

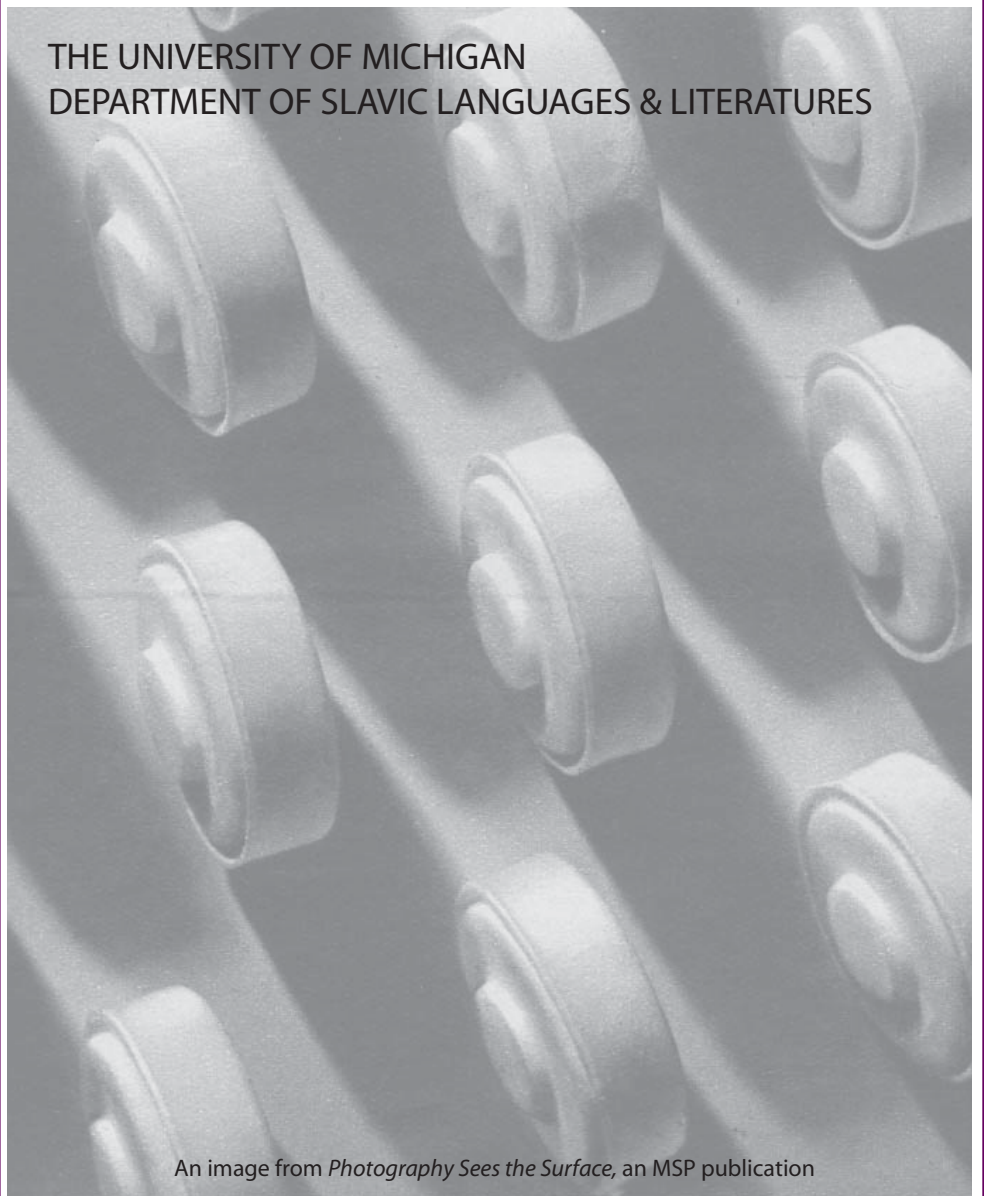
The Slavic Scene

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

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An image from *Photography Sees the Surface*, an MSP publication

The Slavic Scene

Letter From the Chair

Dear Friends



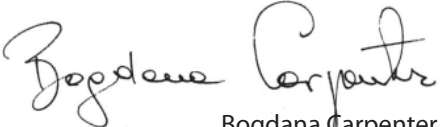
Here I am once again, after a 10-year interval, sitting in the “old” chair’s office. However, it shares with the old office only the location as well as a single wall of shelves with books and journals that recall the days of Professors John Mersereau and Ben Stolz. Thanks to Sheri, our enterprising and energetic key administrator who initiated and carried through the whole operation, the office has been repainted, recarpeted, and is about to be beautifully refurbished. I invite you to come and see! The new “look” effectively creates a sense of a new beginning. And it is this new beginning I am looking forward to as the new chair.

