

The AATSEEL NEWSLETTER



American Association of Teachers of Slavic & East European Languages

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**For current online information about AATSEEL
 and its activities, visit AATSEEL on the web:**

<http://www.aatseel.org>

Michael Henry Heim

(21 January 1943 – 29 September 2012)

It is with great sorrow that we report the passing of Michael Henry Heim on 29 September 2012, after a long struggle with cancer. Among the many spaces, both academic and personal, that will feel bereft without him over the next months is our AATSEEL Boston conference, where he was planning to deliver the keynote address on “The Role of Slavic and East European Literatures in the Development of Literary Translation in the US.” Heim was wonderfully equipped to tell that story. The scope of his translation activities was astonishing. He worked actively in over a dozen languages — Russian, Czech/Slovak, Croatian/Serbian, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Italian, Latin, Romanian, Hungarian, occasionally even Chinese from an undergraduate major in East Asian Studies. But none of this erudition was bookish or dry. Heim invested his entire person in every literary project, relishing those moments when translation became a matter of moral principle — as it did in scandals over English versions of novels by Vladimir Nabokov, Milan Kundera, and Günter Grass. His long association with the international writers’ organization PEN and especially with its collective of Central European translators, first traumatized by service to the Soviet Empire and then orphaned by the demise of that Empire, is emblematic of his human role in the liberation of Middle Europe from its masters on both sides.

The depth and gentleness of Heim’s mentoring of PhD students at UCLA was legendary in the field. One of his PhDs in Nabokov studies currently teaching at Princeton, Stanislav Shvabrin, offers this epitaph to Michael Heim:

“Michael’s scholarly desserts are many and varied indeed, yet it was his capacity for kindness and empathy that is unmatched: he felt personally responsible for every empty classroom left brightly lit on a vast campus, and corresponded with foreign graduate students’ children to ensure that they grow literate in their mother tongue. Quixotic? Perhaps; this single man’s

relentless pursuit of ‘small deeds,’ however, has certainly translated into a number of momentous, positive changes in other people’s lives.”

A good translation, they say, reflects not just words but whole behaviors. Most of us can barely behave in our native tongue, with our native-born equipment. Michael Heim behaved in fifteen different literatures and cultures, making them all available to one another. He will be sorely missed.

Caryl Emerson (Princeton University),
AATSEEL President 2009-2010

Message from the AATSEEL President

When we meet together this January 3-6 in Boston, I hope you will join us in paying tribute to Michael Heim, to whom we had awarded the 2011 AATSEEL Outstanding Contribution to Scholarship. More information on that tribute will be available in the months ahead.

At 2013 AATSEEL we have organized several events that may interest members. First, one of our leading Russian cinema scholars, Professor Yuri Tsivian (University of Chicago), is offering **Advanced Seminar # 1: Russian Film**. Enrollment will be limited and pre-registration required. Whether you are a cinema scholar or a teacher seeking to incorporate more film into your coursework on Russian culture, language, literature, or comparative Slavic, this workshop is a one-time opportunity to engage in dialogue with a master of the field.

Second, an **Advanced Seminar # 2: Contemporary Russian Poetry** will be offered by one of the profession’s lead experts, Professor Stephanie Sandler (Harvard University). Many of you will remember Professor Sandler’s essay, written in dialogue with Professor G. S. Smith, in the *Newsletter*’s State of the Field series on contemporary Russian poetry (see these essays online at <http://www.aatseel.org/resources/stateofthefield/poetry.htm>). Poetry can often be an enormously insightful medium, teaching tool, and linguistic resource for a richer understanding of Russian culture, yet many of us are unsure about how to

integrate poetic texts into our teaching, writing, and research. Come learn from one of the best.

A third reason for joining us in Boston plans is our **Featured Workshop: Intensive Language Instruction**, conducted by Professor Thomas Garza (University of Texas, Austin). Professor Garza is well-known to AATSEEL colleagues as a leader in intensive language instruction, someone who has taken on such challenging tasks as the incorporation of literature study into first-year language instruction (see, for example, the Texas Language Center’s vimeo at <http://vimeo.com/39765768>). In response to our colleagues’ suggestions last year, Tom Garza will conduct an AATSEEL 2013 intensive workshop offering participants a chance to engage with him on questions concerning daily class activities, text selection, expected outcomes, and other issues that interest participants.

As ever, you must be a current AATSEEL member and pre-registered for the 2013 conference to reserve a spot in the Advanced Seminars and the Featured Workshop. Further information is available from our colleague and much-appreciated collaborator, Professor Katya Hokanson at hokanson@uoregon.edu.

In roughly a month—by 30 November—the AATSEEL online conference pre-registration will close and these one-time opportunities will in all likelihood be filled up. I hope very much to attend these events and would invite you to join me. They are the very best of our profession and, taken together, promise to be a significant intellectual crossroads in our field.

Nancy Condee (University of Pittsburgh), AATSEEL President (2011-2012)



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Cross-Cultural Communication

Editor: Elena Denisova-Schmidt
University of St. Gallen (HSG), Switzerland

This column deals with cross-cultural issues. Topics covered will include teaching culture through language, cross-cultural communication in business environment and cross-cultural communication in academic settings. Any suggestions are welcomed. Please contact Elena Denisova-Schmidt (elena.denisova-schmidt@unisg.ch)

Russian language classes in the USA and in Europe have for a long time been a mixture of foreign language and heritage language classes. How do modern foreign language textbooks reflect the current situation? What possible teaching techniques and materials would consider the needs and demands of both Russian heritage learners and 'real' foreign language learners?

Some of the tools used by the authors of *Конечно!* – a textbook designed for Russian as a foreign language (mostly for German-speaking Europe) – contain ideas for heritage learners and could be projected onto similar textbooks for comparable settings.

Storyline

The book's storyline includes a protagonist – Viktor Nauman – who lives in Russia, but has family in Germany. Viktor represents the Volga Germans, the German-speaking minority in Russia. Some Volga Germans moved back to Germany after collapse of the Soviet Union; some still remain in Russia. Alexander Nauman, now living in Berlin, visits his half-brother Viktor in Moscow. Both boys explore the city:

Алекс, сводный брат Вити, живёт в Берлине. Алекс не часто летает на самолёте, но летать ему нравится. В Москву он летит в первый раз. Витя с бабушкой и дедушкой едут в аэропорт Домодедово. Дедушка Вити обычно не ездит на машине в час пик, поэтому они едут на метро. Алекс уже ждёт в аэропорту и ходит по залу. Наконец идут Витя с бабушкой и дедушкой.

(Конечно!, p. 69)



(Конечно!, p. 70)

This context makes students more sensitive to the history of the Volga Germans; they represent the majority of Russian-speaking immigrants in German-speaking Europe.

Витя: Эй, соня, уже 10 часов, пора вставать!

Алекс: Что? Уже?

Витя: Мы едем в центр.

Алекс: В центр города? Неплохо. Кремль, Мавзолей Ленина ...

Витя: Мавзолей? Кому это интересно?

Алекс: Мне, и даже очень. У нас мавзолей нет. А на чём мы едем?

Витя: На метро, конечно. Москвичи обычно ездят в центр города на метро.

Алекс: На метро, здорово!

Витя: Тогда вперёд, ребята нас уже ждут.

(Конечно!, p. 70)

Additional exercises

Every unit contains a *Reading* page with more challenging exercises, which are developed for heritage students, but could be also used with high-performance students:

(Конечно!, p. 53 and p. 89)

References:

Amstein-Bahrmann, C./Borgwardt, U./Brosch, M./Denisova-Schmidt, E./Gentsch, D./Jakubow, P./Reichert-Borowsky, G./Walach, E.: *Конечно!, Russisch als 2. Fremdsprache*. Stuttgart, Leipzig: Ernst Klett Verlag, 2008.

