



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

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

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Eurasian Studies

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## Notes from the Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are delighted to welcome a new colleague to our community, Edward Tyerman, Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures. Edward holds a PhD in Russian and Comparative Literature from Columbia University, and will teach 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Russian literature, early Soviet culture, and late-Soviet and post-Soviet literature and film. His interests include early Soviet culture, Soviet internationalism, cultural connections between Russia and China, Russian and Soviet Orientalism, experiences of post-socialism, and subjectivity and self-narration.

Our Fall schedule featured a number of excellent speakers, beginning in late August with Paweł Machcewicz, former director of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk, who spoke on the museum's history and the intersections of history, memory, and politics. In September, Bálint Magyar, sociologist and former Minister of Education in Hungary, provocatively compared the political regimes of Hungary and Poland, and attracted much attention near and far. Dr. Matthew Rojansky of the Woodrow Wilson Center, spoke in October on the conflict between the US and Russia and asked if we are witnessing the "new normal." On November 7, Lucan Way, Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto and Berkeley alumnus, lectured on the Russian Revolution and Soviet durability. The theme of Russia continued in a talk on "Putinism" by our own Steve Fish, Professor of Political Science later that month.

On October 25, William Taubman, emeritus professor at Amherst College, gave our annual Colin and Elsa Miller Lecture on Mikhail Gorbachev, drawing on his recently published biography. Taubman emphasized the impact of Gorbachev's personality on his policies and his fate, but admitted that Gorbachev remains a mystery.

From mid-November to mid-December, ISEEES hosted Hon. Bronisław Komorowski, former President of Poland (2010-15), and Ms. Aleksandra Leo, Director of the Bronisław Komorowski Institute. Komorowski gave several talks at Berkeley, including a lecture on Euro-Atlantic security from the viewpoint of Central and Eastern Europe, and a presentation to the graduate student *Kroužek* working group on the dilemmas of European integration following Brexit.

Our faculty/graduate student lunchtime seminar series featured Cinzia Solari, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Jason Wittenberg of our Department of Political Science, who spoke on their intellectual trajectories in the study of our region.

ISEEES is hosting four visiting scholars. Prof. Edith Clowes is on leave from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Virginia. Dr. Jan Szumski, Assistant Professor at the Polish Academy of Sciences, is using a Fulbright grant to study the influence of Soviet policy on the historical disciplines in the Eastern Bloc. Ms. Ionela Ciolan is completing a PhD at the National University

of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest, Romania, and has a Fulbright grant to explore European foreign policy towards countries in the EU's Eastern Partnership. Mr. Alexandru Groza is working on a doctorate in history at the University of Bucharest, and is using his Fulbright to study Romanian external propaganda in the US during the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

The 2018 Berkeley-Stanford Conference will be held on Friday, March 9, at Stanford University. The theme will be "Empires: Past and Present." Our biennial outreach conference will be held on Saturday, April 28. The topic will be "Bourgeois, Democratic, Nationalist, Communist: Post-World War I Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe."

Be sure to check our website <http://iseees.berkeley.edu/> for other upcoming events and updates to the calendar. We look forward to seeing you at our events in 2018!

As a last point, I want to note the retirement of Edward "Ned" Walker, who joined us in 1993 as director of the Berkeley-Stanford program in post-Soviet studies, and also taught as adjunct professor in the Department of Political Science. In this quarter century Ned became a valued colleague and friend as well as indispensable mentor to graduate students across disciplines.

It's not easy to put one's finger on precisely what has made Ned also so well-liked, among faculty of all disciplinary stripes, the practitioners whom he invited to campus, but most impressively, the graduate students whom he helped mold into cohorts. Maybe the post-Berkeley success of those alumni points us toward

answers: Ned holds a PhD in Political Science from Columbia, and had a knack for getting historians and humanists to wonder exactly what they are getting at when they speak and write. He got through to us and pushed us to new understandings because he's no mean historian and humanist himself, as anyone knows who heard him speak on religion or quote from poetry, or who managed to get one of the CD's he gave away before leaving, ranging from little known jazz to little known classical repertoires and everything in between.

Ned started with old-style education at a Catholic boarding school in Kenya, and made his way through Harvard and the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins, before Columbia and Berkeley. Somewhere between liberal arts and Soviet studies he picked up sailing, and as is his way, did not keep it to himself, but used it to bring us closer together—faculty, visitors, graduate students. Like the best academic conviviality, the "Slavic sails" were seriously convivial and enjoyably academic—unpretentious, fun, and memorable.

The great Harvard preacher Peter J. Gomes used to tell the classes graduating each year that there is nothing worse than premature nostalgia, and in order to combat this temptation we graduates of Ned's school hope to have our friend and mentor back frequently in the years to come.

John Connelly  
ISEEES Director  
Professor of History



## Save the Date

*Upcoming event during the Spring 2018 semester\*\**



### 42nd Annual Berkeley-Stanford Conference *Empires: Past and Present*

Friday, March 9, 2018  
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Stanford Humanities Center  
Stanford University

*\*\*Please note that event details may change. Updates will be sent out by email and can be found online at <http://iseees.berkeley.edu/>.*

Professor Sarah Cramsey created a summer abroad program for students to explore coexistence in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany through the Berkeley Summer Abroad Program. The course is a 6-unit History course entitled “The History of Coexistence and ‘Otherness’ in Modern Europe.” ISEES Assistant Director Zachary Kelly assisted Professor Cramsey on the program. The second group traveled together for 6 weeks during Summer 2017, visiting Warsaw, Krakow, Oswiecim, Prague, Frankfurt an der Oder, and Berlin.

# Memorialization: Preserving and Destroying the Past

**Katharine Kuchinski**

*Undergraduate Student, UC Berkeley*

When I first visited the Roman Forum, weaving my way through rows of columns and statues with broken limbs, I was struck by how *ruinous* it was. Truly. Dandelions had sprouted up through the cobblestones, several young children were hopping from one column stump to the next, and the occasional Classics nerd such as myself was wandering around with an old copy of Virgil in hand. It was not until I explored the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto this summer that I realized the following: ruins do not *have* to be ancient. As I stood before the rubble of Miła Street houses, I realized that the human desire to memorialize past and present - through the preservation *or* destruction of ruins - is a phenomenon present in the landscapes of both the Roman Forum *and* the Warsaw Ghetto. Indeed, “Jewish Ruins”<sup>1</sup> are just as legitimate as those of the Ancient Romans, and the sites of the former Warsaw Ghetto, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the House of the Wannsee Conference prove no exception. However, the extent to which these memorials impart a transformative experience on visitors proves limited by the inevitable constraints on knowledge about the past - no matter how recent this past - as well as the human tendency to also *destroy* sites of memorialization.

Even when I first stood in front of the Warsaw Uprising Monument with POLIN behind me, on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto, it was hard to shake the idea of Warsaw as “the modern Pompeii.”<sup>2</sup> There was nothing there - nothing left of what was once the epicenter of Jewish life and culture in Warsaw, as the Nazis had leveled the Ghetto following the Uprising in 1943. It was not until physical ruins were before me, specifically the remnants of the Ghetto wall, that I began to interact with the landscape. Ruins of the walls of ancient civilizations have always captivated me - Hadrian’s Wall, the Servian Wall, and the walls of Troy - because of what they represent: the first signs of civilization, including protection and defense, but also division, isolation, and containment. When walls are built, distinctions are drawn; differences are highlighted. Indeed, after the Nazis built eleven miles of brick around the Warsaw Jewish quarter in 1940, whatever coexistence had once characterized Polish-Jewish relations during the Interwar Period broke down. To now stand before the last remaining section of this brick wall - marked by a simple memorial plaque - had a similarly transfixing effect. Even as an American student in the twenty-first century, free to walk in whichever

direction I chose after leaving this site of memorialization, the imposing brick structure nevertheless inflicted an overwhelming sense of loss - of culture, of life, of coexistence - as if the hatred and contempt of the Nazis and the complacency of others toward Jews was the mortar that still held those bricks together.

Just as a wall changed the way I thought about the landscape of what was once the Warsaw Ghetto, then Otto Dov Kulka’s *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death* shaped my experience at the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau. In his reflections, Dov Kulka, who spent his boyhood years as a prisoner at Auschwitz, describes his return to Birkenau some thirty years later, specifically his encounter with the ruins of Crematorium I, as follows: “There were bushes and trees there, growing wild on those ruins...The stairs that led to it still exist, and the concrete roof that collapsed, like a tiger’s back or an ocean wave, lay upon it.”<sup>3</sup> His description still holds true today. I visited Birkenau on a disarmingly picturesque summer day; the sky was cloudless and birds were chirping. It did not feel right that this quintessential place of death and destruction was at once serene and - it pains me to say it - almost beautiful. Dov Kulka writes of his return, “It was no longer a childhood landscape, it was a landscape of - I don’t want to say this word - but it was a graveyard landscape, the burial of Auschwitz. Auschwitz had been buried...But everything was there, and I, at least, was able to recognize it.”<sup>4</sup> No longer a prisoner, nor a child, Dov Kulka’s observation that “Auschwitz had been buried” acknowledges the landscape for the ruin it has become.

However, Otto Dov Kulka also emphasizes that “everything was there” and still very much recognizable at Birkenau. To me, Auschwitz-Birkenau is the closest thing to a complete ruin that I, as a student of the Ancient World, will ever encounter. As I stood under a shady patch of trees, across from Crematorium I, listening to Dov Kulka’s haunting words being read aloud, never has the past felt so tangible. The vast expanse that is Birkenau, with its uniform layout of barracks, bears witness to the dehumanizing mechanics of the former camp; the general structure of the collapsed Crematorium I is still visible - aided by a diagram, visitors can observe where the entrance, changing, and “shower” rooms lie, thus tracing the path of the unsuspecting victims who descended

1 Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 155.