I would like to thank Professor Jindrich Toman for his nine years of service as both my successor and my predecessor in the chair’s office. Deeply concerned about the Department’s welfare, he worked hard to make our graduate program competitive and our undergraduate curriculum attractive. His calm and sunny disposition helped us all, and we will remember fondly his winning smile that greeted us in the MLB hallways.

The last ten years were not easy for the Department. Not only because the new political landscape in the part of the world we study has affected our classes and enrollments in an unexpected way, but even more importantly because of a general intellectual malaise that in the past decade could be felt in the entire field of the humanities. It has been a time of disorientation, uncertainty, and new pressures. The sense of crisis is far from over, and discussion about the future of the humanities—also our own field of Slavic studies—is in full swing. The recent special 50th anniversary issue of *Slavic and East European Journal* is evidence of a broadly perceived need to elaborate new directions and new models. The title of a conference that took place in Cracow in 2004 “Polish Studies in the Process of Reconstruction” is symptomatic. While there is no clear consensus about the direction in which the change should occur, the validity of the old philological model is almost universally questioned, and a shift toward a more inclusive, open model of cultural and interdisciplinary studies seems to be gaining

popularity. The definition of what is understood by “culture” remains vague, however. It leads to a question: by sweeping away philology and opening the gates to cultural studies—an often glittery but somewhat swampy terrain—might we lose our distinct identity and deprive our students of a solid scholarly base in exchange for fashionable but perhaps not very durable goods? Yet in order to survive—as a department, a field, and as scholars—we have to move forward, and cannot close our eyes to what is happening around us. While healthy skepticism toward new “fashions” is appropriate, persistence in approaches and methodologies that have lost their vitality is untenable. To paraphrase great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, “you cannot stubbornly deck your head with faded laurel leaves.”

The general debate about the future of the Slavic field has coincided with our own internal discussion about the future shape of the Department. The first stage of this discussion took place more than two years ago in connection with our long range plan. This was followed by the External Review last November, the response of the LSA Executive Committee, and our response to both the review and the Dean’s letter. The outcome of this process is a set of recommendations and expectations. Our plan is an excellent first step, but as the process of its implementation takes place it will need constant corrections and revisions. It is up to us to select the best path. With recent losses of faculty and a number of retirements in the foreseeable future, our first priority is hiring new faculty, an exciting but laborious process. I hope to set this process in motion. But it will take years before it is completed, well beyond my two-year tenure. Meanwhile I will need your cooperation, understanding, and patience. I am looking forward to working with you all.


Bogdana Carpenter
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The Slavic Scene

Feature

FOTO: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918–1945

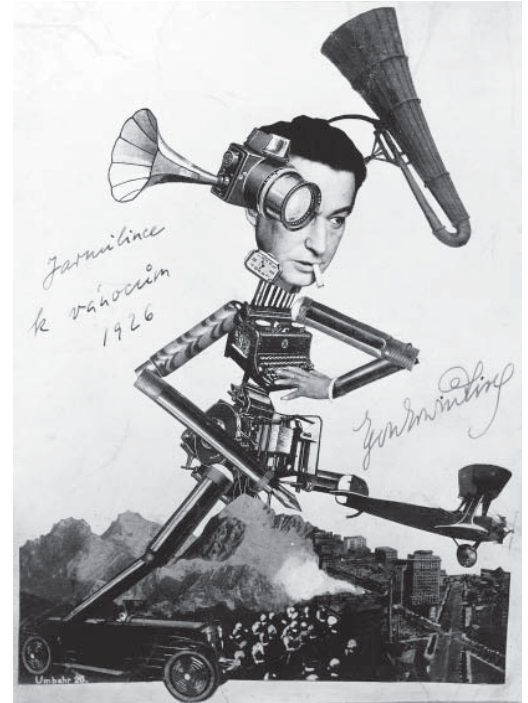
by Matthew S. Witkovsky

In June 2007, the National Gallery of Art, Washington will host an exhibition devoted to the golden age of modernist photography. *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918-1945* presents the work of approximately one hundred individuals whose creations exemplify the possibilities for photography between the two World Wars. Across Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, and Poland, photography became a phenomenon of immense proportions in the 1920s and 1930s. It fired the imagination of dozens of progressive artists, provided a creative outlet for thousands of devoted amateurs, and became a symbol of modernity for millions through its use in magazines, newspapers, advertisements and books. Most crucially, as this exhibition argues, it was in interwar Central Europe that the history of photography as a modern art form was established.