Denisova-Schmidt, E.: Russian Heritage Learners in Switzerland: Challenges and Opportunities, Poster Presentation, Sixth Heritage Language Research Institute, UCLA, 2012 <http://www.nhlrc.ucla.edu/events/institute/2012/posters.asp>

American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS Announcements

American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS is now accepting applications for its **Summer 2013 programs in Russia, Eurasia, and the Balkans:**

- Advanced Russian Language and Area Studies Program (RLASP)
- Business Russian Language and Internship Program
- Russian Heritage Speakers Program
- Eurasia Regional Language Program
- Balkan Language Initiative

The application deadline for these programs is **February 15, 2013**. All program websites and applications can be accessed through <http://acStudyAbroad.org> or by emailing outbound@americancouncils.org.

Grant Recipients

American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS is pleased to announce its Summer 2012 and Academic Year 2012-13 Fellows, receiving U.S. Department of State (Title VIII) funding:

STATE OF THE FIELD

Readers: We would like to reinstate the State of the Field series. If you have written a seminal work in your field or sub-field, please consider sharing a summary of that for this newsletter. You may send the contribution to the editor, Leaver@aol.com. Many thanks for considering this possibility!

Language immersion participants in Russia and Eurasia:

Hunter Bandy, Duke University

Carsten Brown, Texas Tech University

Monica Bykowski, University of Notre Dame

Emily Canning, Brandeis University

Tyler Dupont, State University of New York System - Buffalo

Celia Emmelhainz, Texas A&M University

Amanda Getty, University of Michigan

Kramer Gillin, University of Wisconsin – Madison

Ruth Grossman, Georgetown University

Victoria Hallinan, Northeastern University

Margaret Hanson, Ohio State University

Joely Hildebrand, University of Denver

Nina Jankowicz, Georgetown University

Seth King, University of Virginia

Megan Luttrell, University of Kansas

Katie Manbachi, Princeton University

James Nance, George Mason University

Rebekah Ramsay, Emory University

Brian Richey, Indiana University

Michael Seyer, Villanova University

Amy Stidger, University of Texas – Austin

Patrick Thoendel, University of Massachusetts – Amherst

Jessica Willis, Boston University

Research fellows in Russia, Eurasia, and the Balkans:

Dr. Steven Barnes, George Mason University

Daniel Beben, Indiana University

Khashayar Beigi, University of California – Berkeley

Elizabeth Bospflug, Yale University

Dr. Helen Faller, Independent Scholar

Dr. Victor Friedman, University of Chicago

Claire Kaiser, University of Pennsylvania

Isabelle Kaplan, University of Maryland

Kyle Marquardt, University of Wisconsin – Madison

Jessica Mason, University of Wisconsin – Madison

Dr. Laura Osterman, University of Colorado

Maria Rives, Yale University

Meagan Todd, University of Colorado

Dr. Thomas Wier, University of Chicago

Elizabeth Zherka, University of Washington

Balkan Café

Editor: Nataša Milas,
Yale University

Balkan Café is a new column dedicated to research and teaching issues pertaining to the countries of the Balkan Region. This is a place for students, teachers, and scholars to come together and exchange ideas, concerns, and questions on various aspects of Balkan Culture. I am using this opportunity to invite short articles, translations, and reviews, as well as announcements of conferences, book publications, and other material relevant to Balkan Studies. Please send questions or submissions to the editor, Nataša Milas, at natasa.milas@yale.edu.

XLV International Seminar on Macedonian Language, Literature, and Culture

The International Seminar on Macedonian Language, Literature, and Culture celebrated its forty-fifth anniversary this summer from June 22nd to July 5th. Organized annually by the Skopje University of Cyril and Methodius this venture is a unique opportunity for South Slavicists, and Macedonian heritage speakers to immerse themselves in the language and culture of this central Balkan nation. The combination of rigorous academic requirements, a rich cultural program and beautiful setting makes the seminar a perfectly balanced summer activity.

This year over fifty participants from Europe, North America and Asia took part in the diverse activities prepared by the seminar organizers. The required language courses, divided into three proficiency levels, were lead by experienced instructors who specialize in language acquisition for foreigners. Among them were the authors of excellent textbooks on Macedonian for foreigners included in the welcome package for each participant.

The morning language classes were complemented by a diverse selection of optional lectures and master-classes in the afternoon and evening. Along language skills the participants had a chance to learn hands-on the famous traditional Macedonian dances (*horos*), songs, and even cuisine. The lectures covered a wide range of topics, including contemporary film, history of the Macedonian language and literature, ethnography and geo-politics of

Macedonia. The seminar program also included several excursions to historical places such as the old town of Ohrid, Struga and the famous monastery St. Naum, hiking up to the highest peak of the nearby Galicica National Park and a boat excursion along the lake.

The breathtaking setting of the Cyril and Methodius University Congress Center on the Ohrid lake was an added bonus. The wonderful weather and scenic panorama of the surrounding mountains provided a peaceful and productive work setting conducive to networking and building personal and professional ties with the other participants.

The summer seminar was preceded by the 39th International Conference on Macedonian Language and Literature held on the 20th and 21st of June 2012 in the same location.

More information about the seminar can be found on the university website: http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk_content.php?meni=35&glavno=34

Maria Hristova
Yale University

New in Translation

Žižek, Slavoj and Boris Gunjević.
God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse.

Seven Stories Press, 2012.

Slavoj Žižek's new book, *God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse*, writ-

ten with Boris Gunjević, was recently published by Seven Stories Press. The book deals with the question of the self-imposed restrictions that plague life in the modern, ostensibly free, developed world. As Žižek writes, "If, once upon a time, we publicly pretended to believe while privately we were skeptics or even engaged in obscene mocking of our public beliefs, today we publicly tend to profess out skeptical, hedonistic, relaxed attitude while we privately remain haunted by beliefs and severe prohibitions." The book discusses how the life of the seemingly free atheist, or even hedonist, is actually a life lived according to a host of limits—everything from gym memberships, to recycling—that act as self-imposed limits upon the baffling freedom of a world in which 'God is dead.' Žižek, of course, is not invoking the saving parameter of religion—indeed, a key point of the work is that only religion makes it possible for a good person to become bad—but, rather, is at pains to point out that the death of God has decidedly *not* made everything possible. Indeed, since God is dead, nothing is possible. As Žižek phrases it, "there is nothing more oppressive and regulated than being a simple hedonist."

Trevor Laurence Jockims
New York University

Kiš, Danilo. *The Attic*. Dalkey Archive Press, August, 2012.

Kiš, Danilo. *Psalm 44*. Dalkey Archive Press. August, 2012.

Kiš, Danilo. *The Lute and the Scars*. Dalkey Archive Press, August, 2012.

On August 21 2012 Dalkey Archive Press published three new works by the Former Yugoslav writer Danilo Kiš: *The Attic*, *Psalm 44*, and *The Lute and the Scars*. John K. Cox, professor of history at the North Dakota State University, translated all three works. While *The Attic* and the *Psalm 44*, written in the early 1960s, showcase young Kiš—they are considered Kiš's novels of apprenticeship—the last in the series, *The Lute and the Scars*, features collection of stories written between 1980 and 1986 that have been compiled from the author's archive. Besides the translator John K. Cox, who has written an introduction to *The Attic* and an afterward to *The Lute and the Scars*, other writers involved in this project include Adam Thirlwell who wrote an introduction to *The Lute*, and Aleksandar Hemon whose article prefaces *Psalm 44*. These three new and noteworthy works by Kiš contribute to his existing opus published by Dalkey Archive Press: *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* and *Garden, Ashes*.

