



# Newsletter of the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Fall 2010  
Volume 27, Number 2

In this issue:

Notes from the Director .....	1
Julia McAnallen	
<i>Medieval Trash to Modern Treasure:</i>	
<i>1,000 Birchbark Letters and Counting ..</i>	3
Campus Visitors .....	6
Mikayel Zolyan	
<i>Armenia's Facebook Generation:</i>	
<i>Social Networks and Civic Activism in</i>	
<i>Armenia .....</i>	7
Giving to the Institute.....	14
Associates of the Slavic Center.....	15
FLAS and BPS fellowships	
recipients .....	16
Faculty and Student News.....	17
Kujachich Endowment Awards .....	18
Hertelendy Endowment Awards .....	18
CRRC Fall 2010 Program.....	18
Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock	
<i>"Prayers on the lips of the humble":</i>	
<i>History and the Search for Morality in</i>	
<i>Modernity: Marc Bloch's "The Historian's</i>	
<i>Craft"; Michel de Certeau's "The Writing of</i>	
<i>History" .....</i>	19
Funding Opportunities .....	28

### **Newsletter of the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies**

University of California, Berkeley  
Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

260 Stephens Hall # 2304  
Berkeley, CA 94720-2304  
iseees@berkeley.edu  
http://iseees.berkeley.edu

Editors: Andrei Dubinsky and Jeff Pennington.

Subscriptions are free of charge.  
Submit mailing changes, suggestions, corrections, or inquiries to the above address or call (510) 642-3230.

The ISEEEES Newsletter is published twice a year, in the Spring and Fall semesters.

## Notes from the Director

Welcome to the fall 2010 edition of the ISEEEES Newsletter!

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century a Time of Troubles was nearing an end for the Russian people as order returned following years of budget cuts and rulers of dubious legitimacy. On a much less drastic scale our Institute can also look forward to improved fortunes. The worst of the university's fiscal challenges appear to be past, and we await the return of our Director Yuri Slezkine in January from leave at Stanford's Hoover Institution. In contrast to Russia's, our interregnum has seen only one "usurper" (and no false Dmitris), namely yours truly.

If I don't deserve an opera written in my honor, that is due to the efforts of a staff that is excellent in good times and bad. In this past year ISEEEES successfully competed for a four-year U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships grant, and kudos go to ISEEEES executive director Jeff Pennington and ISEEEES program representatives Andrei Dubinsky and Libby Coyne for their hard work in putting together a successful proposal.

In 1958, the launching of Sputnik led to the federal government's most significant participation in modern foreign language and area studies research and training in history—the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The following year the U.S. federal Office of Education began administering the National Resource Centers Program under Title VI of the NDEA, and today the U.S. Department of Education continues to administer the program under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. UC Berkeley has been a participant in Title VI programs and our Institute a National Resource Center since that time.

As a National Resource Center, ISEEEES promotes programmatic activities focusing on our region, including language and area studies instruction, scholarly research, funding for library resources, public outreach, and teacher training. One new Title VI initiative will focus on outreach to community college faculty and students in central and northern California.

FLAS fellowships assist in the development of knowledge, resources, and trained personnel for modern foreign language and area and international studies; foster foreign language acquisition and fluency; and develop a domestic pool of international experts to meet national needs. ISEEEES works collaboratively with the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures to offer FLAS fellowships to graduate and undergraduate students studying the following languages at UC Berkeley: Armenian, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, and Russian. Thanks to new legislation, starting in 2010 FLAS fellowships will be available to undergraduates as well, indicating Congress's support for foreign language education at all levels of higher education.

As our own George Breslauer, UC Berkeley's Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost and ISEES-affiliated faculty member, stated in an interview for the 50th anniversary of the Title VI program: "Title VI has been indispensable not only for our area research centers but for thousands of students and young scholars," adding that "without Title VI, we would not be able to offer some of the innovative programs that prepare Berkeley students to be globally aware citizens."

ISEES hosts an outstanding group of scholars during the current academic year. Ms. Elira Karaja is a Ph.D. candidate in economics at the Institute for Advanced Studies IMT in Lucca, Italy. Her research is in transition economics of southeastern Europe, and she is working with Professor Gérard Roland. Ms. Bogusława Lewandowska is a lecturer in philosophy at the Institute of Fundamental Technological Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences and works on Dostoevsky's question of anthropology and conception of freedom within its existential context. Ms. Anna Mkhoyan is a student at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. She is working with Professor Stephan Astourian on a research project entitled: "Russian Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus (1991-2008)/ Case Study: Armenia." Professor Jeong Park joins us from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea, where he teaches Romanian language and literature. He is spending two sabbatical years at UC Berkeley, conducting research on contemporary Romanian culture and literature, especially within the field of world comparative literature. Ms. Valida Repovac-Pašić, a Fulbright scholar from the Department of Political Science at the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is currently doing research for a dissertation entitled: "The Idea of Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary Sociological Theories of Nation." Valida's faculty mentor is Vicki Bonnell.

I'm pleased to report that our faculty/graduate student seminar series *Turning the World Upside Down: Reassessing the Causes and Consequences of Radical Transformations in Eurasia and Eastern Europe* continues to be very successful, and our Carnegie-supported Field Development Project will bring four scholars from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to Berkeley for a two-week working visit this November.

In addition, I would like to draw your attention to upcoming public events. On Saturday, November 13, the Armenian Studies Program will organize a symposium on "The

Armenian Diaspora and Its Relations with the Armenian State." The symposium will run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in 370 Dwinelle Hall on the UC Berkeley campus. The following Monday, November 15, at 12 noon in 270 Stephens Hall, Dr. Aida Boudjikianian will give a brownbag lecture entitled: "Significant Characteristics of the Lebanese Armenian Diaspora in the 20th Century." Later that week, on Thursday, November 18, Stephen Cohen, Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University, and Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor of *The Nation*, will give a book talk on their new book *The Victims Return: Survivors of the Gulag after Stalin* (PublishingWorks, 2010). This event will take place at 7 p.m. at Books, Inc., 1760 Fourth Street in Berkeley.

For those of you attending this year's ASEES (formerly AAASS; you wonder where they got the idea for their new name!) convention in Los Angeles, there will be a joint Berkeley-Stanford-UCLA reception Friday evening, November 19, at 8 p.m. in the Emerald Bay Ballroom of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel. Please feel free to drop by and catch up with friends and colleagues.

It's never too early to save the date for spring events. The 2011 Berkeley-Stanford Conference will be held on Friday, March 4, in the Alumni House on the UC Berkeley campus. The topic of the 2011 conference will be "Varieties of Post-Socialism." The ISEES Annual Teacher Outreach Conference will be held on Saturday, April 30, 2011, also in the Alumni House, and the topic will focus on the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the twenty years which have followed.

Be sure to check our website <http://iseees.berkeley.edu> for additional happenings and updates to the calendar. Our public events are also listed in our *Monthly Updates*, which are mailed to campus addresses and to the Associates of the Slavic Center (see pp. 14-15 about ASC membership, or visit our website at <http://iseees.berkeley.edu/give>). Although ISEES has maintained its excellent record in obtaining extramural funds from foundations and granting agencies, the continuing support we have received from our Associates of the Slavic Center has been critical to our success, and we are very grateful to its members. Our ASC members are vital to our operation, and I would like to thank you for your continuing assistance. I hope to continue seeing you at our events.

John Connelly  
ISEES Acting Director  
Associate Professor of History

---

### **Berkeley/Stanford/UCLA Reception at the 2010 ASEES Convention in Los Angeles**



ISEES invites UC Berkeley faculty, students, alumni, and ASC members to the Berkeley/Stanford/UCLA Reception at the 2010 ASEES (formerly AAASS) Convention in Los Angeles. If you plan to attend the convention or are in the Los Angeles area, join us on Friday, November 19, 2010, at 8 p.m. in the Westin Bonaventure Hotel (404 South Figueroa Street), Emerald Bay Ballroom, Los Angeles, CA.

# Medieval Trash to Modern Treasure: 1,000 Birchbark Letters and Counting

*Julia McAnallen*

*Julia McAnallen is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, UC Berkeley.*

This year's *Prazdnik beresty* or 'Birchbark Day' on July 26<sup>th</sup> was a day for celebration indeed. While the holiday commemorated the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unearthing of the first birchbark letter in 1951, the spotlight was on this summer's discovery of the 1,000<sup>th</sup> letter. Found on July 21<sup>st</sup>, the 1,000<sup>th</sup> *berestianaya gramota* or 'birchbark letter' was one of a total of forty-two letters excavated this summer in Velikiy Novgorod. The significance of this year's findings was not lost on Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who flew in on July 26<sup>th</sup> to visit the Novgorod Kremlin and the Troitsky archaeological site and to speak with leaders of various northern Russian archaeological expeditions.



*Yaroslav Court in Velikiy Novgorod, photo by Дар Bemep, Wikimedia Commons.*

But what exactly is a birchbark letter? Well, more or less what its designation suggests: a letter or document written on a strip of bark from a birch tree (which are more than abundant in this area of Russia). Medieval residents of Novgorod – Old Novgorodians – used birchbark as their papyrus from the 11<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The discovery of birchbark letters marks a turning point in the understanding of early Russian dialectal diversity and has proved indispensable in shedding light on the vernacular language of early residents of Novgorod and surrounds. But these birchbark documents are also of interest to historians, archaeologists, and others studying early Russian and northeastern European economic, legal, social, and cultural practices. Their contents are described in The Novgorod Museum of History and Culture as follows:

Берестяные грамоты – это письма новгородцев, написанные боярами и холопами, ремесленниками и крестьянами, взрослыми и детьми, мужчинами и женщинами. Содержание берестянных грамот бесконечно разнообразно: частные письма, долговые расписки, челобитные, любовные послания, духовные завещания, феодальные обязательства, ученические упражнения, и т.д. Написанные чаще всего по частным делам, грамоты вводят нас в мельчайшие детали древнего быта и человеческих взаимоотношений, дают новые сведения о ремесленном торговле, о классовой борьбе, о военных событиях, об организации суда и государственных органов.

'Old Novgorodians used birchbark letters as their written communication. The letters were written by boyars and serfs, artisans and peasants, adults and children, men and women. The wide-ranging content of the letters includes private correspondence, bills of debt, petitions, love letters, last will and testaments, feudal obligations, schoolchildren's writing drills, etc. The letters, most frequently written about private matters, take us into the finest details of medieval daily life and human interactions, providing new knowledge about the trading of goods, class struggle, military activities, the legal system, and state organizations.'

Old Novgorodians composed the letters by etching Cyrillic characters onto the inside – brown, not white side – of the birchbark with a stylus. The practice was to write without space between words, a custom imported from formal written registers. Two-sided letters are also attested, either when a recipient responded to the initial letter by writing on the opposite side of the strip of bark, or when he or she simply recycled the bark and wrote an unrelated message on the opposite side. In still other cases, a single message spills onto the reverse side of the strip of bark. In this summer's batch of letters, a handful of two-sided letters were found, some with messages from separate people and one with a single message on two sides of the birchbark. A database with the texts of all but the most recently excavated letters accompanied by their photos and Modern Russian translations can be found on the website <http://gramoty.ru> (developed by scholars at the Institute of Slavistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences).



*A birchbark letter found in Staraya Russa (100 kilometers south of Novgorod) on July 21st. Photo by Julia McAnallen.*

In my first year of graduate school I was introduced to birchbark letters and since then have relied on them as an unparalleled example of early Russian vernacular language. So naturally I jumped at the opportunity to visit Novgorod for two weeks this summer to witness the archaeological and linguistic activities surrounding birchbark letter excavations firsthand. While in Novgorod I had the opportunity to meet the team of scholars working with the birchbark letters, participate in the archaeological dig, and observe the process of decoding letters. And by chance I was in town for the Birchbark Day celebration on July 26<sup>th</sup> (attended by well-known archaeologists Valentin Yanin and Elena Rybina; linguists Andrei Zalizniak and Alexei Gippius; but *not* Prime Minister Putin!) and for the discovery of almost ten letters.

### *Digging for Buried Linguistic Treasure*

Working at the excavation site is tedious and particularly difficult in what has been a summer of record-breaking heat waves in Russia. The excavations run from 7 AM to 1 PM to avoid working during the hottest part of the day: the afternoon. After the volunteers separate items of interest from the dirt (and sometimes mud), they dump the dirt in a separate area of the excavation site designated for waste. Then a metal detector is run over the excavated dirt in search of small metal objects such as buttons that slipped past the excavators' notice.

The excavation team – consisting primarily of university students studying archaeology but also including some junior high school students and guests like me – dig methodically across carefully measured plots using shovels and their hands to retrieve anything of cultural interest, i.e. anything man-made. Aside from the prized birchbark letters, other important cultural artifacts found in the excavation include wooden implements, pottery shards, kettle handles, necklaces and bracelets, coins, buttons, and objects made out of leather, such as the leather shoe that my excavation partner and I uncovered.



*The excavation site on Troitsky street. This large lower level is the older layer, corresponding to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by J.M.*

How have all of these artifacts made out of biodegradable materials such as birchbark, wood, leather, etc. remained intact for 800 years? The conditions in Novgorod are particularly felicitous for the preservation of biodegradable materials and metals. The soil in Novgorod is moist and clayey and prevents the penetration of oxygen; these conditions are favorable for preserving organic materials. Thus, biodegradable materials are preserved unusually well and, furthermore, metal is largely spared from rust.

Birchbark was not only used for writing letters in Medieval Novgorod but also for kindling and in building structures; therefore, excavators must weed through a lot of bark with no writing before uncovering the sought after letters. Each strip of birchbark must be handled and examined carefully, since every fragment has the potential of providing new insights into medieval language and culture. Bins of excavated birchbark not used for correspondence are ubiquitous at the excavation site.



*Bins of birchbark at the excavation site. Most of the birchbark excavated had not been used for writing letters by Old Novgorodian residents. Photo by J.M.*

The current excavation site in Novgorod is on Troitsky street, just south of the Novgorod Kremlin. The excavations are currently being conducted at two cultural layers corresponding to two different time periods: the lower layer corresponding to the earliest settlements in Novgorod in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the higher layer to the latter half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Modern-day Novgorod is on average between six and nine meters higher than the original settlement, a result of a continual increase in the ground level over the course of more than 1,000 years of human settlement. All of the birchbark letters found this summer are from the higher cultural layer dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

How do the archaeologists determine these dates? The main method of dating applies dendrochronology to logs from buildings and wooden roadways within a given cultural layer. Dendrochronology is a method of dating using annual growth rings on trees, and narrows in on a relatively specific date for the samples of logs. The excavated birchbark letters and other artifacts are assigned a date according to the dates of the logs they are closest to in

the excavation site. The dating of the letters typically has a degree of error between 10 and 60 years.

