

ПЕРУНЪ: The Newsletter of the USC Slavic Department

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Note from the Editor



A group of faculty and graduate students volunteered at an aid distribution center for community members affected by the Eaton and Palisades wildfires in January.

From raging wildfires in LA at the start of the semester to the firestorm of federal attacks on research funding, private universities, and international students, events transpiring in the background of our semester disrupted our lives in many ways. Your resilience and perseverance helped to keep our department steady and our professional lives moving forward, despite the challenging environment. I'm proud of our community of scholars and it fills me with joy to share your accomplishments from Spring 2025.

-CM

Evgeny Dengub was invited to deliver the keynote address “Meaning-Making in Today’s Language Classroom” at the Stanford World Language Project Professional Development Session at Stanford University in December 2024. In early 2025, he also gave the talk “Feedback & Ungrading” at Harvard University’s one-day Professional Development Symposium for Language Educators: Advancements in the Assessment of Russian and Other Slavic Languages. His chapter, “Beyond Grades: A Humanistic Approach to Russian Language Learning through Ungrading,” is forthcoming in the volume *Assessment of Russian as a Foreign Language: Unlocking Proficiency* (Routledge Russian Language Pedagogy and Research Book Series, 2025). Evgeny was awarded a semester of sabbatical funding through the competitive Advancing Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences Sabbatical Program from the Office of the Provost at USC, in support of his ongoing projects. In addition to his scholarship and teaching, Evgeny played key roles in two major conferences this year: he served as a member of the steering committee for the international virtual conference Teaching and Learning Russian as a Second and Heritage Language in a Diverse and Changing World (organized by ACTR), and as co-organizer and co-chair of the 3rd International Gender-Inclusive Language Instruction Conference hosted



at USC Center for Languages and Cultures. He was also invited to serve as a jury member for the AATSEEL Linguistics/SLA and Pedagogy Book Prize for the 2025–2027 cycle.

Yulia Dubasova presented her paper “From Decadence Towards the Symbolist Novel: The Christian Myth in Fyodor Sologub's Short Story Collection *The Sting of Death*” at AATSEEL 2025. In May, she completed the Proficiency-based pedagogy program at Middlebury College “STARTALK Institute for Teachers of Russian,” and was awarded their scholarship. Yulia was also awarded a scholarship from The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, which will partially cover her participation in the YIVO-Bard Uriel Weinreich Summer Program in Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture this summer. She also passed her MA Exams!

Mahshid Hosseiniarzarnaghi has been admitted to the 2025 session of the Middlebury Language Schools after passing the entrance exams and she received a scholarship award to attend in Summer. **Dmitrii Kuznetsov** took part in the roundtable “Uncovering the “Hidden Curriculum” of Graduate School” at AATSEEL. He completed the manuscript of his dissertation and can see the finish line ahead.

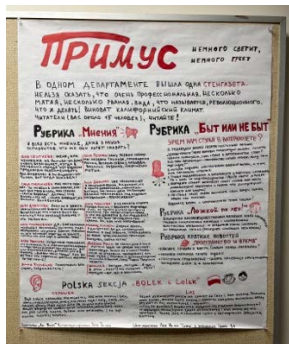
Colleen McQuillen’s chapter “Prospecting and Mining: Striking Gold in Russian Literature” was accepted for publication in *The Palgrave Handbook of Russian Ecological Culture*. It shows how the pursuit of natural resources in the Russian empire produced unique types of knowledge about the land and new forms of literature to express it. She delivered a paper entitled “Laughing Matter: Caricatures of Fossils at the Fin de Siècle” at the twelfth annual Workshop on Russian & Eurasian Modernisms, which she co-organizes with Julia Vaingurt. This year it was held at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the theme was “Scales of Measure, Scales of Reliability.” The event explored how modernist culture registered the shock of the newly acquired extension and magnification of human sense perception along the infinitely small and infinitely large vectors and how it responded to these radical reconfigurations of scale. Colleen co-organized with Kelsey Rubin-Detlev a two-day conference at USC, “Russian Afterlives of the Early Modern”; and she and Kelsey, together with Sophie Lesinka of the USC Libraries, co-organized “Voices of Freedom, Voices of War in Ukraine: Creative Workshops, Readings, and Conversations.” This event was funded by USC’s Visions & Voices, which is a university-wide arts and humanities initiative.



Chloe Papadopoulos and Colleen McQuillen got their hands dirty at the “Voices of Freedom, Voices of War” creative workshop.

In February Colleen started her two-year term as President Elect of AATSEEL. This is an official position that carries modest responsibilities but ensures continuity of the professional organization’s leadership. She served as discussant for an AATSEEL panel “Literary Technics and Ecocritical Techniques” (part of the “Eurasian Ecologies Past and Present” stream) and reviewed a book manuscript for the University of Wisconsin Press.