Looking beyond traditional accounts of American, French, Russian and German preeminence, *Foto* seeks to show how the last-named country formed the center of a regional orbit that, while in constant dialogue with the West and the Soviet Union, nevertheless maintained closest ties within a sphere that had interacted for centuries under the Prussian and Austro-Hungarian empires. The German Bauhaus, for example, was in fact one of many schools (in Vienna, Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, Lviv, and elsewhere) where training in photography butted into the study of modern art—a type of institution, indeed, that flowered in central Europe already in the 1800s. Training in art history reached tremendous proficiency in this region as well, and greatly influenced the promotion of modernist photography there during the 1920s. The illustrated press, meanwhile, formed the greatest school of all, circulating photographs almost ceaselessly in what could for the first time properly be called an image world.

Foto is the first exhibition to bring together works by recognized masters like the Russian El Lissitzky, the Hungarian László Moholy-Nagy, and the German Hannah Höch—all of whom developed their photographic ideas in Germany—with those of contemporaries who are less well-

known today, such as Karel Teige and Jaromír Funke (Czechoslovakia) or Stefan Themerson and Kazimierz Podsiadecki (Poland). Also featured will be star press photographer Martin Munkácsi, post-pictorialist leaders Albert Renger-Patzsch and Josef Sudek, and experimentalists on the order of Karol Hiller, Miroslav Hák, or František Povolný. The exhibition binds the achievements of these and many other individuals to a larger account, suggesting that photography became the consummate means by which all the countries in the region—whether recently founded nations or dismantled imperial states—sought their place within the new world order established in 1918–19. Individual sections treat the advent of modernist photomontage; the interrelated vogue for experimental photography and for photographic instruction; the media blitz created by advertising, exhibitions and the illustrated press; varieties of surrealist photography; and the simultaneous ascendance in the 1930s of political reportage and propagandistic claims upon “folk” and countryside.



Der Rasende Reporter, 1926, Otto Umbehrr. National Gallery of Art, Washington.

*Matthew S. Witkovsky is an Assistant Curator of Photographs at the National Gallery of Art. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 2002, with a thesis on the Czech avant-garde movement Devětsil. He has written widely on Czech art and architecture, photography, and international Dada, and has collaborated with University of Michigan Professor Jindřich Toman on two reprints for Michigan Slavic Studies: *Alphabet*, by Vítězslav Nezval (2003, first ed. 1926) and *Photography Sees the Surface*, edited by Jaromír Funke and Ladislav Sutnar (2005, first ed. 1935).*

For exhibit schedule, please visit www.nga.gov/exhibitions/fotoinfo.shtm

The Slavic Scene

Classroom Spotlight

Sofya Khagi — Visiting Professor



Sofya Khagi's office is located at 3224 MLB. She can be reached via email at skhagi@umich.edu, or by telephone at (734) 647-2137.

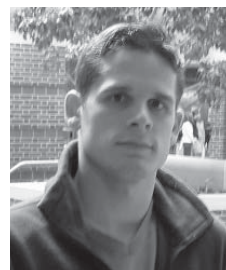
A native of Latvia, I moved to the United States as a teenager in the early 1990s. My first few years in the country were spent in upstate New York where I attended courses at the University of Rochester, and acquired a Bachelor's degree in English literature with a minor in Russian. Later I moved to Northern New England, and obtained a Master's degree in Comparative Literature (English, Russian, French) at Dartmouth College. After Dartmouth I entered the doctoral program in Slavic Languages and Literatures at Brown University. I spent some truly stimulating years at this institution, conducting research and teaching. It is from Brown that I hold my doctorate, received this May.

In the course of my graduate studies I taught multiple courses in Russian language, literature, and culture, as well as in Czech language. In addition, I enjoyed working for a semester at Bates College, where I independently designed new courses. At Michigan, I will have a wonderful opportunity to teach a survey of Russian literature from 1820 to 1870, a graduate course on 18th century Russian

literature (Fall 2006), a capstone seminar in Russian, and a First Year Seminar (Winter 2007).

