Serhiy Zhadan Visits UCSD

On April 24, the Literature Department hosted poet, novelist, translator, activist, and musician, Serhiy Zhadan; the event was co-sponsored by UCSD’s REEES Program and the New Writing Series. Originally from Ukraine’s now war-torn Donbas, Zhadan currently lives in Kharkiv. He graduated from and taught Ukrainian and World Literature at Kharkiv University, and in 2014, he was one of the best-known participants in the protest movement against the Yanukovych government. Zhadan is the author of several volumes of poetry, five novels, and three short story collections. His books, including Voroshilovgrad (2010), Depeche Mode (2013), and Mesopotamia (2014), have been translated to several languages and appear on the Russian bestseller list. Recent English-language articles about Zhadan have appeared in the New Yorker, the London Review of Books, and the Los Angeles Review of Books. Zhadan has been a member of two Kharkiv-based ska bands – Luk and Sobaky v Kosmosi - for which he writes many lyrics. Zhadan read from his poetry and prose in Ukrainian, and Professor Amelia Glaser (Literature, UCSD) and PhD candidate Teresa Kuruc read English translations. The event drew a large crowd from the UCSD community.

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of the REEES Program,

Summer is underway, and I am excited to share with you our program’s accomplishments during the 2016-17 academic year. This spring, one REEES major and three REEES minors graduated, and we wish them much success! REEES affiliated graduate students are making strides in their research – Olga Lazitski (Communication) has advanced to candidacy and has begun work on her dissertation on contemporary Russian news media; Ivana Polic (History) received a FISP award to research Children’s Literature in Serbia and Croatia during the 2017-18 year; and Julia Fermentto-Tzaisler (Literature) received a scholarship to study Yiddish in Tel Aviv this summer. Also, the Russian Club at UCSD has been active this year, holding regular conversation table gatherings and screenings of Russian films and television serials.

REEES is pleased to be an affiliate group of the new IAH (Institute of Arts and Humanities) at UCSD and to have organized one of the IAH “Challenging Conversation” panels this winter, featuring historians Timothy Snyder, Marci Shore, Steven Seegel, and Patrick Patterson, who discussed the legacies of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe. In April, REEES hosted the Ukrainian poet Serhiy Zhadan, who read from his poetry and prose for the UCSD community. In November, REEES, in collaboration with the UCSD Design Lab and Literature Department, hosted a lecture by architectural historian and designer Vladimir Paperny on “Hot and Cold War Architecture. I was very pleased to host, as part of a Sixth College “Culture, Art, and Technology” course, the poet and translator Professor Ilya Kaminsky (SDSU), who spoke about his book of poetry, Dancing in Odessa, and UCSD alumnus Anya Ezhevskaya, who spoke about her work as an English-Russian interpreter at NASA. Next year, the Literature Department is hosting visiting lecturer, Ainsley Morse, to teach a new course in Post-Soviet Literature. I am especially pleased to announce that the California Slavic Colloquium will take place at UCSD next April of 2018.

I want to thank my colleagues in the REEES program, our graduate and undergraduate students, and the community members who have supported us through donations and by attending our events. Special thanks go to Teresa Kuruc for designing and editing this newsletter, and to Mitzy Martinez, our REEES coordinator.

Спасибо всем,
Amelia Glaser
Associate Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature
Director of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, UCSD
REEES Graduate Student Activities

This spring, several PhD students represented the REEES Program at academic conferences. In April, Olga Lazitsky (Communication) and Julia Fermentto-Tzaisler (Literature) - both pictured - participated in the California Slavic Colloquium at UC Berkeley, accompanied by Professor Amelia Glaser (Literature). In March, Teresa Kuruc (Literature) presented at the University of Virginia's Slavic Forum. Lazitsky's presentation, entitled "A genealogy for contemporary Russian nationalist sentiment: the media as mythmaker," examines how Putin, through the Russian mainstream media, manipulates discourse about the Russian past in order to create a myth of Russian nationhood. Fermentto-Tzaisler's research, "Russian Jewish Riots on the Streets of New York City," reads the 1902 New York City Kosher meat boycott as an example of the merging labor and women's suffrage movements among Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Kuruc's work, "Memory as Antidote to Nostalgia in Voroshilovgrad," argues that Serhiy Zhadan's 2010 novel offers an ethics of memory as a tool for negotiating cultural conflict in the Russian-Ukrainian borderlands.

UCSD Student Studies Abroad in Russia

REEES student Meryl Press, a Political Science and Literature/Writing double major and Russian Literature minor, attended the CIEE Russian Language Program in St. Petersburg during the summer of 2016. CIEE students complete 8 weeks of intensive language study and learn about Russian culture through regular excursions, local volunteer opportunities, and living with host families. Meryl considers developing friendships, connecting with her heritage, and forming a new perspective on Russia through language study to be the most important parts of her experience in St. Petersburg.

