THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

MELANCHOLIC MINIATURES

PAVEL ROMANIKO REFLECTS ON HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PERSONAL AND CULTURAL PAST

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ver the last decade, geopolitical crises and fears of regime insecurity have fueled an unprecedented crackdown by governments against civil society, prioritizing state security and sovereignty over human rights and traditional values over liberal democratic principles. As a result, the space for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) is shrinking and freedom of expression is eroding. This trend is particularly prevalent in the post-Soviet region, where burdensome registration and financial restrictions have been imposed; in Russia, several rights-promoting organizations have been declared "undesirable" and their activities criminalized. In light of this, we have devoted a significant portion of our programming this year to human rights-related issues and are including two articles on human rights in this issue of Harriman Magazine.

We are excited to feature a profile on the life and work of Rachel Denber ('86), deputy director of the Europe and Central Asia division at Human Rights Watch (HRW), whom we honored as our 2016 alumna of the year. Denber opened HRW's first Moscow office in 1991 and has been conducting courageous field research and advocacy in Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan ever since. We are delighted and honored to pay tribute to her invaluable contribution to the field of human rights.

In late February, we welcomed Dunja Mijatović, the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, to deliver our annual Harriman Lecture. Mijatović has been serving as the world's only intergovernmental media watchdog since 2010, and she provided a fascinating overview on the shrinking freedom of expression landscape. In our in-depth interview with her for the *Magazine*, Mijatović discussed the trajectory of her career and the contemporary challenges to freedom of expression and media freedom across the OSCE states.

We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to hearing your feedback and ideas for the future.

Alexander Cooley Director, Harriman Institute



SPECIAL FEATURES

Human Rights and Freedom of Expression



<u>A Different Country: Promoting Human Rights</u> in the Wake of Soviet Collapse; Rachel Denber in Profile By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

Denber opened Human Rights Watch's first Moscow office in 1991 and has been conducting courageous field research and advocacy in Europe and Eurasia ever since. Read about her experiences in the field and her current efforts to promote human rights in the region.

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Free Expression in the Age of Security Threats: An Interview with Dunja Mijatović By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

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Double Identities: A Profile of Anna Frajlich (-Zajac) By Ronald Meyer

Anna Frajlich-Zajac retired this spring after teaching Polish language and literature at Columbia for thirty-four years. The poet Anna Frajlich, her alter ego, received the Literature Prize from the Union of Polish writers in exile in March and travels to Rzeszów, Poland, this fall to attend a conference held in her honor.

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<u>In Search of the Twelfth Chair:</u> <u>Pavel Romaniko's *Nostalgia* By Alex Mioković</u>

The works in Pavel Romaniko's Nostalgia series, from which he chose the works for his Harriman exhibit, are untitled and include only a short description of what is visible in the picture. The sources for Romaniko's handmade, miniaturized interiors are his memories of spaces in which he grew up in the Soviet Union or pictures culled from archives that represent Russian and Soviet "collective" memories. Untitled (Kuntsevo), 2010 (see cover) presents a room that appears to be uninhabited, with white walls, dark wainscoting, and a diamond-patterned floor. Harsh, artificial light streams in through the windows. A solitary chair with a red back and seat rests against the wall. The empty room could accommodate several people. What will happen if Stalin returns?



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IN PROFILE RACHEL DENBER A DIFFERENT COUNTRY: PROMOTING HUMAN

RIGHTS IN THE WAKE OF SOVIET COLLAPSE

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

n July 1991, a month before a group of hard-liners from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union attempted a coup to unseat its leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, Rachel Denber ('86) was hired as a research associate for the Helsinki Watch Division of Human Rights Watch (HRW). She would start that fall, and her job would be to investigate the human rights situation in various Soviet republics and to open the organization's Moscow office—the first in the Soviet Union.

It was an exciting and turbulent period. The Baltic republics had declared independence the previous year, and even the Kremlin's tanks were unable to stop them; nationalist unrest and calls for independence destabilized other republics; and, in June, Boris Yeltsin won a sweeping victory in the first open and democratic election to take place in Russia. When Gorbachev essentially dissolved the Communist Party in August, the world was poised for democracy to prevail in the Soviet Union. Denber watched the events unfold and wondered whether she would still have a job. "I was actually very worried they would tell me, 'We don't need a researcher on the Soviet Union anymore because everything is just fine," she says. But she started the position in September as planned (spending the first two months in the New York office and just missing, to her disappointment, the first international human rights conference to be hosted by the Soviet Union). "It only took five minutes to see how much work there was to be done"-the collapsing Communist system was devolving into a state of lawless chaos, and the Soviet republics were riddled with clashes and conflicts.

Denber, who is now deputy director of the Europe and Central Asia Division, will celebrate her twenty-fifth anniversary with HRW in September. We are in her office, located on the thirty-third floor of the Empire State Building. Dressed in jeans and an oversized maroon



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sweater, Denber is sipping Earl Grey tea from a mug adorned with a picture of Cheburashka, a popular Russian storybook and cartoon character. It is one of four mismatched mugs that she keeps on her desk near a half-empty jar of jam, an electric teakettle, and numerous, carelessly stacked tea boxes. "More *kipyatok*?" she offers, reaching for the hot water (she frequently inserts Russian words into English sentences). Six weeks after our meeting, the Harriman Institute will celebrate Denber as its alumna of the year. Humble and selfeffacing, she is squeamish about the honor. "Why *me*?" she asks.

Growing up in Southern New Jersey during the 1970s, Denber was the only Jewish student in her school. Her parents, of Eastern European descent, supplemented her education with thrice-per-week Hebrew school ("You can imagine how much I *loved going*"). As a grade schooler, during lessons about the plight of Soviet Jewry, Denber learned of the Soviet Union for the first time. She wanted to know everything about the place, but her Hebrew school instructor would tell her nothing "beyond the fact that there were Jews there, and they lived badly."

Though the incident ignited an early, "deep-seated" interest in the Soviet Union, Denber, who completed her undergraduate degree at Rutgers, initially studied French. "I was enamored with French literature, French language, French this, French that," she says. In the summer of '82, after finishing her junior year abroad program in Paris, she took a bus tour from Finland to Leningrad. Brezhnev was still alive, and the group spent the days trailing Of course I should have done anything to get myself there. But I really lacked courage and initiative. You had to apply, be accepted; you had to put yourself on the line.

Above: Denber *(second from left)* on the road from Tskhinvali to Vladikavkaz during her first human rights fact-finding mission, 1991



From left to right: Denber with colleague in Azerbaijan on the way to the conflict-torn Nagorno Karabakh region, 1992; Denber with the late Valery Abramkin, one of the first prisoners' rights activists in Russia, early 1990s; Denber on the way from Irkutsk to Bryansk, with Irkutsk human rights activist Aleksandr Lyuboslavski and friend, during a fact-finding mission investigating allegations of torture abuses by police, 1998

a "sweet" Soviet tour guide who stuck to a rigid script. "It was wild," says Denber, "because I was just some dumb kid."

Two years later, Denber enrolled in Columbia University's political science department to pursue a degree in the comparative politics division, where she immersed herself in the study of Soviet nationalities.¹ One of Denber's biggest regrets from that period (1984–91) is that she didn't go to the Soviet Union during graduate school. "*Of course* I should have done anything to get myself there," she says. "But I really lacked courage and initiative. You had to apply, be accepted; you had to put yourself on the line."

In those days, it was still fairly burdensome for political scientists to do research in the region. There were fewer grant-giving organizations, and research opportunities were limited to the archives it was nearly impossible to conduct surveys and difficult to secure interviews, not only with elites but also with ordinary citizens. "As a foreigner, you were under suspicion and people were very guarded," Timothy Frye, a political science professor and former Harriman Institute director, whose graduate studies at Columbia overlapped with Denber's, told me.

Denber completed a master's degree and embarked on a doctorate. But her passion for academia soon waned, and she felt herself becoming "a terrible graduate student." She wanted to be on the ground relating to people but was in New York reading about other people's experiences instead. Then, in 1991, as the Soviet Union teetered on the brink of collapse— Gorbachev's glasnost policy brought openness, and thus discussion of the Communist system's failings—everything changed. "It was just this moment when there was huge demand from government, NGOs, and the private sector, and not that many people to fill it," said Frye.

It was during this period that Jeri Laber (Russian Institute, '54), founder and executive director of Helsinki Watch, decided to hire a Soviet Union researcher and open an office in Moscow. Denber, who had a long-standing interest in human rights, applied for the job; once hired, she did not think twice about leaving her doctoral studies behind.

On a cold, gray day in November 1991, Denber landed in Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport for the first time. She was greeted at the crowded arrival gate, dim and hazy with cigarette smoke, by an amicable retired couple related to the dissident and human rights activist Ludmilla Alexeyeva, now chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group and at the time a longtime consultant for Helsinki Watch. The couple drove Denber straight to a two-room apartment, secured by Laber with Alexeyeva's help, in a large residential building near Smolensk Square. The space had an official feel and a view of the Moscow River and the White House from the roof. Equipped with a laptop, fax machine, and laser printer, the apartment would serve as the inaugural Helsinki Watch office. It would also be Denber's temporary residence in Moscow, a city she fell in love with "at first sight."

It was an unprecedented time in history. A great ideological empire, closed to outside influence for seventy-four years, was opening and unraveling, and no one had any idea where it was headed. Just the year before, it would have been inconceivable to open a branch of a U.S.-based international human rights organization in the Soviet Union. But the opportunity was there, and it was up to Denber to figure out how to make it work. She started as soon as she landed in Moscow.

Denber had excellent command of Russian but no experience navigating the labyrinthine Soviet system. To help her, Laber and Alexeyeva recruited Alexander Petrov, a Muscovite computer programmer with a foot in the dissident movement, who showed up to meet Denber in the apartment's lobby on one of her first days in Moscow. "I remember thinking he was the calmest and most unshakable person I had ever met," she recalls.

The pair immediately set to work on registering the organization as a foreign representative office, first with the municipal government and then the foreign ministry. With the Soviet system eroding, the atmosphere was simultaneously chaotic— "you couldn't find things and you couldn't find people," says Denber—and extremely permissive. Seemingly simple tasks, such as finding a notary, could take all day, but a feeling of boundless freedom offset the frustration. "We could travel freely, talk to anyone we wanted," recalled Petrov, who spoke with me by phone.

The Internet had yet to take off, and each morning they combed five or six national papers for investigative articles about potential human rights abuses, which they translated into English and compiled into digests transmitted to HRW's headquarters. International calls, which Denber had to make almost daily in order to communicate with her colleagues in New York, were a complicated



From left to right: Alexander Petrov on the phone in HRW's first Moscow office, 1991; Denber and Petrov in the Moscow office, late 1990s; Denber in Moscow with the late Larisa Bogoraz, prominent Soviet dissident and human rights activist, shortly before the birth of Denber's son, 1994

It was an unprecedented time in history. A great ideological empire, closed to outside influence for seventy-four years, was opening and unraveling, and no one had any idea where it was headed. undertaking involving a switchboard operator and a lot of waiting.

As the public face of the organization in Moscow, Denber communicated with the media and found new contacts in the human rights community. She was an apt networker with sophisticated intuition and heightened emotional intelligence that allowed her to understand, and put at ease, whomever she was engaging. Petrov was amazed at how flawlessly she grasped the nuances of Soviet culture. "We thought of Americans as knowing nothing," he said, "but somehow, she knew everything."

During those years, Denber would take frequent trips to investigate and document human rights abuses in the former Soviet republics, which were plagued with nationalism, repression, social unrest, and armed conflicts. Her first trip, to Georgia and its autonomous regions North and South Ossetia, took place just two weeks after her initial arrival in Moscow, in December '91. At the time, Georgia was struggling to gain independence from the Soviet Union and fighting a separatist movement in South Ossetia, an autonomous region in northern Georgia. The result was a three-way skirmish between the Georgian, Soviet, and Ossetian military forces; a vicious anti-Ossetian campaign by Georgia's recently elected nationalist president Zviad Gamsakhurdia; and violence against ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia.

Denber would join the late Jemera Rone, HRW's pioneer expert on humanitarian law violations who had spent years investigating conflicts in Central America, on a factfinding mission to document human rights violations committed against Georgian and Ossetian civilians by government and rebel forces from both sides of the conflict.



Denber on a fact-finding mission in the 1990s

Back then HRW did not offer the extensive research training it does now, and Denber trained by watching Rone, who conducted interviews through an interpreter.² During their two-week mission, the pair would interview seventy refugees, and about two dozen government officials, journalists, and hospital workers on both sides of the conflict.

Many of the refugees interviewed— Georgian and Ossetian shelling victims fleeing their villages in South Ossetia for Tbilisi, Gori, and North Ossetia—had been taken hostage for ransom. The practice (a major violation of humanitarian law) was a common means for both Georgian and Ossetian paramilitary forces to raise money; and the hostages were brutally mistreated by both sides—beaten, threatened, and sometimes even killed.

Denber will never forget the first interview she conducted on her own, with an ethnic Ossetian teenager who had been taken hostage by ethnic Georgians, then released. Denber was not only heartbroken on the boy's behalf, but she was also nervous that, in the process of taking his testimony in Russian and recording it by hand, she would misconstrue something he said. "I had this tremendous responsibility to get his story straight," she says. The day after they left Georgia, a violent coup erupted.

When Denber returned to Moscow, where she spent two days before heading to New York for three months, Gorbachev announced the disintegration of the Soviet Union. She flew out of the Russian Federation, a different country than the one she had flown into just weeks prior.

She flew out of the Russian Federation, a different country than the one she had flown into just weeks prior.

In October of '92, Alexander Petrov accompanied Denber on a five-day, factfinding mission to Yerevan, Armenia, to investigate the shelling of Armenian civilians and civilian structures by the Azerbaijani National Army and Air Force. The Azerbaijanis were fighting an Armenian insurgency in Azerbaijan's autonomous region, Nagorno-Karabakh, which had a predominately ethnic Armenian population at the time (the conflict continues to this day, and the mission was one component of the investigations into violations by all sides of the conflict). Denber and Petrov interviewed dozens of ethnic Armenian victims, refugees, doctors, and politicians, and, this time, Denber was responsible for the training. She listened intently while Petrov conducted his first interviews. Then, she pointed out his shortcomings. "Why didn't you ask this? Why didn't you ask that?" she would prod him. Initially Petrov was taken aback. "It was-how do you say in English-annoying," he told me. But he quickly understood the value of the details she wanted him to extract. When the time came for him to conduct an interview on his own, they were in an Armenian hospital. "It was evening, about five; the overhead light was on," he recalled. Denber pushed him into one of the hospital rooms, which contained about fifteen ethnic Armenian children injured by shelling attacks. "These children were maimed, missing limbs, and it was horrible. Rachel's method was to throw me straight into cold water and see whether I would sink or swim."