Hanna Navitskaia presented her research paper titled “Zoshchenko's Bathhouses” at the California Graduate Student Colloquium at Stanford. She was awarded the Hovel Summer Travel Award and the Visual Studies Summer Research Grant to investigate German communist posters and to study German this summer. Hanna adds that she is especially proud of overseeing the publication of our department’s first stengazeta “Primus”!

Chloe Papadopoulos presented an article-in-progress that considered disability, labor, and networks of care in Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk* and *The Brothers Karamazov* at the Modern Language Association Annual Convention in New Orleans. An overview of the panel was featured on *Bloggers Karamazov* if anyone is interested in knowing more about the topic ([Dostoevsky and Disability: The North American Dostoevsky Society at the 2025 Modern Language Association Convention](#)). Chloe was also delighted to share work drawn from her book project in a paper entitled “Giving and Receiving Alms: Patriotic Acts of Charity in Alexander Ostrovsky’s *Koz’ma Zakhar’ich Minin, Sukhoruk*” at our conference on Russian Afterlives of the Early Modern. She recently learned that I was nominated and selected as a speaker for the 2025-2026 Sawchen Lecture Series at the University of British Columbia. Finally, one of the highlights of her semester was accompanying three of our graduate students to the California Graduate Slavic Colloquium at Stanford, where she happily chaired the panel on which our very own Sasha Pchelintseva presented!

Sasha Pchelintseva presented her research at three conferences this semester. At the California Slavic Colloquium, she gave the talk “A Footnote to the Empire? The Ural Myth and Self-Representation in Annotations to Works by Anikita Iartsov and Vladimir Dal’,” investigating how footnotes assert authority and propagate the imperial agenda in the region. At our conference ‘Russian Afterlives of the Early Modern,’ she presented “‘Razvernuty’ starika Kantemira’: Two Twentieth-Century Novels about Antiokh Kantemir,” exploring Soviet reinterpretations of the poet’s legacy.



Kate Tarasova, Chloe Papadopoulos, Sasha Pchelintseva, and Hanna Navitskaia represented USC at the annual California Slavic Colloquium, which was held at Stanford this year.



At the Harvard Slavic Graduate Conference, **Sasha** delivered a paper titled “‘Veseli taino sebia, v sebe rassuzhdaia pol’zu nauk’: The Role of Paratext in (Re)shaping Author and Reader in Antiokh Kantemir’s Translation of *Conversations on the Plurality of World*,” which examined Kantemir’s personal take on the concepts of private and public knowledge reflected in the paratext to this translation. In addition to her conference presentations, she served as a committee member for USC’s Language & Career Week (March 3–6, 2025), helping to organize the event, and chaired a panel on the role of languages in education. In this panel, she also shared how studying French shaped her own academic trajectory.

In recognition of her pedagogical work, **Sasha** received the Assistant Lecturer award. She was also awarded a Houghton Library Visiting Fellowship to conduct pre-dissertation research on footnotes in eighteenth-century Russian periodicals, and a Hovel Summer Travel Grant to pursue related research at the Göttingen State and University Library in Germany, focusing on footnotes in Russian translations of German texts from the same period. In addition, Sasha was accepted into the USC Translation Studies certificate program.



Elena Petrova-Libgober won a USC Russell Endowed Dissertation Completion Fellowship for the 2025/2026 academic year. She also organized for our department the Polish conversation hour, which she plans to continue throughout the next academic year. See left for a recent photo!

Kelsey Rubin-Detlev was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor with Tenure! In addition to reaching that major professional milestone, her article, “L’Église orthodoxe dans les *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*: à la découverte d’une histoire alternative du christianisme,” appeared in the [Revue Voltaire](#) in December 2024. She spoke about biblical reception in the work of Ukrainian-born bishop Apollos Baibakov at AATSEEL 2025; she also presented a paper about Bible reading in eighteenth-century Russia at a workshop on Practice in Early Modern Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic World, at Scripps College in April. With Colleen McQuillen, she co-organized a conference about Russian Afterlives of the Early Modern, at which she also took part in an interdisciplinary roundtable on reception studies and the early modern. Thank you to all participants for making the event a success! She was delighted to facilitate the display of the exhibition [Pioneering Women in Ukraine](#) in USC’s Doheny Memorial Library and to orchestrate an online conversation with some of the project’s creators (Margarita Vaysman, Daria Nepochatova, and Olena Marchyshyna). Finally, she and USC Slavic alumna Erica Camisa Morale signed





an advance contract with NIU Press/Cornell University Press for *The Spring: At the Origins of East Slavic Lyric Poetry*, a bilingual edition and translation of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century East Slavic poetry.

Ellina Sattarova peer-reviewed an article for *The Russian Review* and served as chair for an AATSEEL roundtable titled "Slavic Neo-Gothic and Horror Media of the Last 100 Years," featuring, among other participants, our own Kate Tomashevskaja. She moderated a morning session of our very own USC Slavic conference "Russian Afterlives of the Early Modern"; and she completed the Developmental Editing Workshop for Scholarly Writers. Ellina was interviewed by NPR's correspondent Mandalit del Barco for a story on Yura Borisov, which aired on the Morning Edition on February 26 as a prelude to the Oscars.