Last summer (in 2009) excavations were only conducted at the oldest or deepest cultural layer from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, which predates written correspondence with birchbark, and no birchbark letters were excavated: yet another reason why this summer's abundance of birchbark letters was truly a cause for celebration.

### **Decoding Medieval Messages**

For the Old Novgorodians, birchbark letters were not the precious documents they are for us modern-day scholars. After receiving a note the recipient would often rip it in half or into pieces and throw it away, as we might do with a grocery store receipt or a post-it note from our roommate reminding us to buy milk. Thus, many of the excavated letters are found in fragments and careful, often painstaking examination of every mark, scratch, space, and bump on the letters is required to match up corresponding fragments and decode a patchy and often faded message.

During this summer's excavation, what was initially thought to be the 1004<sup>th</sup> letter was in fact the bottom half of letter #999. The team of linguists and historians recognized this by matching not only the shapes of the birchbark fragments to one another but also by matching the handwriting and content of letters. The task is not as easy as it might sound, since over the course of time physical aspects of the letters often change so that one birchbark fragment may have stretched out or shrunk, but not the other. Such was the case with the two halves of #999. As the linguistics team worked with computer images of the strips of birchbark to match up a line of text that was split between the two fragments, I could feel the "aha" moment in my own head occur as I saw the top and bottom half of characters come together to form a recognizable word.

Even when the letters are intact and more or less clearly written, decoding them requires a certain balance of patience, creativity, intuition, and, perhaps most importantly, knowledge of the Old Novgorodian language. Several of the scholars have spent many years working with the letters and are intimately familiar with quirks of the orthography, grammar, and style of the early Russian dialect in this unusual written genre.

As a first step in decoding the letters, it is useful to recognize particular formulas or patterns frequently used for designating the sender and addressee of the message. A standard formula opens the letter with a cross, followed by a specification of the sender's, then recipient's name. For example:

+ От лоукѣ ко отъцеви...

'+ От лука к отцу...'

'+ From Luke to father...'

Familiarity with naming conventions in Old Novgorodian society is also an asset for decoding letters. Personal names can be split into pre- and post-Christian categories; pre-Christian names (or nicknames; often it cannot be determined whether the name is a given name or nickname) were quite different than Modern Russian names, and often sound odd and/or amusing to the modern speaker, e.g. *Заяць* (*Zayatsъ*) 'hare', *Козьль* (*Kozьль*) 'Goat', *Жадко* (*Zhadko*) 'Greedy One', *Незнанко* (*Neznanko*) 'Unknown One'.

The informal nature of these personal names is echoed in the casual style of the letters more generally. This casual style of writing can come across as humorous to those familiar with formal registers of Early Russian and Slavic writing (both religious and secular) such as Old Church Slavonic Bible translations and Old Russian Chronicles. For example: in a letter discovered this summer, the addressee writes a postscript with information about the letter's courier: а то Гоимере иже то Чърнигове, и со женою не помню имя, in Russian: 'а это Гоимер, ну тот, что в Чернигове, с женой - не помню имя', and English: 'and this is Goimer – the one from Chernigov – and his wife, I can't remember her name'. Not only is it startling to read such candidness in a Medieval Russian document, but it is also unexpected to find written text modeled after another era's conversational spoken language.

This summer's batch of letters has been characterized by an unusually high number of examples of a grammatical category called the dual. Earlier periods of Russian had a separate dual number, in addition to the singular and plural, used for referencing two people or things (not one, not three, but precisely two!). Relics of the dual survive in a handful of Modern Russian plural forms, especially in frequently paired items, e.g. singular *ухо* (*ukho*) 'ear' and plural – formerly dual – *уши* (*ushi*) 'ears'. The 1,000<sup>th</sup> birchbark letter was one of the letters with a dual form, which was embedded in a previously unattested greeting structure: two senders and two addressees.

### **Bringing a Medieval City Back to Life**

This year's excavations cover an area with a handful of homesteads from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, most of the birchbark letters excavated from these areas are linked to the same set of Old Novgorodians who lived in these homesteads. Two recurring personages in this summer's batch of letters are Luke and Yakim. Their trading and economic practices were the first insights revealed by the



*Birchbark letter #999 -- 2 fragments. Photo by J.M.*

letters. For example, in letter #1004 from this summer Luke refers to ‘kettles’ of grain. Until the discovery of this letter, it was not known that grain was measured in such a way, i.e. using kettles as units of measurement.

But the letters also reveal broader aspects of these Old Novgorodians’ lives beyond their economic behavior. For instance, it is clear that Yakim was a religious man familiar with Slavonic writing, since he often wrote in an abbreviated style that parallels usage in Slavonic texts. What made this particularly evident was his habit of omitting vowels, especially in personal names, a trait lacking in letters written by many other Old Novgorodians. As for Luke, his repertoire of letters attests to his proficiency in different written registers: he uses a less formal genitive declension of his name – *от локк* (*ot loukie*) ‘from Luke’ – in letters to his father, whereas he uses a declension associated with a higher style – *от локкы* (*ot louky*) ‘from Luke’ – in more formal correspondences.

Residents’ individual orthographies can also be telling, since in Old Novgorodian multiple characters were often used for writing one in the same sound. For example, the modern Russian letter *y* ‘u’ could be written in multiple ways, e.g. *y*, *oy*, *yo*, etc. Yakim used *yo*: an infrequent variant.

In the past, some of the personages from the birchbark letters make an appearance in other historical corners of Novgorod. Sections of the famous St. Sofia Cathedral in the Novgorod Kremlin are covered with graffiti of the type “Mstislav was here,” and characters in the graffiti are often the same as those from birchbark letters. This is determined

by identifying unique names and handwriting that match in the letters and graffiti.

Weaving together the lives of these Old Novgorodians is a project that takes time and requires cross-comparison with the already extant corpus of letters that have accumulated since 1951. The full impact of this summer’s birchbark letters has yet to be fully realized, but one thing is certain: their contribution to our understanding of early Novgorod and Russia will only increase with the passage of time. For more information on how – thanks to the growing corpus of letters – the lives, habits, and personalities of Old Novgorodians have been teased apart by modern scholars, refer to work by Alexei Gippius, Dan Collins, and Jos Schaeken (e.g. Gippius 2004).

### References

*Drevnerusskie berestianye gramoty* (website); url: <http://gramoty.ru>.

Gippius, Alexei A. 2004. “O neskol’kikh personazhakh novgorodskikh berestianykh gramot XII veka.” Pp. 164-182 in *Novgorodskie gramoty na bereste; (iz raskopok 1997–2000 godov); tom XI*, edited by Valentin L. Yanin, Andrey A. Zaliznjak, and Alexei A. Gippius. Moskva: Russkie slovari.

Yanin, Valentin L. 2001. “Novgorod and Medieval Archaeology.” Pp. 11-14 in *Novgorod: the Archaeology of a Russian Medieval City and its Hinterland*, edited by M. A. Brisbane and David Gaimste. London: The British Museum.

Zalizniak, Andrei A. 2004. *Drevnenovgorodskij dialekt*. Moskva: Yazyki russkoj kul’tury.

---

## Campus Visitors

**Elira Karaja** is a Ph.D. candidate in economics at the Institute for Advanced Studies IMT in Lucca, Italy. During her time at Berkeley, she will work on her dissertation, under the supervision of Professor Gerard Roland.

**Bogusława Lewandowska** is a short-term visiting scholar with ISEES during the fall semester. She is a Lecturer in Philosophy at the Post-Graduate School at the Institute of Fundamental Technological Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Head of Scientific Library at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Her research focuses on Dostoevski's question of anthropology and conception of freedom within its existential context.

**Matthias Meindl** is a graduate student in Philosophy at Humboldt Universitaet in Berlin. He focuses on the literary, artistic, and political culture of contemporary Russia, and his dissertation deals with Eduard Limonov. He will be a visiting student with the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures during the fall 2010 semester.

**Anna Mkhoyan** is a student at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. She is here this semester working with Professor Stephan Astourian on a research project entitled: *Russian Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus(1991-2008)/ Case Study: Armenia*.

**Professor Jeong Park** joins us from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea, where he teaches Romanian language and literature. He is spending two sabbatical years at UC Berkeley, conducting research on contemporary Romanian culture and literature.

**Valida Repovac-Pašić** is a Fulbright scholar from the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where she is currently a Ph.D. student in the Department of Political Science. She is currently doing research for her dissertation entitled: *The Idea of Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary Sociological Theories of Nation*. Valida is working with Vicki Bonnell as her faculty mentor.

# Armenia's Facebook Generation: Social Networks and Civic Activism in Armenia

## Mikayel Zolyan

*Mikayel Zolyan was a visiting scholar with ISEES during the spring 2010 semester. He is Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Sciences of the Valeri Brusov Yerevan State Linguistic University, Yerevan, Armenia.*

Wearing casual jeans and a T-shirt, riding her bike downtown, Mariam Sukhudyan looks like an average student. She does not eat meat, and she is an active participant of environmental movement—so active that she has even had a few problems with the police. This does not sound atypical for an American college student. What is special about Mariam Sukhudyan is that she lives in Yerevan, a capital of a post-Soviet country in the borderland of Eastern Europe, Central Eurasia, and the Middle East. This is a country where even female drivers are relatively rare, let alone young women riding bikes; where heavy meat consumption is so ingrained in people's lifestyle that a local dish of grilled meat called "khorovats" is almost considered an essential part of national identity. The very idea of a private citizen publicly challenging the authorities might seem quite unusual to many locals, who continue to view the state through the prism of Soviet-style paternalism. Certainly, Mariam sticks out against a background of a socially conservative and semi-authoritarian post-Soviet country. However, she is representative of a relatively small yet growing group of Armenian youths that has emerged in the context of the social transformations that are taking place in Armenia.

Many people first heard about Mariam Sukhudyan in the summer of 2009, in connection with a scandalous affair in a boarding school for children with special needs. Mariam and her friends from a group of environmental activists exposed an ugly case of mistreatment and sexual harassment of children. Instead of responding to the call, the police decided to persecute Mariam for "false accusation," a crime punishable in Armenia with several years of prison. Anyone who is familiar with post-Soviet realities knows that a confrontation with the police is extremely dangerous and almost impossible to win. However, in the stand-off that followed a small group of young people (mostly in their twenties), who actively used social networks and alternative media, succeeded in defeating one of the most influential and feared institutions in post-Soviet Armenia—the police.

This case was a part of what seems to be a social awakening of the Armenian public, which over the last few years has mobilized several times to protect its rights and interests, an awakening which is happening with the help of the new tools that the Internet provides for social activism. Several civic initiatives and campaigns, including the campaign against the destruction of "Moskva" cinema hall in Yerevan, a similar initiative against destruction of parks in Yerevan, and the campaign against altering of the law on language, used Internet tools such as social

networks and blogs and managed to attract the attention of Armenian society in 2009-2010. These initiatives have had different degrees of success, but together they have created a completely new atmosphere in Armenian civil society and have begun to transform the paternalistic nature of the relationship between government and society in the context of a post-Soviet political system.

In most cases, Armenia comes under the spotlight of the global community in contexts related either to its past or its foreign relations (and sometimes both). Certainly, the two main issues that are likely to attract attention are the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the issue of recognition of the Armenian Genocide, which is closely related to the current state of Armenian-Turkish relations. In comparison, civil society and Armenia's political and social transformations remain somewhat obscure to foreign governments, for whom Armenia is simply a card in the geopolitical "great game." Even Armenian diaspora communities around the world often seem more interested in Armenia's relations with its (mostly unfriendly) neighbors, than in the domestic development of democratic institutions and civil society.

To an extent this lack of interest is a result of certain disappointments. In the late 1980s Armenia became one of the first Soviet republics where the Soviet regime was openly challenged by massive, mostly peaceful protests that eventually led to the overthrow of the Communists and brought to power forces that advocated for democracy and independence. Many hoped that Armenia was headed in the direction of building a functioning democratic state. However, after the break-up of the USSR, Armenia was caught in a quagmire of conflict with its neighbors (Azerbaijan and Turkey) and faced serious challenges in terms of foreign policy, as well as in its democratic transition. Since the mid-1990s Armenia's internal political life took a disappointing turn: most major elections were marred by allegations of irregularities and fraud, which in turn led to mass protests and government crackdowns.<sup>1</sup> The latest case of disputed elections followed by protests and a government crackdown took place in 2008, leading to the deepest internal crisis in post-Soviet Armenia's history: the government crackdown on protesters on March 1, 2008, led to clashes which left ten people dead (including 8 protesters and 2 law enforcement officers).<sup>2</sup>

Though this pattern had repeated itself several times in the past, the aftermath of the events of 2008 was somewhat unique. In the wake of post-election protests and their suppression Armenia experienced a rise in civic

activism and public debate. There are several factors that can account for this; one such factor is changing Armenian demographics. A new generation has come of age – young people who have never experienced the Soviet Union as adults and grew up in an independent and formally democratic Armenia. Another factor is the new political situation in Armenia following the post-election protests of 2008. As a result of these protests, Armenia, unlike some other post-Soviet states, now has a relatively strong and well-organized opposition. The continuing stand-off between the pro-government forces and the opposition party, the Armenian National Congress, creates a climate in which the government is more likely to respond to criticisms and pressures from public opinion and civic society. The 2008 crisis was also different from previous cases of post-election protests in terms of the level of organized participation of youth: a pro-opposition youth movement “Hima” (“Now”) played an important role in the opposition’s activities.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, there are many socially active young citizens who are critical of both the government and the opposition, thus serving as a resource pool for non-political civic activism.