For the next five and a half years, Denber, who eventually became the Moscow office director, worked day and night alongside Petrov, both in Moscow and all over the former Soviet republics. The office was "a boiling kettle of activity," with "its own insane rhythm," recalled Erika Dailey (Harriman Institute, '92), who was based in HRW's New York office and often filled in for Denber in Moscow while she was in In the mid-1990s, organized crime peaked all over the region—people were shot on Moscow's streets in broad daylight, and violence intensified in the former republics.

the field, taking over the office directorship while Denber was on maternity leave (Denber married a Muscovite in '93 and gave birth to a son in '94). People stayed on the couch, constantly coming and going friends, friends of friends, and prominent human rights activists from the Soviet era, most of whom had spent years in internal exile or deprived conditions. "They smoked, they were exhausted, their nutrition was horrible," Dailey told me.

In the mid-1990s, organized crime peaked all over the region-people were shot on Moscow's streets in broad daylight, and violence intensified in the former republics, particularly in the Caucasus. In the midst of this chaos, Denber was instructed to lead a member of HRW's advisory committee on a trip through the South Caucasus, where they would be meeting with various officials. The era preceded cell phones, so meetings were hard to arrange, with Petrov fielding some of the logistics from Moscow while they were traveling. Because road banditry was so widespread, particularly carjacking and hostage taking, they traveled from Yerevan to Tbilisi by train. But, as they approached the Armenian-Georgian border, they stalled. After standing in the station for hours, the advisory committee member, feeling anxious, urged Denber to do something-if they waited any longer, they would miss their meetings with no way of alerting anyone. She ran out of the train looking for a driver and eventually found

someone to take them. But, there was a problem. The driver, a nice middle-aged man who accepted a hefty sum in return for the favor, only had one arm. And the car was a stick shift. Denber had no idea how they could possibly make it, but they went anyway. Thankfully, the car was retrofitted for the man's condition, and the driver knew exactly what he was doing. (When a group of suspicious men motioned for them to pull over, he kept going without hesitation.) Somehow, hours later, Denber and the advisory committee member got to their meetings in one piece.

Courage is a pivotal requirement for human rights researchers, and Jeri Laber instantly recognized Denber's ability to adjust to complicated and dangerous circumstances. "She had a strong spirit, a good sense of humor," Laber told me. "And she never complained about safety problems or poor working conditions."

In 1997, Denber was promoted to deputy director of the Europe and Central Asia Division. She was attached to Moscow, and ambivalent about leaving, but she packed up and moved her family to New York. In the ensuing two decades she supervised the researchers working in Europe, Russia, and Central Asia, and oversaw the opening of field offices in Tbilisi, Dushanbe, and Tashkent, among other cities. She also continued to go on fact-finding missions, though not as frequently, and spent a significant amount of time in Moscow, which remains her second home (during our interviews, which spanned the course of three months, Denber visited Moscow twice-for a week in February and a monthlong stay in March).

Throughout the 2000s, after the Color Revolutions, and then the Arab Spring, inspired the fear of similar movements overtaking Russia, Denber watched the human rights situation there deteriorate, with media freedom taking a plunge, and the killings of journalists and human rights







From top to bottom: Denber with Petrov in HRW's first Moscow office shortly after returning from her first fact-finding mission, 1991; Denber with Uzbek human rights activist Umida Niyazova (*center*) and Harriman Institute National Advisory Council member Colette Shulman at an HRW reception honoring Niyazova, 2008; Denber at a Moscow press conference presenting HRW's *World Report 2013*



Harriman director Alexander Cooley introducing panelists at the Harriman Institute's 2016 alumni reception; *opposite page:* Cooley presenting Denber with 2016 alumna of the year award

activists becoming commonplace. Media is an important tool for human rights workers. "We document abuses in order to affect change," says Denber. "And in order to do this, you need to make the abuses public—to bring them to the attention of governments, the international community, and the broader public." For that, you need free media. But it has become increasingly difficult to publicize human rights abuses in Russia.

In October 2006, the journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who had been investigating violations in Chechnya, was shot in broad daylight outside her apartment building in Moscow. Her death was never properly investigated. Then, in July 2009, Natalia Estemirova, a close friend of Politkovskaya's who directed the Grozny office for the Moscow-based human rights organization Memorial (one of Russia's most prominent human rights organizations currently fighting for its survival against threats from the Kremlin to close it), was kidnapped. Ambassador Sarah Mendelson, a friend of Denber's from graduate school and a longtime colleague, was awakened by a frantic call from Denber (who knew Estemirova) the day of Estemirova's disappearance. Denber wanted her to get in touch with Michael McFaul at the National Security Council to raise the alarm. Before Mendelson could make the call, Estemirova's body had been found. "We've had colleagues killed, we've had colleagues jailed, we've had a lot of scary times," Mendelson told me.

Watching her colleagues in Moscow "fight for their professional lives" has been disheartening, says Denber. But despite the dismal atmosphere, HRW has managed some victories in recent years. In the leadup to the Sochi Olympics, for instance, HRW's Russia team spent two and a half years investigating the exploitation of migrant workers in the construction of the infrastructure. Abuses ranged from the confiscation of passports to the nonpayment of promised wages. After HRW, together with Memorial's Migration and Law project, leaned heavily on the International Olympic Committee, the IOC finally put pressure on the Russian government, which in turn

investigated the situation. In February 2014, the government issued a pledge for wage arrears in the amount of \$8.3 million. Another impact came in autumn 2014, after the organization released a report about the rights of children with disabilities living in orphanages, who are isolated, neglected, and subjected to abuse. In a surprise move, the Russian ministry of labor and social protections sent a letter to all the executive agencies in Russia responsible for children with disabilities living in institutions, summarizing the report's findings and instructing the officials to read the report and "take all measures" to address the issues presented. "It was a big high point with Russia in recent years," says Denber.

On February 11, 2016, Denber, fresh from a weeklong stay in Moscow, arrived at the Columbia Club for a panel (fittingly, on the topic of Russian media and propaganda) to be followed by a reception in her honor. She sat in the front row, avidly participating in the evening's question-and-answer discussion.



When it came time for her to receive the award, she shifted uncomfortably in her seat and, with a nervous smile, walked up to the podium.

"I'd like to think you're honoring me because you're honoring my organization and the movement," she said, recalling her days as a graduate student at the Harriman Institute. Then her face lit up, and her reticence subsided. "There is one thing the Harriman Institute did not teach me," she said, mischievously, and recounted an anecdote from her first fact-finding mission to Georgia and South Ossetia with Jemera Rone.

On their first stop, in the North Ossetian capital, Vladikavkaz, Denber realized that she had forgotten her toothbrush in Moscow. She naively scoured the "sweet provincial city" for a replacement. And, not finding one, tracked down a dentist's office. There were no toothbrushes there, either.

"But how can that *be*?" she asked an employee sitting at the reception area.

"*Devushka*" [young lady], the woman responded with a combination of weariness and contempt. "Don't you know where you've landed? You've landed in the *Soviet Union*."

¹While at Columbia, Denber regarded the Institute as a second home. She studied with Mark von Hagen, Seweryn Bialer, and Alexander Motyl, and wrote event summaries for the Harriman newsletter. In the late 1980s and early '90s, she took over editing *The Soviet Nationalities Reader: The Disintegration in Context*, a compilation of top academic papers on the Soviet nationalities question, published by Westview Press in collaboration with the Harriman's Nationalities and Siberian Studies Program in 1992. "It was the go-to source for trying to figure out which ethnic groups did what, to whom, and when," Timothy Frye told me.

²At the time, HRW was a relatively new organization, founded in 1978 by Jeri Laber and Robert Bernstein (president of Random House for twentyfive years) as Helsinki Watch, with funding from the Ford Foundation, to monitor the Soviet bloc's compliance with the human rights principles established by the 1975 Helsinki Accords. It was only in 1988, after expanding its activities to other parts of the globe, that Helsinki Watch evolved into HRW. The concept of a fact-finding mission was new, too—Laber established the practice by sneaking into Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and other former Soviet bloc countries as a tourist in the late '70s and early '80s to interview the dissidents there; and continued it through field work in Turkey in the early '80s, where she interviewed political prisoners and politicians, and in Afghanistan in the mid '80s, the first time the organization dealt with the investigation of war crimes.

FREE EXPRESSION BY MASHA IN THE AGE OF UDENSIVA-BRENNER IN THE AGE OF SECURITY THREATS

AN INTERVIEW WITH DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ

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n November 1997, four years before the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center prompted the war on terror, the participating states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) established a mandate on the representation of freedom of the media. The mandate outlines the OSCE's commitment to freedom of expression as a "fundamental and internationally recognized human right" and to "free, independent and pluralistic media" as an "essential" component of a "free and open society and accountable systems of government," and it designates an OSCE representative to ensure compliance with these principles. According to the mandate, the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) is charged with concentrating "on rapid response to serious non-compliance," and, in the case of serious non-compliance allegations, is to "seek direct contacts, in an

> Mijatović addressing the media in Simferopol, March 4, 2014

appropriate manner, with the participating State and with other parties concerned, assess the facts, assist the participating State, and contribute to the resolution of the issue."

On February 23, 2016, the Harriman Institute welcomed Dunja Mijatović, the OSCE's third RFoM, to deliver the annual Harriman Lecture. It was three weeks before the end of Mijatović's six-year tenure, and she expressed her dismay at the rapid decline in media freedom she had witnessed since taking office in 2010. The OSCE, which currently encompasses fifty-seven participating states, including Russia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan—countries where media freedom is severely restricted—has yet to agree on a representative to replace her, and Mijatović is worried about the future of the post. "It would be impossible to establish something like this now, and we have to protect it," she said. I spoke with Mijatović over Skype on January 25, 2016, about her career and the transformation of the global media landscape.

In late March, the Ministerial Council of the OSCE agreed to extend Mijatović's term for an additional year, since no consensus on her replacement had been reached. **Masha Udensiva-Brenner:** What were your perceptions of the media and its function while growing up in the former Yugoslavia?

Dunja Mijatović: There was no media pluralism in the Communist system, and, coming out of it, it was very easy to manipulate people's minds, to inject hatred. I always quote Mark Thompson's book *Forging the War*, where he writes that verbal violence produced physical violence. Everything we read in the media in those days was propaganda. The experience was one of the main reasons I decided to work on promoting a free and safe environment for journalists to do their jobs.

Udensiva-Brenner: Were you ever interested in becoming a journalist?

Mijatović: Absolutely. I was very interested. I have always written and still write a lot. I see journalism, really courageous, investigative journalism, as a talent, a passion, but somehow I realized that it wasn't for me.



Left to right: Mijatović presenting her regular report at the OSCE Permanent Council, November 26, 2015; Mijatović, giving opening remarks at the expert meeting on intermediaries' role in Open Journalism, organized and hosted by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, December 9, 2015. Photos courtesy of the OSCE. *Opposite page:* Mijatović delivering the 2016 Harriman Lecture

There was no media pluralism in the Communist system, and [in the aftermath] it was very easy to manipulate people's minds, to inject hatred.

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Udensiva-Brenner: What in particular made you realize this?

Mijatović: There was no particular moment; it was the way my career shaped up. I realized that in order for journalists to do their jobs, there was a need for institutions to provide a safe environment, which was totally missing in the Balkans, and to introduce certain regulations. And I don't mean restrictions of any kind, but the establishment of some kind of order—the rule of law, licensing—after a very chaotic period.

I was part of the team establishing the first media regulator in our postwar society; it was a process of state institution– building. Media played an extremely important role—the Independent Media Commission was the first institution established after the Dayton Agreement was signed, and the reason for it was the ethnic intolerance that had been created. I started working there back in '97.

Udensiva-Brenner: What was your role?

Mijatović: In the beginning I was head of the content and complaint department, which looked mainly at hate speech issues related to programs inciting violence and many other issues that we faced after the war. Later on, I became director of the broadcasting division, which was in charge of all issues related to media regulation—licensing, content regulation, technical issues, and sometimes content issues and digitalization, among other things. I stayed director of broadcasting until 2010, when I was appointed to the position I'm in now.

Udensiva-Brenner: What challenges did you face?

Mijatović: The main challenge was to stay independent and true to the profession in a much-politicized postwar society. To be able, together with my team, to resist enormous pressure, threats, and many other issues we faced in the process of introducing pluralism and establishing a safe and free media environment. We also had to gain the media's trust in an atmosphere that was extremely divided. But we had enormous assistance from international organizations and agencies, which helped us gain experience and provided trainings.

Udensiva-Brenner: You mentioned you received threats. Who were they coming from?

Mijatović: Sometimes from within the industry, sometimes from politicians. Sometimes they were hidden threats,



Mijatović talking with Harriman director Alexander Cooley in his office before the 2016 Harriman Lecture

sometimes direct. They ranged from, "You will never get a job if you give a license to this station," to bribes—all things that you have to face in a very problematic, divided, and complex society. That was our daily experience. In order to survive we had to stick together as a team, work on trust and professionalism. After that the situation changed for the better. But still, if you look at the media today, and the way it is influenced and manipulated, you will see there is much more work to be done.

Udensiva-Brenner: What has it been like to watch freedom of expression erode in recent years, as governments increase surveillance in response to terrorist threats?

Mijatović: Many people do not even think to challenge the legislation being introduced in order to fight terrorism the right of the government to make our societies safer. Unfortunately, I see many governments making hasty decisions at the expense of human rights, and here I mean the right to freedom of expression. And when you see democracies doing this, what can you expect from countries still on the road to democracy? Not to mention those countries far away from any kind of democracy. We need to be able to assess the challenges all over the globe and to work with the states, and particularly with civil society, to raise awareness about the threats.

Of course there were challenges and problems when I was appointed representative in 2010, but if you look at the world now, it's not just about surveillance. It's also the conflict in Ukraine, which has influenced the media in Europe and the work of journalists in conflict zones tremendously, and Charlie Hebdo. All these things are threats not just to journalism but also to freedom of expression and the free flow of information.

Udensiva-Brenner: The U.K. government announced last November that it is considering new surveillance measures. What do you think of their proposals?

Mijatović: I intervened about this. It was a public statement to raise awareness and to ask the government to examine its proposal. We even submitted recommendations about what to do and what not to do in order to preserve free expression, particularly regarding the work of journalists; investigative journalism and the protection of sources was directly affected by this proposal. The latest news is that the government's own watchdog has also warned them not to do anything that can undermine fundamental human rights. This is something my office will continue to follow. We have raised our little red flag for many governments, including France, Spain, Canada, and other democracies.

Udensiva-Brenner: What's your response to the argument that surveillance has thwarted terrorist attacks in the past and is necessary to help do so in the future?

Mijatović: It's difficult to say what I think about this. I haven't seen any proof of it, though I'm sure there's a need to engage in surveillance when there is an imminent threat of violence and they have information that needs to be investigated.

But I'm always in favor of judicial oversight for any of these processes, and I don't think surveillance should be used by any quasi-judicial agencies or ISPs [Internet service providers]. Many governments are now proposing the engagement of intermediaries, and I think this is wrong—we cannot shift the responsibility of protecting our societies away from the state.