Jergović, Miljenko. *Mama Leone*. Archipelago Press, October, 2012.

Stănescu, Nichita. *Wheel With a Single Spoke*. Archipelago Press, July 2012.

In 2012 Archipelago Press published two very important writers from the Balkans: from Romania, Nichita Stănescu's book of poems *Wheel With a Single Spoke*, translated by Sean Cotter (July, 2012), and from Bosnia, Miljenko Jergović's *Mama Leone*, translated by David Williams (October 2012). Archipelago Press has already published Jergović's collection of short stories *Sarajevo Marlboro*, one of the most important works to come out of the siege of Sarajevo. *Mama Leone*, in a manner reminiscent of Proust's *A La Recherche*, captures the early childhood memories of the author's alter ego, and his growing up in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Drvenik, Croatia.

***Absinthe: New European Writing. Special Issue on Bulgaria*. Spring 2012.**

The latest issue of the literary journal *Absinthe: New European Writing* dedicated an entire issue to the literature and art in Bulgaria. The issue #17 features some of the most important Bulgarian writers today: Georgi Gospodinov, Milen Ruskov, Emilia Dvoryanova, Vladislav Todorov, Krassimir Damianov, Kristin Dimitrova, Virginia Zaharieva, and others. Stela Vasileva and Pravidoliub Ivanov's art work is also showcased in this issue, as well as a number of reviews of recent Bulgarian films and books.

Natasa Milas
Yale University

Website Wins Award

The website of the non-profit organization Macedonian Language E-Learning Center (<http://macedonianlanguage.org>) has won the 2012 Access to Language Education award, presented by the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO), the Esperantic Studies Foundation, and Lerno.net. The Macedonian Language E-Learning Center was founded and is headed by AATSEEL member Biljana Belamarić Wilsey, who is also the principal instructional designer. The Center's website is cited for its offering of "exceptional language learning resources." Read more about the award at <https://calico.org/page.php?id=507#WebsiteAward>. The materials on the website are free and open to anyone. The materials are also being used in the online beginning Macedonian course, offered through the Friday Center for Continuing Education and the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill (<http://fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/catalog/macedonian.html>). Anyone can enroll in the university course and receive transfer credit to their respective university upon completion, if desired. The course is also taught by Biljana Belamarić Wilsey.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The Recent Publications column includes books published in 2010-2011. Authors and publishers are invited to submit information about their new publications.

Please be sure to include the date of publication and the publisher.

Art

Gourianova, N. 2012. *The Aesthetics of Anarchy: Art and Ideology in the Early Russian Avant-Garde*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Culture

Bassin, M., & Kelly, C., eds. 2012. *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Semenenko, A. 2012. *The Texture of Culture: An Introduction to Yuri Lotman's Semiotic Theory*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ethnic & Gender Studies

Narvselius, E. 2012. *Ukrainian Intelligentsia in Post-Soviet L'viv: Narratives, Identity and Power*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

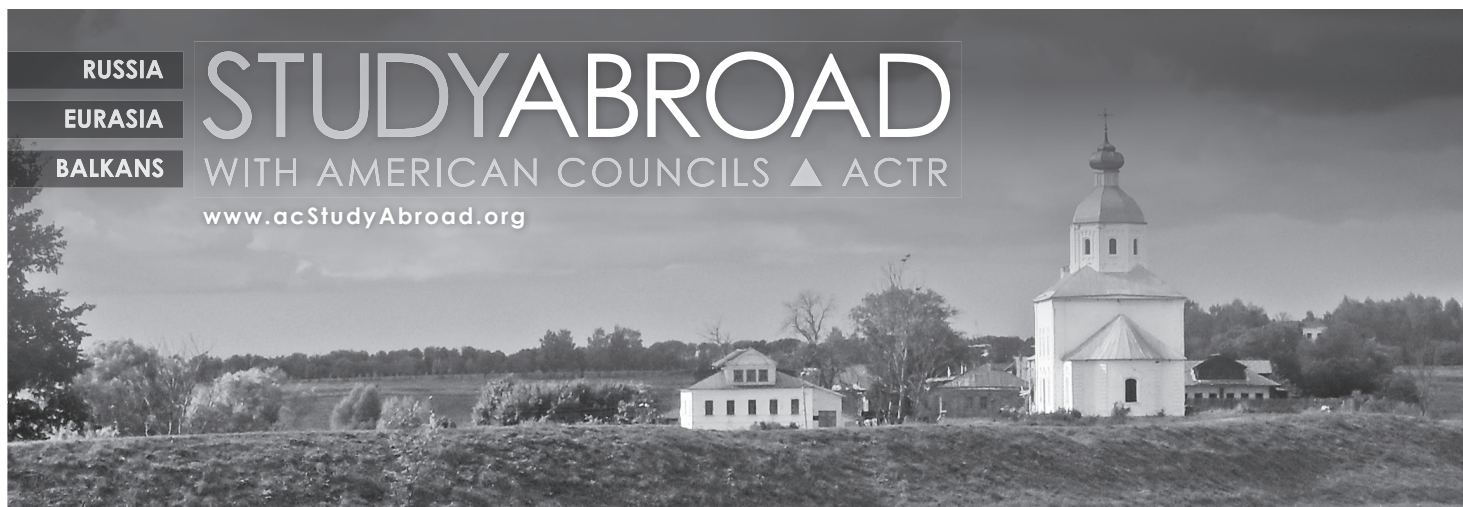
Rutten, E. 2012. *Unattainable Bride Russia: Gendering Nation, State, and Intelligentsia in Russian Intellectual Culture*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

History

Fedyashin, A. 2012. *Liberals Under Autocracy: Modernization and Civil Society in Russia, 1866-1904*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

LaPierre, B. 2012. *Hooligans in Krushchev's Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance during the Thaw*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Continued on page 15



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Technology & Language Learning

Editor: Ferit Kiliçkaya,
Kocaeli University
<http://kilickaya.scienceontheweb.net/>

Submissions for future editions of this column should be sent electronically to Ferit Kiliçkaya (ferit.kilickaya@gmail.com)

Providing Feedback To Language Learners Through Screencasting Software

Providing feedback to language students is one of the most challenging and pivotal issues for language teachers. It is also of high importance for language learners as the comments and suggestions provided by their teachers will guide and improve their skills, specifically writing in the target language, if provided during the process of writing drafts rather than on the finished product. The feedback provided to learners by teachers can be verbal and/or written, and teachers put a great deal of time into learners' writing while providing feedback. Considering the writing skill, the ultimate aim in providing feedback to language learners is to make learners aware of the sentences and/or grammar that need to be improved and edited and encourage them to act on these points.

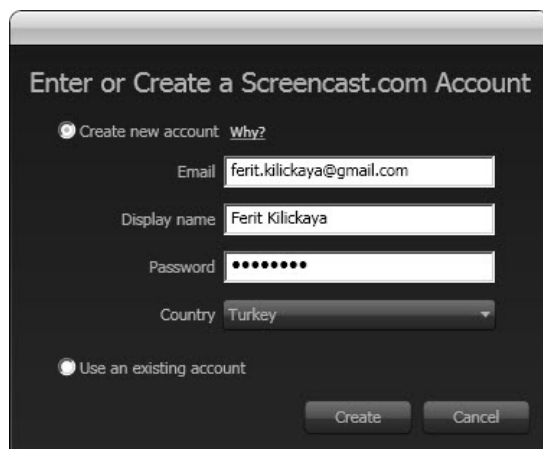
There are several studies conducted on providing feedback to language learners through using the available technology (Ali et al., 2011; Dal-Bianco & MacSween, 2011; Stannard, 2008; Thompson & Lee, 2012). These studies focus on providing feedback to language learners through screencasting software which enables teachers to record their voice and their screen while suggesting learners how to improve their language skills, especially writing. The results of these studies are promising since the findings, in general, indicate that the participants respond positively to receiving feedback through recorded videos. As such, this column aims to bring screencasting software to readers' attention and introduce freely available screencasting software, *Jing*.