Undergraduate Peer Advisor

This year, senior REEES major Isaac Syverson has served as the REEES Program undergraduate peer advisor. Isaac, a long-time language student, became interested in Russian because of its uniqueness from other languages he's practiced. Now, as a peer advisor, he strives to provide guidance to students in his field and to remind them: Russian never gets boring! Currently, Isaac is translating an interview with a Holocaust survivor from Odessa in conjunction with a research project about propaganda and disinformation.

Congratulations to REEES Graduates

Tucker Cecil graduated with a degree in International Studies with a Russian and Soviet Studies minor. He will attend Officer Candidate School for the US Marine Corps and plans to complete Naval Aviation School. REEES major Alexandra Sadovnikova will be working at UCSD after graduation and plans to enroll in a graduate program at Georgetown University in the next academic year. Kate Panian, a Political Science major and International Studies and REEES double minor, will work in the Congressional Relations Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington DC. REEES student Alexander Mitrushina also graduated this spring and is spending the summer in St. Petersburg, Russia.
The Russian Club at UCSD

This year, the Russian Club at UCSD became an official university student organization, increasing its resources for cultural activities including film screenings, cuisine nights, and Kapustnik, the quarterly student talent show. This spring, Russian language instructor Rebecca Wells lead screenings of Kukhnya, a popular Russian sitcom about a modern Moscow restaurant; second-year Russian students performed an episode of Kukhnya at the end of the quarter. Meanwhile, first-year Russian students read "Taman" from Mikhail Lermontov's famous novel, A Hero of Our Time.

Russian language TA Teresa Kuruc hosts a weekly conversation table, which offers Russophiles of all backgrounds Russian-language speaking practice in a casual and supportive environment. During finals week, the Russian Club hosted a celebration at the Price Center, featuring Russian music, games, and a potluck of Russian snacks prepared by language students. For more information, join the “UCSD Russian Party” on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/groups/ucsd russianparty/.

Putin the Vulnerable

In US media, Russian leader Vladimir Putin is widely depicted as an indestructible nemesis, as strong as he is evil. However, this infernal portrayal is far from reality. In the last several years, Putin’s formidable power has shrunk dramatically. From 2015 to 2017 ratings for Putin’s administration went from 59 to 43 percent. This statistic shows that more than half of Russians are unwilling to collaborate with Putin’s government, which makes bureaucratic functions and internal logistics increasingly difficult.

This recent decrease in approval stems mainly from increased poverty, which was caused by the EU’s and US’s sanctions following the annexation of Crimea, a reactionary import ban, as well as increased difficulty in obtaining secure debts. A growing reliance on the Internet, especially among younger people, which increased the availability of independent news resources, has also contributed to this change. These favorable changes were recognized and employed by opposition leaders, most prominently by Alexei Navalny, whose independent Anti-Corruption Foundation created a movie based on an investigation that concerned the corruption of former President and current Prime-Minister of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev. This film inspired a widespread peaceful protest all over the country and caused a 10 percent drop in Medvedev’s approval rating in one month. The US recognition of Putin’s vulnerability is now of primary importance. Instead of recreating the scenario of the Cold War, we should consider supporting the opposition and thus contributing to the overthrow of the present Russian government without terrible bloodshed. (Rebekka Gershovich is a first-year International Studies and Political Science major. A full version of this article was recently published in the UCSD Guardian.)

Summer Film Recommendation: Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors

Rooted in its simple narrative premise of following the life of Ivan, a farmer from a Hutsul village in the Carpathian mountains of Ukraine, Sergei Parajanov’s Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (1965) rests at the intersection of ethnography and poetic experimentation, a film so invested in exploring Hutsul customs that its divergence from contemporary cinematic conventions led to massive government disapproval and hardship for its director. A little over half a century from its initial release, the film remains incrutable, yet striking; Parajanov’s rejection of realism and de-privileging of narrative seems to make way for a deeper, more slippery subjectivity that directly taps into the viewer’s senses and emotions. A forgotten classic by one of the Soviet Union’s most acclaimed--and persecuted--film directors, Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors is necessary viewing for anyone interested in cinema that pushes the medium’s artistic limits and conventions. (Dan-tran Cong-huyen is a fourth-year Literature/Writing and Literatures of the World double major.)
The End of the End of History

On March 14, UCSD’s new Institute of Arts and Humanities sponsored a panel on “The End of the End of History”. The event featured renowned scholars of Eastern European History from across the country. Professors Timothy Snyder (Yale), Marci Shore (Yale), Steven Seegel (U. Northern CO), and Patrick Patterson (UCSD) each spoke about the lessons from Eastern Europe’s 20th Century for our current era, discussing historian Francis Fukuyama’s declaration that liberal democracy throughout the world may signal “The End of History” in the context of the recent rise in right-wing populism. Is liberal democracy itself coming to an end? Is the past repeating itself? Are terms like “fascism”, “autocracy”, and “totalitarianism” useful for our 21st Century context? Amelia Glaser chaired the panel. A full video is available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzkhlCy51ck&t=5157s.