Of course there are issues relating to national security that not everybody needs to know about. But many of the measures are very hasty and adopted without any transparency. What I do know is that we do not know enough. It is impossible to have true security without respect for human rights. At the same time, we cannot enjoy human rights if we do not live in a safe society. We need to find a way to work on these issues together and not discuss security and human rights in parallel.

Udensiva-Brenner: You mentioned during a recent PEN Norway presentation that journalists, particularly those investigating issues of national security, have complained to you that they have started feeling like spies. Can you elaborate?

Mijatović: Well, this is another challenge of our times. I work a lot with various international organizations and NGOs; I also meet with journalists to hear about the problems and challenges they face not only within their countries but also while traveling. One big problem is the protection of sources in a digital environment. Journalists are using encryption more and more for obvious reasons. Many feel there's a need to introduce self-censorship, particularly if they live in problematic countries where there's no real rule of law and infrastructure to protect them and other citizens.

I'm looking at these problems from two sides; one is related to safety online and the other to how we deal with proposed legislation. You mentioned the UK and there are many other examples of laws providing security or fighting terrorism, but which negatively affect the work of journalists who have no idea whether or not their sources are visible and whether or not they can be safe. It's a very complex situation.

Udensiva-Brenner: How much hope can we derive from the recent U.K. Court decision on the David Miranda case?

Mijatović: We will have to wait and see. I'm sure it will become part of the case law on this particular topic. I intervened in this case. I wrote to the authorities in the UK and followed the entire judicial process, which was finalized a few days ago. The decision is already popping up in discussions, with questions of how it will affect future judicial cases and the protection



Mijatović with Dario and Mario Šimić, directors of Klix.ba media portal, Vienna, January 20, 2015. Photo by Vera Djemelinskaia, courtesy of the OSCE

One big problem is the protection of sources in a digital environment. Journalists are using encryption more and more. Many feel there's a need to introduce self-censorship, particularly if they live in problematic countries where there's no real rule of law and infrastructure to protect them and other citizens. of sources. But it is too early to tell. The positive effect of the case is that it reinforces the importance of rule of law; it demonstrates that when you live in a state with an independent judiciary, you will have protection no matter what. Rule of law is extremely important for the survival of free media and freedom of expression. This is one of the main issues I'm raising with emerging democracies.

Udensiva-Brenner: Edward Snowden has done a lot to bring surveillance and freedom of expression issues to the public. Would you consider him a hero?

Mijatović: I never thought of him as a hero. We all have different ways of looking at our heroes. But I see him as a very brave person-a whistleblower, definitely-and someone who has changed the way we think about so many issues, including protection of sources and what journalists can do in order to find out whether or not they are under surveillance. Though I've raised many flags in relation to surveillance and whistleblowing, Snowden's case is difficult, as he is not a journalist and the mandate I have is quite limited when it comes to whistleblowers. In regards to his case, I have mainly monitored whether or not journalists and media could report freely about everything he revealed that was in the public interest. That was the angle my office covered, and it was very similar in relation to WikiLeaks. For me it was important that journalists and media outlets-New York Times, Guardian, and many others-could do their job freely.

Udensiva-Brenner: You mentioned earlier that the conflict in Ukraine and the Charlie Hebdo attack have hugely impacted the freedom of expression landscape. Can you discuss the specifics?

Mijatović: The conflict in Ukraine has demonstrated that as a society we do not learn from our mistakes. I was in Crimea in March 2014, just before the annexation, and I spoke to journalists. For me it was almost like Sarajevo revisited, seeing propaganda used as a tool to incite hatred. We have also had to deal with the sudden kidnapping and killing of journalists in Europe—in Eastern Ukraine, in Crimea. This is still happening, though it is not as problematic as it was earlier in the conflict.

Charlie Hebdo was a brutal attack on people solely because of their views, in this particular case because of visual cartoons they used to express these views, and it has created an atmosphere of increasing self-censorship, and increasing sensitivity around the world. For me there is a red line when it comes to this case. No matter how acceptable or unacceptable, or vulgar, or indecent or provocative, these cartoons are, they didn't kill people; people were killed by the guys who came in and pulled the trigger. Yet immediately following the attacks, and even now, we keep hearing this "but." "But they were this or that." In my view, there is no "but"—the moment we start hearing "but," we are losing the battle for free expression. The price of living in a democracy is accepting views that are different and provocative, maybe even offensive. We have to remember that the right not to be offended does not exist.

Udensiva-Brenner: Since 2009, the year before you started in your position, the U.S. has slipped twenty-nine slots on the World Press Freedom ranking—it's currently at an all-time low, number forty-nine of one hundred eighty. How has your office intervened and how has the U.S. government responded to your interventions?

Mijatović: I've had numerous interventions with the U.S. since I joined the office. The most significant cases were about Verizon, the protection of sources for the *New York Times*, wiretapping Associated Press journalists, and the clashes during Occupy Wall Street and Ferguson. Another issue we were very much engaged in with the U.S. is net neutrality; we even conducted an analysis with a recommendation to the FCC. In order for this recommendation to be taken into account, we sent it via the State Department.

I've paid particular attention to the U.S., because, with the First Amendment and a long history of free speech, I think it should lead by example. It should not allow cases like the ones it has had in the past few years. When it comes to the government's response, I have to say, it has been very positive. I have had several hearings before U.S. Congress, and I'm meeting U.S. officials all the time on the highest levels, and I

Opposite page: Mijatović at a conference on shaping policies to advance media freedom on the Internet, in Vienna, February 14, 2013



120.00



Mijatović with her longtime friend and colleague Tanya Domi, adjunct professor of international and public affairs, Columbia, in Alexander Cooley's office before the 2016 Harriman Lecture

I think my work should be challenged and I should be accountable to all OSCE governments, including the Russian Federation. That's not the problem. The problem is when my work is challenged with lies. have always found it extremely easy to work with them because of their genuine support no matter how critical of them I might be. Each and every recommendation we have sent, along with our assessments, was taken on board. No government likes to be criticized, and my job is to criticize most of the time, but when it comes to the U.S., I've always had full understanding and support.

Udensiva-Brenner: How much importance do you attribute to international press freedom rankings?

Mijatović: I cover a region of fifty-seven states and they are all different. And I do not compare them—for me it would be like opening Pandora's box. The problems sometimes overlap, but the impact and what we see in the national legislations vary. I take note of the information from Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, but I do not base my interventions, or the reasons for my interventions, on those rankings.

I do think rankings are important for civil society, for journalists, in order to put pressure on governments, to change some things for the better. Rankings are a democratic tool. They all have different parameters for making their judgments. In many countries they make politicians angry. So at least they raise awareness. Rankings have a role, but, for me as an international official, the only intergovernmental media watchdog, they are not a reason to intervene.

Udensiva-Brenner: You came into your position in 2010 and you were only the third person in this role. What was it like to step into this relatively new organization that didn't have any other models? How did your job evolve from that of your predecessors?

Mijatović: Two colleagues were representatives before me, Freimut Duve and Miklós Haraszti. Of course I worked off of their legacies. The challenges were enormous, the responsibility as well. You are given a mandate that is a very powerful tool. It is quite broad; you shape it on your own, so, each representative, no matter who the person is, can shape the position according to the needs of the time. What I have brought to the role is more publicity, a greater presence on the international scene. The most powerful tool in my toolbox is my voice, and the office—a team of fifteen people—is more visible than ever. More people are aware of our work. More journalists are aware of the fact that they can turn to us if they have a problem. The network of NGOs, and civil society in general, has grown tremendously in the fifty-seven states. Even in Mongolia, the newest OSCE participating state. It was important to be present in the field, to work with people; not to be in Vienna sitting at my desk, but reaching out, trying to find ways to connect with the governments imprisoning journalists.

Udensiva-Brenner: What were some of your biggest projects when you first came into office?

Mijatović: I can talk about the projects we are still working on; they are extremely important. We started working on the issue of Internet freedom back in 2013. We started a project called Open Journalism where we opened the discussion about new ways of dealing with an audience. We worked a lot with the *Guardian*, and some other papers that were pioneers, to see how we could help; and we also worked with lawyers and academics and intermediaries in the industry. Many other projects evolved from this. We started working on the safety of female journalists online. We have already held several events where we've brought journalists from various OSCE countries and beyond to discuss their experiences. We started working with some governments in order to see how states and law enforcement agencies can be more involved, together with media companies, in protecting female online journalists and bloggers.

We are currently working on a project that brings together Russian and Ukrainian journalists directly from conflict zones and works with them, particularly with young journalists, to build confidence and to discuss reporting in conflict zones, for example, the Balkans or Northern Ireland, and the work of NGOs in these areas. This proved to be a very positive experience for both sides. We are also engaging about the negative role of propaganda, which I consider a scar on modern journalism. All these projects were started during my tenure and I hope they will continue. We've had great response from journalists around the region, who have been actively engaged in the projects I just mentioned. We also try to hold conferences bringing together journalists, civil society, and government officials in Central Asia, where there isn't too much of a presence from other international organizations aside from the OSCE, and in the South Caucasus and the Balkans. These conferences are extremely important because they offer training to journalists and they bring people together in order to discuss important issues.

Udensiva-Brenner: What's it like to work in a position where you simultaneously handle the grassroots component and engagement with governments?

Mijatović: To be honest, I don't know—you just do it because you have to. No government likes to be criticized; my way of dealing with it is that I'm not very diplomatic. Diplomacy has a role to play in some cases. Particularly when we're discussing changes to legislation, but, if a person is beaten or killed and there is no investigation, we need to shout loudly and find the responsible parties. And the governments need to deliver justice to the people. It's very simple. I decided in the very beginning that I would be direct and honest, and that's how I've been doing it. Over the past six years I have stepped on the toes of very powerful people, but I do not regret it a single moment because I did it for the right reasons. In general, I've had overwhelming support from the majority of the states I work with.

Working with civil society is extremely time-consuming and not something you can forget about when you go home. I have visited prisons, I have visited people whom I'd met before who are now imprisoned for their work. For me, the most important thing is being granted access to visit these prisons in order to talk to people, and then, afterward, being granted access to talk to members of these governments so I can urge them to release these prisoners, to drop trumped-up charges, to stop putting pressure on these prisoners and their families. This is all part of the job if you really want to use the mandate in full.

Udensiva-Brenner: Were there any challenges associated with being the first woman in the position?

Mijatović: Absolutely not. I'm very sensitive to this and I would immediately say something if there had been.

No government likes to be criticized; my way of dealing with it is that I'm not very diplomatic.... Over the past six years I have stepped on the toes of very powerful people, but I do not regret it a single moment because I did it for the right reasons.

We give the journalists an independent platform to work from; we to try to build bridges for the future, to work on the dignity of the profession.

In many international events that I take part in, and in many organizations, I'm the only woman sitting on a panel. And if you look at the OSCE, it is only my colleague, the high commissioner for national minorities, and I, two ladies sitting with a bunch of men in gray suits. And that's the reality. When I started the position, I was actually warned that, being a woman from Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would face problems in some parts of the OSCE region, in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, but no. If I get into a fight, it is because we disagree on the issues. Most of the time, in many of these states, I have been treated with real respect. And of course they attacked me harshly on many occasions, but not because I'm a woman, but because they didn't like what I was saying. At least, that's how I saw it, and I never felt that kind of pressure. But of course, as part of the job, I'm always persona non grata in at least one of the states in the OSCE because of the issues that I'm raising; because I'm calling for the release of journalists; I'm calling for changes in legislation. Recently, in Poland, they said, "Who is she? What does she want? We are perfect." It is part of the job, but it's not related to the fact that I'm a woman.

Udensiva-Brenner: You've had to intervene quite a bit with the Russian government in recent years. How have they reacted to your interventions?

Mijatović: They don't like it. It's very public on both sides. I'm constantly being criticized on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. In a way, I don't mind being criticized. On the contrary, I think my work should be challenged and I should be accountable to all OSCE governments, including the Russian Federation. That's not the problem. The problem is when my work is challenged with lies. The problem is that the Russian government does not want to engage on any issue because they feel that everything is more or less fine.

Udensiva-Brenner: You mentioned a project bringing together Russian and Ukrainian journalists. How have the authorities reacted to this initiative?

Mijatović: When I announced this project back in 2015, both governments, Russian and Ukrainian, wanted to be part of it

and they wanted to sit in on my meetings. I declined; I told them that I would report to them about the meetings as their representative, but they could not sit in. But, they have not posed any problems at all.

I work with the Russian Union of Journalists and the Ukrainian Union of Journalists, and I leave it up to the unions to choose our issues. Each time, they adopt recommendations and they draw conclusions. They also started bringing in young journalists from both countries. We give the journalists an independent platform to work from; we to try to build bridges for the future, to work on the dignity of the profession. I bring in people from the outside—I outsource—to teach journalism courses (I don't think my office should be doing that at all). It's not easy, but it's already producing results and, perhaps, building a foundation for cooperation in the future, when the two countries have better relations. In the former Yugoslavia, when the war was over, we all had to go back and work together. If there is no previously established trust, it is much more difficult to move forward.

Udensiva-Brenner: What types of results do you see from this collaboration?

Mijatović: Just the mere fact of having brought together these young journalists; a year and a half ago this would not have happened. They've resolved issues together in the field, such as trying to locate missing journalists, whom we were able to find through connections in the field. And they even had a joint call for releasing kidnapped colleagues from both sides of the conflict. So there are many, many examples, including these sensitive issues. There are also issues related to future work and training. They are working on producing a paper coauthored by Russian and Ukrainian journalists that will be distributed throughout Ukraine. There are small steps and there are big steps, but it's going somewhere.

Udensiva-Brenner: Your term is about to end, what are some of your reflections about the past six years? Is there anything you wish you could have done differently? Is there anything you didn't have enough time to tackle?

Mijatović: There is never enough time to do everything you want, but the most important thing is to try your best to achieve something. My reflection is very positive. I love working with people, and that is probably one of the reasons I managed to open doors in some of the most problematic places in the region. There is nothing much I would do differently. I do not regret making any politicians angry in the process. I wish I could help get more people out of prison. I hope that some of the people who are sitting in prison will get out during my term; even with a month and a half to go, I'm working hard on many of these cases. There's a human touch to my work. We all have different styles, and the new person will have to establish his or her own way of dealing with these issues, but I think the legacy I leave will help.

It is important to keep the independence and the autonomy of the office in order to be seen as an independent player and not someone who is influenced by any particular government, industry, or association. It is a difficult job. It might sound wonderful—you sit in Vienna and you work on issues related to media freedom. It sounds glamorous but it's not. It's hard work, and there's a need to engage with people in order to achieve results.

For me, one of the main reasons to call this a successful six years is the passion I continue to feel even though I will leave office in less than a month and a half. The biggest reward coming out of this position is the ability to help people. You cannot change the world, but, as long as you can help an individual in some place where there are no other international organizations, where there are no other tools—as long as you can find a way to keep the door open with some of the regimes, in order to help some people get out of prison and help them continue their important work as journalists, then you are accomplishing something.