Jing

Jing, provided by TechSmith, one of the leading companies in screencasting and video editing, is freely available screen recording software that provides users with the opportunity to create images and videos of anything available on their screen, be it a

PDF file or a website. *Jing* can be downloaded using the following link on the main page, clicking on the link 'Free Download' (<http://www.techsmith.com/download/jing/default.asp>). The setup file is 7, 67 megabytes (MB) for the Windows Version and 5, 8 MB for the Mac Version. When you are finished with downloading, click on the downloaded file and install it, which is completed in less than a minute.

When the installation is completed, *Jing* requires an account to be created with [screencast.com](http://www.screencast.com). Create an account providing the necessary details, and then *Jing* will be ready to use.



Enter or Create a Screencast.com Account

Create new account [Why?](#)


Email

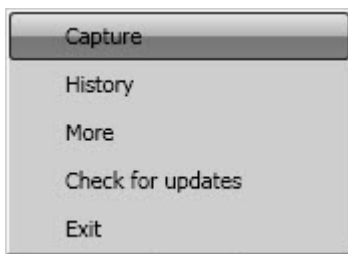
Display name

Password

Country

Use an existing account

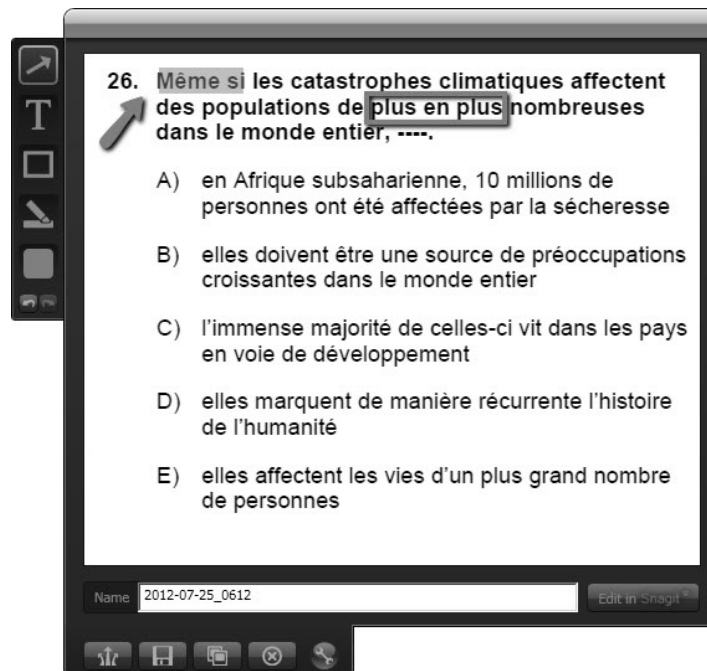
Jing will place an icon on the right side of the task bar in Windows, which will be used to create images and videos. When the icon  is clicked on, a menu will appear.




In order to create images and videos, 'Capture' will be used. When Capture is clicked on, you will choose the area of which an image or video will be created. When the area is selected, *Jing* will provide the following menu.



The first button will capture the image of the selected area, while the second one will record both the screen and audio using the microphone. Click on the first one and create an image of what is available on your selected area. I have selected a multiple-choice question from a nation-wide exam held in Turkey, which is used to test proficiency in French.



When the image is created, I have enhanced it using the arrows and highlighting options provided by Jing, which are only available for images, not for videos recorded. The output file type will be only 'PNG' extension, which means that the other formats are not available such as 'JPG' or 'TIF'.



In order to record a video, click on the Jing icon on your task bar, select 'Capture', select the area you want to record, and click on the second button, . After three seconds, Jing will start recording the video. While recording, you will see the following menu under the area being recorded. The first button will finish the recording, while the second one will pause it.



Please note that Jing limits the recording to 5 minutes. For recording projects that will last more than 5 minutes, you can do the recording in parts, thus creating several videos.

This time, I have used an MS word file which contains one of my previously published manuscripts by the AATSEEL newsletter. I have selected the area in which the text appears and recorded my voice and whatever I do with the text such as underlying and deleting. When I click on the ‘Finish’, the very first button on the menu available below the recording area, Jing will finish recording and provide the following output.



You can change the name of the recording (Jing automatically provides a name, using the current date and time). Considering saving the recording, Jing provides two options: either share it using your account on Screencast.com,  or save it in ‘SWF’ format, . You can also upload your recorded videos to *DropBox* (<https://www.dropbox.com/>) or *Google Drive* (<https://drive.google.com/>) to share them with your students.

Evaluation

Freely available, Jing appears to be an easy but at the same time satisfactory tool that allows language teachers to provide digital feedback to language learners through images and videos accompanied by students’ work in any electronic format and their individualized audio comments and suggestions. Language teachers willing to benefit

from this mode of providing feedback in order to engage and motivate their learners can easily use this tool without spending hours to figure out how it can be used thanks to its basic and powerful features.

How to use Jing

- Language teachers can prepare a recorded feedback on students' essays and written assignments.
- Using presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint, or any word processing software such as Microsoft Word, language teachers can record videos as tutorials and/or demonstrations that focus on challenging issues and language structures in the target language for students.
- For any editing or redrafting purposes, the oral and visual feedback provided by the videos can enable students to easily follow the comments pointed by their teachers as the videos provide them with the opportunity to replay as many times students wish.
- The recorded audio can also be utilized to have students practice their listening skills.

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Resources

Freely available screencasting software

BB FlashBack Express <http://www.bbsoftware.co.uk/bbflashbackexpress/>

CamStudio <http://camstudio.org/>

uTIPu	http://www.utipu.com/
Webinaria	http://www.webinaria.com/
Wink	http://www.debugmode.com/wink/

Commercial screencasting software

BB FlashBack	http://www.bbsoftware.co.uk/BBFlashBack.aspx
Camtasia Studio	http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html
HyperCam	http://www.hyperionics.com/hc/
Snagit	http://www.techsmith.com/snagit.html
Wondershare DemoCreator	http://www.wondershare.com/pro/democreator.html

For a huge list of screencasting software and a comparison, please refer to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_screencasting_software.

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PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

This column is intended to promote a dialogue for teachers of Slavic languages regarding the psychological aspect of language learning. Submissions for future editions of this column should be sent electronically to Valery Belyanin (russianforyou@gmail.com)

Student-Led Teaching as a Method to Increase Student Motivation and Improve Oral Proficiency

Elena Clark, UNC-Chapel Hill
elenapedigo@yahoo.com

In student-led teaching, also known as peer teaching, the students take on the role of instructors and design and lead classes themselves, just as the “real” instructor does. The benefits of student-led teaching are well known (e.g., Sturdivant & Souhan, 2011). A survey of the recent literature on the topic, though, suggests that this is not a common technique for foreign language instruction. However, motivation is also a critical factor in student improvement of oral skills in a foreign language (e.g., Hernandez, 2010). I will describe briefly how the use of student-led teaching has been extremely successful in motivating my students to improve their oral proficiency in RUSS 321/2, a third-year Russian conversation course.