My main research interests are Romantic literature, literary theory, and philosophy, and Russian poetry of the last two centuries. My doctoral thesis, entitled "*Silence and the Rest: Verbal Skepticism in Russian Poetic Culture*," investigates the topos of verbal inadequacy in Russian and European poetry from the age of pre-Romanticism to the present. My other research interests include European intellectual history, existentialism, East European utopia and dystopia, and Baltic literatures and cultures. I have published on (pre)Romantic and conceptualist poetry, on comparative literature (Russian-French), and on contemporary Russian literature and culture. Presently I am working on transforming my dissertation into a book.

Russian literature, and poetry especially, is my primary source of delight as much during free time as at work. I am also fond of ballet and drama, traveling with friends, playing with my dog, and ice-skating.



Winter 2006 Undergraduate Book Awards

Each year we recognize outstanding undergraduate students of 100- and 200- level Russian. They are awarded for their diligence, curiosity, and performance. The Winter semester's winners received either *501 Russian Verbs* or *Liubvi bezumnoe tomle'ne* (*Love's Burning Languor*), unedited Russian stories of the nineteenth century.

The outstanding undergraduates are, from top-left; Adam Kolkman (RU 102), Dani Gill (RU 102), Valerie Samet (RU 102), Joseph Hermez (RU 201), Daniel Sikora (RU 202), and Daniel Deitrick (RU 202).

Congratulations!

The Slavic Scene

Staying Connected

Great Days, Great Colleagues

In the late spring of 1956 while leaving the *Bibliothèque Nationale* where I had been working on my dissertation, I encountered Professor Victor Weintraub, Harvard University's Polonist. We had met the previous year at our apartment in Berkeley, where, at the suggestion of my mentor and dissertation director, Professor Waclaw Lednicki, my wife and I had provided cheese cake and *Vouvray*. In Paris that day we chatted briefly and he asked if I knew that Michigan was looking for an instructor, which I did not, and so he provided me with the name of James Ferrell, then Chairman. I wrote, and was hired by mail (as a pre-doctoral instructor at \$4,950 annually). When my wife and I arrived in Ann Arbor that fall there were just three apartments advertised in the News, and they were unsuitable. Happily, Mark Suino, then part-time department secretary and later assistant professor, had reserved a University efficiency in our name, so we did have lodgings (they did not remotely compare with our Paris apartment on *Rue de Seine*).

In those days before classes began masses of frantic students swarmed about Waterman Gymnasium registering for desired courses. After two days of chaos, packets of cards for each course with students' names determined enrollments. The Russian literature survey, which was my specific assignment, had over 90 students, there were 20 in the translation course (math Ph.D. candidates were required to enroll), and more than a dozen in my Russian language section. Meanwhile, I was determined to finish my dissertation by January fifth (1957), the deadline at Berkeley. The dissertation was mailed on December 31st, just as a blizzard descended. The Postal Service did its duty.

My colleagues were very friendly and helpful. The chairman and others were well qualified. Ferrell and Assya Humesky had studied with Roman Jakobson, Bill Dewey had a legal degree, a Ph.D. in history, and was fluent in Russian, French, German, and Chinese. Ihor Sevchenko, who taught Polish and Slavic linguistics, was actually a Byzantinist. In 1957 when he accepted an offer from Columbia, our History Department and the dean realized too late that they had ignored an exceptional scholar. Poor

by John Mersereau

Jim Ferrell was blamed, and that fall he was replaced as chairman by Deming Brown, from Columbia via Northwestern.

Deming, Bill Dewey, and I worked over a year to define our doctoral program, which was as stringent as those of the Big Three (Harvard, Columbia, UC Berkeley). The launch of the Sputnik was most fortuitous for Slavic Studies, and the Department of Education reacted properly by substantial funding of Language and Area Programs. In its heyday our department had twenty-two full-time faculty, and more graduate fellowships and faculty support funds than any other program of whatever specialty. These enabled us to hire Irwin Titunik from Berkeley (he took his first Russian class from me when I was a teaching assistant there) and David Welsh from London (he was my fellow student at the London School of Slavonic Studies). Tom Winner was lured away from Duke (he later accepted an offer from Brown). We even received extra funding for library acquisitions, a particular concern of Jim Ferrell. Federal grants made it possible to have "distinguished professors" from here and abroad to lecture or teach. The list was long and impressive: from abroad came Nils Ake Nilsson (Sweden), Pavle Ivic (Yugoslavia), Josip Hamm (Yugoslavia), Ivan Klima (Czechoslovakia), Maximilian Brown (Germany), Valentin Kiparski (Finland), Lubomir Dolezel (Czechoslovakia) and others. At the same time we were able to expand offerings in Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Czech, and Ukrainian.