Udensiva-Brenner: And what's next?

Mijatović: I still don't know. I want to stay in the field of human rights, definitely. I want to work with people, but I still don't know where my career will go.

About Mijatović

Mijatović, who has been touted as the most active and influential of the three RFoMs so far, is a founder of the Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, established in 1998 to create a legal, regulatory, and policy framework for the media. She was also involved in the creation of a self-regulatory Press Council and the first Free Media Helpline in South East Europe. In 2007, she was the first woman and the first non-EU member state representative elected president of the European Platform of Regulatory Agencies, the largest media regulators' network in the world. In 2010, the International Peace Center in Sarajevo awarded her the "FREEDOM" prize for her work and activities on the struggle for freedom, peace, and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Europe, and the world. And in 2015, she received the Médaille Charlemagne for her unique contribution to the media field, the process of European unification, and the development of a European identity; and the City of Geneva PEC AWARD for her work on the issue of the safety of journalists and media freedom in Ukraine during the crisis and her "exceptional personal commitment for the promotion of freedom of information in the whole region."

ACADEMIA AND THE POLICY WORLD NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL BY TIMOTHY FRYE MEET? ne of the Harriman Institute's central missions is to use academic research to inform public policy debates. This sounds noble and straightforward, but tensions quickly emerge. Academia rewards peer-reviewed publications rather than op-eds in the *New York Times* or policy pieces in *Foreign Affairs*. Academic articles—let alone books—take years to write, while policy moves quickly. Academics prize nuance, while policy makers want clear answers. Scholars face real trade-offs in their decision to target an academic or a policy-making audience.

Many of these tensions remain, but, over the last decade, the way that scholars interact with the policy-making community has changed dramatically. I finished graduate school in 1997 and took up a faculty position at Ohio State, a university with a long history of excellence in Slavic studies and a top-15 political science department. The unspoken advice for new faculty members was to avoid writing about contemporary policy issues. Doing so was thought to detract from the more serious research required to publish in top academic outlets.

This was good advice then and remains so today. Earning tenure at research universities and liberal arts colleges alike requires publication in prestigious academic outlets. And academic publishing is hard. Top academic journals have acceptance rates in the single digits, and the review process can be slow. Articles submitted to academic journals undergo an initial round of review by two to three outside experts that can take four to six months. Most submissions are rejected at this stage, but some will receive a coveted "revise and resubmit" recommendation from an editor and undergo a second round of reviews that often takes another three to four months. If the article is accepted, the finished version will then take its place in a journal's queue and eventually see the light of day in another six to twelve months. Book publishing can be equally slow but with higher stakes, due to the much longer lead times needed to write a book. Given that time is an academic's most scarce commodity, and tenure is an up or down decision with long-term consequences, it is not surprising that younger scholars have historically been encouraged to focus on academic rather than policy-oriented publications.

Senior scholars also have disincentives to engage in policy debates. Prestige typically flows from publication in high-quality

Timothy M. Frye, Marshall D. Shulman Professor of Post-Soviet Foreign Policy. Photo by Eileen Barroso

Opposite page, left to right: Timothy Frye with Professors Jack Snyder, Kimberly Marten, Valery Kuchynsky, and Alexander Cooley on a panel about the global implications of the Ukraine crisis; Timothy Frye introducing Michael McFaul, former U.S. ambassador to Russia academic outlets, and competition to publish is fierce for them as well. In addition, senior scholars often bear significant administrative burdens on top of their teaching and research responsibilities; while many of them would like to address policy issues, they are often too squeezed for time.

Yet, two factors have changed the landscape for academics seeking to influence policy. The rise of social media has given scholars a way to communicate their knowledge quickly. Younger scholars have been particularly savvy in marketing their research. Blog platforms, Twitter, and Facebook are used to alert policy makers and scholars alike to new research and provide quick takes on the issues of the day. Even a relative dinosaur like me has a Twitter account (follow me @timothymfrye).

The second and more important trend has been the rise of data-journalism and evidence-based policy advocacy. The *Upshot* in the *New York Times, WonkBlog* at the *Washington Post*, and websites like Vox.com and Nate Silver's 538.com have come to play an important role in translating social science research into bite-sized pieces targeted for nonacademic audiences. Rather than publishing op-eds or *Foreign Affairs*-style articles where a

The rise of social media has given scholars a way to communicate their knowledge quickly. Younger scholars have been particularly savvy in marketing their research.

scholar picks a side in a policy debate or calls for attention to a new policy issue, these outlets convert academic research into digestible short reads that provide links to the underlying research for those who want to dig into the details.

For scholars of postcommunism, one of the most important outlets has become the *Monkey Cage* at the *Washington Post*. Founded by five social scientists, including Andy Gelman from Columbia and Joshua Tucker from New York University, the website takes its name from the H. L. Mencken quotation: "Democracy is the art of running the circus from the monkey cage."

While the *Monkey Cage* publishes articles on all geographic regions, it has a strong interest in Eurasia. Its articles on the postcommunist region tend to fall into two categories. When a new policy issue arises, scholars of the region are often able to draw on deep academic knowledge to put that issue into a richer historical context. For example, when the prospect of a Russian move into Crimea arose in early 2014, Gwendolyn Sasse drew on her Harvard University Press book on Crimea, published in 2008, to highlight the range of interests at play on the Crimean peninsula. Similarly, Ralph Clem brought his years of research on regionalism in Ukraine to discussions of voting patterns in Ukraine following the fall of the Yanukovych government.

Another type of article draws on recent academic research that sheds light on a particularly pressing policy issue. For example, President Putin's stunningly high public approval ratings have become an important source of legitimacy for the Kremlin, but some Russia watchers in academia and the policy-making community have speculated that his



Pictured below: Timothy Frye with Michael McFaul, former U.S. ambassador to Russia; *opposite page:* Timothy Frye participating in a panel discussion on the legacy of Václav Havel support was inflated because respondents were lying to pollsters. With three colleagues, I conducted two surveys using a special technique designed to detect dissembling by respondents and found only scant evidence that respondents were hiding their true preferences about President Putin. Editors at the *Monkey Cage* picked up on this research and wrote a short post.

Not all *Monkey Cage* posts translate academic research for a general audience, and some veer much closer to traditional op-eds, but the format works best when scholars are able to draw on deep knowledge of the region or on recent academic research to help inform policy making. To my mind, scholars are best positioned to inform policy debates when they have done the heavy lifting of academic research, even as they are called on to give opinions on topics where we are less than expert.

These new outlets are generally not without problems. One potential shortcoming is that research can be published without undergoing peer review. While every academic complains



about the length and unpredictability of the peer review process (often with good reason), it does provide a check on the credibility of academic research. In addition, not all top-notch academic research lends itself to clear policy solutions and short sound bites.

For the Harriman these new opportunities play to our strengths. Our faculty—including Kimberly Marten, Alexander Cooley, and me—have been especially active on these fora. In addition, four of my graduate students have used the *Monkey Cage* to discuss their research on topics ranging from how the Internet shapes political protest in Russia to how to integrate Syrian refugees in Turkey.

One thing that has not changed is that politics are driven by much more than the scribblings of academics. There are real limits to what scholars can accomplish via these new outlets as policy making (and not just foreign policy) in Washington is deeply polarized. The voices of academics must compete for the attention of policy makers with long-established and well-funded interest groups, foreign governments using public relations firms to press their views, and think tanks claiming foreign policy expertise. But the rise of new media platforms at least gives academics a chance to be heard by those who are willing to listen.

Timothy Frye is Marshall D. Shulman Professor of Post-Soviet Foreign Policy and a former director of the Harriman Institute.



The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists Tarik Cyril Amar Cornell University Press, 2015 ISBN 978-0-8014-5391-5

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, directly from the publisher, and select bookstores.

BY RONALD MEYER **PARAADOX CITY** TARIK CYRIL AMAR'S STUDY OF HISTORY IN UKRAINIAN LVIV

he largest city in western Ukraine and seventh largest overall, Lviv today performs the role of standard bearer and symbol of Ukrainian national identity, despite the fact that as recently as 1939 the city had been known as Lwów, a Polish city and major center of East European Jewish life. Poles represented the majority population, while Ukrainians accounted for approximately one-sixth of inhabitants and ranked as the least politically powerful group. Over the last

three centuries alone Lviv had been ruled by the Habsburg Empire (when it was also known as Lemberg), a Russian imperial occupation during World War I, interwar Poland, and the Soviet Union, not to mention the longest German Nazi occupation of any major city in the USSR (as of 1941). In his deeply researched and engaging new study, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City* *between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists* (Cornell University Press, 2015), Tarik Cyril Amar, assistant professor of history at Columbia University, explores the enigma of how under Soviet and German rule a predominantly Polish city became preponderantly Ukrainian both ethnically and in self-perception.

As Amar put it in his book launch at the Harriman Institute (on December 2, 2015), "Lviv's twentieth-century experience represents an important intersection of historical conditions and forces that far transcend the local history of this one city. Here was a major European borderland city, with a long past shared by empires and multiethnic populations, that was transformed by major forces of twentieth-century history: Soviet communism, Soviet nationshaping, nationalism, and Nazism."

Amar was quick to point out, both in his talk and again in our interview a month later, that the book was written well before 2013 and the violent crisis in relations between Russia and Ukraine that has kept Ukraine in the news as never before. Nor did family or



THE PARADOX OF between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists TARIK CYRIL AMAR



Lviv represents a nodal point, a crossroads of historical processes.

personal background set him on a trajectory to Ukraine, but rather the topic came from inside Soviet history. As an undergraduate in the nineties at Oxford's Balliol College, he took one Russian history class with Catherine Andreyev on revolutionary history. But this was one very good class among many and did not set him down the Soviet path. After earning his master's degree in international history at the London School of Economics, Amar applied to Princeton University for graduate studies, still not as a Russianist but rather with a project on German foreign policy in the interwar period. That project was abandoned after taking a seminar with Stephen Kotkin, whose *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (1995), a pioneering study of another city, Magnitogorsk, quickly became required reading for everyone in the field of Soviet studies. Inspired by Kotkin's work and cutting-edge seminar, Amar pitched his tent in Soviet history and has not looked back.

After deciding that he wanted his case study to be on the periphery, he set out for Chernivtsi, another former borderland city in western Ukraine, but it quickly became apparent to the young researcher that there were de facto problems with the Party side of the archive, which, although not officially closed, proved to be inaccessible. He moved to Lviv and the situation was the exact opposite. The archivists were welcoming and professional and the archive truly open. The conditions were excellent, if you could manage to overlook the fact that there was no heating during the harsh winters. As he remarked in our interview, Lviv "represents a nodal point, a crossroads of historical processes." Moreover, while Lviv was literally on the periphery of the Soviet Union, it offers us the opportunity to explore something centrally important: "In the initial phase the Party is quite literally talking to itself, trying to come to terms with the question, 'What does it mean to be Soviet in this place and how is that accomplished?'" Also serving as the academic director of the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe (2007–10), Amar ended up living in Lviv for a total of five years, witnessing a period of dynamic developments as well as persistent problems in post-Soviet Ukraine.

The first step in the demotion of Poles in the Lviv hierarchy took place during the Soviet occupation of 1939-41, following the division of Poland between Germany and the USSR. The Soviets imagined their own presence as the socialist equivalent of a modernizing and civilizing mission, which would bring socialism to a city that had been ruled by Polish lords. In his "Tales about Western Ukraine" (1940), the distinguished Moscow writer Viktor Shklovsky, better known today as a Russian formalist critic than as war correspondent, reports that the region is a "remote corner" and "natural preserve of religion," and equates religion, clergy, and believers with backwardness and ideological enemies, whereas the Red fighter is the quintessential Soviet man and symbol of modernity. The subjugated Polish Lwówians, however, saw only simple people, poorly dressed, whom they considered to be uneducated and unintelligent. The seventeen-year-old Stanislaw Lem, who would grow up to be the well-known Polish science fiction writer, found the



In the initial phase the Party is quite literally talking to itself, trying to come to terms with the question, "What does it mean to be Soviet in this place and how is that accomplished?"

Soviets terrifying and ridiculous, a "terrible, gigantic ape. . . . The Germans evoked only fear, at the Soviets you could also laugh."

Amar details the strategies for raising the status of Ukrainians during the Soviet occupation of Lviv in 1939-41, which were accompanied by policies marginalizing the Polish population, although the Soviets also announced a policy of internationalism. A good example of the latter is the Monument to the Stalin Constitution, erected in Lviv in 1939, with inscriptions in Polish, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. Nevertheless, Polish was abandoned as a language of instruction in favor of Yiddish in Jewish secondary schools; and Ukrainian was made a mandatory subject for all students. The 1941 anniversary of national Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz presents an interesting example of appropriation by the Soviets. Modeled on the elaborate, large-scale Pushkin anniversary celebrated in the Soviet Union in 1937, the Mickiewicz anniversary, the Soviets claimed, "honored the works of a rival state's culture more than that state did." In other words, the Soviet invaders were proud of having saved Mickiewicz from the "Polish lords."

The German occupation of 1941–44 proved to be "the greatest rupture in the city's history," bringing with it new extremes of unprecedented violence and rule by racist ideology. While Nazism and Stalinism followed different logics of brutality, as Amar remarked, "the Germans, like their Soviet counterparts, felt that history with a capital H was on their side, against the dying representatives of doomed epochs." The Jewish population in Lviv, which before World War II amounted to slightly more than 30 percent, was decimated by the Germans, who set up a large combined labor and mass murder camp within walking distance of Lviv's center. Moreover, during an initial pogrom in 1941, German propaganda troops filmed this mass spectacle of violence, as we see in a photo reproduced in Amar's book.

In chapter 4, Amar tracks the end of Lwów and the making of Lviv, from the point when Soviet forces took the city back in July 1944, when the city had 150,000 to 160,000 inhabitants, less than half its prewar population. Some ten years later, the Polish share of Lviv's 380,500 inhabitants amounted to 2 percent; the vast majority





of the Polish population had left during the compulsory population exchange of 1944–47. Amar again quotes Stanislaw Lem, who describes this end of a world left behind in stages: "After the [first] arrival of the Soviets, then after the arrival of the Germans, and finally—when we had to leave Lwów."

During the Soviet occupation of 1939–41 there had been no attempt at industrialization, but after the war Lviv was held up as a symbol of modernization in the new Soviet West and became the site of intense industrialization, for example, the Lviv Bus Factory, which was constructed in 1945–50. Together with industrialization came the creation of a large population of workers, including new urbanites from the countryside. But new Lvivians from eastern Ukraine, a group important for its Soviet identity and not to be confused with the locals, made up the majority of the local elite. If locals held high positions, they tended to be in culture and education. The local intelligentsia was forced to endure repression and a painful transformation, turning it into a symbol of the Sovietizing of the self.

