Milosz himself. The poems, written during the war, are a reflection of the collective experience of Nazi terror. *(in Polish)*



Czeslaw Milosz: An International Bibliography 1930–1980 (1983)

A complete tracking of Milosz's creative path from 1933 to 1980, beginning in Wilno, Poland and continuing with the underground editions published under Nazi rule, his return to public life, subsequent suppression within Poland, Western success, his growing popularity in Poland, and finally the restoration of nearly all his works upon being awarded the Nobel Prize in 1980.

Hymn o perle (1982) *(in Polish)*

Utwory poetyckie (1976), with an introduction by Alexander Schenker. The first substantial selection of Milosz's poems published in Polish; it starts with Milosz's early, prewar poems from the volume *Three Winters* (1936), and ends with the volume *From the Rising Sun* written in California and published in 1974. *(in Polish)*

For a complete listing of books available through Michigan Slavic Publications, please visit www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/msp, or call Rachele Grubb at (734) 763-4496. Discounts are available.



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Thanks Again.