The department was further enhanced by the addition of Ladislav Matejka, a student of Roman Jakobson. Ladislav founded *Michigan Slavic Publications* in 1962 with a small amount of funds which I was able to embezzle from the department's current account. That endeavor has now published over 100 volumes as well as the prestigious *Cross Currents, A Yearbook of Central European Culture*. In 1977 Michigan Slavic Publications also published poetry in Polish by Czeslaw Milosz [U.C. Press had turned him down!] When Milosz received his Nobel

continued on page 6



Prof. John Mersereau,
circa 1988



Prof. Horace W. Dewey,
circa 1988



Prof. Ben Stolz,
circa 1988

Great Days, Great Colleagues — continued from page 5

Prize in 1980 the citation noted that the award was based on his “recent poetry in Polish.” This was Matejka’s doing. Along with Richard Baily of the English Department, Ladislav was also instrumental in organizing the first international congress on Semiotics, which was held at the Residential College in the summer of 1979.

Meanwhile, our production of highly qualified doctoral students became significant for our own program. Herb Eagle returned to us from experience at Purdue, and Carl Proffer “came home” from Indiana. He and his wife Ellendea soon established *Ardis*, which was to become the largest (and best) publisher of Russian dissident authors. It was Carl who (on the roof of the Peter and Paul fortress to avoid KGB bugs) persuaded Joseph Brodsky (Nobel winner in 1990) to come to Michigan.

Our Polish program was substantially enhanced when we were joined by Bogdana Carpenter, who came from The University of Washington with a doctorate from Berkeley. There she had studied with Milosz and Lednicki, both of whom frequently lectured here. Another “returnee” was Ben Stolz,

who left Michigan for Harvard and returned with a doctorate in Slavic Linguistics. He replaced me as chairman in 1972 and served until I resumed that position in 1987, prior to retirement in 1990. (Meanwhile, I had served eight years as director of the Residential College, occasionally teaching a literature course or seminar in the Slavic Department.) It was Stolz’s financial acumen that enabled the department on short notice to fund Brodsky’s appointment, and he also raised funds for a chair in Armenian Studies.

It is not my intention to provide a detailed history of the department’s challenges and triumphs. Suffice it to say the department has also been most fortunate with respect to our professorial staff recruited from abroad: Michael Makin, Vitaly Shevoroshkin, Jindrich Toman, Omry Ronen, Andreas Schonle and most recently Olga Maiorova and Mikhail Krutikov. As the surviving active faculty enter an uncertain future, I hope they will draw strength from the prestige which their department rightly claims and to the significant achievements to which they have contributed and will continue to contribute.

Slavic Department Memories

by Phil Ventura



Phil Ventura can be reached via email at amvpav@aol.com

My name is Phil Ventura. I am a 1970 graduate of LS&A, with a B.A. degree and major in Russian from U-M’s Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

All my language classes were held in the Frieze Building, which will soon be demolished. Although I can recall the names of only a few of my fellow students, I do remember all my classes with fondness, even after all these years. I vividly remember in particular two department lecturers: Mrs. Natalya Fischer and Mrs. Ignatieff. Both were noted in the department for directing the staging of plays in Russian, and comedies were king. I had a dual role in Gogol’s *Zhenit’ba*. Cast members were fully made-up and costumed for the on-stage performance at a local theater. On another occasion we performed

Zoshchenko’s one-act play *Kocherga* in a classroom at Frieze.

To me the most impressive thing about my training in Russian at U-M was that courses were largely held in the Russian language. I found out later that this was hardly the case at other universities and colleges. I was truly privileged to have the opportunity to study and learn Russian from instructors like Ray Parrott (second-year Russian), Howard Dwelley, Assya Humesky (stylistics), Deming Brown, Mark Suino and Serge Shishkoff, among others.

I realize now that my time spent in the Department prepared me very well for work after college, but

continued on next page

Slavic Department Memories — continued from previous page

Do you have a memory from the department that you'd like to share?