By 1991 Lviv was a solidly Ukrainian city. It is the most Ukrainian of all major Ukrainian cities culturally, ethnically, and politically. Moreover, both Ukrainian nationalists and Soviets articulated claims of a primordial Ukrainian Lviv. According to the last Soviet history of Lviv (1984), Lviv's initial development in the Halyts-Volyn Principality in the thirteenth century had created the conditions Soviet rule came too late . . . even Soviet violence and indoctrination could not reform Lviv, which was too much under the influence of Habsburg and other Western cultural institutions.

whereby it was able to preserve its "eastern Slavonic" nature even under "the yoke of foreign feudalists." Thus, Lviv's Orthodox Ukrainians embodied "an organic continuation" of Kyiv Rus, which both Russians and Ukrainians claim as their birthright. In a national reading, this essentially or inevitably Ukrainian city proved resistant to Soviet recasting and ultimately prevailed. Enlisting the power of Western traditions, this narrative avers that "Soviet rule came too late ... even Soviet violence and indoctrination could not reform Lviv, which was too much under the influence of Habsburg and other Western cultural institutions."


Of course, there is much more to Amar's erudite and captivating book than my brief survey of these few points. For example, in the final chapter, "A Soviet Borderland of Time," he renders the geographical category temporal, inviting the reader to rethink the metaphor. Time, of course, was extremely important for the Soviets, since they believed that they had entered a different stage of history. But had they? Amar fleshes out this consideration of time with reflections on the divide between public and private memory, as well as official and counter memories. Amar anchors his exploration of Soviet teleology in a local and borderland setting in a discussion of two competing narratives: the first, about the interwar Communist Party of Western Ukraine (KPZU); and the second, about a Communist underground in German-occupied Lviv (the Ivan Franko People's Guard). Amar summarizes the importance of these two narratives: "Together they constituted a Soviet history of the present, to borrow a phrase but not its meaning, which connected Lviv's past not only to a general Soviet Marxist account of universal history but also to the specific teleology of the postwar Soviet Union, anchored in the key myths of the Great October Revolution and the Great Fatherland War." Rather than summarize Amar's argument, I invite you to read this tour de force in his own words in The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv.



Tarik Cyril Amar Photo by Susan E. Heuman, 2016

DOUBLE OF ANNA FRAJLICH (-ZAJAC) BY RONALD MEYER

nna Frajlich-Zajac, senior lecturer, retired this spring after teaching Polish language and literature at Columbia for thirty-four years. To look at it another way, she has been the mainstay of the Polish language program, which celebrates its centenary this year, for a third of its existence. The celebrated Polish poet Anna Frajlich, her alter ego who goes by her maiden name, journeyed to London to receive the Literature Prize from the Union of Polish Writers in Exile at a ceremony held on March 20, 2016. Frajlich, the author of ten books of poetry, one prose volume, a small book of essays on Nobel Laureate Czesław Miłosz, and a scholarly monograph on Russian symbolist poetry, was awarded the prize for her "work as a whole." The announcement, made in November at the fabled Łazienki Palace in Warsaw during the ceremony celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the Union of Polish Writers in Exile, cites "her deep literary roots in Polish, Jewish, and American culture," yet recognizes that it is in "the Polish language that she finds a safe haven and belonging. . . . The journey,

exile, and the passing of time are frequent themes in her works. Her work has a deep humanitarian dimension."

Rather than ask the reader to keep track whether the surname is single or double-barreled and to which of the two Annas I refer, I will simply call her Anna. I take this liberty based on our more than twenty years of professional collaboration and friendship. Robert Maguire, in some regards a mentor to us both, brought us together in 1992 so that I might help Anna prepare her dissertation for publication. We remembered Bob fondly when we sat down in her elegant Upper East Side apartment to discuss emigration, teaching at Columbia, and her career as a poet.

When she arrived in New York City on a hot and muggy summer's day in 1970, her two-year-old son Paul unseasonably bundled in a warm, woolen sweater, Anna could not have imagined in her wildest dreams how successful her American adventure would turn out. Sensing endings rather than beginnings, she had left Poland on November 12, 1969, with husband Władysław and son Paul.

Anna and her family were part of the mass emigration of some 13,000 Poles of Jewish descent who had fallen victim to a virulent anti-Semitic campaign and political crisis known as March 1968. Emigration required renunciation of one's Polish citizenship, which Anna had to perform on behalf of her two-year-old son. Like her fellow émigrés, Anna believed that she would never see her native land again. Officially they were bound for Israel, but her husband argued that if they were to leave Poland, they should go as far as possible from Europe; thus they informed the authorities in Vienna that they wished to make the United States their home. They traveled to Rome under the care of the gendarmerie due to their statelessness. As they awaited travel documents for the United States, they were charged only with refraining from any demonstrations, which left them free to explore the Eternal City and begin adapting to life in the West. Many years later Anna's Roman ramblings would provide the background for her dissertation and monograph, The Legacy of Ancient Rome in the Russian Silver Age.



Although acclimating to life in New York was difficult, Anna and her family were not without some family members, friends, and connections. The well-known Polish authority on Shakespeare, Jan Kott, facilitated a stint teaching Polish language at SUNY Stony Brook (1970-71), but this temporary position seemed to lead no further. Anna then entered what she has called her "University of American Life," otherwise known as the Kimball Research Institute, a branch of the New York Blood Center. (Her experiences at the Kimball make up the title piece of her prose collection Laboratorium.) At the time, the Kimball employed a number of scholars, scientists, and diplomats who had asked for asylum as a result of political events in Eastern Europe. As it turned out, Russian became the lingua franca for this group of émigré Czechs, Poles, and Romanians. Anna admits that her Russian was "absolutely dead" when she arrived in the United States, but it was revived by the laboratory, which oddly enough helped prepare her for graduate school in NYU's Slavic Department, where a number of courses were offered only in Russian.

Although she had published a few poems in Poland before her emigration, Anna's career as poet really begins in emigration. She had written her first poem in the fourth grade for a class where she had been assigned to look through children's magazines and find a poem for the May 1 holiday. Instead of looking for someone else's poem the young Anna decided to write her own, which, she says, was her first and last poem written on a political subject. She continued writing poetry, but did not show her poems to anyone. Her mother shared some poems with a Yiddish poetess, who in turn showed them to another poet, who judged that Anna had "genuine poetic talent." Anna made her debut as a poet in Warsaw's Polish-language Jewish weekly and then had publications in Szczecin, where her parents had settled after the war. The poems appeared with the byline "A. Frajlich." Eventually the director of her school read the publication and asked whether it was she who had written the poems. When she answered in the affirmative, he replied "Nie jednemu psu na imię Burek" [there's more than one

"I have been following Anna Frajlich's career for years. She is a very talented poet." —Czesław Miłosz

dog named Burek], since Frajlich was not an uncommon name. She continued to write as a university student, but says that everyone was writing poetry then and so she did not show her poems to anyone. Nearing graduation she was invited to join Hybrydy, a group of poets that published a few of her poems in 1971, even though by that time she was persona non grata in Poland. (Once again, the surname Frajlich did not divulge too much.)

Upon leaving Poland she sensed that her writing life was over, but that life seemed to begin again in 1972, after receiving an encouraging letter from Stefania Kossowska, deputy editor at *Wiadomości*, the leading Polish émigré weekly: "You maintain a beautiful



balance between the contemporary idiom and honest common sense. Most of all I like your 'Pompeii, Santa Maria ...' and the last poem (untitled). I am sending all three to be typeset and want to place them in one of the upcoming issues." Thus began a relationship with *Wiadomości* that continued until it closed in 1981. *Wiadomości* opened doors for the young poet to émigré publications in New York and Paris and served as calling card at several important junctures.

As Anna recounted in a March 2016 interview that she gave on the eve of receiving the prize from the Union of Polish Writers in Exile, London one of the main centers of the Polish emigration—holds a special place in her affections: "The London award means a great deal to me precisely because it is London; that is, it is connected to the city that witnessed the beginnings of my career as an émigré writer. My first book was published in London, and it was in London that Stanisław Baliński published my first review."

A meeting with Zoya Yurieff, professor of Slavic literatures and cultures at New York University, proved to be fateful. Yurieff, who knew Anna from her *Wiadomości* publications, encouraged her to apply for graduate school, saying, "Your place is at the university." Anna had earned her master's degree in Polish

"Sensitivity is Anna Frajlich's poetic domain. Sensitivity toward the beauty of the world, toward seasons, toward landscape...." —Jan Kott philology at Warsaw University, writing her dissertation on the philosopher and critic Stanisław Brzozowski and the Polish positivists. But as she told me, by Polish standards as a woman in her midthirties she was more likely to retire than to begin graduate school. And so she began her graduate studies under the guidance of Yurieff, who also suggested the topic of ancient Rome in the poetry of the Russian symbolists. Anna plans to write a memoir called "Women in My Life," which will include portraits of her mother and a Warsaw University professor, among others, and, of course, Zoya Yurieff.

Concurrent with her NYU graduate studies, Anna worked as a freelance cultural correspondent with Radio Free Europe (RFE) as a writer and interviewer, which culminated in her interview with Czesław Miłosz upon his receiving the Nobel Prize. She first met Miłosz at a lecture at the Guggenheim on October 17, 1978; he inscribed the date in his book about Stanisław Brzozowski, which Anna had purchased in a local Polish bookstore and brought for him to autograph. When writing her thesis on "one of the most original Polish thinkers of the twentieth century," to cite Miłosz's formulation, Anna had to travel across Warsaw to read this same book in the restricted section of the library, after producing a document from her thesis adviser. Now she had her own copy, with the author's inscription. They continued to meet sporadically at readings and conferences.

The Nobel interview, which has been published in English translation, almost did not come about. Miłosz had not been treated well by RFE in the early days of his emigration, and he did not feel obliged in the least to give them an interview. But he had been persuaded that since he had given an interview to *Trybuna Ludu*, the Polish Communist daily, he should give one to RFE. He agreed, but insisted that Anna conduct the interview. The interview took place at Miłosz's home in Berkeley. The piece, which very much represents a poet interviewing a poet, was a resounding success; it was broadcast four times and published.

In 1993, Anna was conducting interviews for the column "What Other People Read," which was appearing in the cultural supplement to the Polish Daily News. She conducted a telephone interview with Miłosz for the column, realizing only after hanging up that she had forgotten to hit the record button. She immediately called him back and explained the situation. He "graciously" suggested that they conduct the interview again the next morning. You can read about Anna's relationship with Miłosz, including how he introduced her to Scotch after they concluded the Nobel interview and that she taught his granddaughter Polish at Columbia, in her essay, "He Also Knew How to Be Gracious."

WHY STUDY POLISH? WHY NOT?

Anna joined the Columbia Slavic Department in 1982, which was then chaired by Robert Maguire. The noted Columbia Russian Institute economist, Alexander Erlich, had recommended Anna for the position. It turns out that Erlich had received some materials about Anna, including a poem she had written about the poet Władysław Broniewski, whom Erlich admired. At their first meeting, Erlich mentioned that he had read her poem. Her one year of teaching a decade earlier allowed her to reply truthfully that she had experience teaching in the U.S. university system. Plus Maguire, a translator of Polish verse, knew her poetry. In addition to her Wiadomości publications, by this time she had published three volumes of

Poems by Anna Frajlich Selected and Translated by Ross Ufberg

Manhattan Panorama

to Władek

The bridges overhang the city like diamonds in a diadem reflected lights are burning in the Hudson and the Harlem Rivers in the East River in the bay and in puddles on the road the bridges overhang the city that shone in flight between a setting star and the rising moon walls pinned into heaven pressed by granite to the ground wind in its stone sails out to sea it moves at dawn

She Leaves

like other mothers, mine leaves taking nothing with her for the road

she's still here yet wades through Lethe's dark waters reaches out her hands I cannot help

If I could make it up to her the pain and all those nights when she stood over me and fought on my behalf

my debt

a coin worn thin and out of circulation falls into the gulf soon no one will be there to claim it.

June 5, 2003



verse in London and was the recipient of the Kościelski Foundation (Switzerland) Literary Award.

Anna admits that she has grown tired of people asking the question, "Why study Polish?" As if it were some esoteric discipline and required special justification. She says that she finally decided the proper answer was, "Why not?" In spring 2015 Anna organized the symposium "The Polish Language at Columbia: History and Functionality" to illustrate the "why not?" It brought together scholars to discuss the history of Polish studies at Columbia, as well as former students who had studied Polish, including Harriman director Timothy Frye; Ph.D. candidate Ross Ufberg; David Tompkins, Carleton College professor of history; polymer scientist Dustin Wayne Janes; William deJong-Lambert, professor of history at Bronx Community College; and Nancy Sinkoff, Rutgers professor of history and Jewish studies. Janes directly addressed the "Dlaczego?" [Why?] question, since he, too, had been asked it so many times. Not of Polish ancestry and lacking a Polish wife or girlfriend, which, it seems, many assume to be the usual reasons for taking up Polish, he became interested in the language through Polish friends he met as an undergraduate in New Jersey.

He does indeed utilize Polish in his work as a polymer scientist by visiting Poland to meet with specialists in his field. Ross Ufberg, a translator of Russian and Polish and cofounder of New Vessel Press, has published translations of Polish works and translated Marek Hłasko's Beautiful Twentysomethings for Northern Illinois University Press. (A selection from Ufberg's fine translations of Anna's poetry appears alongside this essay.) David Tompkins told the audience, "Polish has been absolutely essential to my career as a scholar and professor of history," adding that the material he has found in Polish archives has been invaluable to his research. For Tompkins the "origin moment" was visiting Poland in 1991, right after the fall. Finally, on more than one occasion Timothy Frye has shared Anna's advice, when he was preparing for a trip to Poland: "Speak with an American accent, not a Russian one." Those of us who came to Polish after Russian can appreciate the dilemma of the perfidious Russian accent. All these presentations buttressed Anna's assertion that "language is a key to literature, to history, to understanding progress of any sort."

Of course, the symposium also included warm reminiscences of studying the language and literature with Anna. Anna Frajlich is one "of the most interesting phenomena in contemporary Polish poetry.... She reveals deep truths about the existence of an individual entangled in the tragic fate of contemporary civilization." —2003 Literary Prize, W. & N. Turzanski Foundation

Pictured above: Anna Frajlich in her Upper East Side apartment. Photo © Jan Hausbrandt The professional in all that she does, Anna embodies the sophisticated, modern language teacher. I can vouch for this myself, since I am currently a student in her intermediate Polish class. She explains the finer points of Polish grammar (of which there are many!), makes jokes and tells stories, digresses to Polish history and culture to illustrate a lexical or grammatical point, and enjoins us to participate-all in Polish. Anna, who possesses a stentorian voice, requires that her students-and others as well-speak up. The four undergraduates each have their own strengths, and in some respects it's a master class in teaching to observe how she coaxes the very best from each one. It's a gift.