Finally, it can be argued that the development of Internet in Armenia and the advent of social networks created new opportunities for civic activism and public debate. For a long time Armenia had lagged far behind in comparison even with the low levels of Internet penetration of the post-Soviet region. However, in the last few years a breakthrough occurred, both in terms of Internet speed and availability.<sup>4</sup> Even though Armenia is still behind the global average, Armenian users today have access to the same services and tools that are used by Internet users across the world. That the spread of Internet has far-reaching social and political implications became obvious already during the 2008 post-election crisis, when debates between opposition and government supporters spread to blogs and social networks. Opposition supporters used blogs, social networks, and YouTube to spread their message and mobilize supporters, while government supporters were equally active on the web.<sup>5</sup>

This political system in Armenia, which also exists in some other post-Soviet states, is quite different from developed Western democracies, but it is also different from outright authoritarian regimes like those of Turkmenistan or Belarus. In this kind of a system, which is sometimes called “managed democracy,” individual citizens, NGOs, and media outlets are free to express opinions critical of governmental policies, in most cases without fear of retribution or persecution (such persecution or violence might happen, but that would be the exception rather than the rule). The real difficulty is communicating these critical views to a large audience. Radio and television stations are controlled by the government, which is often unwilling to grant space to critical voices, while print media has limited circulation. In this setting, tools like social networks and blogs provide exactly what independent

voices lack: an opportunity to spread their message to larger audiences and mobilize their supporters. In some openly authoritarian regimes the government might use social networks to identify and punish online dissenters. In the Armenian case, however, the rulers have so far preferred to tolerate this kind of dissent, rather than risk damaging their shaky democratic credentials by cracking down on online activists.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in some cases, when civic initiatives are not perceived as a direct political threat, the government engages in discussions and negotiations, and, as we shall see, sometimes even backs down on specific issues.

### **Who was the Real Criminal? Mariam Sukhudyan’s Case**

Mariam Sukhudyan’s case is a rare example of a definitive success of a relatively small group of young activists with scarce resources. Many people first heard about Mariam Sukhudyan in the summer of 2009, in connection with a scandalous affair in a boarding school for children with special needs in Nubarashen district of Yerevan. Mariam and her friends, who volunteered at the school as participants of a charity project sponsored by the UN Development Program, uncovered cases of violence and sexual abuse of the children. Most children pointed to one of the teachers – Levon Avagyan, a teacher of Armenian language and literature. Mariam and her friends retold these stories to a journalist working at the H1 public TV channel, who in turn included these stories in a documentary film shown on H1. The volunteers expected that after the issue of child abuse became public, measures would be taken either by the law enforcement authorities or the school administration. However, the police had a different view on the issue. Mariam was summoned to a police station, where she was interrogated for several hours – not as a witness but as a culprit. The police charged her with “false accusation,” a crime that, if proven, entails five years of imprisonment. The police claimed that she had made up the child abuse story in order to influence the position of the management on certain financial issues. Mariam and her lawyer and friends pointed to several inconsistencies in the police version of the events, claiming that the police had immediately charged Mariam with “false accusation,” while failing to conduct a thorough investigation of the charges against Levon Avagian in the first place.<sup>7</sup> Another reason why the police interpretation of the case seemed dubious to many was the fact that Mariam Sukhudyan was also an active member of an environmental group, which was involved in a confrontation with the government over several economic projects with a potentially harmful environmental impact; some activists suggested that the case was an attempt to pressure the activists into backing down from their claims.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the reasons behind their actions were, the police hardly anticipated the scale of the reaction that the persecution of Mariam Sukhudyan was going to cause.

As Mariam’s friends from the environmental movement started publicizing the issue using Facebook, a cause “Hands



off Mariam Sukhudyán” was created, and within hours hundreds of people joined it (it ended up having about 2700 members).<sup>9</sup> Protest actions were organized and publicized through Facebook, one on the day of Mariam’s interrogation in the local police station and another one several days later in front of the Ministry of Education.<sup>10</sup> A web-site, providing information in English about the case, was created.<sup>11</sup> Many bloggers expressed their support for Mariam; they included commentators of very different political and ideological orientations: from government supporters to opposition activists, from conservatives and nationalists to liberals and women rights supporters.<sup>12</sup>



*Mariam Sukhudyán (right) outside of the courtroom.  
Photo from Mariam Sukhudyán: activist page,  
[www.mariamsukhudyán.info/](http://www.mariamsukhudyán.info/).*

Soon Mariam Sukhudyán’s case started receiving wide media coverage. Internet news-sites and, shortly after, major newspapers reported on the issue. Numerous NGOs issued public statements expressing their support for Mariam Sukhudyán.<sup>13</sup> New revelations about the horrible conditions that existed in the Nubarashen school were published in press and on the Internet, attracting the attention of Armenian public.<sup>14</sup> While continuing the legal battle, Mariam and her friends also brought the wider public’s attention to the miserable conditions of children’s lives at the Nubarashen special boarding school and the ill-treatment of the students by other teachers. It became clear that while the sexual assaults were an exceptional and extreme case, they took place against a general background of neglect and ill-treatment.

The media attention to the issue spread beyond Armenia’s borders: Al-Jazeera network aired a report about the case.<sup>15</sup> The fact that Mariam’s case was publicized on a major international news network, watched throughout the world and especially in Europe and the Middle East, meant that the case reached a completely new level. While previously it could have been ignored by the authorities as a minor incident between police officers and several young people, now it was starting to threaten the international reputation of the country. In October 2009 the charge against Mariam was changed from “false accusation” to “libel,” which carried a lesser punishment. On March 11,

2010, all accusations against Mariam Sukhudyán were dropped. This happened a day after Mariam was honored at a special ceremony at the US embassy, where she received “the Women of Courage” award from the US ambassador.<sup>16</sup>

The police proceeded with the investigation in the Nubarashen school, and Levon Avagyan, the teacher who was implicated in the case, was arrested. He was tried in court, pleaded guilty, and was convicted and sentenced to two years in prison. The victims did not consider this sentence satisfying and turned to the appeals court, which added a year to the two-year sentence.<sup>17</sup> The Nubarashen school principal, who at first refused to acknowledge the crime and, according to the activists, stood behind the allegations against Mariam Sukhudyán, was fired.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, this prompted a protest action on behalf of his supporters, including some of the teachers at the school, who held a protest in front of the Ministry of Education, claiming the director’s dismissal was unfair, since he had not known about the criminal activities of the jailed teacher.<sup>19</sup>

In any case the achievements of the group supporting Mariam Sukhudyán are remarkable in the post-Soviet context. A group of young people, without any political affiliation or the backing of a political party or any other institution, was successful in defending its position and emerged victorious in a stand-off with a law-enforcement agency. While initially some voices in the pro-government media reproduced the police version of the events and accused the activists of defending the wrong person,<sup>20</sup> the outcome of the trial against Levon Avagyan dealt a serious blow to this kind of interpretations of civic activism. The case attracted the attention of foreign embassies and international organizations working in Armenia. The publicity garnered by the group defending Mariam also helped publicize their environmental activism, albeit with little effect in terms of forcing the government to abandon its potentially harmful projects.

### **Saving a Cinema Hall from Destruction: the “Moskva” Cinema Theater Controversy**

While in Mariam Sukhudyán’s case social networks simply helped publicize the actions of an already established group of activists, in another case, the case of the “Moskva” theater summer hall, social networks were central to all phases of the initiative. In this case, a diverse group of civic activists defended an architectural structure in central Yerevan against demolition, which was authorized by the government. What made the case especially delicate and difficult to handle was the fact that the position of the government was supported by one of the most authoritative and respected institutions in Armenian society—the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The roots of the controversy go back to early Soviet years, when the Bolsheviks demolished several churches in Yerevan, including the Poghos-Petros Church (in Western

Armenian pronunciation “Boghos-Bedros,” the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul). A cinema theater called “Moskva” (Moscow) was built there soon afterwards. The controversy, however, was not related to the cinema per se but to an open air hall which was built in the 1960s, decades after the main building of the cinema. The open air cinema hall was the only structure of this type built in Yerevan, and it was included in the list of architectural monuments protected by the government. In February 2010, the ministers’ cabinet issued a decision, removing the cinema hall from the list of government-protected monuments.<sup>21</sup> It was announced that the owner of the cinema theater had agreed to sell the open-air hall to an unknown buyer, who in turn was planning to demolish the hall and rebuild the Poghos-Petros church on the spot.<sup>22</sup>

The government’s decision came under criticism from many public figures, intellectuals, artists, and architecture specialists. This situation was not new for Yerevan’s residents: during the 2000s, numerous architectural projects that involved destruction of the city’s old landscape were carried out, despite harsh criticism from specialists and intellectuals. This time, however, the public’s dissatisfaction materialized in a civic initiative which organized an effective campaign against the demolition of this architectural monument. The organizers of the group included people as diverse as young architects and preservation activists Sarhat Petrosyan and Sevada Petrosyan (no relation to each other), the head of the film department of the National Gallery of Armenia, Melik Karapetyan, and 21 year old art school graduates, Nvard Yerkanyan and Mané Tamanyan (it helped that the latter also happened to be the great-granddaughter of Alexander Tamanian, the architect who had shaped the look of modern Yerevan). One of the first actions the activists took was forming a group on Facebook, which began growing so rapidly that the founders themselves were astonished. By September 2010, the group had more than 6500 members, an extraordinary number for a small country with a relatively low level of Internet penetration.<sup>23</sup> The group was used to spread announcements about actions, share useful information, conduct discussions. Often these discussions included opponents of the group. Soon the opponents decided to form their own group on Facebook, called “Saint Boghos-Betros has to be Rebuilt, Where Moscow Cinema Hall Is,” which, however, failed to attract comparable numbers of supporters, managing to gain only about 500 members.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, the main debate was not taking place in Facebook groups: the number of intellectuals and other public figures who expressed their support for the preservation of the cinema hall was growing. The issue of the cinema hall became a major topic for mainstream media. Due to this issue’s non-political nature, not only opposition media, but also government controlled TV channels paid attention to the debate, giving the opponents of the government’s decision a chance to express their

opinions. The most difficult moment for the initiative came when the Armenian Apostolic Church got involved in the debate. The activists went out of their way to ensure that their protests were not directed against the Armenian Apostolic Church or against religion as such. Nevertheless, several low-level members of clergy spoke out on the issue and harshly criticized the movement for the preservation of the hall, accusing it of challenging the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church and hinting that certain “dark forces” stood behind the movement. The activists’ response stressed that they did not object to the re-construction of the church as such; they opposed the demolition of the existing structure. In a letter addressed to the head of Armenian Apostolic Church, Garegin I, members of the group went out of their way to stress their respect for the Armenian Apostolic Church: “We, the undersigned, with deep trust in God and respect for the Armenian Church, hope that you will generously give up this initiative as a token of astuteness and respect for the cultural values of the Armenian people.”<sup>25</sup>

The activists decided to advance their cause by collecting signatures under a petition to the government, demanding to overturn the decision regarding the open air hall. Several groups of activists were stationed at different busy spots in downtown Yerevan, where they encouraged pedestrians to sign the petition and explained the issue to those who had not heard of it. In some cases, proponents of the church reconstruction project would also approach the signature collectors and engage them in lively discussions. Even though these discussions sometimes became quite tense, they helped to make the signature collection process more dramatic, attracting the attention of passers-by and the media. Eventually, about 23,000 signatures were collected, including signatures by well-known academics, artists, architects, and other public figures.<sup>26</sup> The group’s position was supported by numerous NGOs, artistic unions, and Armenia’s Public Council.<sup>27</sup> The government backed down under the pressure, nullified its decision, and announced that a final decision on the issue would be taken after a series of “public discussions.”<sup>28</sup>



*Activist collecting signatures to save Moscow Cinema Hall.  
Photo by Taguhi Torosyan.*

While it is somewhat early to state that the group won a decisive victory, it has certainly been successful in publicizing the problem and making it a major issue in Armenia's public life. This has been the first case in the post-Soviet history of Yerevan where a major construction project was halted because of public opposition. As such it stood in stark contrast to earlier construction projects that were carried out during the 2000s, even though there had been both public criticism and civic campaigns directed against these projects as well. Sarhat Petrosyan, one of the leaders of the initiative, who had also actively participated in these earlier campaigns, admitted that "the unprecedented activity of social networks" was one of the major reasons why this time the preservationists were more successful.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Genie Is Out of the Bottle: New Civic Initiatives**

Both initiatives described above gained a lot of publicity in Armenian society. They set a pattern that was later replicated when groups of civic activists tried to focus public attention on a certain issue or challenge a governmental decision. Thus, during the summer of 2010 two new such initiatives imitated the patterns established by the previous ones.

A situation somewhat similar to the "Moskva" cinema case emerged with regard to another urban development project, giving rise to another initiative with a telling name: "We are the masters of this city." This initiative brought together young activists who protested the destruction of a garden adjacent to the building of the National Library in central Yerevan. In June 2010, visitors at the National Library, disturbed by the sound of construction equipment working outside, discovered that the garden in front of the library building was being demolished in order to build an open-air café, as it turned out later. The owners of the café claimed that they had all the necessary documentation from the mayor's office. The situation developed in a fashion somewhat similar to the "Moskva" cinema case. A group, which included mostly young people, was formed to protest the destruction of the garden; some of the participants had already been involved in other similar initiatives, including Mariam Sukhudyan and other environmental activists. A group "We Are the Masters of This City" was formed on Facebook, and by fall 2010 it already had more than 3600 members.<sup>30</sup>

Reports about the situation appeared in print media. Several leading artists and intellectuals joined the discussion, denouncing the demolition of the park. The activists did not confine themselves to virtual reality; using Facebook, they organized a street protest at the spot where the café was being built, which again attracted the attention of the media. As in the case of the "Moskva" cinema hall, the group started collecting signatures under a letter addressed to leading government figures and, according to reports, managed to collect about 20,000 signatures. The group also launched a class action law suit against the builders of the café, which was signed by 60 people, among

them prominent artists and academics.<sup>31</sup> As of September 2010, the case was being investigated, with the activists vowing to continue their struggle. Like other initiatives, this one was also interpreted by some as a conspiracy theory; in this case such interpretation was offered by a high-ranking official – the mayor of Yerevan. The mayor claimed that the initiative was backed by "certain political forces" and rebuked the activists, particularly expressing his anger at the title of the initiative: "which city are they talking about?... We are the governors of this city, we are the decision makers... We have to work in such a way that the poor people [of Yerevan] would not need other masters except for us."<sup>32</sup>

A more recent case involving mobilization via social networks is related to the issue of a government proposed change in the law on language. This change was supposed to allow the opening of schools where the language of instruction would not be Armenian. In early June 2010, the government submitted to the National Assembly a proposal to alter the existing law on language (passed in 1993), which maintains that the sole language of instruction in Armenia's middle schools has to be Armenian.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that this seemingly secondary issue provoked public outcry can be explained by the specificity of Armenia's situation. For centuries, ethnic Armenians had a status of a minority within mighty regional empires, and as such faced not only physical threats but also the threat of linguistic and cultural assimilation. During Soviet rule, many Armenians felt that the position of Armenian language was threatened by growing use of Russian: by the late 1980s, Russian language schools in Armenia were the most prestigious, attracting the best teachers and students from families that formed the political and intellectual elite of society. Armenian intelligentsia of the late Soviet period found itself divided into two groups, often critical of each other: the so called "Russian speakers" and "Armenian speakers." The language issue was one of the most hotly debated topics during the independence movement era in the late 1980s and during the first years of Armenia's independence.<sup>34</sup> Armenian intelligentsia's insecurity regarding the future of Armenian language did not fade away with the establishment of an independent Armenian state; the main concern has been loss of Armenian language abilities among the numerous Armenian diaspora, including recent migrants from Armenia.