When I began teaching the class, I turned to my experience with student-led classes in a First Year Seminar (Krometis et al., 2011) to see if student-led classes would be equally effective in a language learning setting, and began tracking the students’ responses to this exercise. Although my sample size is still small enough that my results are largely anecdotal in nature, the outcomes have been extremely positive, suggesting that student-led teaching is a promising technique that warrants further trial in the foreign language classroom.

For their final project in RUSS 321, students were required to design and teach a 20-25 minute conversation class in Russian, on a topic of their choice and with exercises of their own

design. Although some of the students were so nervous that they were visibly trembling as they began their classes, they all claimed in their post-teaching reflection essays to prefer the exercise to more traditional tests, and some also said they couldn’t wait to try it again next semester. Furthermore, on their post-course evaluations they all marked “agree” or “strongly agree” in response to the prompt “Overall, considering its content, design, and structure, this course was excellent.” This suggests a high level of student satisfaction with the project and the course overall.

18 students enrolled in RUSS 322, the second semester of the course. 15 of them had taken RUSS 321 with me either in Fall 2011 or Fall 2010. The large (for conversation) class size and the high rate of re-enrollment also suggest that the students enjoyed the course and were motivated to continue studying Russian conversation. This time they had two teaching opportunities: one individual 20-25 minute session in the middle of the semester and one group 50-minute session at the end of the semester. These projects were similar in length and difficulty to assignments I had received in graduate seminars conducted in Russian. Despite this challenge, and despite making mistakes (e.g., wrong endings) when speaking in front of the class, and occasionally conducting less-than-optimal lessons (e.g., running out of time), neither the students’ enthusiasm nor the correctness of their language were damaged.

The students’ abilities to produce correct language and succeed in traditional classroom assessments could be measured by their performance on the weekly quizzes I administered in both semesters. In the first semester, I chose the topics, created the vocabulary lists,

*Editor: Valery Belyanin
(Kaluga State University)*

and designed and led the exercises to reinforce the material. In the second semester, as part of their first teaching assignment, the students did all those things. The average quiz grade in the first semester was 87%; in the second semester it was 90%. The average essay grade for both semesters also remained stable in the B+/A- range, while their grammar instructors reported no deterioration in the quality of those students’ grammar. This may have been because they were exposed not only to their own speech, which they knew to be faulty, but also to authentic materials, which they assumed to be correct. Their high level of oral fluency and willingness to speak, meanwhile, was noted both by myself and other instructors.

In conclusion, student-led teaching was an extremely effective method to engage the students and encourage them to improve their oral proficiency. The motivation provided by teaching and seeing each other teach encouraged them to challenge themselves and converse better than they would have otherwise, while conducting independent research on topics of their choice and then sharing them with the class caused everyone - including the instructor - to gain cultural knowledge.

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EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT RUSSIAN GRAMMAR BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

Alina Israeli
(*American University*)

Please send questions to: Prof. Alina Israeli, LFS, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW., Washington DC 20016-8045; or via e-mail to: aisrael@american.edu

Q. When do we use *иметь*? That is он имеет встречу is not quite Russian, while there are a lot of good expressions: *иметь право, смысл, возможность*. It has to be abstract, right?

A. This is a very interesting question, because it exposes different levels of abstractness. *Право, смысл, and возможность* are very abstract: you cannot see them or touch them. *Встреча* is also abstract, but we can decompose the event, that is it is an event where two or more concrete people meet. We can visualize the event, hence it is somewhat less abstract than let us say *право*, and consequently, as we will see, is less prone to combine with *иметь*.

Встреча is a noun that describes a communication process, and we can come up with similar nouns: *разговор, дискуссия* etc. The Russian National Corpus (RNC) has a few examples with these nouns, but their scarcity, conditions of use and time period when they were used underscore their relative abstractness. There is only one example of *имел дискуссию*:

КАК-ТО НА ДНЯХ *имел дискуссию* с одним адвокатом, который привел действительно профессиональные возражения тому, о чем сказано выше. [Евгений Левшин. Эволюция бандитизма (2003) // «Завтра», 2003.07.10]

There are three examples of *имел встречу*, all involving heads of state in some sense; in addition to the head of the Orthodox Church in the example below, the other examples mention Nixon and the Prince of Wales (of yesteryear):

14 мая 2004 года, в день прибытия делегации в Москву, Высокопреосвященнейший митрополит Лавр *имел встречу* со Святейшим Патриархом Московским и всея Руси Алексием. [Визит в Россию официальной делегации Русской Зарубежной

Церкви (2004) // «Журнал Московской патриархии», 2004.05.24]

There are eleven examples of *имел объяснение* (meaning ‘a discussion to resolve differences, misunderstandings’) and thirty-seven of *имел разговор*, all involving formal or official circumstances:

По этому поводу «сердитый» Михаэль *имел объяснение* с итальянцем по завершении квалификации. [Дмитрий Ситник. Гран При Франции: мишин юбилей (2001) // «Формула», 2001.08.15]

Губернатор по этому поводу уже *имел разговор* с руководителями местных банков, которые, правда, выдвинули условие: покажите, что ЖКХ значится в числе приоритетов по развитию региона, и мы на ваш бюджетный рубль выделим четыре своих. [Татьяна Макогонова. Реформе нужны личности // «Красноярский рабочий», 2003]

The next set of nouns, even though more abstract and describing one’s needs, feelings and attitudes, are fairly rare and/or old-fashioned. There are two 19th century examples of *имел необходимость*, three examples of *имел потребность*, with only one from 20th century prose, and four examples of *имел подозрение*, all from 18th and 19th century prose:

По прежним связям он *имел обширное и знатное знакомство*, через него и я познакомился со многими из его или сослуживцев или благодетелей, потому что дядя был беден и *имел необходимость* в пособии старых знакомых. [Н. А. Дурова. Письмо В. Н. Мамышеву (1861)]

Наоборот, он *имел потребность* выразить перед людьми самого себя. [Владимир Орлов. Альтист Данилов (1980)]

Карл в недоумении остановился лагерем на берегу Десны и оставался

без действия. Петр *имел подозрение* на старого гетмана. [А. С. Пушкин. История Петра: Подготовительные тексты (1835-1836)]

There are fifteen examples of *имел надежду*, twelve of which are from before the 20th century, eighteen of *имел желание*, all from before the mid-20th century, 107 of *имел намерение*, and 140 of *имел неосторожность*. This cursory look at such phrases indicates that in those cases where there is a verb of the same root — *дискутировать, встречаться, объясняться, разговаривать* — the nominal phrase either becomes obsolete or pertains to a high style level of discourse. What has survived well is either a combination with abstract notions (*имел представление, смысл, значение*) or rights (*имел право, льготы, преимущество, прерогативу, власть, полномочия*), or human attributes (*имел положение, предрасположенность, склонность, возможность, шанс*); in all of these cases we do not find verbs that could serve as counterparts. Rarely do we find cases where there is a verb, for example, *иметь влияние* vs. *влиять-повлиять*.

Considering the peculiar history of these words in Russian and their move from being synonymic to *вливание, вливать*, their French origin¹ and other factors, it should not be surprising that they have somewhat different meanings when we speak of people: *кто на нее (по)влиять* vs. *кто на нее *имел влияние**. *Влиять* has the implication of actively influencing someone, making an effort to influence someone, while

¹ see Vinogradov’s essay on their history <http://wordhist.narod.ru/vli-janie.html>; in fact the whole collection entitled *История слов* <http://wordhist.narod.ru/index.html> could be of significant interest.