Moreover, she is proud of her students and their accomplishments. In 2008 she published a booklet of writings from her advanced Polish class, which that year consisted of Barnard and Columbia undergrads. The texts were inspired by the class readings, but, as she states in the introduction, the students write, "about their own lives, experiences, and ideas, while at the same time expanding their vocabulary, phraseology, and knowledge of Polish culture and history." On another occasion, she assigned the topic "the most beautiful thing in my apartment," in response to a short story by Tadeusz Różewicz, a major poet and prose writer. Anna was so impressed with and proud of her students' efforts that she sent their writings to Różewicz, who was celebrating his eightieth birthday. He was touched by the tribute and had them published, mistakes and all, in a leading Polish literary quarterly.

Anna is justly proud of the many conferences, lectures, and readings that she has organized throughout the years. The conference devoted to poet, essayist, and novelist Józef Wittlin (1896–1976), best known in English for his novel Salt of the Earth, was not an obvious choice, and she faced some obstacles in getting it off the ground, which Bob Belknap, then chair of the Slavic Department, was able to overcome. Apart from the merits of the project, it is not difficult to view the enterprise as Polish émigré writer in the late twentieth century paying homage to an important predecessor who had also settled in New York City. The twoday conference held at the Kosciuszko Foundation, the leading Polish institution in the United States with a mission to foster educational exchanges and promote understanding about Poland in the United States, and Columbia brought together an international roster of scholars, whose contributions were published in the volume Between Lvov, New York, and Ulysses' Ithaca: Józef Wittlin, edited by Anna. It is a marvelous introduction to a major writer whose work is still underappreciated in English. Anna also organized successful conferences on Bruno Schulz and Adam Mickiewicz, major writers celebrating anniversaries, who were more obvious choices, but she takes particular pride in the conferences on "North America in the Eyes of the Polish Beholder" (2000), mounted to celebrate the Kosciuszko Foundation's silver jubilee, and the "Polish-American Woman: The Other in Both Cultures" (2002), another Kosciuszko Foundation collaboration.

All the conferences and lectures notwithstanding, the Miłosz Centennial Celebration that Anna organized as a multilingual reading of his poetry proved to be a major landmark in her activities and Polish studies at Columbia in general. The inspiration for the evening came from the Finnish Studies Program's annual Kalevala Multilingual Marathon, where attendees are asked to bring a translation of the work to read. Anna

Memento Mori

A man gets on the bus Will this take me to 86th Street? How trusting the passenger how trusting the one who answers.

May 30, 2002

From Florence

You weren't there on Ponte Vecchio slowly the fog descended from the hills somewhere on Lung'Arno Dante walked and felt a sudden pain in his chest

Beatrice was on the bridge
 such a morning star that the wind
 hadn't yet mingled with her hair
 down Beatrice's bare arms
 the fog sank as if from the hills.
 You weren't there on Ponte Vecchio . . .

Florence, 1970

Not Mine, the Castle and the Chambers . . .

Not mine, the castle and the chambers and not mine is the prince though wealthy wise and dashing though velvet is his garb not mine are cottages of larch and meadows' evening whir not mine the city out of which left long ago my train

mine is the island of streets cut square the crowd winds from the bay blowing from the river – winds "One finds in Frajlich's verse a persistent preoccupation with the themes of exile, emigration, dislocation, and adaptation to new cultural contexts." —Regina Grol, World Literature Today

planned to do the same for Miłosz, but she took the precautionary measure of securing some translations in the event that people came unprepared. As soon became apparent that early evening on October 27, 2011, she need not have worried. Extra chairs had to be brought in the large room in Butler Library, and still dozens were left standing. Of course, the Slavic Department was well represented, but this crowd of college and graduate students came from all possible schools and disciplines. Everyone had brought texts: English, French, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish. Helen Vendler, the marvelous scholar of poetry from Harvard, opened the festivities. The reception afterward was held in the Bakhmeteff Archive, which had mounted a Miłosz exhibit, including Zygmunt Malinowski's photos of Miłosz, one of which graces the cover of Anna's collection of essays on Czesław Miłosz published in that same anniversary year. Everyone remembers the evening as a particularly special event.

LWÓW/KATTA TALDYK/SZCZECIN/ WARSAW/NEW YORK

In her overview of Anna's poetry published in World Literature Today, Regina Grol writes, "One finds in Frajlich's verse a persistent preoccupation with the themes of exile, emigration, dislocation, and adaptation to new cultural contexts." Dislocation and the trauma of exile are frequent themes not only in her poetry, but they also inform her family history. If not for the war, Anna's European homeland would have been Lwów. As she writes in a poem written soon after coming to the United States: "And everything was left behind in Lwów / the city of my mother and father" ("Forget-Me-Nots"). The war changed everything. Anna's mother, separated from her mobilized husband, was evacuated from Lwów to

Katta Taldyk, a little village outside of Osh, Kyrgyzstan, where she gave birth to her daughter near the city of Osh, on the "Roof of the World." (Anna made a spectacular return to Osh and the village of her birth in the summer of 2014, at the invitation of former president Roza Otunbayeva. In addition to the expected readings and receptions, she was treated to a play based on her life performed by students at the university.)

Mother and daughter left exotic Kyrgyzstan for the more commonplace Urals to be reunited with Anna's father. The family eventually settled in Szczecin, a major seaport near the Baltic Sea, in a building where an entire section had been bombed. Baby Anna ran around, shouting, "Poland, Poland!" But her father replied, "This is not Poland. This is Szczecin." Her parents never fully recovered from the loss of Lwów, which became Ukrainian Lviv under the Soviets with a much smaller Polish population, but eventually Szczecin did become home; it was the city of her childhood and youth. In Szczecin she won third prize in a poetry contest. In the twentyfirst century, Anna would be made "honorary ambassador of Szczecin." She eventually moved to Warsaw to enroll in the university. In Warsaw she married and bore her son, but Szczecin witnessed the "most formative period of my life."

Anna continues to examine the theme of exile in her later poems, but more and more we see the exile's celebration of life in New York City, her adopted home. Consider, for example, her declaration that

This city is mine and I belong to it in the crystalline air we sail alongside the banks is it beautiful?—that's not the point what matters is that it is a boat and a harbor. Photo © Krzysztof Dubiel

Oddly enough, concurrent with this Americanization process, Anna explores her roots as a Polish Jew. As she writes in the short essay "My Father's Name," Psachie Freilich/Frajlich received a religious education and, in addition to German and Russian, also knew Hebrew and Yiddish. And even though life might have been made easier if her father had changed his given name, he refused to do so, although both he and his wife had become secular Jews, like most of their friends. In fact, the young Anna thought that being a Jew meant you were an atheist. Anna grew up knowing more about Catholic holidays, which she often celebrated in the homes of friends, than the Jewish ones. One also needs to bear in mind that most Jewish families in Poland consisted of only parents and children, like Anna's, since the older generations had perished in the Holocaust. In other words, grandparents were a very rare phenomenon.

As she writes in the short essay "What Might Have Been," it was not until she was living in the United States that she began to celebrate the most solemn of the Jewish holidays:

> I began to fast on Yom Kippur some twenty years later in New York City. I was a cultural correspondent then for Radio Free Europe and I went to Chicago for a conference, and while I was there I was also promoting my first book of poetry. After my reading a group [of us] went to a Polish restaurant. It was the eve of the Day of Judgment and as we passed through one neighborhood, my friends reminded me that it was so quiet and empty because everybody was celebrating Yom Kippur. And only then did I feel that if my non-Jewish friends could recognize the weight of this holiday, so should I. (Translated by Ross Ufberg)

As Anna remarked in our interview, her double identities are important to her: as a poet/teacher (her parallel careers) and as a Polish Jew, who grew up in a secular household. She explains in the essay about her father that he had strong feelings about his identity and that she grew up with a strong notion about her family history and identity, while many of her generation's parents repressed their consciousness of being a Jew. Anna's collected essays, now being prepared for publication in English translation, will include her Vanderbilt University talk, titled "Unprocessed Holocaust" (2015), which explores this difficult topic.

What's next for Anna? It's clear that she will not be idle. The University of Rzeszów and Jagiellonian University have announced a conference to be held in October 2016 in her honor, which she will attend and where she will give a reading as a form of keynote address. She really has never been in demand so much as today, when her poems are sought out, appearing even in school anthologies, and her oeuvre is the subject of essays, scholarly articles, and master's theses.

She plans to retain close ties with Columbia, her intellectual home for more than three decades.

The Harriman community was recently reminded of Anna's very special presence among us. At the memorial service for Cathy Nepomnyashchy last October, Anna closed the event with a reading of her poem written on Cathy's death. Anna reads beautifully, and the hall resounded and trembled with the quiet drama of the poem, which I will cite in Polish and English so that some might experience again that reading:



Left to right: Yekaterina Shraga and Tatiana Chebotarev (Bakhmeteff Archive); Helen Vendler (Harvard University); Anna Frajlich-Zajac; and Zygmunt Malinowski. Photo courtesy of Zygmunt Malinowski

"Readers familiar with Frajlich's work will delight in her light touches of language, memories, impressions, and thought that capture luminous details on the private and public surface of her life." —Alice-Catherine Carls, World Literature Today

Senność

Pamięci Cathy Nepomnyashchy

Umrzeć we śnie tak lekko z jednego snu do drugiego przemknąć niepostrzeżenie a potem już tylko śnić sennymi labiryntami błądzić w nieskończoności

snem wiecznym żyć.

21 marca 2015

Sleep

In memory of Cathy Nepomnyashchy

To die in dreams so lightly from one dream to another to steal away imperceptibly and then to only sleep in dreamy labyrinths to wander in infinity to live in dreams eternal.

March 21, 2015 Translated from Polish by Ross Ufberg

Selected Honors

Union of Polish Writers in Exile (London) Literature Prize, 2015
Title of Honorary Ambassador to the City of Szczecin, 2008
W. & N. Turzanski Foundation (Toronto) Literary Prize, 2003
Knight's Cross of Order of Merit, awarded by the President of the Polish Republic, 2002
Kościelski Foundation (Geneva) Literary Award, 1981

Selected Publications (Poetry Books)

Translations

- Between Dawn and the Wind, bilingual, expanded 2d ed., translated by Regina Grol (Austin: Host, 2006)
- *Le vent à nouveau me cherche*, bilingual, translated by Alice-Catherine Carls, preface by Jan Zieliński (Soisy-sur-Seine: Editinter, 2003)

łodzią jest i jest przystanią (Szczecin: Forma, 2013)
Znów szuka mnie wiat (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2001)
W słoncu listopada (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2000)
Jeszcze w drodze, introduction by Mateusz Werner (Warsaw: NOWA, 1994)
Ogrodem i ogrodzeniem (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1993)
Który las (London: Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 1986)
Indian Summer (Albany, NY: Sigma, 1982)
Tylko ziemia (London: Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 1979)
Aby wiatr namalować (London: Oficyna Stanisław Gliwa, 1976)

Prose (Books)

Czesław Miłosz. Lekcje. Prywatny Hołd (Czesław Miłosz. Lessons. A Personal Tribute) (Szczecin: Forma, 2011) Laboratorium (Szczecin: Forma, 2010)

Scholarly Publications (Books)

The Legacy of Ancient Rome in the Silver Age (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007) Between Lvov, New York, and Ulysses' Ithaca. Józef Wittlin. Poet, Essayist, Novelist, edited by Anna Frajlich (Torun: Nicholas Copernicus University, 2001)

Essays Cited

- "He Also Knew How to Be Gracious," in *An Invisible Rope: Portraits of Czesław Miłosz*, edited by Cynthia L. Haven (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 138–153
- "Nobody Chooses Loneliness" [the Nobel Interview, 1980], in *Czesław Miłosz: Conversations*, edited by Cynthia L. Haven (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2006), 12–23



BY MEGHAN FORBES

WITHOUT COUNTRY AN INTERVIEW WITH DUBRAVKA UGREŠIĆ

"As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world."

ubravka Ugrešić often quotes these lines from Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*, and indeed they are well suited to an author who defies national demarcations. Alternately described as post-Yugoslav, Croatian, Yugoslav-Croatian, or Croatian-Dutch, Ugrešić is not quite any of these things. But she is certainly a writer, and a prolific one at that, author of five novels and six books of essays, as well as various volumes of short stories, criticism, and books for children.

At the outbreak of the Yugoslav civil war, Ugrešić had held for many years a position at the Institute for Literary Theory at the University of Zagreb, which she relinquished when she left Croatia in 1993. This was a time when—as she describes in her essay "A Question of Perspective"—her books were burned and she was regularly slandered in the local press, branded as an antinationalist "witch," a "feminist raping Croatia," and a "homeless intellectual."

Perhaps that last title had some unintended truth to it: Ugrešić, who now lives in Amsterdam, has, in the years since her exile turned emigration, resisted having her authorial identity subsumed by her "homeland," depending to a large extent on her translators to reach an international audience. Ugrešić subverts a national canon and welcomes instead a reading of her work as transnational literature. Her essays and fiction lay bare the dangers of nationalism, and examine the impact of totalitarian regimes on collective memory and belonging. She has also turned her critical gaze to issues of popular, consumerist culture and the place of the female writer in a male-dominated society.

Ugrešić was in residence at Columbia University, at the invitation of the Department of Slavic Languages and the Harriman Institute, for the month of October 2015, to teach a four-week course and present the keynote lecture at a conference organized around her work, both of which were associated with the theme of transnationalism. It was fortuitous timing that during this same period, Ugrešić learned that she was the recipient of the 2016 Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend Ugrešić's course and other public engagements at Columbia, and the following interview is a direct result of her trip to New York. But, fittingly, this conversation was conducted only later, via e-mail correspondence and across different borders, with Ugrešić back in Amsterdam and myself by then in Prague.

Popular Culture and the Essay

Meghan Forbes: Last October, while teaching a course at Columbia, you asked students to introduce themselves with their names and answers to the following questions: What problems do you have with contemporary culture? What books are you reading? I'd like to start by posing the same questions to you.

Dubravka Ugrešić: Let me introduce myself: my name is Dubravka Ugrešić, and I am a writer. I was born and raised in a small country in southern Europe, in Yugoslavia. One morning, I woke up and found myself in Croatia, an even smaller country, in a different time and political environment that perhaps most closely resembled 1941. As life is not a movie, and I am not Woody Allen's Zelig, I decided to leave this country in order to stay sane. Now I live in the Netherlands.

The problem I have with contemporary culture is that today everything is treated as a product. Culture is a huge and shiny supermarket. As all products are announced as "brilliant," the risk inherent in buying these products falls entirely to me. In that respect, I often miss "my butcher" and "my baker" and "my vegetable lady," people I could rely on. These days, shopping and consuming-including consuming culture-have become more difficult. In such a context, I behave like any other cultural consumer: I buy books randomly, because I've heard of the author or the title, or I know the publisher's taste, or a friend recommended something to me.

