

ПЕРУНЪ: The Newsletter of the USC Slavic Department

Issue № 10 ♦ May 2026

Note from the Editor

We made it! The spring semester presented us with the challenges of learning new administrative procedures and becoming more self-reliant in practical matters as Dornsife College transitioned to a new organizational model. Thanks to your resilience and patience, together we succeeded in navigating the uncharted waters of the Humanities Hub. While I am on sabbatical in the coming academic year, our department will be captained by **Sally Pratt**, who has logged countless hours of administrative experience at USC and knows how to get things done. **Chloe Papadopoulos** will step in as editor of *Perun*, which is celebrating its fifth anniversary with this tenth issue. At the end of the issue, you will find some photos from earlier issues to show how *Perun* chronicles the life of our department (and—hint, hint—to inspire more photo contributions). On to the news! –CM



Julie Ammons presented her paper “Rewriting Pushkin and the Self: Dovlatov’s Pushkin Hills and Counter-History” at the California Slavic Colloquium in Santa Barbara.

Andrzej Brylak (left) participated in the panel “Beyond the Horizon: New Approaches to Reading and Teaching Polish Culture” at the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages Convention. He also presented a paper titled “The Aphasic Translation of Leo Lipski” at the CEREAS NW Regional Conference at the University of Washington.





Yulia Dubasova presented her paper “‘The Other’ as Object and Subject: A Jewish Counter-Narrative to the Russian Romantic Plot in Sholem Aleichem’s *The Bloody Hoax*” at the 2026 AATSEEL Conference. Her review of *The Jewish Inn in Polish Culture: Between Practice and Phantasm*, edited by Halina Goldberg and Bożena Shallcross (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2025), has been accepted for publication in *Ab Imperio: Studies of New Imperial History and Nationalism in the Post-Soviet Space*. Yulia served as a judge for the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) Olympiada of Spoken Russian, and she has taken on the responsibility for coordinating “The Other 19V,” an online reading group dedicated to lesser-known nineteenth-century Russian authors. Yulia was inducted into Dobro Slovo, the National Slavic Honor Society in the United States.

Venya Gushchin published “[Kitsch, Graphomania, and Camp: A Meta-Typology of Literary Badness](#)” in *Ulbandus*, as well as translations of poems by [Maria Malinovskaya](#) and [Tatiana Krasilinikova](#), and a review of Robert Tanner’s *Ambivalent Souls: A True Translation of Eugene Onegin* for Brooklyn Rail. His [review](#) of *Plagiator* (2025, dir. Anton Megerdichev) appeared in KinoKultura. Venya also edited and submitted a cluster of articles to *Canadian Slavonic Papers*. The articles resulted from a workshop titled “Writing Back from the Peripheries? Russophone Literary Diversity,” which was made possible by the BiRmingham-Illinois Partnership for Discovery, EnGagement and Education (BRIDGE). Venya presented papers at AATSEEL, BASEEES, and the workshop “Metaphors and Materialities of Waste,” and he was an invited discussant for the Columbia Working Group on Contemporary Russophone Literature.

Mahshid Hosseinian presented her paper “Dog as Critical Literary Figure of Authoritarian Modernism in the Soviet Union and Iran” at the Slavic Colloquium Conference, which was held at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Chloe Papadopoulos’s article “Lost in the Details: A.K. Tolstoy’s *Prince Serebrianyi* and its Critics” was published in [Slavic Literatures](#). She gave an invited talk—“One Thousand Years of History in a Coffee Table Book”—for the Department of Slavic and Eastern European Languages and Cultures at The Ohio State University. Chloe was also invited to present new material from her book project for the 19v Art History Seminar/Искусствоведческий семинар «19v». Here on campus, she served as a session moderator for our “Metaphors and Materialities of Waste” workshop and introduced *Anna Karenina* (2012) for our departmental film series. Finally, she and Valeria Mutc (UC Davis) announced their working group, “[19v Conservative Imaginaries](#),” which will be hosted by NYU’s Jordan Center and begin its seminar series this coming fall!