Please drop us a line at slavic@umich.edu.

beyond that also enriched my life in general terms: I still manage to read in Russian on a regular basis (latest books read: Y. Krimov's *Tanker Derbent* [a real pot-boiler!] and D. Satter's book on the rise of post-Soviet criminal society in Russia, translated into Russian from English, *T'ma na Rassvete/ Darkness at Dawn*). Experience has shown me that reading to myself aloud (surely a strange thing!) keeps my aural perception sharp, since I do not have the opportunity to converse with a live correspondent.

My immersion in Russian at U-M has also led me to collect a substantial library of books and other Russian-language materials. In fact, I still have my original hardcover edition of *Modern Russian* in two volumes by authors Dawson and Humesky. These were my first Russian textbooks when I started study in 1965. I believe that these books have become iconic of their kind, stressing learning Russian primarily through the audio-lingual/conversational method (pattern drills, conversations, substitutions, etc.).

Over the years I have been invited to take part in several department presentations and celebrations. It was not too many years ago that I had the opportunity to attend a gathering to celebrate the Slavic Department's founding and subsequent history. I had the honor of being introduced to the Nobel laureate poet Joseph Brodsky by Professor Ben Stolz.

A few years after graduation, I began work as a translator/interpreter in Russian at a special machine tool manufacturer located in Warren, MI. At almost that same time I received a job offer from the NSA (yes, that NSA!) to work at Ft. George Meade, MD in a project involving Russian and high-energy physics.

However, I decided to continue in the machine tool business and moved through the ranks, learning every aspect of the company. Later I became responsible for the company's import-export operations. For several years this involved making all

the arrangements for and coordinating the export of company machines and machine spare parts, including massive consignments of equipment sold to half-a-dozen Soviet automobile factories in Moscow, Kostroma, Novorossiysk, Vladimir, Ilichevsk, Alma Ata, Kharkov and Naberezhnie Chelni (the famous Kama River Plant complex – KamAZ).

Along with that I enjoyed numerous years working closely with more than fifty Soviet engineers, who visited our company for the purpose of inspecting and approving the purchased equipment prior to shipment to the Soviet Union. I even had the opportunity at the end of 1976 to spend about seven weeks on a service assignment at the Kama River Plant (KamAZ). While there I was privileged to serve as interpreter/translator for our company's president during his visit.

In the 1990s I was again called on by my company to serve as interpreter for Russian engineers visiting for inspection and approval of a new round of machines. This happened at the same time as the fall of the Soviet regime. This fortunate turn of events provided so much new work that I was able to take on extra after-regular-hours work translating technical engineering inscriptions on drawings from English to Russian.

Eventually we had no further sales to Russia on any significant scale, so I resumed my former company position working in order entry, import-export coordination activities in Germany and Mexico as well as customer service. In January, 2006 a significant merger with a long-time competitor caused my involuntary retirement after more than thirty-five years of continuous employment.

However, this hiatus has now afforded me the time and opportunity to do even more reading in Russian as well as to pursue new activities of interest. All the above describes an odyssey of which I am very proud. Accomplished in large thanks to the preparation provided to me in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan.

The Slavic Scene

Highlights

25th International Conference on Ukrainian Subjects by Svitlana Rogovyk



Assya Humesky and Svitlana Rogovyk at IU-Urbana Ukrainian Conference

For 48 years the University of Michigan Ukrainian Language Program has allowed students to discover and learn the language of the second largest country in Europe and for the past ten years it has been my pleasure teaching it to them. My experience and fascination with pedagogy and method of teaching Slavic languages directed me into research on heritage learners, or students who speak the language but are not literate.

The results of this research was included in the paper "*Necessity of a Differential Approach in the Method of Teaching Ukrainian Language to Heritage Speakers in Conditions of Contemporary Immigration*" and presented at the 25th International Conference on Ukrainian Subjects at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which took place June 19–24, 2006.

Considering nearly one-eighth of the 1.5 million Ukrainians currently living in the U.S. immigrated within the last decade, are young, educated, and created the so-called "fourth wave"— I was certain my topic would be of interest. And it was. My research has been published in *Universum: Publication of Political Science, Economy, Science, & Culture* and *Ukrainian Language & Literature: Professional Journal of the Academy of Science*.