The Internet divided consumers into two groups: some still read essays; others would rather watch video clips of Slavoj Žižek's lectures on YouTube. **Forbes:** Apropos of this new consumer culture: You have described the essay as a genre with a long-standing literary tradition, an effective means of protest, a form in which serious research is retold as literature. How do you think the role and quality of the essay has changed now that information and ideas are passed around quickly on the Internet in bits and pieces?

Ugrešić: The Internet divided consumers into two groups: some still read essays; others would rather watch video clips of Slavoj Žižek's lectures on YouTube. Some do both. The importance of the essay has not changed; in fact, I discovered it as a genre (that suits me) once the Internet had a wider circulation. In the speedy and hierarchized society (of fame and money) we live in today, I cherish the essay even more. It's a form of "underground" thinking, a quick articulation of phenomena, whatever the phenomena might be. It's a way of breaking down the hierarchies of our world. (For instance, I've written essays on the difference between the muffin, the bagel, and the donut, and the significance of hotel minibars, with the same pleasure and seriousness that I write about themes understood as "big," or "important," such as war.) [The late] Svetlana Boym, a great literary scholar, wonderfully explains the importance of "slow thinking" in a quick video statement (that now circulates on the Internet). The essay is probably the quickest way to inspire the reader to practice slow thinking.

Forbes: Is "slow thinking" a prerequisite for your ideal reader? In the most recent issue of *Music & Literature*, you are quoted as saying: "A careful reader only feels comfortable in the text when the author feels comfortable in there too: it's a secret communication between them." In your work, you foster a real intimacy with your reader. But, if the Internet has turned readers into "consumers," who might first come to your work at far remove from its original context, do you feel that digital technologies have estranged you from the kind of reader you most hope to reach?

Ugrešić: I had in mind a specific honesty that is a precondition for the intimacy between a writer and a reader. This doesn't mean being truthful (nobody really cares whether what you describe actually happened or not; that sort of a truth is not the job of literature, after all, but the work of police reports and, hopefully, good journalism). What I mean is that the writer should feel comfortable with herself or himself as a narrator. A careful reader is able to recognize that. At least, I recognize such things.

And yes, digital technologies have estranged many readers from traditional literature, but they have also brought some readers back to literature. These technologies might give birth to a new literature entirely. I haven't bumped into any successful examples yet, but you just never know what could result from new technologies.

And to answer your first question, I am for slowing down. Writers who produce "literary hamburgers" also push their consumers to become fast readers. Although I adore some "speedy" novels (my favorite is *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas!), I prefer slow food, not only preparing it but consuming it too.

Food is a high-quality dialogue. And literature is also supposed to be a highquality dialogue.

Transnational Literature and Translation

Forbes: How is the intimacy you seek to cultivate with your reader related to the intimacy you share with your



translators, on whom you depend as a transnational writer writing outside of a major language?

Ugrešić: Writers write because they want to be loved. Gabriel García Márquez said precisely that in one of his interviews: "I write in order to be loved." I liked this sentence so much that I wrote a novella that plays with the semantic consequences of Márquez's poetic statement. I depend on the love of the chance reader. That sounds like a sentimental line from some ambitious romance novel, but that's how it is. I can rely only on the chance reader wherever she/he is coming from. In that respect, yes, I first of all depend on my translators.

Forbes: Is your translator your ideal reader then? Or more of a coauthor?

Ugrešić: Both. A good translator is that ideal reader. But a good translator is a coauthor, too.

Forbes: You have been a vocal champion of the concept of a "transnational" literature, which you see as existing both in parallel and in opposition to national literature. Can you speak a little about what you mean when you say you are writing transnational literature? And who are the other writers cohabiting that liminal space with you? **Ugrešić:** If you do not belong to a national canon—and women rarely do—then your natural space is a cultural semi-underground. What does that mean? It means a "refugee" space, a "shelter." It could also mean a space "outside the nation" (in exile, in another language, in other geographies, etc.). It could mean a space of "experimental" writing, a space of nonmainstream writing, a space of "subliterary genres" (like science fiction, romances, speculative fiction, Internet writing); all in all, the spaces that nobody can take from women.

Virginia Woolf had it right with her famous quote: "As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world." We might even say that she set the cornerstone for transnational literature. Gender itself is not enough, of course, for the person to feel excluded; neither is an exclusion from the national canon an automatic visa into transnational literature. The concept of minor literature, and belonging to a minor literature, is also not the only element that could lead to a transnational literature. Transnational literature is a work in progress; it's a process. With time, its boundaries will become theoretically clearer. There are more scholarly books written about it every day.

Forbes: The concept of country as "the whole world" feels particularly relevant

today, as attacks like those in Paris come presumably from a nonnational entity. It feels like, more than ever, we must move beyond a conception of nationalism to something "trans"-national, or "non"national, in order to observe and respect a collective humanity, and ensure justice for all people. And yet, the knee-jerk response to such attacks is highly nationalistic and regressive; I am thinking of calls to close borders and to block the path to immigration for those fleeing a similar sort of terror at home. Do you see any parallels between the current debate in the United States and Europe, over how many refugees to take in from the Syrian civil war, and the matter of displaced citizens from the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s? Is there perhaps some liberating solution in your conception of transnational literature to a nationalist, unwelcoming response to émigrés displaced by war?

Ugrešić: You are absolutely right! I believe that refugees (and demographers report that in the last year the number of displaced persons was so large that it is only comparable to the number during World War II!) are the ultimate test of humanity at this very moment. They are the test of the ideas, concepts, and practices of our societies — such as democracy, organizational principles of society, functionality of states, borders, citizenship, global and local political forces, a test of the

people in power, of human solidarity, of our values; just name it. If the response to the "migrant crisis" (as the media dryly calls this human tragedy of colossal proportion) is a resurrection of the swastika, then we will all find ourselves in big trouble.

Memory and Forgetting

Forbes: I recall a definition you gave of nostalgia as a poetic field that requires you to chase after memory as it runs away from you, which I found to be a particularly beautiful and compelling idea. To push that image a little further, if I may, are you constantly chasing the memories of your Yugo-youth, running after them in that poetic field with butterfly net? And why not let them just flutter away?

Ugrešić: I am not chasing the memories of my Yugoslav youth; in fact, it is the opposite. I don't have the feeling that I am picking the themes; they pick me. I am not a writer who specializes in a certain genre—such as science fiction, or the detective novel, for instance—in order to emancipate myself from that reality.

Forbes: Since the Yugoslav civil war, you have been living outside of the former Yugoslavia, but the culture and politics of your homeland remain central to your writing. Vladislav Beronja, in the conference at Columbia dedicated to your work,

I believe that refugees are the ultimate test of humanity at this very moment. They are the test of the ideas, concepts, and practices of our societies. If you do not belong to a national canon—and women rarely do—then your natural space is a cultural semiunderground. described the "fragments and ruins of a once shared Yugoslav space." Do you see your novels and essays, largely created outside of the post-Yugoslav space, as a means by which to piece back together or otherwise restore some of these fragments and ruins?

Ugrešić: Some of them are, such as *The Ministry of Pain*, and probably also *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*.

Forbes: In the essay "Nostalgia," you write that Berlin, where you were living in exile in 1994, turned out to be the "ideal cutting desk for the montage of memories" that would become *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*. Was there something specific to living in Berlin during the period of German reunification that was particularly poignant as your own former country was violently splitting apart?

Ugrešić: Berlin was a perfect background, a city as metaphor, a link to different historical periods and meanings: Fascism, World War II, then the city's division into two parts (communist and capitalist), then reunification. . . . Within Berlin there is an artificial hill, called Teufelsberg, or Devil's Mountain, that is built out of the rubble of a Berlin destroyed by bombing. So, against such a background I could easily project my feelings, fears, obsessions; my status of exile (in a city that has a rich history of cultural exile); the Yugoslav war; the appearance of a new fascism in Croatia and Serbia; and so on and so forth.

By the way, I recently took a boat tour around Manhattan and learned from our guide that American ships during World War II, carrying supplies to England, needed the same ballast for the trip back. So, the ships would carry rubble from the bombings of London and Brighton back to New York and unload it on the East Side of Manhattan. That rubble made Manhattan bigger, and many housing projects were built on top of it—on top of the ruins of London and Brighton.

Forbes: I had never heard that story. That is totally bizarre, and particularly apt when one considers that it was the Americans who built on top of that hill of rubble at Teufelsberg, too: an NSA listening station.

Ugrešić: Even if this story was perhaps invented by a tourist guide with literary ambitions, it sounds very good to me. It's a story about interconnectedness. It's a perfect metaphor for history, but also for this very moment.

Device

Forbes: A predominant characteristic of your work is the use of collage as literary device. What is it about this process that is so effective for you? **Ugrešić:** I wouldn't say that collage is my predominant literary device. Collage is known as a technique of the visual arts: photography, film, etc. For me, collage is more a way of thinking than something to be used strictly as literary technique, I would say. And as a way of thinking, it is tremendously exciting: you put one thing next to the other one and wait to see what will happen. The two "things" talk, hate each other, love each other, change each other's meaning, enrich each other, give their existence new meaning.

Forbes: If the task of the writer is to subvert existing forms, in which of your novels do you feel you have been most subversive?

Ugrešić: "Subversiveness" depends on the context, and is defined by the context. One can't be subversive without the context. As concerns my novels, they do not obey or follow general preconceptions of a novel as a specific literary form—for example, a general idea of what the novel is supposed to look like. One of my novels has a little subversion implanted into its very title. That's *Fording the Stream of Consciousness.* In the original it is *Forsiranje romana-reke.* "Fording the river" is a military term. "Roman-fleuve" is a French term; it literally means "river-novel." A roman-fleuve is a long novel in serial form,

like Marcel Proust's À *la recherche du temps perdu*. So, I made a pun: "Fording the river-novel." Let us say that subversiveness is a way to express our relationship to surrounding cultural references (be they narrow, national, or wider, international); another way to reevaluate established aesthetic, ethical, ideological values, etc.

Gender Inequity in Publishing

Forbes: As a woman who writes, I have been very grateful for the vocabulary you've provided and the room you've made for us to talk about the lack of gender parity in the publishing world. In what ways do you think you have been most successful in drawing attention to this issue?

Ugrešić: I think that women who draw attention to this issue are not terribly popular, because the men—who still hold the power in our culture—don't want to hear such things. However, if you belong to a discriminated community, it's your duty to draw attention to that discrimination.

Forbes: You have remarked often of your admiration and deep respect for two male figures I also treasure: the Czech author Bohumil Hrabal; and the UCLA professor and translator, Michael Henry Heim. Could you give us the names of a few literary ladies who have had a profound impact on your life and writing?

Ugrešić: I must admit that men had a profound impact on my life and writing. It's simple: the history of literature consists mostly of male writers. That's why I, and my generation of women writers, should be aware of the fact that our understanding of literature, culture, and the world has been shaped by male writers, artists, and philosophers. I personally started to publish very early and didn't encounter any problems—the opposite, in fact. However, that ease with which I achieved a place in literature (then Yugoslav) didn't make me blind; I was quite aware of the inequality of positions.

As concerns the literary ladies, I first think of the nineteenth-century Croatian author Ivana Brlić Mažuranić. She wrote some of the best fairy tales in the whole world of fairy tales, and she had a great impact on me when I was a little girl, and later. Even now I often read her tales. They belong to the highest level of classical literature. Although she borrowed a lot from Russian folklore, her fairy tales are unique and uniquely beautiful. Later, some other female writers came into focus for me, Virginia Woolf among them. Today, if we mention a couple of female Nobel Prize winners for I think that women who draw attention to this issue are not terribly popular, because the men—who still hold the power in our culture—don't want to hear such things.

literature—such as Svetlana Alexievich, Alice Munro, Herta Müller, Elfriede Jelinek, Doris Lessing, Toni Morrison—we become aware of how the general literary landscape has changed tremendously with them. Even a quick look at their names and oeuvres proves how diverse, interesting, and powerful literature written by women is. Thanks to that generation of women who are building a contemporary woman's literary canon—many young women writers have managed to be recognized early, at their debut; for example, Zadie Smith or the charming Valeria Luiselli, a writer I am reading at the moment.

Forbes: And what about Lena Dunham? In class, you introduced yourself to us with a confession. You told us that you had just read Dunham's memoir *Not That Kind of Girl* on the plane from Amsterdam to New York, and said: "I must tell you one thing: I liked it." What did you like about Dunham's book?

Ugrešić: It has intelligence, juvenescent energy, a pleasant bluntness, humor, and honesty. I also liked Dunham's excellent little movie *Tiny Furniture*. Dunham, together with some other young women, such as Miranda July, are forging a new American, feminist-oriented cultural scene. Forbes: In the essay "Soul for Rent!" you announced that you'd be renting out your soul to keep afloat financially during the recession. You instructed prospective clients—perverts and smokers need not apply—to send their contact details to your editor. So I've been dying to know: Did you receive any inquiries?

Ugrešić: No, of course not; the soul has a negligible market value anyway, almost like Albanian chewing gum. But this bitter and funny little piece is sort of an homage to Woody Allen and his hilarious story "Whore from Mensa" constructed on a simple inversion. It's a story about a group of talented young women, studying literature and completing their PhDs, who work in a sort of intellectual brothel. They offer their clients intellectual services: a lecture on Franz Kafka, for instance, or Moby Dick, or, while we are at it, a short introduction to transnational literature (that last one is my invention!). The story was published in the New Yorker forty years ago and it's still vital, maybe even more vital today than when it was written.

Forbes: Thank you so much, Dubravka, for answering these questions. I'd like to close without a question, just an open space, for you to have the last word . . .

Ugrešić: I can't have the last word. I am a writer, remember? Generals and prophets usually have the last word. But literature is about ongoing narration, another chapter, another sequel, another conversation . . .

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Eli: So, the twenty-seventh floor again. Everything comes full circle. Alicia: Yes. First the tragedy, then the farce.

--- "Monday," The Good Wife, season 7, episode 14, 2016

Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.

—Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1852

Untitled (Gallery), 2008. Archival pigment print, 32 x 40 cm. Edition 10. All photos in this essay, with the exception of the Lenin portrait on page 56, © Pavel Romaniko

IN SEARCH OF THE TWELFTH CHAIR: PAVEL ROMANIKO'S **NOSTALGIA**

BY ALEX MIOKOVIĆ

astiche. In Untitled (Gallery), 2008, we see walls in shadow, a shiny wood floor, a doorway trimmed in white paint, portraits on the wall . . . a gallery? What kind of gallery is it? The portraits hang at different levels; none at eye level. The doorway is the only visible light source. After a while, one recognizes them as portraits of former Soviet leaders. Lenin's portrait hangs above the doorway. Stalin is over on the far right edge where the frame cuts off. There are also portraits of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and, in relative darkness, a small horizontal portrait of Putin (all the others are vertical) seemingly looking down at Medvedev.