2 Ibid., 70.

3 Otto Dov Kulka, *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death: Reflections on Memory and Imagination*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2013), 10.

4 Ibid., 7.

into the depths of the Crematoria, never to return. For me, the train tracks - perfectly intact - were the most devastating. Walking their length, I was struck with the overwhelming sense of helplessness that Otto Dov Kulka must have felt upon his return. He was Orpheus, traveling to Hades and back. His friends lost to Auschwitz suffered the same fate as Eurydice; just out of reach, Orpheus can neither retrieve nor join her, and is thus forced to return alone.

My final stop, the House of the Wannsee Conference, a site of memorialization in Berlin that had nearly been destroyed following the Second World War, explicitly invited discussion about contemporary efforts at memorialization. The day before I flew home, I took the train to Wannsee, and then from there a bus to the infamous villa where the Final Solution was planned. It seemed only fitting that the skies were grey and ominous; a clap of thunder sounded as I made my way down the long gravel driveway to the entrance of the House. Inside, I found the rooms filled with a permanent exhibit on both the Wannsee Conference and the Holocaust, with each room focused on a specific theme - three of these rooms are actually based on perpetrator groups - rather than the victims - including the conference participants. The rooms are bare except for these exhibits, and it was eerie to walk through the halls and eventually into the dining room where the meeting was held. From there, I walked out onto the terrace overlooking the lake, where a group of teenagers happened to be posing for pictures. I thought this insensitive, given where we were, but it was easy to see why they had picked this landscape for a photoshoot. It was raining, but the grounds were still beautiful. It was unfathomable to me that this peaceful summer retreat, tucked into the woods and surrounded by nature, was where a group of high-ranking Nazi officials, headed by Reinhard Heydrich, had met to discuss the Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe.

Despite Holocaust-survivor Joseph Wulf's idea for a documentation center at the site in 1965, it was not until the 1980s that the discussion resurfaced, ultimately resulting in the House being opened to the public in 1992, as a memorial and educational site.<sup>5</sup> Right before leaving, I had ventured upstairs to explore the library, yet had coincidentally stumbled upon an inconspicuous series of poster boards instead. The first one read: *We are interested in your comments and ideas concerning the prospects and challenges of memorial work. What is absent from established memorial work? What aspects of this period of history continue to be overlooked? How can we approach the history of National Socialism in new ways? What additional topics should memorial sites address?*<sup>6</sup> These topics for discussion were the first of their kind I had seen at an active memorial site, and I soon found myself thinking about why such

5 "Joseph Wulf." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d. Web.

6 House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial and Educational Site.

an exhibit happened to be *here*, at a nearly-destroyed and very new site of memorialization in Germany. The easy answer was what I had heard several times over the course of the past week: Germany had to be particularly sensitive to these topics, *given its history*. It was a phrase I had heard at least ten times since arriving in Germany a week ago - "given its history" - and for the first time I really stopped to think about what it meant. *Given its history*, how could Germany best contribute to global efforts at memorializing the Holocaust? One sentence from the exhibit stood out to me: "the memorials must continue to question the established culture of remembrance, discover forgotten themes and sites, and explore new ways to conduct memorial work."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the so-called "culture of remembrance" is still very much evolving; it is a changing process, and if I had ever thought ancient ruins had nothing to do with a perfectly intact villa, then I was wrong. Bridged by centuries, all sites of memorialization - preserved or destroyed - have one thing in common: the "culture of remembrance" runs through these landscapes, ever-changing because of what we may or may not know about the history; their difference lies in the meaning they invoke in each of us.

As a Classics major, my experience at each of these sites was very much shaped by relativity. In my field, I interact with many ruins. Thus, to see almost complete sites of memorialization, with the exception of the Warsaw Ghetto, was a meaningful change for me. And, even for sites that were closer to the side of ruins, like the Warsaw Ghetto, I was presented with a wealth of documentation to orient me beforehand - for example, Jürgen Stroop, Marek Edelman, and Emmanuel Ringelblum. I now appreciate, however, that for contemporary historians of this era, this still may not be enough. For just as Classicists pour over broken papyrus scrolls trying to piece together fragments of Sappho, historians of the 1940s are searching for that missing link between Hitler and the Final Solution, or in the case of the Warsaw Ghetto, the extent to which Christians aided Jews during the Uprising. In that sense, for me it will be reassuring to go back to Berkeley in the fall, knowing that studying the 1940s can be just as frustrating as studying the Ancient World. For if there is one thing I have learned, it is this: even the memorialization of recent history has its roots in the ancient past. As has been aptly written, "Ruins, though, are hardly static; they have histories that change as people perceive and deal with them in different ways - neglecting, destroying, altering, transforming, preserving, restoring, and reusing them."<sup>8</sup> Thus, as we historians and Classicists continue to grapple with landscapes of the past - whether they be the walls of Troy or those of the Warsaw Ghetto - let us all keep in mind that history, too, is hardly static, and memorialization is a meaningful lens through which to view it.

7 Ibid.

8 Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland*, xiii.

# Merely Players: The Role of Performative Assimilation

Madeleine Karydes

Undergraduate Student, UC Berkeley

In a recent visit to a bilingual school in Prague, I spoke with a student named Sophie about migration and cultural exchange. Sophie identifies as Ukrainian, even though her family has been living in the Czech Republic for several years, and she prides herself on speaking fluent Czech and celebrating Czech holidays. As we talked, she asserted that all immigrants ought to “follow the rules” of the country that welcomes them, in order to “be good citizens” there. To clarify her perspective further, she applied this logic specifically to the case of Muslim refugees, saying that the choice to wear a hijab makes Muslim women stand out - and not “looking Czech” is a reason for their social exclusion. Amidst the crowd of boisterous high-schoolers, clad in blue jeans and a neutral tee shirt, Sophie’s light brown hair and blue eyes blend in seamlessly.

The question of how to approach assimilation reaches from college campuses to political platforms to ethnic restaurant cuisine, and beyond. The current influx of refugees in the European Union galvanized debates of citizenship and belonging anew. The United States boils with talk of travel bans and border walls. The EU struggles to provide adequate asylum on the front lines, with the specter of Brexit looming in the background. In Germany, a country largely considered one of the most generous countries in welcoming asylum-seekers in recent years, immigration policy dominates public concern in opinion polling.<sup>1</sup> Amid these debates, two perspectives emerge most prevalently: one side argues the necessity of rapid assimilation to smooth over a cultural transition process, while others decry the high expectations to immediately adjust as just adding another heavy burden to refugees’ already-exhausting journey to safety. Christiane Beckmann, from the nonprofit Moabit Hilft in Berlin, explains that learning a second language requires reconciling enormous loss and healing from psychological trauma before academic retention even becomes possible.<sup>2</sup> Undeniably, the mental toll of assimilation weighs heavily.

Rogers Brubaker’s article “Aftermaths of Empire and the Unmixing of Peoples: Historical and Comparative Perspectives” examines the unfolding phenomenon of post-Soviet migration in and out of Russia through the lens of other historical diasporas. This piece serves as a useful tool to decode current tensions surrounding migration - though Brubaker takes care to acknowledge that the past cannot offer “precise analogs,” only “analysis” to shed light on the present day.<sup>3</sup> In this thorough and detailed article, Brubaker walks the reader through three examples of post-imperial demographic reorganizations, and considers the influencing factors for each scenario, before describing how these factors may present some semblance of a larger pattern. Centrally, Brubaker

acknowledges that the motivating factors for populations to uproot and move are diverse and variegated. Brian Porter’s work, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, provides a critical counterpoint to these observations. With the case study of the National Democratic party in Poland to illustrate his point, Porter argues that the formation of the nation as a political concept did not automatically engender violent, disciplinary categorizations of “us” on one side of a border versus “them” on the other. Rather, this ideology festered within the deliberate rhetoric of specific individuals who “perceived a world populated by mutually hostile and competing communities surrounded by high walls of inclusion and exclusion.”<sup>4</sup> That is, nationalism began to hate when it needed to identify and subjugate its neighbors.

Brubaker traces the various motivations for ethnic unmixing through a range of historical expressions, while Porter dissects the sociopolitical rhetoric that facilitated the weaponization of mass nationalism. Both Brubaker and Porter push audiences to consider difficult questions, and provide a launch pad for further intellectual investigation. People are once more leaving their homes out of fear for their lives, targeted for uncontrollable factors, just as in the past. And the harsh spirit of nationalism seems no more generous in its welcome. We as readers are left to ask, in what scenarios has “belonging” to a particular country been defined as the practice or performance of cultural norms? To test this tenuous definition, can national identity be self-chosen, or is it inalienable? Quite simply, is there a “right” way to be a good or successful immigrant? And why are some immigrants more deserving than others in a shared experience of diaspora?

As these questions suggest, pragmatic solutions to social reorganization remain elusive; historical precedent demonstrates a nearly impossible standard for practical assimilation. Walking and talking like a citizen is not enough to erase prejudice, or the stereotypes that abound based on skin color, or passport status. Dr. Carsten Koschmieder explained in a lecture that racism still persists in Germany, as evidenced by an ignorant politician’s racially charged remarks about not wanting Jerome Boateng, a black German, for a neighbor - despite the fact that Boateng, a legal citizen born in Berlin, proudly plays for the German national soccer team.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the task of “fitting in” is not simple. The categories of identity and belonging are messy, and difficult to truly claim autonomy over when the political landscape shifts so unpredictably.