Sasha Pchelintseva received a 2026 Excellence in Teaching Russian Award for Graduate Student Instructors from the American Council of Teachers of Russian. She served as a jury member for the ACTR Olympiada of Spoken Russian held for the first time in California. At the annual AATSEEL conference, Sasha presented a paper “Between Page and Screen: Andrei Platonov’s ‘Fro’ and Its Cinematic Counterparts.” She also participated as a speaker at a USC PhD Academy event “Funding Your PhD: Fellowships and Grants” and completed the USC PhD Academy professional development certificate program in Academic Communication, Leadership, and Management.



We celebrated an array of achievements at the department’s Award Ceremony, which also served as the induction ceremony for Dobro Slovo. Left to right: Liza Shchegrov, Mika Moawad, Sasha Pchelintseva, Lena Petrova-Libgober, Yulia Dubasova, Julie Ammons, Anna Sbitneva, Kate Tarasova, Assel Uvaliyeva, Cesar Garcia, Michael Fayer, and Sasha Friedlich.

Lena Petrova-Libgober’s article “The Bad Jewish Daughter: Rethinking Esterka’s image as a *Belle Juive*,” co-authored with Savoy Curry (Northwestern University) was accepted for publication in *Shofar* and expected out in Issue 45.2 (Summer 2027). She co-organized a stream with Daria Solodkaia at AATSEEL, titled “Squaring the Pushkin Circle: People, Propositions, Interpretations,” where she presented her paper, “Aleksandr Pushkin, Orest Somov, and the Witches of Kyiv.” Lena received two awards: the USC Graduate School Summer Research and Writing Grant, and the 2026 Outstanding Assistant Lecturer Award from USC’s Center for Languages and Cultures (CLC). She was also inducted into Dobro Slovo. Lena served as a judge at the Olympiada of Spoken Russian for High School students in March and served as the language Ambassador of Russian and Polish for the CLC Outreach Committee.



Sally Pratt presented a paper entitled "Zabolotsky Creates a Self: Namechecks and Acts of Nameless Commemoration" for a panel entitled "Poets Writing about Poets" at the AATSEEL conference in February 2026. The panel was organized by USC PhD and Stanford postdoc, Erica Morale. USC postdoc and Notre Dame faculty member, Emily Wang, also participated in the panel. Sally also chaired a session for the Pushkin stream at AATSEEL entitled "Squaring the Pushkin Circle." She is at work on co-editing a collection of articles with Dmitry Manin entitled "Zabolotsky's *Stolbtsy* Collection at 100: 1929-2029." She reports that our own **Venya Gushchin** is a contributor!

Kelsey Rubin-Detlev's article, "Recovering the Writer-Empress: Cataloguing Translations of Catherine II," a review of Emmanuel Waegemans, ed. *An Empire of Words: Translations of Catherine II's Writings. An International Bibliography* (Antwerp: Benerus, 2025), appeared in volume 13 of *Vivliofika* in December 2025. She also peer reviewed an article manuscript for a graduate student journal.

Ellina Sattarova presented a paper titled "The Afterlife of Early Cinema in Aleksei Balabanov's *Trofim and Of Freaks and Men*" and chaired a panel titled "Russian and Belarusian Cinema of the Last Decade" at AATSEEL in February. She also had the pleasure of participating in the 14th Annual Workshop on Russian and Eurasian Modernisms, "Metaphors and Materialities of Waste." Last but not most certainly not least, she passed her third-year review (Hurray! Congratulations, Ellina!).

Kate Tarasova published an article titled "Satirizing Censorship in Early Soviet Culture: *Krokodil* and Limits of Laughter" in issue 44 (2025) of *Europa Orientalis*. She received the Deborah A. Martinsen Symposium Travel Award from the International Dostoevsky Society, a USC VSGC Summer Research Grant, and a USC Graduate Student Government Travel Award. With Hanna Navitskaya, she presented the paper "Soviet Republican Films Come to the State" at the AATSEEL Conference in New Orleans.