UCSD Hosts Visiting Scholar from Lviv

Dr. Ihor Lylo, Assistant Professor of the Department of History of the Middle Ages and Byzantine History at Lviv National University of L. Franko in Ukraine, is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Hellenic Studies at UCSD. He holds a PhD from Lviv National University and is the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship, the Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellowship, and a fellowship from the Open Society in Budapest, among others. Dr. Lylo recently presented “At Home Among Strangers, A Stranger at Home,” a talk that addressed the many facets of the history of the Greek diaspora in Ukraine. Although the history of the Greek communities in Crimea, Mariupol, and even Kyiv and Odessa are well known, the history of the Greek community in Lviv remains obscure. Lviv has had an interesting Greek diaspora since the 14th century. Dr. Lylo discussed the history of Greeks in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, who were particularly active in Lviv in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Revolutions and Rebellions Working Group

The working group Revolutions and Rebellions hosts monthly meetings that feature works in progress by graduate students, faculty, and scholars both within and outside UCSD. The workshop convenes around important questions: How has the experience of political overturn affected the notions of freedom, transparency of government, history, and revolutionary ideologies including Marxism? The group focuses on revolutionary moments in history, like the 20th century revolutions in Russia, China, and Cuba, while also featuring cross-cultural and interdisciplinary presentations by scholars of area studies and political, literary, and cultural theory, such as: Emily Bovino’s (Visual Arts, UCSD) Plastic Activism: A Round About the Destruction of Bahrain’s Pearl Roundabout; famous scholar of Russian history and literature Vladimir Paperny’s Hot and Cold War Architecture; Professor Jesse Driscoll’s (School of Global Policy and Strategy, UCSD) “Ukraine’s Civil War”; Professor Patrick Patterson’s (History, UCSD) Risky Business: Selling Socialist Success in the Retail Stores in Eastern Europe; Professor Raul Coronado’s (UC Berkeley) ”A World Not to Come: A History of Latino Writing in Print Culture”; Professor Gary Fields’ (Communication, UCSD) Enclosures: Israeli Settlements as Obstacles to Middle East Peace; and Dr. Cassandra Hartlay’s (Communication, UCSD) “Always a Guinea Pig: the shifting milieu of disability services in Petrozavodsk, from Perestroika to Putin’s Reconsolidating”. For more information about upcoming meetings, join the “Revolutions and Rebellions” Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/groups/1822765841338038/.
Since 1998, the San Diego Russian School (http://www.sdrussianschool.com) has welcomed kids from all over San Diego County for Sunday classes. Thanks to continuing REEES support the school has been able to offer a variety of classes for children with different levels of fluency in Russian. We provide instruction in basic grammar and reading skills, comparative literature, Russian history, geography, and arts, as well as elective computer programming and math courses. This year, we started an "Insight into Professions" program in which professionals from the Russian-speaking community presented about their work. For example, Dr. Natalia Rudakova (Communication, UCSD) talked about journalism in Russia and in the US. Also, we were lucky to have an intern – Alexandra Sadovnikova – through UCSD’s Academic Internship Program. We are very happy about the growth of SDRS in the past year and look forward to another productive year.
Faculty Research and Publication Highlights

Professor Natalia Roudakova (Communication) is publishing Losing Pravda: Ethics and The Press in Post-Truth Russia (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in July of 2017). Professor Amelia Glaser (Literature) traveled to Kyiv during the summer of 2016 to take part in a symposium on the life and works of the Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem. She will be taking part in a colloquium in September of 2017 on Translational Russian Studies. In October of 2016, postdoctoral fellow Cassandra Hartblay (Communication) staged I Was Never Alone, an ethnographic play about living with mobility impairments in Russia, at the Shank Theater at UCSD (photo by Jim Carmody).

Hartblay, whose research focuses on Disability Studies, recently published an article, “Good Ramps, Bad Ramps: Centralized design standards and disability access in urban Russia,” in the journal American Ethnologist.

Professor Lera Boroditsky (Cognitive Science) will deliver a keynote address at the 10th annual Embodied and Situated Language Processing Conference in Moscow, Russia. Professor Boroditsky’s research focuses on the relationship between mind, world, and language.

Professor Deborah Hertz (History), who is currently writing about radical Jewish women in Eastern Europe and Palestine, took a trip to Odessa this past spring. You can read more about her impressions of Odessa in the upcoming Jewish Studies Program Fall Newsletter.

Jesse Driscoll’s (School of Global Policy and Strategy) book Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States was recognized with 2017 Edgar S. Furniss Book Award, awarded annually to an author whose first book makes an exceptional contribution to the study of national and international security.

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