If all the world’s a stage, then perhaps Shakespeare’s theatrical axiom holds more sinister implications for the performance of cultural assimilation in contemporary Europe. This performance encompasses the adoption of a new country’s language, behavioral norms, foods, dress, and social markers of in-group status. In other words, playing the role of a good national citizen to the best of one’s ability, in spite of improbable odds. For example, a Syri-

1 Koschmieder, Carsten. “Who Is German?” Otto-Suhr Institute for Political Science, Berlin. 5 July 2017. Lecture.

2 Beckmann, Christiane. “Welcome to Moabit Hilft.” Moabit Hilft EV Headquarters, Berlin. 6 July 2017. Address.

3 Brubaker, Rogers. “Aftermaths of Empire and the Unmixing of Peoples: Historical and Comparative Perspectives.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18.2 (1995): 189-218. Web.

4 Porter, Brian. *When Nationalism Began to Hate*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

5 Koschmieder Lecture.

an refugee learning German and rooting for the German national team in football games in order to better fit in with his peers - as Mohammed, a tour guide with “Why We’re Here” in Berlin, does - performs assimilation by mirroring the dominant social cues around him as a form of protection. This kind of wholesale adjustment requires mental and emotional fortitude and a relentless

optimism for a kinder future. Sophie, the Ukrainian student, believes that immigrants must quickly abandon their past and adapt to the present, regardless of external factors; but this is no short order. Rather than place the onus on minorities seeking refuge, it is high time the citizens of the majority provide our peers with a fair chance.

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# The Affect of Displacement

Roya Aghavali

*Undergraduate Student, UC Berkeley*

One of my first memories as a child was marching in protests in front of the federal building in Los Angeles with my parents chanting, “Freedom for the People of Iran.” This was because I was privileged of being born to two parents who were refugees from Iran, who dedicated their young lives to the resistance against the current regime of Iran and for the fight for democracy in Iran. But, as my parents have always said, their individual freedom came with a price. The price of leaving their home, their families, their friends, the familiarity and comfort they once knew, to come to a new and unknown place where they had to go through many hardships for a better life and yet have the desire and motivation to continue fighting for a democratic Iran. My parents offered me a different perspective on life, one that I would not have been able to learn through any other means. Living with my parents also helped me have a better understanding of how displacement and exile had affected them. I saw how their displacement transcended differently as time went on and how it affected not only them, but their friends, families and even me, a US-born citizen who has never been to Iran. The book *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death* by Otto Dov Kulka and the article “We Refugees” by Hannah Arendt helped paint the different images and affects that displacement has on people who had to leave their homeland due to traumatic events and how it affects the way that they perceive their past, their home, their survival, and their fight to be free.

As I read Otto Dov Kulka’s book, I began thinking of my mother and her journey as a refugee. When the Iranian revolution occurred my mother was only fourteen years old. When she would speak of her childhood, she would never speak of politics but the happy memories she had with her family and friends. When Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in 1979, everything suddenly changed and a religious dictatorship and oppressive regime came to power. People lost many of their basic human rights, and no one could speak freely anymore and criticize the government without facing severe consequences. My mom and her friends started actively participating in protests against the government’s brutalities and in support of democracy. Most of my mom’s friends were killed and my mother was the only one among her friends who survived. The Basij forces of Iran would either take the demonstrators to prison or kill them right on the street. The Basij forces of Iran are ideological supporters of the Islamic Republic of Iran who receive all kinds of financial supports from the government and in return they have to protect the government. They have “carte blanche” to do and say whatever

they feel is necessary to protect and defend the government. Soon, the situation got out of control and my mother’s situation became extremely dangerous which forced her to leave her country. She fled to Turkey and had to stay there for six months to get a visa. Once she got the visa, she went to Washington D.C. My mother never felt like she was saved. She felt alone, confused and full of guilt for surviving.

The word “survival” usually has a positive connotation. The act of surviving suggests freedom and receiving the chance for a new start. However, survival that comes from fleeing or escaping a dangerous situation comes with an immense sense of guilt. As Otto Dov Kulka states, survivors are not “privileged to experience”<sup>1</sup> the tragic death their family and friends experienced in times of crisis. Dov Kulka was able to truly capture the essence of survival and what it means to survive. He wrote about a dream he would consistently have of him descending the stairs of the crematorium in Birkenau with all the people he loved and cared for. The dream always took him back in time, back to Birkenau “when [he] knew that there [was] no way to avoid that place, that everyone [was] bound to arrive at that place because it [was] an unalterable law of the place, one from which there [was] no escape, and there [was] no chance for the fantasy [they] conjure[d] up about liberation and an end.”<sup>2</sup> Even though he knew that there was no way to avoid the crematorium and no way to escape, he somehow survived. But, he survived without his friends, and without the people he loved and cared for, wondering why he was lucky enough to live while everyone else had to die. This immense guilt had an intense presence in my mom as well. Once she came to Washington D.C., she became a full-time activist opposing the Islamic Republic of Iran trying to liberate the people of Iran from the oppressive system they were living in. She too would have consistent dreams of the scenes of her friends and family getting killed on the streets of Iran by the Basij forces and felt guilty that she could not have saved them or did not face the tragic death with them, therefore committing her life to activism because survival seemed like a sin otherwise.

Along with the guilt of survival for a refugee like my mother, Hannah Arendt was clearly able to describe what displacement truly feels like. As I was growing up, my mother would tell me to never be scared of death. When someone would die she would say that they are now truly free. My mom was not a pessimist

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1 Dov Kulka, Otto. *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2013), 40.

2 *Ibid.*, 11.

and was actually very optimistic and positive about life. She never lost hope for a free Iran and committed her life to activism, but it seemed like her “proclaimed cheerfulness [was] based on a dangerous readiness for death.”<sup>3</sup> My mother along with other refugees were “witnesses and victims of worse terrors than death-without having been able to discover a higher ideal than life, [...] if somebody died, [they] cheerfully imagine[d] all the trouble he [had] been saved.”<sup>4</sup> Even though my mom was fighting back and trying to remain hopeful, she would still see death as the true freedom that cannot be gained any other way. Among these worse terrors was displacement. Displacement that not only displaced a population from their home, but from their families, their friends, their culture, their history, and their identity forcing them to start new in a place where they have to be “so damnably careful in every moment of [their] daily lives to avoid anybody guessing who [they] are, what kind of passport [they] have, where [their] birth certificates were filled out [...] [they] try the best [they] can to fit into a world where [they] have to be sort of politically minded when [they] even buy [their] food.”<sup>5</sup> The affects of displacement

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3 Arendt, Hannah. “We Refugees,” *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*. Ed. Marc Robinson. (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1994), 112.

4 *Ibid.*, 112.

5 *Ibid.*, 115.

and losing a significant part of identity could have been one of the worse terrors of them all, but to my mom and to many refugees who have experienced tragic, horrifying events in their homeland, home is not home anymore. Just as Otto Dov Kulka described as a child, the only home he knew was Birkenau, which he refers to as the “mythic homeland of death.”<sup>6</sup> My mom also refers to Iran as “a homeland of death,” and as a land that will probably never be the same as what she remembered. But, even though it is the homeland of death, the memories she had of the true homeland, one where she had childhood dreams will never fade away.

It is hard to truly encapsulate the feeling of displacement and survival when it is something that has been witnessed rather than experienced. But, the use of “I” and the first-person in this essay was to emphasize that the feeling of displacement and survival could be so strong that it could affect a person who has never even been displaced or has never been a “survivor.” By reading Otto Dov Kulka and Hannah Arendt, the framework was provided to see how similar stories of displacement and survival could be and how displacement could affect the way a person treats the environment they live in, the way they behave and the way they see the world in a tremendous way.

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6 Dov Kulka, 79.

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# Dissent and Subversion: Václav Havel and the Truth

Jacob Elsanadi

*Undergraduate Student, UC Berkeley*

Uprising, insurrection, dissent, and subversion. The methods through which societies express discontent with ruling parties are innumerable. Throughout the twentieth century, in response to oppressive regimes, dissent manifested in both violent and nonviolent uprising and protest. In order to better understand the subversive transpirations of the last two-thirds of the twentieth century, this essay hopes to shed light on the processes by which a society or a people attempt to subvert a status quo and what it really might mean to subvert.

What does being oppressed, or “powerless”, mean? What does it signify? To Václav Havel it indicates, in some ways, “living within a lie”.<sup>1</sup> As he states, an oppressive regime “pretends to pretend nothing” despite that it is really pretending everything.<sup>2</sup> Those living within the lie, as he argues, do not necessarily need to accept the lie but they “accept their life with it”.<sup>3</sup> In this way, Havel aligns somewhat with the thoughts and arguments of Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci posited that the concept of “hegemony” constitutes the social, political, and cultural domination of one group over the other. This dominance, however, is imposed as inevitable in some ways. It is perceived as “common sense”. Havel’s “post-totalitarian state” in many ways reflects a

hegemonic system.

When an individual or even an entire population finds themselves under an oppressive political, social, or economic system, there sometimes occurs an attempt at pushing back. When, in Havel’s text, the greengrocer refuses to put up his “Workers of the World Unite” sign, he is in effect producing an act of counter-hegemony. The system must permeate every aspect of life therefore when someone chooses not to adhere to any one of these aspects, they “threaten it in its entirety”.<sup>4</sup> When the greengrocer puts up the sign, it may not even be noticed, as in a way it has become common sense that it should remain in his window. When it is taken down, however, the hegemonic system withstands a “threat to its entirety”. It is counter-hegemony in that removal is not only questioning the lie that permeates all of the greengrocer’s existence, but also is exposing a truth in displaying what occurs if he does not put the sign up. It opens up a space where a new possible type of common sense may take shape. Counter-hegemonies and expositions of truth can be found not only in Havel’s post-totalitarian state, but also in a variety of contexts.

The Prague Spring provides one example that illustrates Havel’s arguments. Havel asserted that “part of the essence of

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1 Havel, Václav. “Power of the Powerless,” pg. 31. 1978.

2 *Ibid.*, 31.

3 *Ibid.*, 31.