Against this background, political parties, academics, writers, artists, and civil society representatives voiced their opposition to the suggestion.<sup>35</sup> They claimed that they were not opposed to teaching of foreign languages per se, but they advocated for reforms that would lead to a more thorough education in foreign languages – not just in isolated "elite" schools but in the entire educational system. The critics argued that creation of foreign language "elite" schools, which would attract the best teachers and the children of the wealthy, would create competition that would undermine the rest of Armenian schools, thus worsening the already dire

condition of Armenia's education system. They also argued that foreign language school graduates would be more prone to emigration, thus contributing to a "brain-drain," which is already a major problem for Armenia. They also argued that foreign language schools can become a tool for post-colonial domination, creating a "fifth column" that would be helpful in implementing neo-imperialist projects of regional powers. Though the government never specified which languages would be used in the new schools, many critics assumed that the real intention behind the suggestion was the re-establishment of Russian schools, which dominated Soviet Armenia's education. Some argued that the real reason for the government's suggestion was pressure from Moscow, which sought to complement its already strong political, economic, and military position in Armenia, with Russian language schools – a tool of cultural and ideological influence.<sup>36</sup>

Resistance to the initiative followed an already familiar pattern. A Facebook group "We Are Against the Re-opening of Foreign Language Schools" was created, and by September 2010 numbered about 3200 members.<sup>37</sup> The legal changes suggested by the government immediately became one of the most heated topics of discussions in blogs and Internet forums. One of the most surprising aspects of the anti-foreign school campaign was the fact that it attracted people from quite diverse backgrounds and from various, sometimes radically opposed to each other groups and organizations. Thus, it included activists from both Armenian National Congress and nationalist Dashnakcutyun party, bitter political rivals that have clashing views on virtually every other aspect of Armenia's politics. Many of those opposing foreign language schools were themselves graduates of Russian schools from Soviet times. Some public figures, as well as certain bloggers, however, actively supported the law, which led to heated debates on a range of media platforms: from social networks to television and print media. The position of opponents of the change of the law was supported by diverse institutions and organizations, including the Writers' Union of Armenia and Armenia's Public Council, and by important public figures, including political leaders, artists, academics, and scientists.<sup>38</sup>

The response of the authorities included references to alleged political conspiracies, claiming that while the majority of the law opponents were "honest," certain "political centers" were attempting to manipulate the protest, using the new technologies available through the Internet, such as social networks.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, however, the government also attempted to strike a conciliatory note, expressing respect for the position of the opponents and readiness for dialogue. The initial proposal was modified to include limitations on the number of foreign language schools. This concession did not impress the activists, who argued that even if the number of these schools is limited, there are no limitations on the number of students at these schools, which leaves a legal loophole for expanding the foreign language schools network. With

this modification, the proposal was voted on at the National Assembly, with several dozen protesters demonstrating in front of the building on the day of the vote. The police did not interfere with the protest, although several pro-government members of parliament, who were booed by the crowd while entering the National Assembly, shouted insults back at the protesters, a fact that was noticed by the opposition-affiliated media.<sup>40</sup> The law modification was approved in the first reading. The activists, however, vowed to continue their struggle against the new law, which, in order to become an acting law, has yet to pass a "second reading" vote in the parliament and be signed by the president.

How important were the Internet, social networks, and alternative media for this rise of civic activism? A lot has been written about the use of Internet and especially of social networks for social movements and protest. Even terms like "Twitter revolution" have been coined by enthusiasts of online tools for social movements. They, in turn, have been criticized by skeptics, who emphasize the limitations of such tools, as well as the fact that these tools can be used as effectively, if not more so, by governments as by social activists. Without engaging in theoretical arguments about the nature of such tools and the global implications of this debate, I would like to point out that in the case of Armenia, social networks, blogs, and video streaming services have opened new possibilities for social activism and public debate. This might be true for other countries with political systems similar to the one that exists in Armenia, particularly for post-Soviet countries, stuck at different points of the path that leads from totalitarianism to democracy. As the Armenian case shows, in the settings of "a managed democracy" the Internet, as a tool for advancing social movements, in spite of all of its drawbacks and limitations, presents new opportunities for voicing concerns and mobilizing activists around social issues, contributing to a more open social and political climate, and, sometimes though still all too seldom, even leading to a real improvement in the lives of citizens.

## Endnotes

1. Post-election political crises following this pattern occurred in 1996, in 2003/2004, and in 2008. On the events of 1996 and the following development, see Stephan Astourian, S. H. *From Ter-Petrosian to Kocharian: Leadership Change in Armenia*, University of California, Berkeley, 2000. On the crisis of 2003/2004 see M. Zolyan. Armenia chapter, in and D. O' Beachain and A. Polese (eds). *The Colour Revolutions in the Former Soviet Republics*, Routledge, 2010.

2. On the elections and post-election crises of 2008 see Human Rights Watch, *Democracy on Rocky Ground: Armenia's Disputed 2008 Presidential Election, Post-Election Violence, and the One-Sided Pursuit of Accountability*, 2009; Policy Forum Armenia, *2008 Presidential Election: Select Issues and Analysis*, 2008.

3. Policy Forum Armenia, op. cit., p. 39.

4. One of the paradoxes of development of Internet in Armenia is that no reliable statistics is available. According to the Public Services Regulatory Commission, an Armenian government agency, there are 1,396,550 Internet users (47.1% of the population) as of June, 2010 (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/am.htm>). This figure seems exaggerated,

given that in 2008 the World Bank counted only 191,000 users or 6.21% of the population than numbers about 3 million (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER>). According to an Armenian blogger and IT specialist Samvel Martirosyan's estimate, the real percentage is somewhere between 15 and 20% of the population (Kolichestvo Internet-Pol'zovatelei v Armenii, <http://kornelij.livejournal.com/742279.html>). There are indirect indicators that the penetration of Internet in Armenia is growing very rapidly, though at the same time Armenia lags far behind global standards. Thus, the number of Facebook users rose from about 50,000 to about 80,000 from May to September 2010 (<http://www.facebakers.com/countries-with-facebook/AM/>), while the number of users of a Russians language socials network "Odnoklassniki.ru" and "vkontakte.ru" in February-March 2010 was estimated at about 300,000 and 150,000 respectively (<http://kornelij.livejournal.com/742279.html>; <http://kornelij.livejournal.com/770909.html>).

5. Policy Forum Armenia, 2008 Presidential Elections..., pp. 40-41.

6. There are, however, some worrying signs in the Caucasus that governments might choose to crack down on dissent in the virtual world: thus, in Azerbaijan two prominent bloggers were arrested in 2008, and they remain in prison in spite of international concerns voiced at the highest level, including a call for release by Hillary Clinton (International Crisis Group. *Azerbaijan: Vulnerable Stability: Europe Report N 207*, 3 September, 2010, p. 18).

7. "Charges against Sukhudyan have no serious grounds, her lawyer finds," *Panarmenian.net*, 24 August, 2009, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/society/news/35347/>, accessed on 7 September, 2010.

8. Hasmik Smbatyan, "Rights Groups Condemn Case Against Armenian Activist," *Radio Liberty Armenia*, 19 August, 2009, <http://www.azatutyun.org/content/article/1803361.html/>, accessed on 7 September, 2010.

9. [http://www.causes.com/causes/334666?recruiter\\_id=7885971/](http://www.causes.com/causes/334666?recruiter_id=7885971/), accessed on 8 September, 2010.

10. Hasmik Smbatyan, "Rights Groups...", *AlPlus*, "Gathered for Mariam," 1 September, 2009, <http://www.alplus.am/en/society/2009/09/1/action/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

11. [www.mariamsukhudyan.info](http://www.mariamsukhudyan.info).

12. Shushan Harutyunyan, "Bloggers' [writing] about the green movement activist and about 'putinophilia'" [in Armenian], 18 August, 2009, <http://www.7or.am/blog/?p=538/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

13. Hasmik Smbatyan, "Rights Groups Condemn Case Against Armenian Activist," *Radio Liberty Armenia*, 19 August, 2009, <http://www.azatutyun.org/content/article/1803361.html/>, accessed on 7 September, 2010.

14. Onnik Krikorian, "Another Youth Activist Under Threat," *Frontline Club*, 23 August, 2009, <http://frontlineclub.com/blogs/onnikkrikorian/2009/08/another-youth-activist-under-threat.html/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

15. Onnik Krikorian, "Attivisti Sotto Inchiesta," *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 23 September, 2009, <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/ita/aree/Armenia/Attivisti-sotto-inchiesta/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

16. Marianna Grigoryan, "Armenia: Slander Case against Copper Mine Protestor Dropped," *EurasiaNet*, 16 March, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav031710a.shtml/>, accessed on 7 September, 2010; Hasmik Smbatyan, "Indicted Armenian Activist Honored by US Embassy," *Radio Liberty Armenia*, 10 March, 2010, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1980066.html/>, accessed on 7 September, 2010.

17. "Court of Appeals Adds One Year to the Sentence of 'abusive' Nubarashen teacher," *Hetq Online*, 8 April, 2010, <http://hetq.am/en/society/nubarashen-school-9/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

18. Irina Hovannisian, "Yerevan School Head Fired Over Sex Abuse Scandal," *Radio Liberty Armenia*, 31 May, 2010, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/2058101.html/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

19. "Scars are Evidence," *Al Plus Online*, 3 June, 2010, <http://www.alplus.am/en/social/2010/06/3/nubarashen/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

20. "Um en Pashtpanum Aktivistnery" [Whom are the activists defending?]] *Hayots Ashkharh* ["Armenian World" newspaper], 20 August, 2009.

21. Simon Maghakyan, "Vandalizing Vandalism? A Popular Outdoor Auditorium in Yerevan is Threatened by a New Church," *Ararat*, 23 June, 2010, <http://araratmagazine.org/2010/06/moscow-cinema-destruction/>, accessed on 10 September, 2010.

22. Marianna Grigoryan. "Armenia: Yerevan Architectural Debate Pits Church against Preservationists", *Eurasianet*, 24 March, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav032510.shtml/>, accessed on 6 September, 2010.

23. <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=343138923439&ref=ts/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

24. <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=371400856838&ref=search/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

25. Marianna Grigoryan. "Armenia: Yerevan Architectural Debate Pits Church against Preservationists", *Eurasianet*, 24 March, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav032510.shtml/>, accessed on 6 September, 2010.

26. "Interview with Sarhat Petrosyan [in Armenian]," *Lragir*, 23 March, 2010, <http://lragir.am/armsrc/interview33514.html/>, accessed on 10 September, 2010.

27. An institution modelled on Russian "Obshestvennaya palata" (public house), created in 2008, <http://www.publiccouncil.am/>.

28. "Amarain dahlichn ir teghum e" [the Summer Hall is Still in its Place], *Report*, 8 September, 2010, <http://www.report.am/news/society/kino-moskva-amarayin-dahlich.html/>, accessed on 10 September, 2010.

29. "Interview With Sarhat Petrosyan [in Armenian]," *Eritasard*, 17 March, 2010, <http://www.eritasard.am/index.php?lang=1&id=2765&t=4/>, accessed on 10 September, 2010.

30. <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=119537174725392&ref=ts/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

31. "Vopros studencheskogo sada budet reshatsya v sude" [The issue of the garden will be decided in court], *www.yerevan.ru*, 9 July, 2010, <http://yerevan.ru/2010/09/07/vopros-studencheskogo-sada-budet-reshatsya-v-sude/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

32. "Gagik Beglaryane andzamb pataskhanets" [Gagik Beglaryan's personal reply], *Al Plus*, June 18, 2010, <http://www.alplus.am/am/politics/2010/06/18/gagik-beglaryan/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

33. Marianna Grigoryan, "Opposition Mounts to Proposed Foreign-Language Schools in Armenia," *EurasiaNet*, 16 June, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61317/>, accessed on 6 September, 2010.

34. Levon Abrahamyan, *Linguistic Nationalism and the Cult of Translation in Post-Soviet Armenia*, 1998, Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series.

35. Marianna Grigoryan, "Opposition Mounts to Proposed Foreign-Language Schools in Armenia," *EurasiaNet*, 16 June, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61317/>, accessed on 6 September, 2010.

36. Marianna Grigoryan, "A Linguistic Trojan Horse?", *Transitions Online*, 23 June, 2010, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/21569-a-linguistic-trojan-horse.html/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

37. <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=112426852127161&ref=ts/>, accessed on 8 September, 2010.

38. Marianna Grigoryan, Opposition Mounts to Proposed Foreign-Language Schools in Armenia, *Eurasia net*, 16 June, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61317/>, accessed on 6 September, 2010.

39. "Aravot" [Morning], 29 June, 2010, <http://aravot.am/am/articles/politics/80540/view/>, accessed on 10 September, 2010.

40. "Lezvi Masin Orinagitsn Yndunvec" ["the Law on Language was passed" in Armenian], *Hetq Online*, 24 June, 2010, <http://hetq.am/am/politics/otaralezu-dprots-10/>, accessed on 10 September, 2010.

# Make a Gift to ISEEEES!

The loyal support of private donors like you supplements the funding we receive from other sources and enables us to meet the standards of excellence required of us by the University of California, Berkeley as an organized research unit and by the U.S. Department of Education as a Title VI National Resource Center. Your support helps to expand and sustain a robust area-specific international education for our students, furthers research opportunities for faculty focusing on our region, and allows us to respond to new programming opportunities and to expand public outreach.