Presenting to an audience of 120 members, were fifty-eight speakers from the Ukraine, U.S., Canada, Australia, Italy, England, Poland, and Serbia. They introduced their thoughts, research, and publications on a plethora of topics in Ukrainian studies, including, but not limited to:

- Ivan Franko and his National Consciousness
- Problems of Publishing in Contemporary Ukraine

- Establishment of a main Center of Archival Heritage of the Diaspora
- Transformational Tests of Ukrainian Science
- Issues on the Educational System in Ukraine
- Post-Orange Ukraine
- Entrepreneurship and the Economy of Ukraine
- Historical Ukrainian Studies
- The Ukrainian Famine of 1932–1933
- Ukrainian philology and the state of the language development in modern Ukraine
- Language and Culture
- Focus on literature: Ihor Antonych, George Luckyj, Ivan Bahrianyi, Lesia Ukrainka

Among the Ukrainian scholars and people of letters who attended the conference, there were seven rectors (presidents) of Ukrainian Universities, as well as other prominent Ukrainian scholars: Yaroslav Yatskiv of National Academy of Sciences, Kyiv; Natalia Yakovenko, Kyiv-Mohyla Academy; Federigo Argentieri, John Cabot University, Rome; David Marples, University of Alberta; Leonid Rudnytsky, La Salle University; Taras Hunczak, Rutgers University; Assya Humesky, University of Michigan; Yevhen Perebyinis—chief editor of "*Literaturna Ukraina*"; and others.

This conference was dedicated to the 150th Anniversary of Ivan Franko and 20th Anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy. The conference consisted of 20 sessions, a round-table discussion, the Chernobyl Tragedy Symposium, as well as an "authors' evening" and a bandura concert. The conference continues to unite and broaden the scholarship of Ukrainian studies.

Attendees of the 25th Annual Conference of Ukrainian Subjects



Zbigniew Libera and The Anishinabe Indians

by Piotr Westwalewicz

Poles have been fascinated with the history and culture of North American Indians since the 18th century. The origins of this interest are a testimony to the often conflicting and confusing aspects of the collective Polish psychology.

On the one hand, Poles saw clear parallels between their loss of independence and domination by foreign powers and the North American Indians' defeat by European settlers. On the other hand, the conquest of North America by the Europeans reminded Poles about their own eastward drive into the territories of today's Ukraine and Belorussia and the "civilizing mission" that both justified and accompanied it.

In short, Polish interest in North American Indians stems from their identification with both the conquered and the conquerors.

I was not particularly surprised when Zbigniew Libera asked to visit the Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways Museum in Mount Pleasant during his stay in Michigan. Anybody who grew up in Poland in the 1960s and 1970s reading novels and watching films about the brave Indians repeatedly sacrificing their lives in a noble fight for a doomed cause had to be curious to find out how fiction compared to facts.

The Ziibwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways is impressive in two ways. First, it is impressive in its overall design and scope. It

covers the entire history of the Anishinabe nation and offers insights into its cosmology, mythology, as well as its past and present culture. Second, it is impressive in how it documents the recent remarkable transformation of the Anishinabe perception of themselves. The museum proves, also by its very existence, funding and purpose, that the

Anishinabe nation overcame the self image of victims and made a deliberate decision to reconstruct itself as a participant in the contemporary world.

Zbigniew Libera remarked several times on both aspects of the museum's design during our drive back to Ann Arbor from Mount Pleasant. There was a tone of regret in his comments. He wondered to what extent the contemporary project of building the "Fourth Polish Republic" conducted by the right wing populist parties grows out of Polish mentality of "victimhood" and "civilizing mission". Can Poles learn from the Anishinabe to move forward and to embrace participation in the contemporary world and to use history to self-evaluate and self-create rather than to recycle old resentments and phobias?

That question carries an artistic and personal significance for Libera. His work has always centered on issues of self-definition and self-identification in the context of social restrictions on individual thought, expression and conduct. Zbigniew Libera has always been interested in how individuals and societies construct, deconstruct and reconstruct themselves. The Anishinabe are an example of a successful transformation of collective and individual memory and psychology.

Zbigniew Libera commented several times during his stay here about his feeling of alienation in today's Poland, where the politics

of "cultural despair" increasingly limits the sphere of individual freedom of thought and expression. In some way, Zbigniew Libera is like those brave Indians from the 1960s and 1970s novels and films. He still hopes that his cause of Poland as a free and democratic participant in new Europe is not doomed.