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4 *Ibid.*, 40.

the post-totalitarian system is that it draws everyone into its sphere of power, not so they may realize themselves as human beings but so they may surrender their human identity in favor of the identity of the system".<sup>5</sup> And it was this very piece of the Soviet project in Prague that the populace resented; they called for identity, they called for morality, and they called, as Alexander Dubcek put it, for "socialism with a human face".<sup>6</sup> The Prague Spring reflected, in part, a deep moral crisis, one that Havel refers to as a systemic demoralization.<sup>7</sup>

This demoralization, and lack of a "human face", in some ways can also serve as a useful lens through which one can explore other uprisings. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising serves as an example of a much more violent attempt at subversion. Despite its violence, there are still connections to be made with thinkers like Havel. Havel's notion that the powerless "live within a lie" is applicable to this particular uprising as well. This stands true, firstly, on a literal level. Oppressors in Warsaw used bread rationing in order to motivate Ghetto residents to willingly register for deportation.<sup>8</sup> This served as one layer to a larger lie regarding what deportation really meant. At this point in the story of the Warsaw Ghetto, no one yet knew that being removed from the area meant certain death. Furthermore, as Marek Edelman points out, the bread actually served as a way for people to argue against those who believed that deportation led to death.<sup>9</sup>

It is within this context that a group of dissidents attempted to bring their society into the "truth". Predecessors to the Jewish Combat Organization disseminated a newspaper entitled *On Guard*, urging Jews not to register for deportation and to take up arms in resistance.<sup>10</sup> This subversive act exemplifies Havel's point in a more tangible fashion; whereas his discussion of dissent often leans towards the theoretical, the example of the beginnings of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising display how subversion can bring citizens of a world of lies into one of truth. *On*

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5 Havel, 36.

6 Cramsey, Sarah. "Prague Spring" Slide 17.

7 Havel, 45.

8 Edelman, Marek "The Ghetto Fights," pg. 58.

9 Ibid., 58.

10 Ibid., 56-57.

*Guard*, in a way, may even show some similarities with Charter 77. Charter 77 was an attempt at exposing the hypocrisy of the Czechoslovak government around this demoralization. The charter, signed and in part created by Havel himself, attempted to do exactly what he describes in "Power to the Powerless": shed light on the truth and bring the citizens of then Czechoslovakia away from living within a lie. Both of these documents attempted to shed light on the true nature of their oppressors. In Czechoslovakia, this meant illustrating that recent signatures of international peace documents including the Helsinki Accords were in reality toothless displays. In Poland, it meant displaying that oppressors were nothing other than cogs in a machine meant to eliminate the Ghetto residents' culture. These acts and their attempts at illustrating truth served as invaluable stepping-stones on the road to uprising and revolution.

Subversive acts that proliferate truth may not always appear so revolutionary, however. Take the Jewish Flying University of the postwar period in Poland as an example. With the creation of a space for Polish Jews to meet, there occurs a push upwards and against a system that had forgotten Jewish culture. A system that remained as a leftover of wartime, however an oppressive one nonetheless for Jews "living in a land of ashes" afraid of what existing as themselves might mean.<sup>11</sup> The Jewish Flying University stood as a counter-hegemonic force in a space that was devoid of Jewish culture, and a system that led those who were Jewish to feel oppressed.

In the "post-truth" world, there are many lessons to be gleaned from a subversive past of truth exposition. Havel's work demands that a second-look be given to political and social systems, and that this second-look occur through dissent. Those without power attain power and truth by expressing dissent, a reluctance to follow the "common-sense" of the system, and expressing a desire to regain what Havel terms a human identity. In order to live within the truth, one must expose themselves to realities that are, in a way, unimaginable.

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11 Gebert, Konstanty. *Living in the Land of Ashes*, pg. 6. 2008.



# 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 ISEES. Applications are accepted through the Graduate Fellowship Office.

## Awards for Summer 2017

**Zachary Bekowies**, Department of Italian Studies, received funding to study Romanian in Babeş-Bolyai and Timișoara, Romania.

**Alexandra Berl**, Chemistry major, received funding to study Russian in St. Petersburg, Russia.

**Brian Egdorf**, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received funding to study Russian in Moscow.

**Lee Hekking**, Department of History, received funding to study Polish in Krakow, Poland.

**Karina McCorkle**, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received funding to study Russian in Moscow.

**Erin McElroy**, Department of Women's Studies at UC Santa Cruz, received funding to study Romanian in Bucharest.

**David Parker**, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received funding to study Bosnian through the Melikian Center at Arizona State University.

**Mary Vitali**, Department of Comparative Literature, received funding to study Russian at Middlebury.

## Awards for Academic Year 2017-2018

**Allison Bakamjian**, School of Public Health and Social Welfare, received a fellowship to study Armenian at UC Berkeley.

**John Dethlefsen**, Peace & Conflict Studies and Russian Language and Literature double major, received a fellowship to study Russian at UC Berkeley.

**Zora Franicevic**, Society & Environment and Slavic Languages and Literatures double major, received a fellowship to study Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian at UC Berkeley.

**Brendan Hamilton**, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, received a fellowship to study Russian at UC Berkeley.

**Lee Hekking**, Department of History, received a fellowship to study Russian at UC Berkeley.

**Katherine Metkowski**, Political Economy and Slavic Languages and Literatures double major, received a fellowship to study Polish at UC Berkeley.

**Melissa Samarin**, Department of Political Science, received a fellowship to study Russian at UC Berkeley.

**Thomas Sliwowski**, Department of Comparative Literature, received a fellowship to study Polish at UC Berkeley.

**Matthew Stenberg**, Department of Political Science, received a fellowship to study Polish at UC Berkeley.

**Gal Tabachnik**, Linguistics major, received a fellowship to study Russian at UC Berkeley.

# 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.

Our Federal and state funding have 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, 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!

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ISEEES acknowledges with sincere appreciation the following individuals who made their annual contribution to ISEEES between June 2017 and December 2017.

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## UC Berkeley Participants at the ASEES Convention

The 49th Annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEES) was held in Chicago, IL, on November 9-12, 2017. ASEES held a joint Alumni Reception with Stanford's CREES on Friday, November 10, 2017, at Rock Bottom Restaurant & Brewery.

### Faculty Papers

**David Beecher** (IAS): "Third Worlds in Third Languages: Tartu University in the Age of Official Soviet Bilingualism"  
**Steve Fish** (Political Science): "What is Putinism?"  
**Victoria Frede** (History): "Scenarios of Friendship?: Catherine II, Frederick II, and Temples of Friendship"  
**Ellen Langer** (Slavic): "Having it All: Culture and the Four Skills in the Introductory Czech Curriculum"  
**Olga Matich** (Slavic): "Sokolov's Neo-Baroque *Palisandriia*: Alternative History and Literary Legacy"  
**Eric Naiman** (Slavic): "Все это было почти уже грубо: Reading *Crime and Punishment*'s Epilogue Hard Against the Grain"  
**Harsha Ram** (Slavic): "Traveling to Tbilisi"

### Student Papers

**Caroline Brickman** (Slavic): "Fragmentary Mythopoesis, or Batiushkov Backwards"  
**Thomas Dyne** (Slavic): "Что происходило в этом человеке?": The Body and the Ethics of Omniscience in Turgenev"  
**Jennifer Flaherty** (Slavic): "Russia's Interior: The Problem of the Peasant and the Path to the Novel in 'Zapiski okhotnika'"  
**Joseph Kellner** (History): "Those Who Know History: Millenarian Sects and the End of the Soviet World"  
**Matthew Kendall** (Slavic): "Constructing a Good Listener: Sound Technologies in and around the Early Production Novel"  
**Emily Laskin** (Comparative Literature): "Writing Imperial Borderlands: Nikolai Grodekov's Ride Across Afghanistan"  
**Hilary Lynd** (History): "Like Twin Brothers: Soviet Nationalities Policy in Apartheid's Mirror, 1985-1994"  
**Karina McCorkle** (Slavic): "After the Comma: Exilic Motifs in the Poems of Joseph Brodsky's 'K Uranii'"  
**Kit Pribble** (Slavic): "Myth and its Absence in Baratynsky's Nature Poetry"  
**Christina Schwartz** (Slavic): "Stepping out of Historical Time: Narrating *Bezvremen'e* in Sokolov's *Palisandriia*"  
**Aleksandra Simonova** (Anthropology): "Cities of Science: From a Scientific Experiment to Search for New Governmentality in Russia"  
**Yana Skorobogatov** (History): "Mind Control: Psychiatric Testimony and the Death Penalty, 1954-1991"  
**Ivan Sokolov** (Slavic): "Seeing the Seeing: Lyric Landscape in Arkadii Dragomoshchenko"

### Panel Discussants

**David Beecher** (IAS): *Nationalizing Impact of War: From Civil War to WWII*  
**John Connelly** (History): *Entrepreneurship in Cold War Era Cultural and Academic Life*  
**Brian Egdorf** (Slavic): *Locating Philosophical/Ethical Concerns in Literary Form: The Case of Turgenev*  
**Luba Golburt** (Slavic): *Breaking the Sequence: The Links between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries in Russian Literature*  
**Eric Naiman** (Slavic): *Gaps and Lapses in Nabokov*  
**Isobel Palmer** (Slavic): *Sounds out of Bounds: Obscenity, Noise, Laughter, and the Tuning of the Russo-Soviet Soundscape*

### Panel/Roundtable Chairs

**Caroline Brickman** (Slavic): *Breaking the Sequence: The Links between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries in Russian Literature*  
**John Connelly** (History): *Entrepreneurship in Cold War Era Cultural and Academic Life*  
**Steve Fish** (Political Science): *Civil Society, Politics, and Social Policy in Russian Regions*  
**Zachary Kelly** (ISEES): *Eastern Europe and the East: Soviet Encounters and the Remaking of National Belonging*  
**Irina Paperno** (Slavic): *Locating Philosophical/Ethical Concerns in Literary Form: The Case of Turgenev*  
**Irina Paperno** (Slavic): *Tolstoy: An Historical Poetics*  
**Liladhar R. Pendse** (Library): *Collecting the Grey Literature from Eastern Europe: Opportunities and Challenges*