Like all state institutions, our state funding has faced continued reductions, compelling us to draw more and more on our modest endowments to maintain the superior programming and research and academic support our student, faculty, and public constituents have come to expect. As a result, we have expanded opportunities for more targeted giving in order to encompass a variety of ISEEEES programs. Contributions of any size are appreciated and contribute directly to ISEEEES's continued accomplishments. We would be very happy to discuss details of these Funds or other giving opportunities. Jeff Pennington, the executive director of ISEEEES, can be reached at [jpennington@berkeley.edu](mailto:jpennington@berkeley.edu) or (510) 643-6736.

## GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

### **ISEEEES General Support Fund**

The ISEEEES General Support Fund is an unrestricted fund that is used to: provide travel grants to affiliated graduate and undergraduate students for the purpose of presenting papers at academic conferences; provide research assistance to affiliated faculty members; convene conferences, open to the public, that examine current topics in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies; host an annual reception to foster community building among faculty, students, and the public; and augment the state and grant funds that provide minimal support for ISEEEES operations.

### **ISEEEES Graduate Student Support Fund**

The ISEEEES Graduate Student Support Fund is a new UCB Foundation endowment that was established by a generous gift from an anonymous donor. When fully funded, the ISEEEES Graduate Student Support Fund will be used to support graduate students in the field of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. The endowment was launched by the initial gift and matching funds from the Graduate Division. Additional gifts to the Fund are encouraged and gratefully accepted.

### **Colin and Elsa Miller Endowment Fund**

The Annual Colin Miller Memorial Lecture honors the memory of a journalist and radio and TV producer who was devoted to the Center for Slavic and East European Studies (as ISEEEES was called before the year 2000). The endowment funds an annual lecture given by a respected scholar in the field of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

### **Hungarian Studies Fund**

This fund promotes the teaching of the Hungarian language at UC Berkeley, provides research assistance to faculty and students studying Hungarian topics, and supports lectures, workshops, and conferences devoted to Hungarian studies.

### **Fund for Romanian Studies**

This fund promotes the teaching of the Romanian language at UC Berkeley, supports lectures, workshops, and conferences devoted to Romanian topics, and provides research assistance to faculty and students pursuing Romanian studies.

# Support Our Institute!

## Associates of the Slavic Center

ISEEES acknowledges with sincere appreciation the following individuals who made their annual contribution to ISEEES between April and September, 2010.

### CENTER CIRCLE

Frank Fletcher\*  
Serge and Jane Petroff\*

### BENEFACTORS

Enid Emerson\*

### SPONSORS

AnnMarie Dorward Mitchell\*

### MEMBERS

Anonymous\*  
Eugenia Bailey\*  
David Michael Berke II  
Ruth and Ralph Fisher\*  
Paula and Eric Gillett\*  
Mary Louise Green \*  
Michael Patrick Richards\*  
Jane D. Wight  
Pavel Yefanau

\* gift of continuing membership

Your gift will qualify you for membership on our annual giving program: Associates of the Slavic Center. Descriptions of membership benefits by level are included below. Thank you for your continued support.

**Members (Gifts under \$100).** Members receive Monthly Updates to the Newsletter so that they can attend all ISEEES events. Members are also notified in writing about newly-added events.

**Sponsors (Gifts of \$100—\$499).** ASC Sponsors also receive a specially designed gift that bears the ISEEES logo, promoting Slavic and East European Studies at Berkeley.

**Benefactors (Gifts of \$500—\$999).** ASC Benefactors receive a complimentary copy of a book authored by ISEEES faculty.

**Center Circle (Gifts of \$1,000 and above).** Members of the Center Circle will qualify for the Charter Hill Society at UC Berkeley. The Charter Hill Society is Berkeley's new program designed to recognize donors' annual giving to the campus. Benefits of this program include a subscription to *Berkeley Promise Magazine* and an invitation to *Discover Cal* lecture.

*It is a policy of the University of California and the Berkeley Foundation that a portion of the gifts and/or income therefrom is used to defray the costs of raising and administering the funds. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

You can contribute online by visiting the ISEEES website <http://iseees.berkeley.edu>, clicking on the "Contributing to the Institute" link, and selecting the ISEEES fund which you would like to support.

Or send a check, payable to UC Regents, to:

Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies  
University of California, Berkeley  
260 Stephens Hall #2304  
Berkeley CA 94720-2304

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home \_\_\_\_\_ Business \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

If your employer has a matching gift program, please print name of corporation below:

\_\_\_\_\_ I have made a contribution but wish to remain anonymous.

## FLAS Fellowship Awards

Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships enable US citizens and permanent residents to acquire a high level of competency in modern foreign languages. FLAS funding for Russian and East European languages comes to UC Berkeley through a Title VI grant from the US Department of Education to ISEEEES. Applications are accepted through the Graduate Fellowship Office.

### Awards for Summer 2010

Michael Dean, Department of History, received a graduate fellowship to study Polish.

Rhiannon Dowling, Department of History, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

Elaine Eller, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received an undergraduate fellowship to study Czech.

Cammeron Girvin, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received a graduate fellowship to study Serbian.

Eric Johnson, Department of History, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

Mark Keck-Szajbel, Department of History, received a graduate fellowship to study Slovak.

Michelle McCoy, Department of Art History, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

Ethan Nowak, Department of Philosophy, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

Brandon Schechter, Department of History, received a graduate fellowship to study Tatar.

Malgorzata Szjabel-Keck, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received a graduate fellowship to study Slovak.

Peter Woods, German Department, received a graduate fellowship to study Slovenian.

Irene Yoon, English Department, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

### Awards for AY 2010-2011

Julie Beigel-Coryell, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received an undergraduate fellowship to study Polish.

Natalie Buchwald, Department of Biology, received an undergraduate fellowship to study Polish.

Margarita Chudnovskaya, Department of Political Economy, received an undergraduate fellowship to study Russian.

Rhiannon Dowling, Department of History, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

Elaine Eller, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received an undergraduate fellowship to study Czech.

Kevin Kenjar, Department of Anthropology, received a graduate fellowship to study Bosnian.

Irina Kogel, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received a graduate fellowship to study Polish.

Andrew Kornbluth, Department of History, received a graduate fellowship to study Polish.

David Marcus, Department of Anthropology, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

Michelle McCoy, Department of Art History, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

Alekzandir Morton, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received an undergraduate fellowship to study Romanian.

Mary Renolds, Department of Comparative Literature, received a graduate fellowship to study Russian.

Lily Scott, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received a graduate fellowship to study Bosnian.

## Berkeley Program in Eurasian and East European Studies (BPS) Fellowships

### Academic Year Fellowships

David Beecher, Department of History.

Sarah Garding, Department of Political Science.

Larisa Kurtovic, Department of Anthropology.

### Summer Research Grants

Nina Aron, Department of Anthropology.

Boris Barkanov, Department of Political Science.

Alex Beliaev, Department of Anthropology.

Michael Dean, Department of History.

Rhiannon Dowling, Department of History.

Sarah Garding, Department of Political Science.

Anastasia Kayiatos, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

Andrew Kornbluth, Department of History.

Alina Polyakova, Department of Sociology.

### Summer Dissertation Write-up Grants

Andrej Milivojevic, Department of History.

Erik Scott, Department of History.

Zhivka Valivacharska, Department of Rhetoric.

**Save the date!**  
**Annual Berkeley-Stanford Conference**  
***Varieties of Post-Socialism***  
**Friday, March 4th, 2011, Alumni House,**  
**Toll Room, UC Berkeley Campus**

# Faculty and Student News

**Greg Castillo**, Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture, presented a paper on GDR household consumption regimes at the panel “Consumerism and the Fall of Communism” at the VIII World Congress of the International Council for Central and Eastern European Studies, held in Stockholm in July 2010. The paper expanded upon a central theme of his recently published monograph, *Cold War on the Home Front* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

**Robia Charles**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science, was appointed Associate Regional Director at the Caucus Resource Research Centers.

**Nicole Eaton**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History, received the Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for 2010-2011 and the Berlin Program in Advanced German and European Studies Fellowship for research and writing in Berlin from April 2010 to January 2011. Nicole also presented at the Association for the Study of Nationalities Conference in New York in April, where she was awarded “Best Doctoral Student Paper” for “German Bodies, Soviet Medicine: Kaliningrad Oblast Hospital, 1945-1948.”

**Elaine Eller**, undergraduate student in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and FLAS recipient for summer 2010, was interviewed by Czech television about her project with the Pammrova society.

**Monica Eppinger**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Anthropology, accepted a tenure-track position at Saint Louis University, as Assistant Professor in the School of Law with affiliation with the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice.

**Anastasia Kayiatos**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received a fellowship from the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities, to support the writing of her dissertation “Silence and Alterity in Russia after Stalin, 1955-1975.” She has also been awarded the 2010-11 Jacobson Award for innovative teaching efforts in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. As an Outstanding GSI, she received a Teaching Effectiveness Award in April. Lastly, this August she led a workshop on “Asking Good Questions” at the 2010 GSI Conference.

**Sarah Ruth Lorenz**, Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Comparative Literature, received the Chancellor’s Dissertation Fellowship for 2010/11 for the completion of the dissertation “Visionary Realism: The Collision of Ethics and Mimesis in the German Enlightenment and Russian Realism.”

**Danielle Lussier**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science, presented a paper, “Democratizing Citizens: The Role of Civil Society in Russia and Indonesia,” at the Seventh Annual Berkeley Political

Science Graduate Student Conference on May 7, 2010. She has also been awarded a UC Dissertation-Year Fellowship for 2010-2011.

**Rebecca Manley**, Associate Professor in the Department of History, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, received the 2010 W. Bruce Lincoln Book Prize given for an author’s first published monograph or scholarly synthesis that is of exceptional merit and lasting significance for the understanding of Russia’s past. She received the award for her book *To the Tashkent Station* (Cornell University Press). This book is based on Rebecca Manley's 2004 Ph.D. dissertation in Berkeley's Department of History.

**William Nickell**, Gary Licker Research Chair in Cowell College, UC Santa Cruz (Ph.D. from UC Berkeley, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures), has just published a book titled *The Death of Tolstoy: Russia on the Eve, Astapovo Station, 1910* (Cornell University Press, 2010). Appearing on the 100th anniversary of Tolstoy’s death, this study, as one reviewer put it, “is certain to be one of the most important books in Russian cultural studies this decade.”

**Dylan Riley**, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, was granted tenure and promoted to the rank of associate professor.

**Katryn Schild**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, has been appointed, as of fall 2010, Visiting Assistant Professor at the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, Tulane University.

**Erik Scott**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History, received the Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship for the 2010-2011 academic year.

**Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock**, Ph.D. from the Department of History, UC Berkeley, received and declined the Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion fellowship. She also accepted a tenure-track position at Wesleyan University—a joint appointment in their History Department and the College of Social Studies.

**Jonathan Stone**, Ph.D., Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, 2007, has been appointed, as of fall 2010, Assistant Professor in the Department of Russian and Russian Studies, Franklin and Marshall College.

**Alyson Tapp**, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received the Chancellor’s Dissertation Fellowship 2010-11 for the completion of her dissertation “‘Not form which you see, but emotion which you feel.’ Elegy, novel, criticism: emotion in Russian literary history.”

**Orna Uranchimeg Tsultem**, Department of Art History, filed her dissertation titled “Ikh Khuree: a Nomadic Monastery and the Later Buddhist Art of Mongolia” in December 2009 at the Department of Art History.

## The Peter N. Kujachich Endowment in Serbian and Montenegrin Studies

Professor Ronelle Alexander received a grant to underwrite costs related to renewal of copyright permissions for materials to be used in the second edition of her Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language textbook, which will be published this year by the University of Wisconsin Press. Additionally, the Endowment helped fund the Serbian language program at Cal.

In February 2010, the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures held an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental conference on *Slavic Languages: Time and Contingency*. With support from the endowment, a number of presentations were devoted to Serbian and to language use in Serbia and Montenegro.

Endowment funds were also used to support research projects by Professor Olga Matich, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, for her research in Belgrade on Russian émigré academics in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1920s – 1940s) and their impact on institutions of higher education in the Kingdom. Sarah Garding, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science, received funds from the Endowment for research on ties between the Serbian state and the Serbian diaspora since 1990. Lastly, Andrej Milivojevic, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History, received funding for research on the attempts to liberalize the Yugoslav economy between the early 1960s and early 1970s.

---

## The Hertelendy Graduate Fellowship in Hungarian Studies

Daniel Viragh, graduate student in the Department of History, was a recipient of the Hertelendy Graduate Fellowship in Hungarian Studies for his research project *Curious Subculture: The Jews of Dualist Hungary*.

The project examines what would it be like, to not be aware of some fundamental aspect of your identity. The Jews of Dualist Hungary created an interesting subculture which allowed them to live in just such a way. After Emancipation in 1867, Hungary's rulers hoped that the Jews would integrate socioculturally and help modernize a primarily agrarian economy. However, integration was incomplete, even though Jews contributed greatly to the country's development. Why this was so is manifested in the communal structures the Jews created, which this study proposes to examine—for the first time. Additionally, The Hertelendy Endowment funded a new class in Hungarian studies at Berkeley in the Spring 2010 semester. The course, Independent Study 198, taught by Gergely Tóth and offered through the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, looked at Hungarian society and tradition through the eyes of leading 20th century Hungarian short story writers. The course's purpose was the examination of the development of Hungarian short stories in the twentieth century, focusing primarily on the writings of Örkény István. Additional authors also included Karinthy Frigyes, Kosztolányi Dezső, Krúdy Gyula, Móra Ferenc, Móricz Zsigmond, Tamási Áron, and Wass Albert.

---

## UC Berkeley – CRRC Field Project: Fall 2010

This project brings four “Carnegie Fellows” from the South Caucasus to Berkeley for a two-week visit to Berkeley for an intensive review of the key literature, theoretical approaches, and methods employed in a particular field of scholarship. The Fall 2010 program takes place from October 30 through November 13, 2010. This fall we have four visitors:

Giorgi Sordia, University of Georgia (Tbilisi, Georgia).  
Discipline: International Relations. Topic: Managing Ethnic Diversity. Graduate student facilitator: Danielle Lussier and Susanne Wengle. Faculty mentor: Ned Walker.

Ceyhun Mahmudov, Qafqas University (Baku, Azerbaijan).  
Discipline: Political Science and International Relations.