иметь влияние (and оказать влияние) means more of an indirect process or unwitting effect:

Иван Павлыч, Ромашка на него влиял. Он на него смотрел ночью, а Валька этого не выносит. [Вениамин Каверин. Два капитана (1938-1944)]

Несколько лет назад орден Голубых кругов стал вдруг очень влиятельным. Говорят, что из-за одного человека, который сначала стал тайным покровителем ордена, а потом его магистром. Он имел влияние на короля. [Сергей Осипов. Страсти по Фоме. Книга первая. Изгой (1998)]

We find an even more striking distinction between *иметь отношение* and *относиться*. *Иметь отношение* means 'have something to do with, be related in some way', while *относиться* has additionally the meaning of 'feel about someone or something'.

In some instances where there is no counterpart verb, such as with *необходимость* and *потребность*, *иметь* in a construction that feels like a Western calque has been replaced by verbs of feeling — *чувствовать* and *испытывать*:

имел *потребность* — 3 vs. *испытывал потребность* — 10

имел *необходимость* — 2 vs. *испытывал необходимость* — 2 vs.

чувствовал необходимость — 24

One footnote: Why do I use masculine constructions and not feminine? In cases where there are not that many examples to begin with, there are even fewer in feminine gender, and in some case cases none at all, as in *имела встречу*. *Имела потребность, объяснение, and разговор* correspondingly yielded one, three and five examples.

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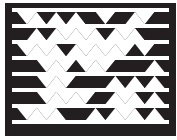
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Filosova, T., & Sporing, M. 2012. *Da! A Practical Guide to Russian Grammar*. London: Hodder Education Publishers.

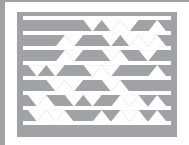
Gasparov, B. 2012. *Beyond pure reason: Ferdinand de Saussure's philosophy of language and its early Romantic antecedents*. NY: Columbia University Press.

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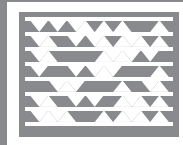


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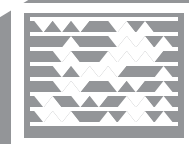
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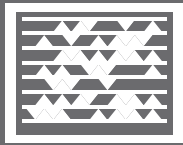
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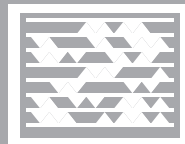
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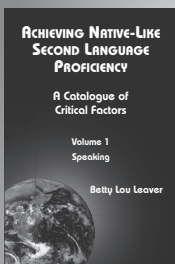
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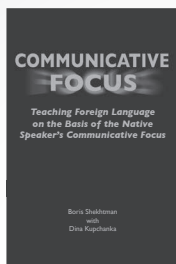
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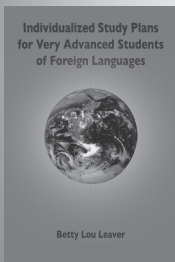
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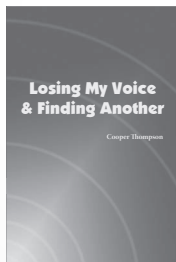
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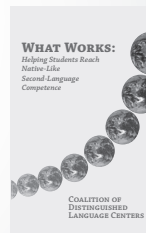
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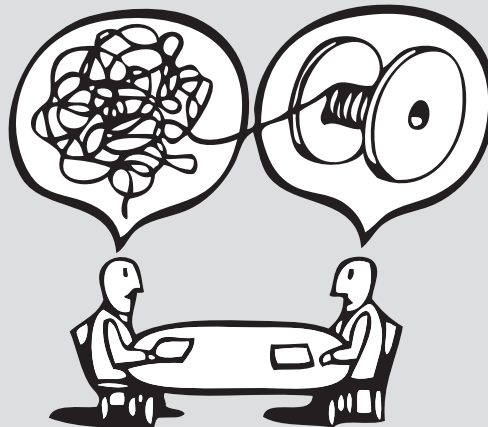
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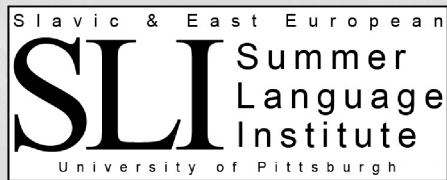
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Czech Corner

*Editor: Mila Saskova-Pierce
(University of Nebraska)*

Editor's Note: This corner is for teachers of the Czech language, and I would like to invite them to share their news, views, and experience related to the teaching of various kinds of courses dealing with Czech culture, language, and literature. Contributions do not have to be limited to the United States; they can and should include issues of Czech language and culture instruction throughout the whole world. Contributions to the Czech Corner may be sent to the column editor at msaskovapierce1@unl.edu.

Join the World celebration of the work of Václav Havel and Miloš Forman

In 2012/2013 the Czech Republic Embassy in the US is coordinating a world-wide celebration of the achievement and intellectual legacy of two Czech cultural personalities, Miloš Forman and Václav Havel. What follows is a recap of some information about those cultural personalities.

Miloš Forman is a world-wide recognized filmmaker who lives and works in the USA. He has received two Oscars, first as best foreign film director and then as an American director. Václav Havel was a playwright, philosopher, dissident and former president of the first post-communist Czechoslovakia and then Czech Republic.

Václav Havel's legacy was celebrated on the grounds of the Czech Republic embassy in the project entitled *Freedom of Expression in the Contemporary World dedicated to Miloš Forman and Václav Havel, running from February-May 2012. The embassy encourages groups, clubs, and university programs to continue the celebrations of both of these personalities.*

Miloš Forman

Award-winning director Miloš Forman's (born in 1932) is well-known in the US. He has been recognized as a major talent of the *Czech New Wave* with films exploring social and moral issues, including *Loves of a Blonde* (1965) and *Firemen's Ball* (1967) both nominated for the *Best Foreign Film Oscar Prize*. The latter film was attacked in the communist Russian press at the time and banned after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Forman later came to the United States and made several successful films, notably *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), which won five Academy Awards, including best picture, best director, best actor (Jack Nicholson), best actress (Louise Fletcher), and best adapted screenplay. Forman went on to win a second Oscar for directing the film *Amadeus* (1984). Some of his better known films include *Hair* (1979), *Ragtime* (1981), *Man on the Moon* (1999), and *The People vs. Larry Flynt* (1996). In his films, Forman explores the theme of the individual versus society. His films address questions of personal freedom, social conformity, and the oppression of the individual. He is among only a handful of filmmakers whose work has a constant artistic integrity with broad public appeal.

The celebration is an annual initiative spearheaded by the Embassy of the Czech Republic, under the patronage of Deputy Prime Minister and Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, focusing on the mutual inspirations between Czech and American cultures.

Václav Havel

Václav Havel has been in the past several decades the most famous Czech intellectual and politician in the world. For his work Havel received many recognitions, including the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Gandhi Peace Prize, the Philadelphia Liberty Medal, the Order of Canada, the freedom medal of the Four Freedoms Award, and the Ambassador of Conscience Award.

Václav Havel (1936 – 2011) has written more than 20 plays and nu-

merous non-fiction works, translated internationally. They deal with the ethical and philosophical legacy of communism, goulash socialism, and consumerism in the eastern as well as western world. They explore in depth the mechanism of totalitarian power. The most recent philosophical essays reflect upon issues of power and power corruption, using his experience of a president of the Czech Republic and international celebrity among others. Some of his famous plays dealing with the Communist power and resulting moral and ethical corruption of people living in the Communist system, are *The Garden Party and Audience*. Consumerism and goulash socialism is the theme explored in other works, notably the play *Unveiling*.