### Roundtable Participants

**Jennifer Flaherty** (Slavic): *Tolstoy: An Historical Poetics*  
**Victoria Frede** (History): *Other Herzens*  
**Luba Golburt** (Slavic): *Romantic Nationalism*  
**Ellen Langer** (Slavic): *Transgressions in Library Metadata*  
**Steven Lee** (English): *The Other and the International: Soviet Cultural Production of Difference*  
**Olga Matich** (Slavic): *Transgression, Decline, Rebirth?: The Anthropology of Fins de Siècle in Europe*  
**Isobel Palmer** (Slavic): *Transgressing the Text: Form vs. Emotion in Russian Literary Theory and across Disciplines*  
**Liladhar R. Pendse** (Library): *In Search of the "Perfect Collection": Researchers, Librarians, and Administrators on Armenian Studies Collections and the Patron/Librarian Relationship*  
**Harsha Ram** (Slavic): *The Other and the International: Soviet Cultural Production of Difference*  
**Leslie Root** (Demography): *Health and Demography in Russia and Eurasia*  
**Christina Schwartz** (Slavic): *Internet Poetry and Online Communities*  
**Yana Skorobogatov** (History): *Translating Race in Eurasia I: Freeing Angela Davis*  
**Maria Whittle** (Slavic): *Music and Gender II: Malleable Gender Identities in Film and Popular Music in Russia and Eastern Europe*

### Book Discussions

**John Connelly** (History): "The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End" by Robert Gerwarth  
**Jason Wittenberg** (Political Science): "Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust" by Evgeny Finkel

### Meeting Moderators

**Liladhar Pendse** (Library): *Committee on Libraries and Information Resources Membership Meeting*

# ISEEES Community News

## Faculty

**Luba Golburt** (Slavic) was awarded the Distinguished Teaching Award for Senate Faculty Members at UC Berkeley.

**Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann** (History) received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2017 and will be a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg/Institute for Advanced Studies Berlin for academic year 2017-2018. His second book has just been translated into Russian: Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann. *Socialnoe obščenie i demokratija. Asociacii I graždanskoe obščestvo v transnacionalnoj perspektive* (Moscow: NLO, 2017).

**Ellen Langer** (Slavic) was awarded the Distinguished Teaching Award for Non-Senate Faculty Members at UC Berkeley.

**Harsha Ram** (Slavic) travelled to Munich, Germany in June, as the Berkeley representative to the Berkeley/LMU Graduate Student Conference in Russian and East European Studies at the Ludwig Maximilian Universität; to Tbilisi, Georgia, in June supported by a Mellon Project Grant for completion of book manuscript; and to Berlin, Germany, in July, as a Summer Fellow at the Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung, Berlin, where he delivered the talk titled “The Russian Avant-garde as a Model for World Literature.” Professor Ram also delivered a talk at the American Comparative Literature Association’s annual conference in Utrecht, the Netherlands, titled, “Velimir Khlebnikov and the Russian Avant-garde.”

**Gérard Roland** (Economics) gave the keynote lecture at the Second World Congress in Comparative Economics in St Petersburg in June, titled “Comparative Economics in Historical Perspective.” In July, he gave a keynote lecture at the IMF Conference “Reaccelerating Convergence in Central and Eastern Europe and Southeastern Europe. The Role of Governance and Institutions” in Dubrovnik, Croatia, July 10-11, titled “Understanding the Evolution of Post-Communist States.” He also participated in the policy roundtable at that conference with Christine Lagarde (Director of IMF).

**Yuri Slezkine** (History) published a new book in August 2017, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton 2017). The book has come out in English, French, and Dutch and has impressed reviewers everywhere with its size and weight (all 1128 pages).

**Éva Soós Szóke** (Slavic) gave a presentation at the October 2017 Foreign Language Education Symposium in Monterey. Her presentation focused on how to teach language through poetry, music, and images in socio-cultural context in a mixed-level classroom to improve the students’ interpretive abilities; and how a differentiated language teaching approach can mitigate the teaching difficulties of a course where students’ proficiency levels are highly varied.

**Edward Tyerman** (Slavic) joined the Berkeley faculty in the Fall of 2017. He has two articles forthcoming in the next few months: “Resignifying The Red Poppy: Internationalism and Symbolic Power in the Sino-Soviet Encounter,” *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, No. 3 (Autumn 2017): 445–466; and “Sino-Soviet Confessions: Authority, Agency, and Autobiography in Sergei Tret’iakov’s Den Shi-khua,” *The Russian Review* 77, No. 1 (January 2018): 47–64.

## Graduate Students

**Harrison King** (graduate student, History) participated in the inaugural Monterey Summer Symposium on Russia at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies from June-August 2017. The seven-week fellowship consisted of seminars taught by leading American and Russian experts (and conducted in Russian and English) on a wide range of topics such as Russian art, literature, film, Imperial Russian and Soviet history, politics in the post-Soviet space, and U.S.-Russia relations from the Cold War to the present.

**Pawel Koscielny** (PhD candidate, History) presented the paper “The Name of the Dead and Poland’s New Messianism” at the conference “Grafting the Self” at Princeton’s Slavic Department. On July 14, he presented the paper “Illiberal Memory” at Viadrina’s Summer School for Interdisciplinary Polish and German Studies Concluding Workshop.

**Emily Laskin** (PhD candidate, Comparative Literature) was invited to participate in a workshop on Central Asian literature and history in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in November. She also won a Dean’s Fund award to do archival work at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg and RGALI in Moscow during summer 2017.

**Isobel Palmer** (PhD candidate, Slavic) received the Townsend-Mellon Global Urban Humanities Fellowship, Spring 2017. She also presented a paper at the Berkeley/LMU Symposium in Munich, June 2017, titled “The Rhythm of History: Blok’s prosody and the revolution of 1905.”

**Leslie Root** (PhD candidate, Demography) is spending the fall semester in Taganrog, Russia, conducting field research for her dissertation on changing Russian fertility patterns in the Putin era. Her research is supported by a U.S. Department of State Title VIII grant.

**Thomas Sliwowski** (PhD candidate, Comparative Literature) attended Princeton Slavic’s “Grafting the Self” graduate conference, where he presented the paper “Gombrowicz According to Miłosz: Or, Every Reputation You Form with Deform You in Turn.”

**Agnieszka Smelkowska** (PhD candidate, History) conducted research in Moscow, covered by the Allan Sharlin Memorial Award from the Institute of International Studies. This Fall, she will be Germany on the DAAD Research Fellowship at Humboldt University.

# Campus Visitors

**Ionela Ciolan** is a Visiting Student Researcher Fulbright Scholar with ISEEEES during the 2017-2018 academic year. She is currently a doctoral student in International Relations at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest, Romania. While at Berkeley, she will be continuing her studies on European foreign policy in its Eastern vicinity.

**Edith Clowes** is a Visiting Scholar with ISEEEES and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures during the Fall 2017 semester while on sabbatical. Professor Clowes holds the Brown-Forman Chair in the Humanities and teaches Russian language, literature, and culture and Czech literature in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Virginia.

**Alexandru Groza** is a Visiting Student Researcher Fulbright Scholar with ISEEEES during the 2017-2018 academic year. He is currently a doctoral student in the Doctoral School of the Faculty of History at the University of Bucharest in Romania. While at Berkeley, he pursue research on the external Romanian propaganda in the US during Nicolae Ceausescu's regime.

**Jan Szumski** is a Visiting Fulbright Scholar with ISEEEES during the 2017-2018 academic year. Dr. Szumski is an assistant professor in the L. & A. Birkemajer Institute for the History of Science at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland. His research project is titled "The Soviet Historical Memory Policy versus History Disciplines in the Slavonic Countries of Eastern Bloc, 1945-1989."



## Save the Date



### 41st Education Outreach Conference

*Bourgeois, Democratic, Nationalist, Communist:*

*Post-World War I Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe*

Saturday, April 28, 2018  
9:00am - 5:00 p.m.  
Berkeley City College  
2050 Center Street, Berkeley

*\*\*Please note that event details may change. Updates will be sent out by email and can be found online at <http://iseeess.berkeley.edu/>.*

# Gombrowicz According To Miłosz Or, Every Reputation You Form Will Deform You In Turn

Thomas Sliwowski

Graduate Student, Comparative Literature, UC Berkeley

Witold Gombrowicz and Czesław Miłosz are two writers who, despite their strange friendship and fragmentary correspondence, seem to be incommensurable in a way that few literary pairs are. Miłosz, the Nobel laureate, the serious intellect who had seen the Warsaw Uprising, who had experienced totalitarianism first hand, and who lived to express his oracular visions of history, violence, and meaning, is like water to the oil that is Gombrowicz the jokester, the obscene satirist and slippery provocateur who could always be counted on to shock the conservative sensibilities of the literary public, in Poland and abroad. This, at least, is how the story is most often framed. We could, of course, inverse the poles of seriousness and silliness to see Miłosz as a Serious Intellect (with Serious Eyebrows to match), reckoning with capital-H History and confident enough about the conclusions he draws to both speak for the legacy of Polish literature and to find himself included among those Great Romantic Bards that nobody reads without being forced to. Gombrowicz, then, would be the subversive thinker, setting off logic bombs in Polish ideology and demystifying hierarchies and binaries at least a decade before deconstruction came into vogue.