This is just one example of the photographs created by Pavel Romaniko. Since 2008 his pictures have focused on interior spaces that he fabricates in miniature out of paper and which exist only to be photographed. All the works in his *Nostalgia* series, which spans the last eight years, are untitled and include only a short description of what is visible in the picture. The sources for Romaniko's miniaturized interiors are his memories of spaces he grew up with in the Soviet Union or pictures culled from archives that represent Russian and Soviet "collective" memories. He also relies heavily on his personal archive of photographs that he has been collecting since 1998.

In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,* Fredric Jameson juxtaposes pastiche with parody. Both concepts are quite similar on the surface; both borrow from elsewhere, somewhere from the past. Below the surface of parody, however, one senses an ulterior motive, but for pastiche there is only the surface itself. "In this situation a parody finds itself without a vocation; it has lived, and that



strange new thing—pastiche—slowly comes to take its place. ... Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs." For Jameson, although the logic of pastiche is spatial rather than temporal and, therefore, ahistorical, there is nevertheless some possibility of mapping it and returning it to its historical moment. This moment can only be found in the relationship of pastiche to the "logic" of capitalism.

When a popular television show borrows a quote from Marx, it empties out most of the historical significance of the original statement or, at the very least, the gravity or irony of it. Unlike parody, the television show becomes a clever device—a flourish, a stylistic stroke, but not much more. In Romaniko's photographs, there is definitely both style and flourish: something borrowed-from memory, other photographs-as well as the clever "device" of distinguishing surface-the superficial flatness of the photograph itself versus the surface from crafting a miniaturized space out of paper and photographing it in a way that has us believing we are looking at "real" spaces. But when we do believe, if we do, then we realize that the photographs and the objects in those photographs are intentionally fabricated to mimic Soviet-era propaganda, and we begin to think about the context of those "original" images and examine the relationship to both sets of pictures. (Vestiges of this Soviet propaganda can still be seen in present-day Russia.)

Indeed, in *Untitled (After Brodsky)*, 2014, we are confronted with a room with covered chairs, a Biedermeier table with a newspaper on it, and paper, perhaps the pages of a book, strewn on the floor. Like all of Romaniko's photographs, there is only the vague (and mostly imagined) evidence of human presence. Here, "Brodsky" refers to the source of this photograph: Romaniko has carefully reconstructed the space in Brodsky's 1930 painting *Lenin in Smolny*. But in this reconstruction, Lenin is missing.

Nostalgia. "At an art exhibition in Moscow, there is a picture showing Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, in bed with a young member of the Komsomol. The picture is titled *Lenin in Warsaw*. A bewildered visitor asks a guide: 'But where is Lenin?' The guide replies quietly and with dignity: 'Lenin is in Warsaw.'"

Lenin in Warsaw was a well-known Soviet joke, retold by Slavoj Žižek in his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Untitled (After Brodsky) does not depict Lenin, but he may as well have been included. It is interesting that during Soviet times, the rewriting of history, and in particular the "rewriting" of it through the use of photography, seemed to work only partially. On the one hand, there was an image



From top to bottom: Untitled (Smolny), 2014. Archival pigment print, 30 x 44 cm. Edition 10; Isaak Brodsky, *Vladimir Lenin in Smolny* (1930). *Opposite page: Untitled (Kitchen)*, 2009. Archival pigment print, 22 x 32 cm. Edition 10

and a representation of how things were *supposed* to be, and on the other, the reality of how things were, and most people knew that. Thus, as the history of past events both in Russia and the Soviet Union were systematically manipulated and, if you will, miniaturized, what was omitted became even more present. In this way, the titles of Romaniko's images are actually not "untitled." Rather the act of not titling the works points to that which is not and cannot be titled. In a sense, all the photographs—from dark stairwells to empty chairs gathered around the radio or a single chair in front of a small television—reveal that something is not quite right. Something is missing and we know exactly what that something is! Or



do we? Do we forget that longing for that which is not there, and that which at one time was with us and made us so comfortable, is now regained only in part and probably was not as comfortable as we remember? Pictures have borders, dark places and spaces, that we cannot walk around or move through; there are spots that leave us blind. They are flat, miniaturized objects that only permit an imaginary entrance. This is the treachery of the image, of *any* image. This, too, is the peril and predicament of nostalgia.

Nostalgia . . . a seemingly uncomplicated term. Yet, while viewed as a form of *melancholia*, nostalgia is also often juxtaposed against it. Indeed, it is the more frivolous cousin of melancholia. It is a longing for the past in the sense of "the good old days."

The *Wikipedia* pages for nostalgia and melancholia use photographs to help illustrate the meaning of each. They are astoundingly different. For nostalgia, we see an antique, circa 1940s, front desk from the Beverly Hills Hotel, now preserved as a bar for the new hotel. The old is new but still old and comfortable. The desk has not been forgotten; it has merely been turned into an object of surface and fantasy—oozing, we are told, with sentimentality. Meanwhile, for melancholiathe black bile, one of the four temperaments of medieval science—the curious are presented with Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I*, a sixteenth-century woodcut. It is an image from an era about which we cannot be nostalgic because it is not of our own time—there is no connection—but the image *is* something we can contemplate from a distance.

The distance in melancholy, however, can make us vulnerable—all is gone, all will go away, and we will go away as well. Romaniko's photographs allow the viewer to see nostalgia through the eyes of melancholy. It is contemplation through the sadness of irretrievable loss, the possibility of nothingness, of no *body*, and we realize there is no returning to the past and, thus, it is the present moment and its outcome in the future that *really* matters. In this way, through the melancholic look, there is a possible future. Romaniko's nostalgia is turned into *melancholia*—or an optimistic end.

At Romaniko's exhibit at the Harriman Institute (January 29–March 10, 2016), a group of dramatically lit pictures present miniature, peopleless rooms. The title of the exhibit is *Nostalgia*. A bewildered visitor asks his guide: "But where is the nostalgia?" The guide replies quietly and with dignity: "The nostalgia is in Warsaw."





From top to bottom: Untitled (Stairwell), 2008. Archival pigment print, 24 x 30 cm. Edition 10; *Untitled (Lesnaya Street)*, 2010. Archival pigment print, 22 x 32 cm. Edition 10. *Opposite page: Untitled*, 2008. Archival pigment print, 30 x 24 cm. Edition 10

Utopia. In a recent conversation with the artist I asked him why there were no people and why his spaces looked as if they had been abandoned. He answered, "They could come back." My next question had to be, "Would their return be a good thing?"

There is something in Romaniko's photographs that makes one anxious, even uneasy. And this uneasiness might be more about what is absent than what is present: the people might return! In Thomas More's sixteenth-century fictional narrative, *Utopia*, the reader is introduced to an imaginary country where everyone is satisfied with his or her existence and all people live in harmony. Today, sadly, we disparage the idea. "If only!" We should remember, however, that *Utopia* is also a pun. In Greek, *eu-topia* means a good place while *ou-topia* means no place. More's country was a nonexistent country but also a representation of ideal good. In Romaniko's photographs, when the people do return, one wonders from where they are returning. With what knowledge? And, perhaps most importantly, will the place to which they are returning become a better place?

Utopia as an ideological apparatus could lead one to the predicament that was the Soviet Union, and, once again, in the words of Jameson, where "[u]topian thought represented a diversion of revolutionary energy into idle wish-fulfillments and imaginary satisfactions . . . [and] now it is practical thinking which everywhere stands as a testimony to the power of that system to transform its adversaries into its own mirror image. The Utopian idea, on the contrary, keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one."

Untitled (Meeting), 2010, presents a room that appears to be uninhabited, with white walls and daylight streaming in through the windows. Chairs lie heaped in disarray on the floor. Like an abstract expressionist painting, there is no room for us to enter the pictorial space. So, what will happen when the people return?

And *Untitled (Kuntsevo)*, 2010 (see the cover of this magazine), is another room that appears to be uninhabited, with white walls, dark wainscoting, and a diamond-patterned floor. Harsh, artificial light streams in through the windows. A solitary chair with a red back and seat rests against the wall. The empty room could accommodate several people. What will happen if Stalin returns?

Alex Mioković is an independent scholar whose academic specialties are in Russian art and critical theory. He was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1959 to Russian immigrant parents. He lives with his wife, Heidi, and many cats in Rochester, New York.

In Memoriam



John Hardt

John Hardt, an alumnus of the Russian Institute Class of 1955, and a Columbia University Ph.D. in economics, died in December 2015 at the age of 93. He was preceded in death by six months by his wife of over sixty years, Mary, and is survived by five sons and ten grandchildren. John worked for over thirty years as senior specialist in Soviet (and later post-Soviet) economics at the Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.

John was born in Seattle, Washington, and during World War II served as army captain in France, Germany, the Philippines, and Japan, receiving ribbons and battle stars in both the European and Asiatic theaters of operations.

After earning his degree, John worked for the Operations Research Office and the Research Analysis Corporation, both in the Washington area, before joining the Congressional Research Service (CRS) in 1971. As a senior specialist at CRS he advised members of Congress and their staff on economic issues related to socialist and postsocialist countries. He frequently testified before congressional committees and traveled as adviser with congressional delegations. John accompanied Hubert Humphrey on a delegation to meet with the Soviet Party secretary in 1974; he advised a senate strategic arms limitation delegation to the Soviet Union in 1979, participated in a trade mission of the Ways and Means Committee to Eastern Europe in 1983, and accompanied congressional staff delegations to China in 1993 and 1998. As part of his duties he also briefed new members of Congress on contemporary trade and economic issues.

He retired from CRS in 2003. A tribute by Senator Robert Bennett honoring his service to Congress appeared in the *Congressional Record* that year.

John was author and editor of numerous books, from *The Cold War Economic Gap* (1961) to *Russia's Uncertain Economic Future* (2003). He was perhaps best known as editor of an extensive series of collective volumes published by the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress on economies of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China. Some of the over seventy volumes in the series include *China Under the Four Modernizations* (1982), *Gorbachev's Economic Plans* (1987), and *Eastern European Economies in Transition* (1994).

He was adjunct professor in economics at George Washington University for almost four decades, beginning in 1966, and he also taught at Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, the University of Maryland, the Foreign Service Institute, and the Army War College.

Alumni & Postdoc Notes

Anita Demkiv (née Petroski) (MARS-REERS, 2004) is CEO of ADIN Energy, an energy consulting company that she founded in 2015. She earned a Ph.D. in global affairs in 2012 from Rutgers University. Her dissertation examined the correlation between prolonged low oil prices and political instability in petrostates. She has taught at Rutgers University and Fordham University, including a course on Russian politics, and remains involved with Columbia University as a Graduate School of Arts and Sciences alumni board member. Prior to founding ADIN she worked as a crude and oil products researcher for two NYC-based brokerage firms.

Eileen Kane (Postdoctoral Fellow, 2007–08) is associate professor of modern European and Russian history and director of Global Islamic Studies at Connecticut College. She recently published her first book, *Russian Hajj: Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Cornell UP, 2015).

Edmund Levin (M.IA., SIPA 1985; Harriman Certificate, 1990) has been a writer and producer at ABC News (*Good Morning America*) for the past twenty years, working mostly on breaking news and political coverage. His writing has appeared in the *New York Times, Atlantic, Wall Street Journal, Slate* and other publications. His first book, *A Child of Christian Blood: Murder and Conspiracy in Tsarist Russia: The Beilis Blood Libel* (Schocken, 2014), came out to favorable reviews. He took part in conferences at Dartmouth, at the YIVO Institute, and in Kiev, marking the hundredth anniversary of the Beilis trial, which took place in 1913.



Anita Demkiv (née Petroski)



Edmund Levin



Kate Schecter



Daniel Schlafly

Kate Schecter, (Harriman Certificate, 1991; Ph.D., Political Science, 1992) joined World Neighbors as the new president and CEO in June 2014. She is responsible for managing programs and operations in thirteen countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In her previous position, she worked for the American International Health Alliance (AIHA) for fourteen years. Schecter worked as a consultant for the World Bank for three years (1997–2000), specializing in health-care reform and child welfare issues in Eurasia and Central Eastern Europe. She has written extensively about the Soviet socialized health-care system and was a principal investigator for the Carnegie Corporation's Russia Initiative. She is coeditor and coauthor of Social Capital and Social Cohesion in Post-Soviet Russia (M.E. Sharpe, 2003); and author of a chapter in Russia's Torn Safety Nets: Health and Social Welfare in Post-Communist Russia (St. Martin's Press, 2000) and an entry on Chernobyl for Scribner's Encyclopedia of Europe 1914-2004 (2006). She has made three documentary films for PBS about the Former Soviet Union. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has served on the board of Children's National Advocacy and Public Policy, Inc., of the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC, since 2010.

Daniel Schlafly (M.A. and Russian Institute Certificate, 1965; Ph.D. History,

1972) is professor of history and director of the Russian and East European Area Studies Program at Saint Louis University. He has translated and edited Marek Inglot, S.J., *How the Jesuits Survived Their Suppression: The Society of Jesus in the Russian Empire (1773– 1814)* (Philadelphia, St. Joseph's University Press, 2015) and two volumes of S. M. Solov'ev's *History of Russia* for Academic International Press. He has published articles on Russia and the West, particularly the Roman Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus in Russia in *Kritika, Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique, Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Catholic Historical Review, History of Education Quarterly, Rodina, Journal of Church and State, The Historian*, and elsewhere. His studies at Columbia were not just the foundation of his academic career but also personally rewarding. It was a real privilege to work with and get to know so many outstanding scholars, like Marc Raeff, István Deák, Fr. Alexander Schmemann, Loren Graham, and Robert Maguire.

Christopher Walker (M.I.A., SIPA 2001; Harriman Certificate, 2001) has

been named vice president for studies and analysis at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) based in Washington, DC. In this capacity, he oversees the department that is responsible for NED's multifaceted analytical work, which includes the International Forum for Democratic Studies, a leading center for the analysis and discussion of democratic development. The International Forum pursues it goals through several interrelated initiatives: publishing the *Journal of Democracy*, the world's leading publication on the theory and practice of democracy; hosting fellowship programs for international democracy activists, journalists, and scholars; coordinating the Network of Democracy Research Institutes, a global think tank network; and organizing a diverse range of analytical initiatives to explore critical themes relating to democratic development.

John Williams (M.I.A., SIPA 1985; Harriman Certificate, 1986) is office director of the Office of Analysis for Russia and Eurasia in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR/REA) and is a member of the U.S. government's Senior Executive Service. From 2010 to 2015, he headed INR/REA's Regional Affairs and Eastern Republics Division. From 2000 to 2010, he headed the Office's Russia Division. During his twenty-four years at the Department, he also served as a National Security Fellow at Syracuse University's Maxwell School (2012); public policy scholar at the Kennan Institute for Advanced Study of Russia at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (2001–2); and political officer at the U.S. Embassy, Moscow (1993–96). He has won several State Department and Intelligence Community awards and was selected to participate in the Director of National Intelligence's Exceptional Analyst Program (2001).



Christopher Walker



John Williams

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Untitled (Work Desk), 2008. Archival pigment print, 24 x 30 cm. Edition 10. © Pavel Romaniko

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