As a political personality, Havel was the founding signatory of the *Charter 77 manifesto*, a founding signatory of the *Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism*, and a council member of the *Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation*, among others.

University of Kansas at Lawrence News

Dr. Roman Sukač (Silesian University, Opava) will be a guest of Marc L. Greenberg (University of Kansas) in August-September 2012 to work on a project on Czech historical phonology. During his stay, Dr. Sukač will give two public talks: »*Everyday life in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968*« and »*The Sudety/Sudentenland Experience: the Palimpsest Memory of Silesia*«.

University of Nebraska News

Dr. Martin Starý from Charles University accepted the teaching position of Czech language and literature for the academic year 2012 - 2013. He will also head the celebration of Václav Havel and Miloš Forman works at the university.



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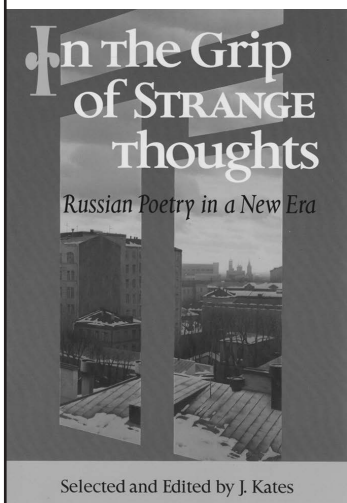


Selected Poems of Anna Akhmatova

Judith Hemschemeyer has done a heroic job. These are cleanly executed versions from which the strong, pure feeling of Akhmatova transpires.
 —Richard Wilbur

In 1990, Zephyr's *Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*, translated by Judith Hemschemeyer and edited by Roberta Reeder, was named one of the Best Books of the Year by *The New York Times* and hailed by Harrison Salisbury as "a magnificent achievement whose like as an event in poetic scholarship is not likely to be equalled in our day." These translations have remained both an academic and a popular favorite ever since. In 2000, Zephyr then brought out a bilingual *Selected Poems*, especially tailored for classroom use, incorporating the original biographical essay by Reeder and Hemschemeyer's introduction and notes.

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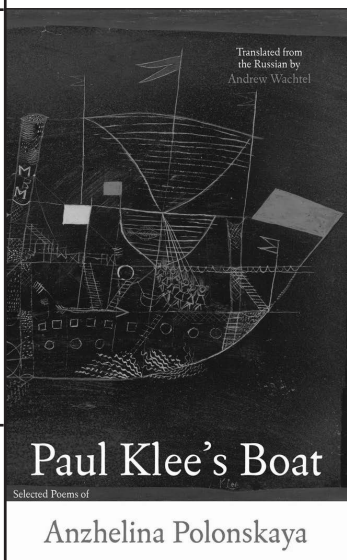
In the Grip of Strange Thoughts: Russian Poetry in a New Era

Edited by J. Kates; Foreword by Mikhail Aizenberg

Kates's commentary on various approaches to translating Russian poetry will be especially illuminating to the anglophone readers for whom the volume is intended. With its range of reverberating voices, the present title will be welcomed by Russian- and English-speaking readers of contemporary poetry. —N. Tittler, *Choice*

In the Grip of Strange Thoughts is a Russian and English bilingual edition of thirty-two contemporary poets writing amidst the upheaval of the Russian 1990s. The collection conveys a sense of the profound freedom and energy of a unique moment in Russian history, as well as the diversity of experience in the years before and since.

444 pages / Paper (978-0-939010-56-1) \$19.95



Paul Klee's Boat

Anzhelina Polonskaya

Translated from Russian by Andrew Wachtel

Unlike many of her contemporaries, Polonskaya did not receive a classic Russian literary education, so her work is considerably more idiosyncratic and less anchored in tradition. This book, her first collection in English translation since 2005, includes her cycle "Kursk," an oratorio requiem with music by David Chisolm that will be performed across Australia and the United States.

Anzhelina Polonskaya was born in Malakhovka, a small town near Moscow. Between 1995 and 1997 she lived in Latin America, working as a professional ice dancer. Her first book of verse *Svetoch Moi Nebesny (My Heavenly Torch)* appeared in 1993. Eventually deciding to leave ice skating, and to devote herself full-time to literature, Polonskaya consistently has been one of the freshest voices writing on both the Russian and world stage.

152 pages / Paper (978-0-9832970-7-9) \$15.00

Russian at Work: Interviews with Professionals Who Use Russian on the Job

*Editor: Katya Jordan,
University of Virginia*

Dr. Laura Wilhelm is a multitasker par excellence. Following her graduation from the University of Kansas in 1994 with a Ph.D. in Slavic Languages and Literatures, she became a founder of LauraWil Intercultural, “a full-spectrum business development company that breaks barriers to success for speakers of English and Russian.” She is a CEO at VR Media in the Greater Los Angeles Area, a columnist for WeHoNews.COM, a member of the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, and an advisor to the Professional Business Network. The list continues. When I asked Dr. Wilhelm to give me an interview, I admit, I did not know what to expect; however, Dr. Wilhelm not only kindly agreed to answer my questions, but did it in such detail and with such dedication, that I would be remiss if I did not share the full interview with the readers. I hope you enjoy reading about Dr. Wilhelm’s experience with Russian at work and her insights in the areas of both business and education as much as I did.

Part I.

At what age and under what circumstances did you become interested in Russian culture and language?

At a relatively early age. I was one of the top students in my French class at Torrey Pines High School in Del Mar, CA and thought about majoring in this language since I also loved French literature. However, Russia was more on my radar as America’s Cold War superpower rival that my father’s generation of scientists had battled during the Space Race. I was fascinated by Nixon’s overtures to Russia and China and his adventures behind the Iron Curtain. I started reading Russian classics found around the house such

as *Anna Karenina* and *The Gulag Archipelago* and wondered often about the country that had produced such disparate masterpieces.

I began learning Russian at Reed College, which is not the easiest time of life to start. I persisted anyway and graduated from Reed Phi Beta Kappa with a major in Russian and minor in Classics in 1988. One of my Russian professors and his wife, who had both received their Ph.D.’s at Stanford, came to my wedding that same summer. This professor dedicated one of his translations to me with the deathless Russian proverb **Жизнь прожить -- не поле перейти.** Truer words were never spoken in any language.

How would you describe your present job?

Just making it up as I go along. In May 2009 the Chair of the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce invited me to assist them with business development projects of interest to the Russian community. For eight years I worked with Russians at the City of West Hollywood before going out on my own as a consultant and ESL instructor. The WHCC’s invitation was a good excuse to consolidate my many different projects under the company umbrella LauraWil Intercultural. One of the Chamber’s Board members who had known me at the City swooped down and practically forced me to have a free consultation in his law office, so you can bet I am doing things by the book business-wise.

One of my company’s development projects involving a nearby K-12 Russian school attracted the notice of a well-known 22-year-old Middle Eastern eco-friendly fashion designer with an abiding interest in Russia and family in the area. He had a close friend who

worked for the magazine *Hollywood Weekly* where I started to advertise my company through a series of articles on globalization and American culture. The HW publisher later tapped me to collaborate on a new TV series with his staff. These associations led me in the direction of youth talent development.

A venture that spun off this phase was some PR work for the non-profit organization Designers 4 Africa that is associated with A-list Hollywood celebrities such as Cameron Diaz, George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, and billionaire supermodel Gisele Bundchen. As the newest member of D4A’s Board of Directors, I expect to help create some charity fundraisers that will alleviate poverty in Africa and other parts of the developing world.