Most discussions about the common ground between Miłosz and Gombrowicz fall into one of several possible traps. Aleksander Fuit, in *Wieczny Moment*, makes use of Gombrowicz as a sort of foil for Miłosz, mentioning the former only to show how all of his thoughts were more fully developed in Miłosz's work.<sup>1</sup> The hierarchization trap involves positing one as more valuable than the other; a model which, as the above paragraph shows, can be all too easily reversed. Bogdan Czaykowski, on the other hand, writes that Gombrowicz and Miłosz were the two antipodes of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Polish literature, two ends of a spectrum onto which we can map all of their contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> This is an instance of the incommensurability trap, albeit with an elegant touch: Czaykowski holds them to have been antithetical, but complementary, tokens of the totality that is 20<sup>th</sup>-century Polish literature. His is, perhaps, too elegant a structure to serve as critical. Other attempts try to avoid

1 Cf. Fuit, Aleksander. *The Eternal Moment: The Poetry of Czesław Miłosz*. Trans. Theodosia S. Robertson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. 89-91.

2 "Most of twentieth-century Polish literature coalesces in the vicinity of Miłosz or falls in-between the two polarities. Miłosz is thus more centrally within Polish literary tradition in general, and twentieth-century Polish literature in particular, than Gombrowicz. What places them in the same category is their unquestionable literary achievement. Both are major writers who have pursued their literary goals and philosophical visions with utmost single-mindedness and persistence. Polish, and one need not hesitate to say, world literature, is the richer for it. Human civilization is in need of both philosophical attitudes: it needs its hedgehogs as much as it needs its foxes; those, who can justify our sense, or at least our yearning for what Rozewicz (perhaps for lack of a better word) calls the sacrum, as well as those who put it to the test by reminding us of the human limitations of our understanding of the mystery which appears, Janus-like, now as Chaos and now as Cosmos." Czaykowski, Bogdan. *Witold Gombrowicz and Czesław Miłosz, the Two Polarities of Twentieth Century Polish Literature?* Adam Mickiewicz Lecture. University of Toronto, February 2000. <http://sites.utoronto.ca/tsq/02/gombrowicz.shtml>

the question altogether: Miłosz writes in 1987 about an encounter with Joanna Salamon, who insisted that the Gombrowicz - Miłosz binary was analogous to the Słowacki - Mickiewicz binary, a suggestion that bothered Miłosz enough to compel him to explain that his and Gombrowicz's common promoter, Jeleński, deliberately forced them into the "model, all too well-worn in Polish culture, of the bardic pair."<sup>3</sup>

The above analogy between Gombrowicz and Miłosz and the two foremost bards of Polish Romantic poetry is a textbook example of our thought being dominated by what Gombrowicz would call *Forma*: the received ideas which, as institutionalized and normalized social forces, exert an inescapable influence on every facet of our interaction with the world at large. Joanna Salamon is unable to think of Polish literature outside of the Form of literary friendship institutionalized during the Romantic period, but Miłosz's discomfort with her analogy has less to do with the analogy itself than it does with his having been, yet again, paired with Gombrowicz.<sup>4</sup> The goal of this essay is threefold, but involves first and foremost a critical assessment of how the conundrum of the Gombrowicz/Miłosz pair became such a conundrum in the first place. I argue that, because Miłosz would continue to think and to write about Gombrowicz long after the latter's death, there can be little question that Miłosz played a significant role in the reception of Gombrowicz. This reception can best be summed up with a sentence from Michał Szymański, in his introduction to the first critical anthology of their complete correspondence: somehow, along the way between his death and his critical rediscovery in the 1990s, Gombrowicz became "a tool for carrying out a facile and easily-stomached trial of [Polish] national tradition."<sup>5</sup> My argument will then turn to an explication of Gombrowicz's theory of *Forma*, a sort of weak-theory of language and sociality that unexpectedly offers us a critical apparatus adequate to the task of explaining just what it is that Miłosz is doing when he sums up Gombrowicz for us, and keeps summing him up over and over again. I will then use this 'case study' to evaluate and qualify Gombrowicz's theory of *Forma*, and will conclude with some comments on the relevance and importance critically evaluating literary reputations.

What was Miłosz's strategy in his writings about Gombrowicz, both during the latter's life and after his death? I argue that he

3 "I nasze polemiki, i osoba naszego wspólnego promotora (czy słowo to ma prawo obywatelstwa w polskim?) Jeleńskiego stopniowo doprowadziły do zbliżania nas według mocno osiadłego w Polsce modelu pary wieszczów, tak że ciągle czytam w polskiej prasie literackiej 'Gombrowicz, Miłosz.'" Miłosz, Czesław. *Zapiski o Gombrowiczu in Witold Gombrowicz/Czesław Miłosz: Konfrontacje*, ed. Michał Szymański. Warsaw: Zeszyty Literackie, 2015. 210-211. Henceforth, "Konf." Translation my own except where indicated otherwise.

4 Ibid. "Ale muszę potraktować to o tyle poważnie, że zostałem wrobiony w tę binarność (na zawsze?)"

5 "Gombrowicz w wolnej Polsce jako narzędzie do łatwej, masowej rozprawy z narodową tradycją?" Szymański, Michał. "Przedmowa" in *Witold Gombrowicz/ Czesław Miłosz: Konfrontacje*. ed. Michał Szymański. Warsaw: Zeszyty Literackie, 2015. 14. Henceforth, "Konf."

systematically and consistently sought to sideline Gombrowicz, to articulate and disseminate preemptively conclusive summaries of Gombrowicz's literary-philosophical project, in order to render himself as a foil or antidote to the trickster that Gombrowicz became. In this way, Miłosz shored up his reputation as an almost supernaturally 'serious' poet, heir to the Polish Romantic tradition of Mickiewicz, and both older and wiser than all this 20<sup>th</sup>-century avant-garde schlock, which was rendered in synecdoche through his figurations of Gombrowicz, and which itself stood for all the horrors and excesses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The end result of this process was the congealing of a reputation aptly articulated by sociologist and Gombrowicz scholar Maciej Gdula:

I really do value Gombrowicz, but one can only lament the fact that he's acquired this reputation, of being someone who is a joker, an ironist, who doesn't take anything seriously, and that in fact his literature and thought can be reduced to his trying to show that the world is absurd, and that we should just catch up to this absurdity, making stupid faces etc. This isn't the same Gombrowicz we find in the books.<sup>6</sup>

Having spent his early career developing a counterform, that of the immature prankster, capable of deconstructing the presuppositions of Polish national ideology, the posthumous Gombrowicz found himself stuck in this form of immaturity, unable to be taken seriously despite the fact that any careful reading of his novels or his *Diary* makes it quite clear Immaturity was never an end in and of itself, but only a means of exposing what the Mature form of conventional writers took for granted. In the interview, Łuczewski goes on to describe his own critical project, which involves teasing out the sociological insights latent in Gombrowicz's writing. This is a project not unlike many contemporary critical endeavors which seek to reevaluate Gombrowicz by taking him seriously as a thinker.<sup>7</sup> Here we must note that there have always been academic writers willing to take Gombrowicz seriously,<sup>8</sup> but that these endeavors have failed to produce a critical mass capable of counteracting the profoundly reductive popular reputation that Gombrowicz has acquired.

To understand the roots of this reputation, it is helpful to consider some of the overarching themes and traits of Miłosz's writings about him. In an essay titled *Kim jest Gombrowicz?* [Who is Gombrowicz?], he sums up the writer's project thusly:

Gombrowicz's adventure, in short, looks like this: I, Witold Gombrowicz, am a person and I am myself, but they don't let me be a person and myself, because I have been classified. I am

Witold the petty noble, I belong to the higher classes and the lower classes don't treat me like myself, but rather like a petty nobleman. In his memories of playing with peasant children and of hanging out in peasant's quarters we can find the key to the entirety of the Gombrowiczian philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

A sort of disdain is palpable here, but one is less baffled by this dismissive and patronizing tone than by the specious claim that Gombrowicz's entire oeuvre can be reduced to his social class and a couple of formative childhood experiences. This fixation on social class will reappear in *Mieszkaniec Ziemi Ulro*, where Miłosz teases out a strange sort of snobbery competition between himself and Gombrowicz:

In terms of his parentage, Gombrowicz stood about two classes higher than I did: he was raised well, had a terrific upbringing and consequently moved in the high circles of society with ease, while I was a savage. This game he played, of being a snob about his noble birth, seemed intended to mask his real snobbery, or rather despair, that he wasn't born into an even higher class of nobility.<sup>10</sup>

This already seems like a strange reading of Gombrowicz's latent classist snobbery: why would he play at being a snob to mask how much of a snob he actually was? *Coś tu nie gra*. While such intimate details seem to elucidate Gombrowicz's fascination with everything inferior, lower, and immature, they also seem to function, for Miłosz, as a way to either call into question the authenticity of Gombrowicz's concerns, or to show that he, Miłosz, was perhaps more democratic than this strange emblem of theorization from below. Miłosz continues by explaining that his nobility, though two classes lower than Gombrowicz's, was actually superior because he hailed from the Lithuanian nobility, and also that he was ashamed even of his humbly noble parentage. In the next paragraph, Miłosz complicates any understanding of this snobbery game:

Well, of course I consider myself to be more highly born than Gombrowicz. For the simple reason that he was born in a worse country. Once, in Venice, I told him that, after all, he comes from central Poland. It was a momentous punch. The good knight Gombrowicz stumbled and nearly fell off his horse, but in the last second he replied, crying that it's not true, that his family is from Żmudzi, on the Niewiaża River, and that only his grandfather emigrated from there, after the 1863 uprising.<sup>11</sup>

9 Konf. 167. First published in *Kultura* (Paris: Instytut Literacki. 1970, no. 7-8, pp. 41-56.) Original: "Przygoda Gombrowicza tak, w skrócie, wyglądała: ja, Witold Gombrowicz, jestem człowiekiem i sobą, ale nie pozwalają mi być człowiekiem i sobą, bo zostałem zaklasyfikowany. Jestem panicz Witold, należą do wyższych i niżsi nie traktują mnie jako mnie samego, ale jako panicza. W wyznaniach o zabawach z fornalskimi dziećmi i o urzeczaniu izbą czeladną jest klucz do całej Gombrowiczowskiej filozofii."