Topic: Comparative Diaspora Studies. Graduate student facilitator: Brandon Schechter. Faculty mentor: Zachary Shore.

Hamazasp Danielyan, Yerevan State University (Yerevan, Armenia). Discipline: Political Science. Topic: TBA. Graduate student facilitator: Alex Beliaev. Faculty mentor: Michel Laguerre.

Alina Poghosyan, Institute of Archeology and Anthropology (Yerevan, Armenia). Discipline: Social Anthropology. Topic: Migration and Development. Graduate student facilitator: Nina Aron. Faculty mentor: Cybelle Fox.

### Save the date!

### ISEEES Annual Teacher Outreach Conference

### *Twenty Years Later: The Dissolution of the Soviet Union*

Saturday, April 30, 2011

Alumni House, Toll Room, UC Berkeley Campus

# “Prayers on the lips of the humble”: History and the Search for Morality in Modernity: Marc Bloch’s *The Historian’s Craft* Michel de Certeau’s *The Writing of History* Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock

*Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock received her Ph.D. in History from UC Berkeley in 2010. She is now Assistant Professor at the Department of History and at the College of Social Sciences at Wesleyan University, Connecticut.*

Philosopher!

1. I am writing to you in answer to your letter which you are about to write to me in answer to my letter which I wrote to you.
2. A violinist bought a magnet and was carrying it home. Along the way, hoods jumped him and knocked his cap off his head. The wind picked up the cap and carried it down the street.
3. The violinist put the magnet down and ran after the cap. The cap fell into a puddle of nitric acid and dissolved.
4. In the meantime, the hoods picked up the magnet and hid.
5. The violinist returned home without a coat and without a cap, because the cap dissolved in the nitric acid, and the violinist, upset by losing his cap, had left his coat in the streetcar.
6. The conductor of the streetcar took the coat to a secondhand shop and exchanged it there for sour cream, groats, and tomatoes.
7. The conductor’s father-in-law ate too many tomatoes, became sick and died. The corpse of the conductor’s father-in-law was put in the morgue, but it got mixed up, and in place of the conductor’s father-in-law, they buried some old woman.
8. On the grave of the old woman, they put a white post with the inscription “Anton Sergeevich Kondratev.”
9. Eleven years later, the worms had eaten through the post, and it fell down. The cemetery watchman sawed the post into four pieces and burned it in his stove. The wife of the cemetery watchman cooked cauliflower soup over that fire.
10. But when the soup was ready, a fly fell from the wall, directly into the pot with this soup. They gave the soup to the beggar Timofey.
11. The beggar Timofey ate the soup and told the beggar Nikolay that the cemetery watchman was a good-natured man.
12. The next day the beggar Nikolay went to the cemetery watchman and asked for money. But the cemetery

watchman gave nothing to the beggar Nikolay and chased him away.

13. The beggar Nikolay became very angry and set fire to the cemetery watchman’s house.
14. The fire spread from the house to the church, and the church burned down.
15. A long investigation was carried on but did not succeed in determining the cause of the fire.
16. In the place where the church had stood a club was built, and on the day the club opened a concert was organized, at which the violinist who fourteen year earlier had lost his coat performed.
17. In the audience sat the son of one of those hoods who years before had knocked the cap off that violinist.
18. After the concert was over, they rode home in the same streetcar. In the streetcar behind theirs, the driver was the same conductor who once upon a time had sold the violinist’s coat in a secondhand shop.
19. And so here they are, riding late at night through the city: in front, the violinist and the hood’s son; and in back, the driver, the former conductor.
20. They ride along and don’t know what connection there is between them, and they won’t know till the day they die.

--Daniil Kharms, “The Connection,” 1937.

This paper investigates the intellectual trajectory of twentieth-century historiography through Marc Bloch’s *The Historian’s Craft* and Michel de Certeau’s *The Writing of History*. It examines Bloch’s and Certeau’s efforts to grapple with the epistemological dilemma at the heart of historical inquiry: What (and whose) stories should we tell? How should we tell them? How can we know these stories are true? And what are the moral implications of the historian’s choices (of subject and method)? “The Connection,” a peculiar piece by the Russian writer Daniil Kharms, illustrates the challenge posed by the study of experience. Kharms’ Philosopher is confronted by the chaos of events—by actions (both conscious and unconscious, informed and uninformed, rational and irrational) and their consequences (both intended and unintended). The violinist is jumped by hoods and loses his cap (which dissolves in

nitric acid), his recently acquired magnet (which is stolen by the hoods), and his coat (which he absentmindedly leaves on the tram). This sets off a chain of events, the connections between which are not apparent to the actors involved. The world described is subject to the erratic behavior of nature (the conductor's father-in-law, after eating the tomatoes purchased in exchange for the violinist's coat, dies), human folly (his body is mixed up in the morgue with the body of an old woman, who is buried in his place under a post bearing his name), the decay inevitable with the passing of time (the rotten post falls down, is sawed for firewood and used to make soup), duplicitous human motives (the soup, because it is contaminated by a fly, is offered to the beggar Timofey) and uninformed human responses (Timofey, having received soup from the cemetery watchman, recommends him to the beggar Nikolay, who then burns down the cemetery watchman's house). The fire spreads to the church, destroying the building, and, following an unsuccessful investigation, a club is constructed in its place. And so on... the world continuously shifts beneath our feet.

In the end, the actors find themselves together without any awareness of their connection to one another. And they will not know, the narrator tells the Philosopher, until they die. Who is the narrator, and what is his purpose in addressing the Philosopher? The narrator's access to the connection between the actors and events of the story, as well as the way he collapses linear time in his address—"I am writing to you in answer to your letter which you are about to write to me in answer to my letter which I wrote to you"—mark him as omniscient, a kind of God. He mocks the Philosopher, whose "letters" attempt to communicate with him. The Philosopher tries to understand man's actions and their consequences, to extract an underlying meaning from experience. Yet the narrator rejects the Philosopher's hubris. The meaning of the connection, the narrator tells us, will reveal itself only after earthly life. The efforts of the Philosopher, then, are both vain, and in vain.

Kharms's omniscient narrator suggests that the human pursuit to document and understand experience is futile. Why, then, do we, with our limited vision and fragmented understanding, seek a knowledge whose authenticity is impossible to verify? How might we, even given this futility, attempt to get closer? This question—"What is the use of history?"—opens Marc Bloch's *The Historian's Craft*.<sup>1</sup> Writing in occupied France in 1941, Bloch's book is the last testament of an historian who believes that an investigation of craft might yield answers. Bloch sets out to legitimate the study and practice of history, and his impassioned treatment of historical practice makes the historian's task into an almost sacred enterprise. In the decades leading up to the First World War, France had been at the center of the debate about the nature of historical knowledge and the legitimacy of history's claims to scientific truth—a debate largely concerned with the challenge posed by the emerging discipline of sociology.<sup>2</sup> When the calamity of the war revealed the fragility of states, it also shattered the illusion

that the history of man was realized through the state and that the history of people could be told as the history of the state coming to self-realization. By the time Bloch was composing *The Historian's Craft*, the new social sciences had diminished the prestige of history as a discipline. As the long, confident nineteenth century drew to a close, new concerns undermined the belief of many historians in the legitimacy of their pursuit. Yet while Bloch's generation grappled with these challenges, Michel de Certeau's generation pushed still further, shaking the foundations of the discipline. By the end of the century, Certeau's *The Writing of History* challenged history's moral foundations—the relationship of the discipline (and the historian) to the institutions and language of power.<sup>3</sup> The question at the heart of Certeau's investigation was how to write about the figure that had interested Bloch, and that, by century's end, had taken center stage in historical narratives—the ordinary person. The problem was that this subject was, for the most part, silent.

#### **"The subtle enchantment of the unfamiliar"**

Bloch never gives an explicit answer to his opening question, but his underlying understanding of history is suggestive. Bloch observes that Western man is, by nature, historically-minded: "... our civilization has always been extremely attentive to its past. Everything has inclined it in this direction: both the Christian and the classical heritage. Our first masters, the Greeks and the Romans, were a history-writing peoples. Christianity is a religion of historians."<sup>4</sup> The Western inclination to derive meaning from history, Bloch proposes, means that history has an inherent meaning, and thus utility. At the very least, history entertains and brings aesthetic pleasure. "The spectacle of human action which forms its particular object is, more than any other, designed to seduce the imagination—above all when, thanks to its remoteness in time or space, it is adorned with the subtle enchantment of the unfamiliar."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Bloch discourages historians from denying history's aesthetic possibilities: "Let us guard against stripping our science of its share of poetry.... It would be sheer folly to suppose that history, because it appeals strongly to the emotions, is less capable of satisfying the intellect."<sup>6</sup> History's aesthetic appeal is not, for Bloch, history's legitimation, but neither does it detract from its validity as a science.

Yet Bloch quickly goes on to declare that aesthetic pleasure is not enough to legitimate history as a pursuit. "Either all minds capable of better employment must be dissuaded from the practice of history, or history must prove its legitimacy as a form of knowledge."<sup>7</sup> Although Bloch argues against the "orthodox positivist" claim that the legitimacy of history is dependent on its ability to promote action,<sup>8</sup> he asserts that historians must not only ask questions and describe events, but answer questions and understand the relationships between phenomena: "... history will rightly claim its place among those sciences truly worthy of endeavor only in proportion that it promises us, not

simply a disjointed and... nearly infinite enumeration, but a *rational classification and progressive intelligibility* [italics mine].”<sup>9</sup> Bloch sees history, “this newcomer in the field of rational knowledge,” as a “science in its infancy... very young as a rational attempt at analysis.”<sup>10</sup> Echoing Giambattista Vico’s *New Science*, Bloch hopes to see a broadened universal history and sees knowledge as both *cumulative*: “Each science, taken by itself, represents but a fragment in the universal march toward knowledge”<sup>11</sup> and *progressive*: “However uncertain our road at many points, we are, it seems to me, at the present hour better placed than our predecessors to see a little light on the path ahead.”<sup>12</sup> Yet while Bloch makes the model of progress conceptually problematic, his argument never departs from the progressive model. His claim that history is a science largely rests on the discipline’s ‘progressive’ accumulation of knowledge, and history’s legitimacy lays on the success of its claim to be a science.

Where Bloch departs from the model of evolutionary progress is in his choice of subject. Discarding history’s traditional interest in the feats of extraordinary man, Bloch’s interest is in the ordinary man whose story has been marginalized and largely untold. The main concern of historians, Bloch argues, should be the experience of the common man who lives within history, neither ‘making’ it nor being dragged along passively by the forward rush of the idea.

Largely ignored in the idealist approach to history was the common man, portrayed as the passive recipient of ideals forged elsewhere. But methods for establishing this correspondence between the culture of the elite and the culture of ordinary people were obviously wanting, as generalizations about the ethos of an age or a people dissolved under scrutiny.<sup>13</sup>

Bloch turns attention away from the producers of culture to the audience; his interest is in the way that the audience makes sense of elite discourse in often-unpredictable ways, using radically different conceptual frameworks and tools.

The problem of culture centers not upon the intellectual’s visionary leap toward the future, but upon the ordinary individual’s tenacious hold on the wisdom of the past. The culture of an age is to be grasped in the habits of mind common to all people, and these constitute a powerful force of inertia. To study the history of mentalities is to enter the arena of human experience most resistant to change.<sup>14</sup>

In this way, the Annales school in general, and Bloch in particular, redefined the meaning of “culture” by turning attention away from the high culture of power-wielding elites and towards *mentalité*—the reception, assimilation, and reconfiguration of ideas to popular culture, to the audience.<sup>15</sup>

In pursuing *mentalité* as a subject, Annales historians focused on the structures through which ideas were

assimilated into everyday life.<sup>16</sup> For Bloch, historical events, ideas, and institutions are meaningless if divorced from their social context: “In a word, a historical phenomenon can never be understood apart from its moment in time. This is true of every evolutionary stage, our own and all others.”<sup>17</sup> What interests Bloch is not “society” as an abstract sociological construct, but the men whose worldviews and beliefs embodied and defined society.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Bloch asserts that *mentalité* is not constant, but evolves and changes with time—ideas and institutions affect change on society, and society in turn changes ideas and institutions: “Certainly, we no longer consider today, as Machiavelli wrote, and as Hume and Bonald thought, that there is, in time, ‘at least something which is changeless: that is man.’ We have learned that man, too, has changed a great deal in his mind and, no less certainly, in the most delicate organs of his body.”<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, the historian must observe the shifts in mentality that make historical man different than himself: “Above and beyond the peculiarities of individuals of every age, there are states of mind which were formerly common, yet which appear peculiar to us because we no longer share them.”<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Bloch points out that historical mentalities cannot be taken for granted because they seem natural to us.<sup>21</sup> Annales historians undermined the accepted practice of taking politics to be the foundation of historical study. Pointing out that a focus on politics privileges ruptures over continuities, they advocated abandoning linear narrative and its teleological trajectory. Instead, they drew attention to the “deep structures” underlying everyday experience. With his interest alternate possibilities of psychological transformation and historical change, Bloch hoped to undermine “our assumptions about what was ‘natural’ ...”<sup>22</sup>

The centrality of the “human element” in Bloch’s theory of history is at the heart of his radical break with the preceding generation. Indeed, Bloch suggests that such a shift might fundamentally transform the discipline as a whole. He notes that, “our language, fundamentally conservative, freely retains the name of history for any study of change taking place in time.”<sup>23</sup> By focusing on ordinary people, Bloch redefines history as the science of men in time, since “it is men that history seeks to grasp... The good historian is like the giant of the fairy tale. He knows that wherever he catches the scent of human flesh, there his quarry lies.”<sup>24</sup> Bloch argues that history is unique as a science precisely because of its focus on human experience—“There is, then, just one science of men in time. It requires us to join the study of the dead and of the living”<sup>25</sup>—an assertion that suggests both history’s legitimacy and utility.