Anna Sbitneva organized a panel at ASEES titled "*Farewell to Communism: Audio-Visual Culture of Perestroika*," where she presented the paper "*Authorial Voice on the Short Waves: Vladimir Voinovich's Radio Performance of Moscow 2042*." She also organized and chaired a roundtable at AATSEEL called "*Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum of Graduate School*." In addition, she contributed a film review of *Boshetunmai* (2022) for a special edition of *KinoKultura* focused on Kyrgyz cinema. Anna passed her qualifying exams in January and later this spring she became a recipient of the Teresa Wilson Endowed Fellowship for Summer 2025 to support work on her dissertation.

In April **Kate Tarasova** presented her paper "Kak Ukroshchali Smekh: Zhurnal Krokodil i Tsentsura v 1920-e–1930-e Gody" at the International Research Seminar *Dinamika Tsentsurnogo Protsessa v Russkoi Literature* organized by the University of Parma. She also participated in the California Graduate Student Colloquium at Stanford with a research paper titled, "Constructing Co-authorship: Ilf's and Petrov's Literary Identity." Kate was awarded the Hovel Summer Travel Award and the Visual Studies Summer Research Grant, which will allow her to conduct research work in Berlin this summer. She was also selected for the Ph.D. Academy Scholarship and Research Fund to further develop her studies on Soviet-German cinematic relations.

Kate Tomashevskaja received a Graduate Certificate in Cinema and Media Studies and a Graduate Certificate in Visual Anthropology this spring. At AATSEEL she participated in a roundtable on "Slavic Neo-Gothic and Horror Media of the Last 100 Years" by presenting "Political and Social Otherness in Late Soviet Horror Films." She also received a GSG Professional Development Fund grant in February and a Ph.D. Academy Scholarship and Research Fund grant in May.

Assel Uvaliyeva worked part-time as a Research Assistant at the Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, analyzing Russian and Kazakh-language articles before transitioning to a project focused on the TV series. She also received a DAAD Scholarship to study German this summer at Leipzig University.



Alik Zholkovsky and Lada Panova presented papers at the international conference “Gasparovskie chteniia,” organized by RGGU in April. Alik’s paper was titled, “«Я утром проснулся, и что-то меня обуяло...» Назыма Хикмета -- Давида Самойлова,” a recording of which you can find at <https://youtube/dt2ChHHJtyE?si=4J_2I3D5RsgSFeVF>. Lada’s paper, «Петербургский текст» -- из уст «бывшего»: «Декабрь морозит в небе розовом...» («Меншиков в Березове») is also available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YN_pq_CSkL0>.



Lada and Alik at his retirement party (L), where we celebrated his 40 years of teaching at USC and let him cut the cake (R)!



ALUMNI

In this issue Перунъ is unveiling a new section devoted to the accomplishments of our department’s recent alumni.

Erica Camisa-Morale’s article “Karion Istomin and the Trinity of Wisdom: God, the Sovereign, and the Poet Praise of Wisdom in the Panegyric to Petr Alekseevich (1683)” was published in *Language and Education in Petrine Russia: Essays in Honour of Maria Cristina Bragone*, eds. Svetlana Mengel, Laura Rossi. She notes that Professor Maria Cristina Bragone was her “first teacher of anything Slavic!” She and Kelsey Rubin-Detlev signed an advance contract with NIU/Cornell UP for the poetry collection *The Spring: The Origins of the East Slavic Origins*. Erica gave the talk “The Emergence of the ‘I’ in East Slavic Lyric” at University of California at Berkeley; and presented her paper, “An Icon Made of Words: Petr Buslaev’s ‘Spiritual Vision’” at Stanford’s Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (CMEMS), Stanford University. She rounded out the semester with a presentation: “Early Modernity: Periodization Issues and Paradigm Changes” at the USC conference Afterlives of the Early Modern and was awarded Stanford Mellon Funds for Professional Development to cover the cost of the editing her book manuscript (work to be done by our own Professor Emeritus Marcus Levitt).



Looking Ahead to Academic Year 2025-2026

We are eager to welcome four new members to our scholarly community in August 2025.

Dr. Veniamin Gushchin will join us as an assistant professor; and three students will enter our Ph.D. program. Members of the incoming cohort are: **Ksenia Guliaeva** (BA in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, Wesleyan University); **Petr Lobanov** (MA in Creative Writing, Higher School of Economics – Moscow); and **Sydney Vermeersch** (MA in Slavic Languages & Literatures, University of Toronto).

Перунъ, which may be translated as thunderbolt, is the name of the pagan Slavic thunder god. It is also the penname of Vadim Nevskii, who contributed illustrations to Russian satirical journals from the years 1905-1907. His monogram graces this newsletter's heading, which was taken from the Russian Satirical Journal Collection housed in the University of Southern California Digital Library.