10 Konf. 201. First published as Miłosz, Czesław. *Ziemia Ulro*. Paris: Instytut Literacki. 1977. Paragraph 17. Original: "Gombrowicz pochodzeniem stał ode mnie o jakieś dwie klasy wyżej, był dobrze wychowany, miał znakomitą *Kinderstube* i poruszał się swobodnie w dobrym towarzystwie, podczas gdy ja byłem dzikus. Jego zabawa w snobizm dobrego urodzenia zdawała się służyć do maskowania rzeczywistego snobizmu czy też żalu, że nie był lepiej urodzony."

11 Konf. 202. Original: "No, oczywiście, że uważałem się za lepiej urodzonego niż Gombrowicz. A z tej prostej przyczyny, że urodził się w gorszym kraju. Raz, w Wenecji, powiedziałem mu, że przecież pochodzi z Polski centralnej. Cios był potężny. Zachwiał się rycerz Gombrowicz i o mało nie spadł z konia, ale w ostatniej chwili cios odparował, wołając, że nieprawda, że rodzina jego ze Żmudzi, znad rzeki Niewiaży, i że dopiero dziadek jego stamtąd"

6 Gdula, Maciej. Interview with Michał Łuczewski, "Socjolog Gombrowicz." Warsaw: Foksal 11/ Centrum Myśli Jana Pawła II-go, January 24, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5JRn8T5O68> Original: "Ja bardzo cenię Gombrowicza, można tylko biedać nad tym, że on się doczekał takiego wizerunku osoby która w zasadzie jest prześmiewca, ironista, i który niczego nie traktuje na poważnie, i że w zasadzie jego literatura i myśli to takie pokazanie, że świat jest absurdalny, i my powinniśmy w zasadzie podążać za tym absurdem, strojąc głupie miny itd. To nie jest Gombrowicz który rzeczywiście jest w książkach..."

7 One can look, for instance, to a recent issue of *The Polish Review*, which is dedicated to Witold Gombrowicz and contains articles probing everything from his insights into the nature of identity and interpersonal relationships, to his latent religious sentiment and the way it informs current debates about secularism and postsecularism.

8 See, for instance, Jerzy Jarzębski, *Gra w Gombrowicza*; Maria Janion, *Ciemna Młodość Gombrowicza*.



How wonderful it would have been to be a fly on a wall and to see their facial expressions during this—almost certainly ironic—exchange! Although we have no way to tell how many levels of irony Gombrowicz was operating on, it seems at least probable that he was poking fun at Miłosz’s constant refrain about noble birth and social classes. Miłosz was more than willing to reduce Gombrowicz’s project to the question of his parentage on several occasions; but he was also steadfast in disavowing the significance of his being paired with Gombrowicz in the first place: in *Preferencje Filozoficzne: Rozmowa*, Miłosz answers Aleksander Fiut’s question about what ties him to Gombrowicz thusly:

If it weren’t for our similar fates—emigration, a publicity that came late, etc.—then nobody would have thought to juxtapose Gombrowicz and myself. But if we’re to do this, then the key to this juxtaposition would be our differing attitudes towards our milieus—our family homes, our parents and relatives, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere,<sup>13</sup> Miłosz would repeat that what brought them together was the fact that they were exiles - an emphasis that, while not foreclosing on more substantive considerations of their pairing altogether, does betray an attitude markedly different from Gombrowicz’s way of reading their pairing. Gombrowicz rather consistently looks for common ground and considers the implications of their exile in terms of Polish literature and world literature: “Me and Gombrowicz - without having too much and common and really being strangers to each other - were brought together by external circumstances.”<sup>14</sup>

Where Miłosz disavows any allegiance, Gombrowicz expends substantial effort to put their works into conversation with one another: writing about *The Captive Mind*, explains that “I am less and less interested in Miłosz the defender of western civilization and more and more inters in Miłosz the opponent and rival of the west.”<sup>15</sup> Gombrowicz concerns himself with the potential of their exilic status, rather than the source of their difference: this orientation, not towards histories—national and personal—but to futurity and potentiality, is characteristic of what distinguishes Gombrowicz’s way of thinking about his relationship with Miłosz from Miłosz’s attitude towards this strange pairing. Where Miłosz saw their common lot as exiles to be an emblem of everything that was lost to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gombrowicz saw their shared exilic status as a prime locus from which to carry out a devastating critique of the presuppositions of West-European ways of thinking about literature.<sup>16</sup>

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wyemigrował, po powstaniu 1863 roku.”

12 Konf. 208. Originally published as Fuit, Aleksander. *Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1981. 90. Original: “Gdyby nie pokrewne losy - emigracja, późny rozgłos etc. - nikt by Gombrowicza i mnie nie zestawiał. A jeżeli już zestawiać, kluczem byłby różny stosunek do swego środowiska - domu rodzinnego, rodziców, krewnych, etc.”

13 In *Mieszkaniec Ziemi Ulro*, paragraph 5: “Ja i Gombrowicz. Mało do siebie podobni i naprawdę sobie obcy, zostaliśmy sprzęgnięci w parę przez okoliczności zewnętrzne.” (Original: “Wyczuwam w nim to samo, co we mnie tkwi, to jest niechęć i lekceważenie w stosunku do nich, zmieszane z gorzką bezsilnością.” Konf. 183.

14 Konf. 51. Originally published in Gombrowicz, Witold. *Dziennik 1953-1956*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

15 Ibid. Original: “coraz mniej mnie interesuje Miłosz-obrońca zachodniej cywilizacji, a coraz bardziej Miłosz-przeciwnik i rywal Zachodu.”

16 Notably, Miłosz was aware that the critical importance that Gombrowicz located in exile. Cf. Konf. 156: “Cała zresztą twórczość Gombrowicza zdaje się być dowodem, że istnieją stałe powołania poszczególnych literatury i

We can locate the beginning of the significantly symmetrical relationship of Miłosz and Gombrowicz in *Przeciw Poetom* (Against the Poets), a polemical essay written by Gombrowicz and published in the Polish-language Parisian literary journal, *Kultura*, in 1951. This essay initiated a dialogue between the two literati which was to last for the better part of the decade—first in subsequent issues of *Kultura*, and then in their personal correspondence—but it also features a remarkably clear articulation of Gombrowicz’s weak-theory of *Forma*. This theory will serve us as a critical implement with which to understand the processes of reputation-formation that defined Miłosz’s later career, and Gombrowicz’s posthumous reception.

*Przeciw Poetom* is an essay about abolishing the institution of poetry, once and for all, because nobody actually likes poetry or understands it. The crux of Gombrowicz’s argument is that poetry has become a fixed form which, rather than actively trying to overcome, we worship and idealize, thereby reifying it all the more. It has become a social institution, a “society of mutual adoration,” a *Forma*. This has annihilated any possibility of growth or change: “What was supposed to be a momentary flight of prose’s fancy became a program, a system, a profession—and now one can be a poet in the same sense that one can be an engineer or a physician.”<sup>17</sup> The effect of this reification is absolute stasis: so preoccupied with performing the rituals of poetic worship correctly, neither poets nor the duped public are able to even conceive of a radical revolution in poetic language, of a historical development that would allow poetry to speak to real life. *Forma*, for Gombrowicz, is the end result of processes of reification: it includes clichés, received ideas, and dogmatic thought patterns, and its insidiousness consists in the fact that it mortifies and decontextualize its content, preventing it from responding to and interfacing with the real world.

*Forma*, in other words, is what arises when social practices grow increasingly codified and therefore irrelevant to lived experience. Forms which were once adequate to the historical condition of persons circulating them, which were “full” in the sense of carrying transcendental (historical) meaning, become empty and transcendently meaningless *Formy* through their artificial preservation. Highly conservative societies, like Poland’s, substitute a formulaic repetition of old sociocultural patterns, and mistake these for the essence of a practice, like poetry, rather than holding open the space for the radical reinvention of literary forms that must accompany any historical change. Gombrowicz writes that “[the poet] must also take care that his way of speaking be in accordance with his essential position in the world, he should express not only his attitude towards the world, but the world’s to him.”<sup>18</sup> This process of reification, of becoming *Forma*, is a social process, meaning one which is both continually reaffirmed through social practices and which exerts a social force onto individuals. This process involves a cult of awe and wonder, emerging whenever anyone mentions a popular poet’s name, which always reverses conventional poetry and established models of “Great

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że powołaniem polskiej jest, niestety, emigracja.” Originally published as *Podzwonne in Kultura*. 1969, no. 9. Paris: Instytut Literacki. pp. 6-11.

17 Konf. 20. Originally published in “Przeciw Poetom” in *Kultura* No. 10 (1951), pp. 3-11. Original: “To co miało być chwilowym wzlotem prozy stało się programem, systemem, profesją—i dziś jest się Poeta, tak jak jest się inżynierem lub lekarzem.”

18 Konf. 21. Original: “Musi on także dbać, aby jego sposób mówienia był zgodny z istotnym jego położeniem w świecie, winien on dać nie tylko stosunek swój do świata, ale i świata do siebie.”