Photo by Artur Pawkowski, from www.indianie.eco.pl



Zbigniew Libera is one of the most prominent and controversial contemporary Polish artists. Born in 1959, he started his career in the 1980s. Originally his work was connected with the underground groups "Lodz Kaliska", "Strych", and "Zrzuty". He gained fame in the 1990s for a series of projects, videos, and installations which examined and questioned some of the most "tabu" topics in Polish and European history and culture. Zbigniew Libera visited University of Michigan in 2006. He presented his biggest ever retrospective exhibit and delivered a "Copernicus" lecture.

Cross Currents and Michigan Slavic Publications as Samizdat



Professor Ladislav Matejka, circa 1988

Emeritus Professor Ladislav Matejka taught Old Church Slavonic, History of Russian Language, and Comparative Slavic Linguistics in the Slavic Department from 1959 through 1989. He founded Michigan Slavic Publications in 1962, the first publication being *"Papers in Slavic Philology"*, the translation and publication of two previously unpublished articles by Roman Jakobson.

How did you decide to start *Cross Currents*?

When I arrived at U-M in 1959, there was a great deal of material that the Slavic Department and the Center for Russian and East European Studies had been collecting and saving. There were some really phenomenal contributions—namely from Czeslaw Milosz, who would win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1980. It was clear that the material was great and should be published. By 1980, we had begun putting together the first issue; it received such a positive response that we decided to publish annually.

Where did the content for subsequent issues come from?

Everywhere, really. We (the editors and others) were looking for it everywhere. We would invite people to write for the journal, or translate interesting articles that they came across. I would say that about 75% of the content was written exclusively for *Cross Currents*. We wanted to represent Central European culture by publishing relevant material—just to make an issue out of the culture.

There were different languages and cultures, but it all had a common theme—for Central Europe it wasn't the differences in language, but rather the similarities in the cultural atmosphere of the region. Because of these similarities, people became interested in reading about it. In fact, a dissertation has been written about *Cross Currents*. And after we started publishing annually, other people tried to copy *Cross Currents*.

I retired from U-M in 1989, and relocated to Massachusetts. I was still heavily involved with *Cross Currents* and Yale University Press agreed to take over the publishing of it.

When the Cold War was over the copyright costs became too expensive and difficult to get, so

Yale didn't feel that they could afford it. Thus the publication came to a halt.

Did you know that *Cross Currents* would stop being published?

I knew that volume 12 would be the final issue. It had become very difficult to continue, even with volume 12. This was mainly because of the political changes—no more iron curtain and the copyright laws had to be followed. It had become very expensive to collect content.

Can you imagine *Cross Currents* making a comeback?

It would be nice to see it start again! I know that there are scholars interested in comparing the similarities between cultures without considering the linguistic aspect. For example, Dr. Jessie Labov from Stanford University has organized a conference titled *"From Samizdat to Tamizdat: Dissident Media Crossing Borders Before and After 1989"* which just happened in September in Vienna, Austria. For details see the ISRA [International Samizdat Research Association] site, www.samizdatportal.org.

The entire 12 volume set of *Cross Currents* is available online through MIRLYN, the Library Catalog of the University of Michigan at mirlyn.lib.umich.edu. MIRLYN is available to everyone. To search the University of Michigan's library resources, go to www.mirlyn.lib.umich.edu, type your search words into the box, then click 'Search'. The results will be displayed onscreen.

Cross Currents volumes 1, 3, 6, 7, and 8 are available from Michigan Slavic Publications for \$10 each. Please call (734) 763-4496, or visit www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/msp.

NEA Grant Awarded to Professor Bogdana Carpenter

Professor Bogdana Carpenter is a 2006–07 recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts award to translate a volume of poetry by a contemporary Polish poet Julia Hartwig. Translations of Hartwig's poems by John and Bogdana Carpenter have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Manhattan Review*, *Agni*, and *The Michigan Quarterly*.

BRODSKY

By Julia Hartwig

The lagoon was witness to his winter days
to the harsh solitude he chose

The torments of attachment don't disappear
yet this evening of Venetian fog
and the pain of beauty are stronger than pain carried inside

How soothing can be distance from all the things
we came to love
the sad pride we can also exist here

A spot was waiting for him on the island of San Michele
even in exile
he was master of his place

He pointed out this cemetery
his love of the lagoon would be enough
to merit it

When the flatterers and slanderers fell silent
he heard in the bay the splash of a wave struck by an oar

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