Kate Tomashevskia earned two certificates: the Graduate Certificate in Visual Studies; and the Ph.D. Academy Certificate in Communication, Leadership, and Management. She presented the paper "Dissident Knowledge: Pseudoscience in the Soviet Samizdat Journal Chasy" at the MLA conference, and the paper "Russian Symbolism in Late Soviet Horror Cinema" at AATSEEL. She received an AATSEEL Graduate Student Travel Grant.



Assel Uvaliyeva published a film review of *Jogtau* in the January issue of *Kinokultura* and presented a paper titled "Mediating Socialist Futures: The Tatar Children's Journal *Little Comrades* and Local Agency in the Early Soviet Period" at AATSEEL. She also presented "Stone Witnesses: Material Culture and Counter-Memory in Abish Kekilbayev's *Ballads of Forgotten Years*" at the Central Asian Studies Conference at the University of Chicago, travel to which was supported by a travel grant from the University of Chicago.

Alik Zholkovsky continues his frenzied pace of publication even in retirement:

[Technē of the Scriptor: Graphomania as Technique: Lebiadkin, Khlebnikov, Limonov, and Others](#). *Arts*. 2026; 15(4): 78. [PDF-version](#).

“Ia Utrom Prosnulsia i Chto-to Menia Obuialo...” Nazyma Hikmeta—Davida Samoilova [“I woke up this morning and something overtook me”: Nazym Hikmet’s poem and its translation by David Samoilov]. *Inostrannaia literatura* [Foreign Literature], 2025, 9: 253-270. [PDF-version](#).

[“Tol’ko etogo malo” i drugie filologicheskie vin’etki](#) [“Only that is not enough” and other philological vignettes], *Zvezda* [The Star], 2026, 1: 259-274. [PDF-version](#).

[Portlenskii sindrom sorok let spustia: “Nostal’giia” Aleksandra Gorodnitslogo \(2023\) – remeik “Piratskoi liricheskoi” Bulata Okudzhavy](#) [The “Portland Syndrome” Forty Years Later: Alexander Gorodnitskii’s «Nostalgia» (2023) — a Remake of Bulat Okudzhava’s “Pirates Waxing Lyrical”], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* [New Literary Survey], 2026, 198: 268-278. [PDF-version](#).

Malen’kii shedevr: sovetskii anekdot o kormlenii slona [A micro-mastepiece: A Soviet-time joke about feeding an elephant], *Novyi mir* [New World], 2026, 4: 185–209. [PDF-version](#).

Alik also delivered several talks:

Доклад на “Гаспаровских чтениях” “Как пирует сердце в “После полуночи...” Мандельштама” (04.18.2026): [видео](#).

Лекция “Советский анекдот о кормлении слона: сложный разбор простого текста”, прочитанная он-лайн [в клубе “IntLex”](#) (02.24.2026) и [на семинаре “Языки психиатрии”](#) (03.05.2026).

[Чтение виньеток в Зум-Клубе “Е-20” \(Бостон\)](#) (01.20.2026)

Доклад на XXXIII Лотмановских чтениях [“К столетию “Глокой куздры” Щербы: чего хотел автор сказать своим художественным произведением?”](#) (12.27.2025).



PHOTO ARCHIVES

To celebrate the fifth anniversary of *Perun*, we look back at some photos from earlier issues.

Issue 1 (December 2021)



At the end of the fall semester Anna Sbitneva and Lena Petrova joined Colleen and Evgeny for a day of sorting books in the Slavic Library.



Issue 2 (May 2022)

In April, the Organization for Students of Slavic and East European Studies (OSSEES) hosted a teach-in and fundraiser for Ukraine on campus that raised over \$2,000 for Help US Help, an NGO that provides medical supplies to volunteer medical units in the areas affected by the conflict in Ukraine. Front row (L to R): Erica Camisa-Morale, Joti Makaspak (then Joseph Nakpil), and Nikita Allgire; Back row (L to R): Dmitrii Kuznetsov, Sarah Matthews, Simon Garibyan, and Caity Giustiniano.