### **The Civilization of the Uncivilized**

In examining human experience, Bloch’s interest is in the emotional activity that became the casualty of the civilizing process, an activity that characterizes the silent majority and that itself acts on history in often invisible, and many times ignored, ways. “We still speak (although, alas, with

less assurance than our elders) of civilization in itself, of civilization as an ideal, and of the difficult ascent of mankind toward its noble tranquility,” Bloch writes, “but we speak also of civilizations in the plural and merely as realities. From this point, we admit that there may be... civilizations of people who are not civilized.”<sup>26</sup> Annales historians focused on the sacred as the “emotional refuge from which he [man] could emerge only with the gradual development of his critical faculties. Through the civilizing process, the human psyche took form.”<sup>27</sup> Lucien Febvre, for instance, suggests that collective psychology is marked by the shift from a world where “emotional life (organized through myth and ritual) stands at the center of culture, toward a modern society, in which intellectual activity crowds emotional life toward the periphery.”<sup>28</sup> In the history of mentalité, cultural development was plotted not so much onto a linear model of progress, as on a spatial model that included both the increasingly ordered and disciplined rational center and the emotional activity relegated to the periphery by Progress.<sup>29</sup> Bloch’s aim is to return to history the mentality of the collective—a collective whose behavior is sometimes unconscious, whose actions are sometimes unintended, whose emotional world is sometimes irrational.<sup>30</sup> To the study of this often-silent subject, Bloch brought all of the scientific tools of his discipline.

As a historian, Bloch still retained confidence in his ability to access and understand the mentality of men removed from his own time. This confidence was largely founded on his belief in the efficacy of the historian’s intuition:

Human actions are essentially very delicate phenomena, many aspects of which elude mathematical measurement. Properly to translate them into words and hence, to fathom them rightly (for can one perfectly understand what he does not know how to express?), great delicacy of language and precise verbal tone are necessary. Where calculation is impossible we are obliged to employ suggestion.<sup>31</sup>

Intuition, Bloch suggests, is difficult to calculate and train, yet it is the historian’s most valued asset: “This faculty of understanding the living is, in very truth, the master quality of the historian.... And, perhaps, it originates as a gift from the fairies, quite inaccessible to anyone who has not found it in his cradle. That does not lessen the obligation to exercise and develop it constantly.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Bloch’s faith in the power of the historian’s intuition is almost mystical. It is predicated on a humanistic vision that binds people—past, present, and future—in a universal fellowship, a uniquely human ability to understand other human beings.

### **A Rational Art: The Historian’s Intuition**

The development and refinement of the historian’s intuition lies at the heart of Bloch’s discussion of craft, for while Bloch was confident in the historian’s ability to communicate with the past in theory, in practice he

found historical method insufficient. Bloch critiques the historical writings of his predecessors for their lack of attention towards critical methodology: “If the best-known theorists of our methods had not shown such an astonishing indifference toward the techniques of archaeology, if they had not been as obsessed with narrative in the category of documents as they were with incident in the category of actions, they would doubtless have been less ready to throw us back to an eternally dependent method of observation.”<sup>33</sup> What he offers the reader is a set of tools, methodological guidelines for questioning and interpreting evidence, thanks to which “vast areas of mankind” can continue to emerge “from the shadows.”<sup>34</sup>

Bloch recognizes the countless potential pitfalls of historical interpretation—deceptive language (“to the greater despair of historians, men fail to change their vocabulary every time they change their customs”);<sup>35</sup> irrational and often contradictory behavior. To illustrate his point, he draws the example of the medieval merchant who violates Church doctrine by day, and kneels piously in Church in the evening.

Then the medieval merchant, after spending the day in violating church commandments on usury and just prices, went off to kneel sanctimoniously before

The image of Our Lady, or when in the evening of his life he heaped up pious charitable endowments; when the great manufacturer of a sterner age build hospitals with money saved out of the wages of ragged children, were either of them seeking, as is usually said, only to obtain a rather cheap insurance against heavenly wrath, or were they not rather, by these outbursts of faith or philanthropy, also satisfying, almost without conscious recognition, those secret needs of the heart which harsh daily routine had forced them to repress? There are contradictions that closely resemble evasions.

[...]

How many men lead lives on three or four different levels, which they wish and sometimes succeed in keeping apart.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, Bloch seems to have faith that these separate spheres—in this case, the secular and the religious—can, using an appropriate methodology, be reconciled. “Even though the roles played alternately by the same actor seem to conflict as crudely as the stereotyped characters of a melodrama,” Bloch writes, “it may be that this antithesis, correctly considered, is only the mask of a deeper solidarity.”<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, Bloch believes that the historian’s ability to understand the past is no worse, and perhaps even better, than the possibility of understanding the present. The historian, ultimately, does have a privileged point of view, and in any case, he observes, “Life is too short, and science too vast, to permit even the greatest genius a total experience of humanity.”<sup>38</sup> What gives the historian an

advantage over the eyewitness is the breadth of perception that can be developed by refining methodology.

I know the mood of my 'man in the street' only through the chart of it which he himself agrees to draw for me. Because the individual, narrowly restricted by his senses and power of concentration, never perceives more than a tiny patch of the vast tapestry of events, deeds, and words which form the destinies of a group, and because, moreover, he possesses an immediate awareness of only his own mental state, all knowledge of mankind, to whatever time it applies, will always derive a large part of its evidence from others. In this respect, the student of the present is scarcely any better off than the student of the past.<sup>39</sup>

Thus there is a persistent tension between Bloch's attempt to formulate a scientific methodology for the study of history and his faith in intuition as the guiding spirit of historical inquiry. Likewise, there is a tension in his goal to develop a rational language to describe evidence that is itself irrational: "Criticism of testimony, since it deals with psychic realities, will remain a subtle art. There is no recipe for it. However it is also a rational art which depends on methodical use of certain basic mental processes. In a word, it has a dialectic of its own which we ought to try to define."<sup>40</sup> What Bloch ultimately advocates is not only a reform of the professional practice of history, but of the historian's own mentality, of the relationship between historian and subject.

*The Historian's Craft* resonates with Bloch's boundless optimism that, with the soul-searching of historians—the refinement of their intuition—the discipline of history can legitimate itself: "Have patience. History is not yet what it ought to be. That is no reason to make history as it can be the scapegoat for the sins which belong to bad history alone."<sup>41</sup> The legitimacy of the enterprise seems, at bottom, to be a moral one. On a broader level, Bloch seems to believe that, by reforming the craft, history can become a moral compass for society: "Henceforth, far wider horizons open before it, and history may reckon among its certain glories that, by this elaboration of its technique, it has pioneered for mankind a new path to truth and, hence, to justice."<sup>42</sup> Yet the path to justice, importantly, depends on the historian giving up his role as judge. Citing Pascal, Bloch points out that in passing judgement, the historian is playing God: "Now, for a long time, the historian has passed for a sort of judge in Hades, charged with meting out praise and blame for dead heroes. We cannot but believe that this attitude satisfies a deep instinct.... Are we so sure of ourselves and of our age as to divide the company of our forefathers into the just and the damned?"<sup>43</sup>

From the perspective of Kharm's omniscient narrator, the historian—with his limited understanding—has little reason for confidence in his judgments. Bloch suggests that the historian must abandon *a priori* theories about the

workings of History, and in this way, history becomes a forum for moral education.

When all is said and done, a single word, 'understanding,' is the beacon light of our studies. Let us not say that the historian is a stranger to emotion: he has that at all events. 'Understanding,' in all honesty, is a word pregnant with difficulties, but also with hope.... We are never sufficiently understanding.... A little more understanding of people would be necessary merely for guidance, in the conflicts which are unavoidable; all the more to prevent them while there is yet time. If history would only renounce its false archangelic airs, it would help us to cure this weakness.... Life, like science, has everything to gain from it, if only these contacts be friendly.<sup>44</sup>

For Bloch, what the writer of history should bring to his craft, and what the reader of history should take out of it, is understanding—an understanding not only of the past, but likewise of the present. Yet Bloch's use of the word "understanding" is misleading. He does not search for an understanding of history as it "really" is, but an understanding of history's infinite complexity. By understanding the historical context through the use of intuition, historians can gain access to human experience in different time and space, *despite* the different beliefs, practices, language, and customs of a world removed from our own. In a secular world, history becomes a space in which writer and reader can again encounter the human condition.

### History on the Margins

The Annales School opened the door to a new kind of history writing—focused on lived experience and psychological transformation—and Marc Bloch's work played a significant role in broadening the scope of history and opening up inquiry into formerly excluded areas. That which modernity had relegated to the margins as "survivals"—religious experience, for instance—could now become an object of investigation. Bloch celebrates new possibilities when he passionately writes, "What an education it would be—whether as to the God of yesterday or today—were we able to hear the true prayers on the lips of the humble! Assuming, of course, that they themselves knew how to express the impulses of their hearts without mutilating them."<sup>45</sup> Yet the caution with which he concludes suggests that the Annales School opened doors without necessarily walking through them. His argument implies that past and present have a mutually constitutive relationship, and that the historian has a critical role in the making of history. But Bloch's treatment of intuition implies that he still had faith that historians could gain, and then grant, access to the mentalities of people living in a different age.

By 1975, when Michel de Certeau published *The Writing of History*, the relationship between past and

present, and the figure of the historian, became central in discussions about history. The catastrophe of the Second World War made the meaning of “progress” irrevocably problematic. The foundations of the discipline—the kinds of questions historians posed and their confidence in their ability to answer them—were thoroughly undermined. For while Bloch still believed in the historian’s capacity to access the mind of the past, Certeau no longer shared this confidence. Rather, Certeau suggested that changing customs and language transform people—that contemporary man is qualitatively different than his predecessors. For Certeau, we are estranged from our predecessors by our modernity.

Certeau argued that history cannot pretend to be scientific; it should simply no longer seek to legitimate itself in this way. Over the course of the twentieth century, the historian had moved to the margins—both in the sense that historians no longer play a central role in producing state discourse, and in the historian’s own focus on the periphery, on that which has been marginalized by modernity.

A strange phenomenon in contemporary historiography must be observed. The historian is no longer the person who shapes an empire. He or she no longer envisages the paradise of a global history. The historian comes to circulate around acquired rationalizations. He or she works in the margins. In this respect the historian becomes a prowler. In a society gifted at generalization, endowed with powerful centralizing strategies, the historian moves in the direction of the frontiers of great regions already exploited. He or she ‘deviates’ by going back to sorcery, madness, festival, popular literature, the forgotten world of the peasant, Occitania, etc., all these zones of silence.<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, for Certeau, even the terms ‘history’ and ‘historian’ are no longer legitimate. Instead, Certeau puts history itself at the heart of his investigation. For Certeau, the practice of history is defined by the medium of writing, by institutional demands, by accepted ways of thinking and dominant bodies of knowledge.<sup>47</sup> The historian becomes a ‘historiographer,’ a figure engaged in the process of writing ‘historiography.’ Historiography, meanwhile, becomes a self-reflexive and self-reflective project with the historian at the center. And as it is defined by the act of writing, historiography gets ever-closer to fiction. The past historians attempt to describe, Certeau suggests, is as fictional a construct as the universe constructed in the novel. “History has become our myth...”<sup>48</sup>

For Certeau, the irony is that both writer and reader see history not as a myth but as a science.<sup>49</sup> Steven Ungar points to this paradox when he writes, “Because history is inevitably tied to myth in the sense that it is a story permeated by collective practices and values, it holds the possibility of becoming the one myth in a scientific society that seeks to reject myths.”<sup>50</sup> By writing history,

the historian does not describe a historical “reality,” but rather writes himself and his own time against the “other”—against the savage, the marginal. Since Machiavelli, historians have struggled to write that which cannot be written: the experience of living in the world as perceived by participants. Certeau makes this paradox explicit from the outset: the frontispiece of the book portrays rational Western man meeting the savage “other” of the New World. This encounter sets the contours of the modern historical discipline: “. . . what is really initiated here is a colonization of the body by the discourse of power. This is *writing that conquers*. It will use the New World as if it were a blank, ‘savage’ page on which Western desire will be written.”<sup>51</sup> Certeau argues that our sense of progress is determined against the “other.” We tell ourselves what we are by writing about that which we believe we are not: “intelligibility is established through a relation with the other; it moves (or ‘progresses’) by changing what it makes of its ‘other’—the Indian, the past, the people, the mad, the child, the Third World.”<sup>52</sup> History as a discipline depends on the “other”: “The writing of history can begin only when a present is divided from a past. An initial act of exclusion separates current time from past time, or the living from the dead.”<sup>53</sup> Above all, history writes against death, and in writing against death, it becomes a rite.<sup>54</sup> “It honors [the dead] with a ritual of which they have been deprived. . . . The dear departed find a haven in the text *because* they can neither speak nor do harm anymore. The ghosts find access through writing on the condition that they remain *forever silent*.”<sup>55</sup> Much like a funeral eulogy or a burial ceremony, writing history exorcizes death.

Certeau suggests that history can only gain formal coherence (in narrative structure, in periodization) through an emphasis on rupture with the past and the distinction of our identity against “otherness.”

Historical discourse makes a social identity explicit, not so much in the way it is ‘given’ or held as stable, as in the ways it is differentiated from a former period or another society. It presupposed a rupture that changes a tradition into a past object, in the manner in which the history of the ancient regime implies the Revolution. But this relation with an origin, either near or distant, from which society separates itself without being able to eliminate it, is what historians analyze.<sup>56</sup>

The writing of history, the quest to draw borders around what is “us” and “modern,” is a search for origins, a delineation of what is “not us” and “primitive.” Through the process of writing our history as a history of cultural evolution, historians label those whose beliefs and practices do not fit into the dominant trajectory as “survivals,” the product of a cultural lag. Approached with a mixture of sentimentality and condescension, they either relegate these “remainders” to folklore or eliminate them.<sup>57</sup>

“Culture” is elaborated right where the power of *producing* history is built, and it is opposed to the social regions that it establishes within the inertia of a kind of “Nature”—originary, passive, and unfathomable. Following this movement, religion, although it is still massively received, becomes divided. Precisely where it takes part in the practices of power, it confirms a reason that it no longer defines and which slowly inverts religion’s own principles.... The consequences were to be manifold. They cannot be reduced to social problems. In particular, because it was constructed in a direct relation with its other, the “savage,” culture established a double language: that of “enlightened” reason, avowable, productive, organizing an axiomatic of social utility; and that of beliefs, disavowed but always there, denied in the present but assuming the figure of an obscure origin, an “obscurantist” past of systems which took their place.<sup>58</sup>

It was this initial conquest, Certeau points out, that brought history into politics—employing the discourse of the elite, the historian came to serve the state.

Certeau describes the slow process by which Enlightenment rationality and the state came to occupy the defining social and cultural place formerly held by the Church and religion. The Church became fragmented, and the clergy began to perform a new *disciplinary* function.