Poetry” without ever stopping to critically analyze what it is that makes this particular Form of poetry valid in the first place.<sup>19</sup>

Miłosz responds to Gombrowicz’s argument—or, rather, to a straw-man version thereof—but what is germane for us at this moment is that the process that Gombrowicz articulated as *Forma* nearly perfectly describes how his posthumous reputation was formed—with generous help from Miłosz along the way. In *Przeciw Poetom*, Gombrowicz makes use of the Maturity/Immaturity dyad he developed while writing *Ferdydurke*. It can be understood as follows: immaturity, although it is often devalued in comparison to maturity, is actually a preferable state because it allows for the possibility of dynamic change, for the radical reconstitution of the self. Both poetics and personhood are, for Gombrowicz, subject to the same critical move whereby *Forma* is recognized as already mature, as deforming the subject, and is then overcome by an immature and novel counterform. Reviving these *Formy*, for Gombrowicz, entails engaging in a thought experiment in which we speculate upon the immature existence of forms before they became *Formy*: “It’ll be a good exercise for our stiff thinking to imagine from time to time Paul Valéry himself as a chaplain of the Immature, a barefoot priest in too-short underpants.”<sup>20</sup>

What Gombrowicz did not envision is that this cycle would continue—that a speculative counterform could *itself* ossify into a fixed *Forma*. The speculative counterform of immaturity, intended as a thought-experiment and as a shorthand or stand-in for a critique of the persistence of received ideas, became the emblem of this writer’s posthumous reputation until quite recently. That this counterform itself congealed into a form we can see from Miłosz’s comments and summations described above: Miłosz took up Gombrowicz’s critical notion of immaturity and instrumentalized it, repeating it in the dismissive register of somebody with a barely-concealed agenda, and successfully making use of it in order to shore up his own self-image as everything that Gombrowicz was emphatically not. Of course, we can’t ape his gesture, reducing Miłosz’s own oeuvre to cynical and calculating self-marketing practices, but the role of his disavowal of Gombrowicz and everything that he represented cannot be ignored. After Gombrowicz’s death in 1969, Miłosz would publish something about the writer every few years, whether in personal writings, occasional articles in *Kultura*, or in his anthologies of Polish literature. Always, he would repeat the same points—

19 An example from our own discipline could be the aftermath of the culture wars of the 1990s: challenges to the New Critical canon of “great Western Literature” called for the inclusion of marginalized voices in curricula; but the set of these marginalized voices in literature had become a sort of canon itself: perhaps a counter-canon, but by no means a circumvention of the problem of canonicity in the first place. Canonification would be a subset of the process Gombrowicz describes as *Forma*.

20 Konf. 18. Original: “Dobra będzie gimnastyka dla naszego sztywnego myślenia, jeśli od czasu do czasu wyobrazimy sobie samego Pawła Valéry jako kapłana Niedojrzałości, bosego księdza w krótkich majtkach.”

reducing Gombrowicz’s project, summing it up in a sentence or two—rendered in the same dismissive tone noted earlier in this essay. What is this, if not an obsessive process of repeated disavowals?

Understanding the overall shape of Gombrowicz and Miłosz’s relationship is instructive not only because it brings to light this consistent pattern of disavowal and what we could term identity-formation in the negative, but also because it compels us to modify Gombrowicz’s own theory of *Forma*. Heavily influenced by Camus and Sartre, Gombrowicz’s career was in constant conversation with existentialist philosophy—he considered himself an existentialist, in fact. In tune with this, the concept of *Forma* implies a fantasy of total agency over *Formy* that his posthumous reputation seems to belie: Gombrowicz can develop and deploy counterforms, but he could not have foreseen that these counterforms would come to define him by congealing into *Formy* that lay claim to his very identity. In short, he did not foresee that somebody else, like Miłosz, could outmaneuver him in this game of forms and counterforms.

Ironically, this congealing of a literary reputation is best captured in one of *Miłosz’s* very late poems, *After Eighty*:

Soon the parade’ll be over, and it’ll be night,  
Who cares about getting it wrong, getting it right?

How will they dress me, redress me, undress me;  
What biometrics will they figure out about me?

But what does a dead bear care at all,  
How he’ll look stuffed and mounted on the wall.<sup>21</sup>

A devilishly paranoid reading of this poem would see it as referring not to Miłosz’s own person, but to what he did to the posthumous Gombrowicz—its resigned tone giving voice to Miłosz’s nonchalance and his easy acceptance of the inevitability of such courses of events. But let’s return to the conclusion of this study; it was at least in part by disavowing Gombrowicz and everything he represents that Miłosz successfully grafted himself onto a lineage of Polish Romanticism that emphasized messianic thought, the absurdity of history, and the truth-function of poetry—but this, too, necessarily came at a cost. For all that he shored up his reputation as the moral voice of a nation, Miłosz also reduced the heterogeneity of his works, which tremble under the weight of the historical significance of his person. He is a Great Poet, a Nobel Laureate, author of the first English-language anthology of Polish literature, etc. etc.—but it is difficult to say much more about him anymore.

21 “Po Osiemdziesiątce.” Original: “Niedługo skończy się cała parada,/ Co za różnica, wypada, nie wypada.// Jak będą mnie u- i roz-bierali,/ Jakich dowiedzą się bio-detali.// Nieżywemu niedźwiedzowi co do tego,/ Jak fotografować będą wypchanego.”

# IN FOCUS: EISENSTEIN AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Lecture/Screening Series at the Pacific Film Archive  
January 17 - April 25, 2018  
BAMPFA  
2155 Center Street  
Berkeley

Presented in parallel with the retrospective *Sergei Eisenstein: Films That Shook the World*, this series examines the life and works of one of the early twentieth century's most celebrated filmmakers within the historical, ideological, and theoretical contexts of his times. Featuring illuminating lectures by Anne Nesbet, a UC Berkeley associate professor of Slavic languages and literatures and an expert on Eisenstein and early Soviet culture, the series follows the entire course of Eisenstein's career, paying particular attention to the political and aesthetic debates in the Soviet Union that surrounded his work and to the reception of his films and ideas in the West. Here is a rare chance to experience theatrical screenings of Eisenstein's films alongside major and lesser-known works by his contemporaries, and to delve deeply into this extraordinary filmmaker's images, his thinking, and his world.

## Special Admission

General admission: \$15; BAMPFA members: \$11; UC Berkeley students: \$7

UC Berkeley faculty and staff, non-UC Berkeley students, disabled persons, ages 65+ and 18 & under: \$12

# SERGEI EISENSTEIN: FILMS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

Screening Series at the Pacific Film Archive  
February 9 - April 21, 2018  
BAMPFA

Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) is regarded as one of the world's most creative, pioneering, and influential filmmakers and is among the most lauded figures in Russia's cultural history. From *Strike* (1925) to *Ivan the Terrible: Parts I and II* (1944–46), Eisenstein's films, as well as his writings and his theory of montage, have shaped how cinema is made and understood. Seen today, films like *Battleship Potemkin*, *October* (also known as *Ten Days That Shook the World*), and *Alexander Nevsky* still shock with their extraordinary beauty and invention.

BAMPFA commemorates the 120th anniversary of Eisenstein's birth with this major retrospective. We are delighted that renowned Eisenstein authority Peter Bagrov will travel from Moscow to share his knowledge of the filmmaker's life, work, and aesthetics. (We regret that Naum Kleiman, who was also scheduled to join us, is unable to attend.) Together with our concurrent lecture/screening series *In Focus: Sergei Eisenstein and His Contemporaries*, this series affords an opportunity to see nearly all of Eisenstein's works in the best available prints—some of them imported from European archives—and to understand why the impact of this quintessential Soviet filmmaker's work and ideas continues to be felt around the world. This series continues through April; additional screenings to be announced.

More information about both series can be found at:

<https://bampfa.org>

Series organized by Senior Film Curator Susan Oxtoby and supported in part by grants from the Trust for Mutual Understanding and the National Endowment for the Arts. Film Series Sponsors: Kevin and Susan Consey. Thanks to our colleagues at the Institute for Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies, UC Berkeley; the San Francisco Silent Film Festival; and the Berkeley Community Chorus & Orchestra, who presented Prokofiev's cantata *Alexander Nevsky*, op. 78, on January 5–7 at UC Berkeley's Hertz Hall.

# Fall 2017 Courses

## Selected course offerings and selected area-related courses

Film Studies 25A	History of Film: Silent to WWII	Nesbet, A.
Geography 55	Introduction to Central Asia	Mehendale, S.
History 101	Topics in Modern European History, French Revolution to the Present	Slezkine, Yu.
History 103B	The Historical Novel and European History	Morton, J.
History 158C	Modern Europe: Old and New Europe, 1914-Present	Connelly, J.
History 167C	Germany 1914 to Present	Richter, I.
History 171B	Imperial Russia: From Peter the Great to the Russian Revolution	Frede, V.
History 173C	History of Eastern Europe: From 1900 to the Present	Morton, J.
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History 275B	The Long Nineteenth Century	Frede, V.
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Political Economy 160	Political Economy in Historical Context	Beecher, D.
Political Science 3	Introduction to Empirical Analysis and Quantitative Methods	Wittenberg, J.
Slavic R5A	Writing (Against) War: <i>Representing and Resisting Conflict in Literature and Film</i>	Postema, A.
Slavic R5A	Literature for Scientists	Egdorf, B.
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Slavic 45	Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature	Golburt, L.
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Slavic 100	Seminar: Russian, East European, and Eurasian Cultures	Kavitskaya, D.
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Slavic 100R	Research in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies	
Slavic 131	Literature and Revolution	Ram, H.
Slavic 134D	The Works of Leo Tolstoy	Naiman, E.
Slavic 181	Readings in Russian Literature	Matich, O.
Slavic 200	Graduate Colloquium	Naiman, E.
Slavic 242	Eighteenth-Century Russian Literature	Golburt, L.
Slavic 280	Graduate Seminar: Evgenii Onegin	Ram, H.
Slavic 280	Graduate Seminar: Facts and Fictions: <i>Factographic Strategies in Russian Prose</i>	Tyerman, E.
Slavic 281	Proseminar: Evgenii Onegin	Ram, H.
Slavic 375A	Teaching Methods for Slavic Languages: Russian 1-4	Muza, A.
Slavic 375B	Teaching Methods for Reading & Composition	Golburt, L.

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