D4A now works in concert with other relief agencies such as We Care for the World. The founder of WCW has recently interviewed me on Global TV, given me a permanent column to write for her online publication Cold Heat News, and invited me to compose pieces for her print magazine. She also appointed me Russian Ambassador for the next Global Independence Day awards ceremony on September 9th featuring participation from over 200 countries.

GID will be preceded by a three-day international business expo in Anaheim that former US President Bill Clinton will hopefully attend. This summer I will also help to plan and promote a gala charity ball in Glendale honoring the 200th anniversary of Napoleon’s defeat in Russia and the founding of Fort Ross.

A couple of years ago some fellow culture vultures in Rochester, MN observed postings from my company projects on Facebook and suggested that we join forces. Approximately a year later they relocated to Washington, DC and offered me the CEO position for their

new youth oriented online company VR Media. We will offer online programming of all sorts in connection with two radio stations on the East Coast and be able to promote and sell related products on the site. Therefore I am now running a bicoastal and bilingual media operation that is rapidly going global based upon nothing more than a Facebook page, a little buzz, and a lot of elbow grease. America--what a country!!!

How does your knowledge of Russian help you in your work?

Russian can indeed be unpredictable. Astoundingly, I discovered a review for one of my Israeli associate's fashion shows in LA that had been posted on a Russian Internet site in Omsk. I contacted the author and she graciously agreed to an interview with this native speaker of Hebrew that ended up being conducted over the phone late at night in Russian and English. It always pays to be flexible.

At the City of West Hollywood Russian translators were in very short supply, so Russian skills tended to equal a lot of extra work. This built my proficiency but not my paycheck. I have done interpretation at big public meetings and for a few years I served as bilingual Recording Secretary for the WH Russian Advisory Board. I still work with this group in different ways. I have struck fear into the hearts of Russian ESL students by being the only American instructor who could understand EVERYTHING.

Nowadays my use of Russian depends upon the client and the project. I am collaborating with a young woman from the former Soviet republic of Abkhazia who published a book called *RunGLISH* based upon the language devised by Russian and American cosmonauts at the International Space Station around the turn of this century. We did one book signing event at a Russian spa in West Hollywood; another during a White Nights Russian cultural festival at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana; and a third at the Orange Tea Room. My Russian was particularly helpful in managing these delightful projects.

The author of *RunGLISH* is close friends with many Russian celebrities, including tenor Nikolai Baskov and Oksana Fedorova, Russia's only Miss Universe to date. Perhaps inspired by this she represented Abkhazia at the 2011 Mrs. World competition in Orlando, FL and came in a respectable 15th place. The American contestant, April Lufriu, came in first. I immediately contacted her since she entered the pageant to bring attention to a medical foundation in Maryland that supports research for a genetic blinding condition that affects her and several of her family members. I figured that my connections in science and the Hollywood celebrity scene would benefit the cause.

Mrs. World and I have developed an absolutely fantastic working friendship since our interests are now moving in similar directions. She and my husband have jokingly started to call me Dr. World. April never stops marveling over my outside the box media abilities and has become more interested in world culture since she went global with the Mrs. World competition.

In March 2012 she went on a week-long cultural tour of China that ended with a charity benefit featuring a fashion show and singing performance hosted by her and several Asian Mrs. World contestants. We wrote about all of this in several articles for Hollywood Weekly. April considers her trip to China to be one of the most memorable and moving experiences of her life. We both hope she can visit Los Angeles later this year.

These associations have led to other fashion- and beauty-related projects both locally and globally that will sometimes require my Russian skills. I have been asked to contact consulates and embassies in LA to recruit participants for several ethnic beauty pageants. Recently my two media companies were invited to help promote an international modeling agency that maintains a luxury resort in Maldives (aka «Paradise on Earth.») Talk about living the dream.

Astoundingly, I discovered a review written in Russian for one of the Middle Eastern designer's runway shows on an online fashion site based in Omsk. I contacted the author and she graciously

agreed to an interview. She and I both spoke Russian and English and the designer spoke English and Hebrew. Therefore, over the telephone I translated the Russian questions into English for the designer and wrote down his responses in English for the interviewer in Omsk to translate into Russian. I remember that this designer particularly liked the Russian interview questions. Later I quoted from the first interview in a parodic promotional video using three Barbies in British, Russian, and Italian dress to gush about the designer's global appeal.

My deep knowledge of Russian language and culture has made a strong impression upon some Russian designers in the UK and a renowned Russian emigré ballet dancer from an equally famous family who knows my idol Mikhail Baryshnikov. He calls and writes every so often both in Russian and English and has introduced me to American superstar talents. As you can see, associates in the public eye have a way of multiplying opportunities in all sorts of unexpected ways.

Although my professional interests have expanded, I still try to make Russian part of my everyday life. I still read Russian books and study the language whenever possible. I like to cook Russian dishes and patronize Russian restaurants and stores, of which there are many in Los Angeles. RUSANGELES keeps me informed about fun Russian events in the area.

What is the most interesting/challenging/rewarding part of your job?

Thus far in this job I have met everyone from Hollywood couturiers to Broadway entertainers to consuls, political candidates, and crowned heads of state. The young Middle Eastern man of fashion I mentioned came along less than a month after my LA company had opened its doors. I will never forget our first face to face meeting. He pulled up to the curb in a slick little BMW convertible dressed to the teeth for a long day of appointments in Bel Air and Beverly Hills. He leaped out of the BMW, whipped off his chic designer shades,

checked his vintage gold watch, and announced, "I am here to HELP you!!!" in the world's most adorable accent. Truly a cinematic moment. Last Halloween he could be spotted scampering gaily about in West Hollywood during Carnival with his shirt unbuttoned and a fabulous five-inch stiletto pump of his own design affixed to his head.

Lately I am having a run on musicians. The lead singer of a Russian pop group who also models may have my company sponsor her INS application. She just invited me to "hang out." A celebrated Russian performer who may have me assist her with a multicultural tribute to 9/11 told me that she would rather have her American flag than an Oscar. Even emigrés of this caliber have often escaped blacklists, holocausts, natural disasters, wars, and other crises. They are truly grateful for the chance to make a new start and believe completely in the promise of the American Dream.

I find this especially rewarding as my own father came from a tiny

Midwestern town and went to an Ivy League college on scholarships. He is now ranked as a world class neuroscientist. As a Distinguished Professor, his award-winning graduate teaching program has been emulated by the schools that produced him and many more as well as other departments at the university where he has worked for nearly 40 years. I know from his example and my own just how far talent can take truly dedicated people in America if they are willing to work hard and don't stop believing in themselves.

My father and many other members of my family may get involved in some of my company projects. I am also back in touch with my former senior thesis adviser from Reed College, Dr. Judson Rosengrant, who will soon publish the definitive annotated edition of Tolstoy's autobiography through Penguin Classics. VR Media hopes to carry this and many other Penguin titles. Naturally it is very satisfying to be able to work with my nearest and dearest this way.

I have gotten used to passing business cards over my head to models who are twice my height and half my age. Sometimes we promote to the schools and I have to think of tactful ways to get them to keep their clothes on in pictures. Disarmament talks are not the only place to use diplomacy, I have found.

Fashion's Night Out is an incredible global economic stimulus initiative sponsored by Vogue Magazine that my LA company has helped to promote through the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. I also work with some of the chief photographers for Project Ethos, which sponsors art, fashion, and music events for emerging talents. As a result I am paying more attention to makeup than I used to in academia and government. My Yves Rocher transparent gel eye shadow with the gold glitter is testing well with the youth market.

To be continued.

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