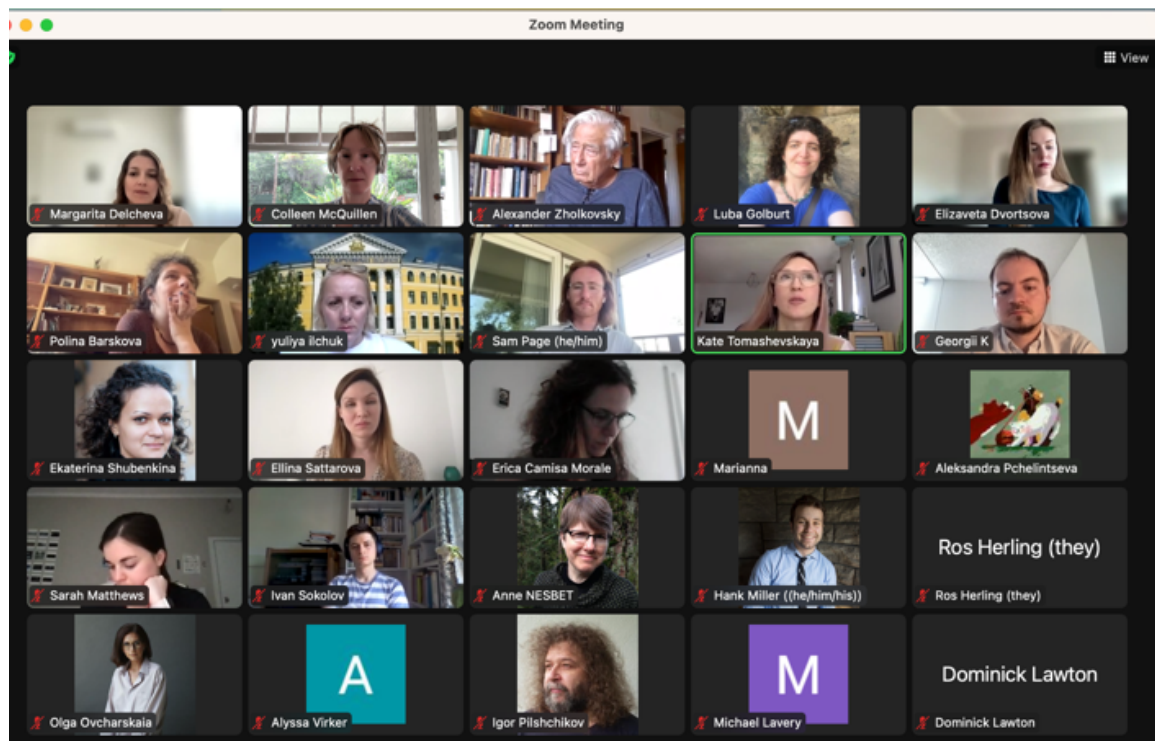
Issue 4 (May 2023)



Sally Pratt gave a touching toast to Tom Seifrid on the occasion of Tom stepping down as department chair.



We celebrated Susan Kechekian's many years of service to SLL and raised a toast to her life's next chapter.



USC had an outstanding showing at the California Slavic Colloquium! Thanks to everyone who tuned in to show support.

Issue 5 (December 2023)



From left to right: Lena Petrova, Sasha Pchelintseva, Andrzej Brylak, Caity Giustiniano, Dmitrii Kuznetsov, and Sarah Matthews pose in their new Polish vocabulary tee shirts.



Kate Tomashevskia and Colleen McQuillen model their millinery creations at the Hat Making Workshop, which was part of our Parajanov Centennial Conference.

Issue 6 (May 2024)



Current and former graduate students, faculty, and staff gathered at Professor Emeritus Marcus Levitt's keynote address at AATSEEL. The organization bestowed upon Professor Levitt (front row, center) the prestigious award for "Outstanding Contribution to Scholarship."

Issue 7 (December 2024)



Andrzej Brylak took students in his Polish language courses for a meal to celebrate the end of the semester. Left to right: Andrzej, Lena Petrova-Libgober, Sarah Matthews, Caity Giustiniano, Dmitrii Kuznetsov.

Issue 8 (May 2025)



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



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.

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.