Placed in the world between what the Church and the society were separately becoming, and living this contradiction in a place binding them to the producers of society (that is, to the educators), but in the name of representations that they were obliged to uphold but which allowed no means of reflecting upon what they were really doing, these priests were more and more dedicated to administrative tasks as well as to silence in matters concerning the meaning of their faith. The solution to this dilemma consisted in concentrating the exercise of organizational powers upon the objective sector that was supposed to represent the conservation of Christian fidelity; in other words, upon the conservation of the “religious practices” of established discourse: worship and ideology.<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, Certeau observes that the Enlightenment civilizing project conforms to a messianic narrative that promises to liberate us from darkness (located both in the past and within us) and bring us into the light, promising freedom in the shape of a perfect civilization.

Messianism, evangelism, crusade: these Christian structures can be recognized in the enterprise which associates the Enlightenment with their predication, this civilizing mission with the power of changing nature, and the task of converting the meaning of being and of doing with the truth of history. Hegel will be the theologian of this future of the Spirit.

But this new evangelism inverts the principle of Providence which is made manifest in the conversion of man. It is a mission, but it belongs to an elite that receives its privilege and power from itself, that no longer derives them from the heavens above.<sup>60</sup>

The discourse of power (political ideology) co-opts religious rhetoric, using it for political ends.

What becomes apparent in Certeau’s analysis of seventeenth and eighteenth century religiosity is that the very foundations of the discipline deny the historian access to the reality he seeks to understand. In searching for a society that is consistent, coherent, and that can be interpreted through rational analysis, the historian fails to take into account that this total system may be a product of his own construction. “Can we suppose that the French population are entirely modeled by what an elite would like them to be?”<sup>61</sup> Certeau wonders, and suggests that in trying to access the past, the historian must accept that which reason has categorized as unthinkable.

... it appears that we have to conceive of the possibility of distinct and combined systems, without having to introduce into their analysis the support of an originary and unitary reality. This implies that we should be able to think of a plurality of systems specified through heterogeneous types and surfaces of functioning; that the very nature of these systems varies (the religious system, for example, has not always been either stable or distinct from what became a political system); that compatibilities, relations, and reciprocal compensations among different systems specify the units marked off by history; that finally the process by which these units are broken down or changed in order to give way to others can be analyzed as the path these combinations follow toward thresholds of compatibility or tolerance among the elements that they are combining.<sup>62</sup>

The inconsistency of Bloch’s medieval merchant may have to remain inconsistent, and the historian may not be able to incorporate it into a rational depiction of reality: “reference to a ‘coherence’ that might embrace the totality of data from a period or of a country collides with the resistance of this raw material.”<sup>63</sup> The merchant may be equally at home in the market and in the church. The coexistence of what the historian believes to be contradictory, even mutually exclusive beliefs, might not present the merchant himself with a problem.

### Stories Told and Untold

Certeau’s search for the ‘discontents’ of the civilizing process seems to be driven by his belief that their world is a repository of the transcendence that has been exiled by modernity. To access Bloch’s “prayers on the lips of the humble”—popular practices and mentalities—Certeau suggests that we need to look at modes of communication

that remain unwritten: “we would need to look at the language of gestures and utensils, to those discourses called ‘tacit’ which were only made audible in the course of revolts or revolutions with scythes, pitch-forks, hoes and the like. We would have to take very seriously the *formality of practices other than writing*. Perhaps this reflection would lead us to recover within language its function of speech.”<sup>64</sup> Certeau argues that what was omitted, marginalized and repressed by the discourse of power became silent, in the sense that it lost its own language. But the silence of the repressed expressed itself through practice. Using a borrowed language, the tactics of the powerless subverted the discourse of power.

The historian Lynn Hunt observes that there is an “ongoing tension in history between stories that have been told and others that might be told.”<sup>65</sup> Certeau, by exposing the underlying connection between power and historical discourse, points to the stories that might be told if one stops telling the story of “progress.” By rejecting traditional narrative, we can tell a different story. We can also tell the same story differently. Certeau discovers that historians have been writing two stories. The first pointed to a presence, while the second marked an absence. In writing the history of “progress,” historians have also written the history of “otherness,” of those qualities (the irrational, the emotional, the sacred) that the civilizing process has repressed in the modern subject. Modernity is a process of alienation: man becomes fragmented, estranged from himself and nature. Certeau’s enterprise is nostalgic, pointing to the absences in our present.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, for Certeau, the practice of writing history itself becomes a civilizing force. Historical writing promotes some elements of the past as beacons of our bright future, and denounces others as evidence of the “unenlightened” behavior we work to shed in the present.

The metamorphosis of Christianity into ethics and, more broadly, into culture can be located ultimately under the sign of *progress*... Thus, the impossibility of having a social reality gain a structural coherence or of identifying language with a logic leads to envisaging reason as a story of progress; that is, to categorizing observed phenomena along a line of a development of reason. Dates become a means of recovering an order, since exceptions can be ranked among resistances and former prejudices... Custom is not only a fact, but also a tool: a society acquires through it the power of endlessly “perfecting” itself, of acting on itself, of changing its nature, of constructing itself. From custom we pass to education: toward the end of the century this “myth” confers upon civilization the form of a conquest binding reason to the ability to transform man through the diffusion of the Enlightenment, and coloring all action that works toward progress with a moral value.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, Certeau puts forth that through the process of becoming civilized, we have colonized otherness not only in the form of the past and savagery; we have colonized

the “other” within, disciplining ourselves and repressing that which does not conform. Those who did not, or could not, do this successfully—the mad, the criminal—we have exiled to “colonies” (asylums, prisons) on the periphery of society. Yet ultimately, in “freeing” ourselves from the darkness of the “other,” we have become constrained in our behavior, our imagination, our emotions. We have exorcised our freedom and have become prisoners—alienated and fragmented selves—inside a civilization of our own making.

Certeau seeks to unmask the Western historical tradition. He argues that from its initial, defining act of conquest, history has been telling the story of power while pretending to be telling the story of man. He shows how the state took over the Church’s role of defining the sacred and the transcendent, how through enlightenment it has “civilized” the emotional world of man. By combining religious ritual, national mythology, and political doctrine, the state constructed a new model that dictated the public and private behavior of citizens. For Certeau, history as a discipline is complicit in this project. Indeed, he implicates historians in the crimes of the state. History becomes the accomplice, the witness, and, ultimately, the victim of a collaboration with power. Yet by the end of the twentieth century, many historians sought to tell a different story, to move away from the idealist-statist paradigm. The history of the ordinary man became the antidote to the history of a “progress” that produced such devastating results. Reacting to the teleological framework that characterized historical scholarship since the Enlightenment, both Bloch and Certeau attempted to produce a new relationship between the historian, the state, and experience. Both authors studied the modern subject, searching for the transcendence marginalized by “progress” in general, and secularization in particular. At bottom, their concerns were moral. Both authors had lost faith in the ability of the ideologically driven state to dictate human morality. They searched for the sacred in the world of modern man, in order to return it to history.

---

## Endnotes

1. Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, Peter Putnam, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1953).

2. Andre Burguiere, “The Fate of the History of Mentalities in the Annales,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 3 (July, 1982): 424.

3. Michel De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, Tom Conley, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

4. Bloch, *Historian’s Craft*, 4. As Bloch points out, the Christian drama of sin and redemption unfolds in time, and therefore in history.

5. *Ibid.*, 7-8.

6. *Ibid.*, 8.

7. *Ibid.*, 9.

8. *Ibid.*, 9. “Experience has surely taught us that it is impossible to decide in advance whether even the most abstract speculations may not eventually prove extraordinarily helpful in practice.”

9. Ibid., 10.
10. Ibid., 13.
11. Ibid., 18.
12. Ibid., 14.
13. Patrick H. Hutton, "The History of Mentalities: The New Map of Cultural History." *History and Theory*, 20, no. 3 (October, 1981): 238.
14. Hutton, 242-243.
15. Hutton, 237.
16. As early as 1929, Bloch articulates his conceptualization of the history of *mentalité*: "'Social realities are a whole. One could not pretend to explain an institution if one did not link it to the great intellectual, emotional, mystical currents of the contemporaneous mentality.'" Bloch described this in his plan for teaching that should have accompanied his candidacy to the College de France. Burguiere, 430.
17. Bloch, 35.
18. "But for a philosophy to impregnate an entire age, it is not necessary that it should act precisely in accordance with a prescribed formula not that the majority of minds should come under its influence except by a sort of osmosis of which they are only half aware. Like Cartesian "science," the criticism of historical evidence make a *tabula rasa* of its beliefs." Bloch, 84.
19. Ibid., 42.
20. Ibid., 80.
21. Ibid., 117.
22. Natalie Zemon Davis, "History's Two Bodies." *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 1 (February, 1988): 21.
23. Bloch, 23.
24. Ibid., 26.
25. Ibid., 47.
26. Ibid., 187.
27. Ibid., 242. Hutton writes that, "[The Annales historian's history] is not a history of ideas, but a history of mind. In this respect, his primary concern is to show how a changing relationship between man's rational and emotional faculties reveals the changing shape of human nature." Hutton, 238.
28. Ibid., 243.
29. Ibid., 258.
30. "This extremely ambitious program is proposed to link the history of knowledge to the history of collective representation, to retrace the hidden thread that weaves through an epoch or from one epoch to another, between the most elaborate intellectual productions and unconscious beliefs." Bruguere, 434.
31. Bloch, 26-27.
32. Bloch, 43.
33. Bloch, 53-55.
34. Ibid., 58.
35. Ibid., 34.
36. Ibid., 152-153.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 47.
39. Ibid., 50.
40. Bloch, 110.
41. Ibid., 67.
42. Ibid., 137.
43. Ibid., 139-140.
44. Bloch, 143.
45. Bloch, 166-167.
46. Certeau, 79.
47. Certeau, 87.
48. Ibid., 45.
49. As Certeau writes, "from the end of the eighteenth century history plays the role of maintaining the relation of reason with the larger totality that it cannot contain—of being the bigamous discourse in which knowledge is simultaneously married to the science which *produces* history, and the novel, the 'extenuation of myth' that allows the 'spirit of the time,' the *Zeitgeist*, to be *expressed*." Ibid., 185.
50. Steven Ungar, "Against Forgetting: Notes on Revision and the Writing of History," *Diacritics* 22, no. 2 (Summer, 1992): 68.
51. Ibid., xxv.
52. Ibid., 3.
53. Ibid., viii.
54. "Death obsesses the West. In this respect, the discourse of the human sciences is pathological: a discourse of pathos—misfortune and passionate action—in a confrontation with this death that our society can no longer conceive of as a way of living one's life. On its own account, historiography takes for granted the fact that it has become impossible to believe in the presence of the dead that has organized (or organizes) the experience of entire civilizations.... What is perishable is its data; *progress* is its motto." Certeau, 5.
55. Ibid., 1-2.
56. Certeau, 45.
57. Ibid., 130.
58. Ibid., 171.
59. Certeau, 186.
60. Certeau, 178.
61. Certeau, 180.
62. Ibid., 122.
63. Ibid., 121.
64. Ibid., 191.
65. Lynn Hunt, "History as Gesture; or, the Scandal of History," *Consequences of Theory*. Jonathan Arac and Barbara Johnson, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): 91-107.
66. On the relationship between nostalgia and modernity, see Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001).
67. Certeau, 178.

University of California, Berkeley  
Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies  
260 Stephens Hall # 2304  
Berkeley, CA 94720-2304  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

### Grants Offered Through ISEEEES

US Dept of Education **Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships** for Academic Year and Summer intensive language training enable eligible graduate and undergraduate students who are US citizens or permanent residents to gain competence in the modern foreign languages critical to the national needs of the US and training in area and international studies. Academic Year languages include Armenian, Bulgarian, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, and Russian. **Deadline:** January 24, 2011. For details, see <http://www.grad.berkeley.edu/financial/deadlines.shtml#graddiv>

**ISEEEES/BPS Travel Grants** provide limited travel support for ISEEEES/BPS-affiliated graduate students. Grants up to \$400 are awarded to students who are on the official program of a professional conference or workshop. **Deadline:** Applications accepted on a rolling basis. To apply, send a request with a budget to Dr. Edward W. Walker, BPS, UC Berkeley, 260 Stephens Hall #2304, Berkeley, CA 94720-2304; Tel: 510-643-6736; [eww@berkeley.edu](mailto:eww@berkeley.edu)

The **Drago and Danica Kosovac Prize** is awarded for a senior or honors thesis in the social sciences or humanities that researches some aspect of Serbian culture or history. Cal undergraduate students are eligible to apply. The application includes submission of the thesis and two letters of recommendation. No electronic or faxed applications will be accepted.

**Deadline:** Applications accepted on a rolling basis. **Contact:** Jeffrey Pennington, ISEEEES, UC Berkeley, 260 Stephens Hall #2304, Berkeley CA 94720-2304; Tel: 510-643-6736; [jpennington@berkeley.edu](mailto:jpennington@berkeley.edu)

The **Peter N. Kujachich Endowment in Serbian and Montenegrin Studies** offers awards up to approximately \$5,000 for 2011-12 to faculty, graduate or undergraduate student projects that focus on the experience of the Serbian and Montenegrin peoples. Applications should consist of a research or project proposal, budget, and letter of recommendation from department chair or faculty advisor. **Deadline:** Applications accepted on a rolling basis. **Contact:** Jeffrey Pennington, ISEEEES, UC Berkeley, 260 Stephens Hall #2304, Berkeley CA 94720-2304; Tel: 510-643-6736; [jpennington@berkeley.edu](mailto:jpennington@berkeley.edu)

The **Hertelendy Fellowship in Hungarian Studies** offers awards to encourage and recognize the study of Hungary. This fellowship provides partial support (tuition, stipend, and/or travel and research-related expenses) to UC Berkeley graduate students working in Hungarian studies. UC Berkeley faculty, undergraduates, and visiting researchers may also apply for funding of research projects devoted to Hungarian studies. Research projects may include conference presentations and language study. An application consists of a letter of intent, research proposal, budget, and letter of recommendation from faculty advisor or department chair. **Deadline:** Applications accepted on a rolling basis. **Contact:** Jeffrey Pennington, ISEEEES, UC Berkeley, 260 Stephens Hall #2304, Berkeley CA 94720-2304; Tel: 510-643-6736; [jpennington@berkeley.edu](mailto:jpennington@berkeley.edu)