

Letter from Chair Katarzyna Dziwirek



Dear Friends of the Slavic Department,

The passing year has brought some changes to the Slavic Department. We have lost our beloved Program Coordinator/Undergraduate Advisor, Megan Styles. Though saddened by Megan's departure, we are very proud to announce that she has accepted a tenure track position at University of Illinois, Springfield. Megan, a UW Ph.D. in Anthropology, will start teaching in January 2014. Congratulations, Professor Styles!

We are very pleased to welcome Teresa Ta, our new Program Coordinator/Undergraduate Advisor. Teresa is a recent UW BA in Anthropology with much advising and administrative experience. Please stop by the department office to say hello and introduce yourself.

Another new face which you might encounter on the M floor in Smith Hall is Dr. Angel Angelov from St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. Dr. Angelov is teaching Bulgarian language and culture classes. This is a rare chance to learn about Bulgarian arts, film, literature and history!

During the summer a team of talented programmers and designers from the College of Arts and Sciences completely redesigned our department's website. I would like to thank Heather Wozniak, Marissa Rowell and Morgen Nilsson for their wonderful work. Please visit us at: <http://slavic.washington.edu/>.

We have also launched a Facebook page, which has a lot of pictures of past and present students and faculty and a wealth of information about departmental and community events. Please visit us and like us at *University of Washington Slavic Languages & Literatures* (available by clicking on the Facebook link on our website).

Our fundraising efforts this year focus on graduate education. We are very pleased to announce the establishment of the Studebaker Fund. Mr. Andy Studebaker has donated money to help graduate students fund their conference travel. We would also

like to gratefully acknowledge the continued financial support of Mrs. Jane Micklesen, who faithfully helps sustain the Micklesen Graduate Support Fund.

In early December we sent out an appeal for donations towards a graduate recruitment fellowship. These fellowships support outstanding applicants to our graduate program. While we can support more advanced students with TAs, most first-year students must cover all their costs, often including

Contents:

1-2	Letter from the Chair
2	Faculty News
2-3	Student News
4-6	Bulgarian Fulbright Lecturer
6	Slovenska miza
7	Polish Studies
8-17	Bulgarian Cultural Preservation in Greater Seattle
18	Reflections
19-22	News from You
22	Conference on Music of the Russian Diaspora
23-24	Gifts

out-of-state tuition. Therefore, our top candidates frequently opt to go Harvard, Princeton, Brown or OSU, which offer incoming students five or six years of funding. If you can, please consider donating towards this goal.

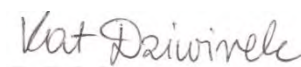
Speaking of graduate students, two excellent students defended their dissertations this year. Veronica (Nika) Egorova, who completed her PhD in summer 2013, studied verbal

and visual aspects of manipulation in Russian and American commercials. Elena (Lena) Doubivko, who entered the program with an MA in Germanics, recently defended her dissertation: *Reclaiming the Rusalka, Towards Multiplicities of Gender in Russian Literary and Visual Culture*, with distinction. Congratulations, Dr. Egorova and Dr. Doubivko!

I want to close by wishing you

all a very good New Year: much success in your professional endeavors and much happiness, joy and fulfillment in your private lives. I hope you will stay in touch with us in 2014.

All the best,



FACULTY NEWS

Gordana Crnković published four chapters: 1) "Ja sam ti, ti si ja: o oslobađajućem antinacionalizmu." In Maša Kolanović, ed., *Komparativni postsosijalizam: Slavenska iskustva*. Zagreb: Zagrebačka slavistička škola, 2013; 2) "Suvremena hrvatska književnost: pod zvijezdom Orwella." In Sabrina P. Ramet, Konrad Clewing, Reneo Lukić, eds. *Hrvatska nakon osamostaljenja: Rat, politika, društvo, vanjski odnosi*. Zagreb: Golden Marketing, Tehnička knjiga, 2013; 3) "Ne-nacionalistička kultura, ispod i iznad površine." In Sabrina P. Ramet, Konrad Clewing, Reneo Lukić, eds. *Hrvatska nakon osamostaljenja: Rat, politika, društvo, vanjski odnosi*. Zagreb: Golden Marketing, Tehnička knjiga, 2013; and 4) "Vibrant Commonalities and the Yugoslav Legacy: a Few Remarks." In Radmila Gorup, ed.: *After Yugoslavia: The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013, 123-134.

Galya Diment's "Невероятные похождения витебского художника Лейбы Шульмана" ("Leiba Shulman's Fantastic Adventures") came out in *Марк Шагал и Петербург* (Marc Chagall and St. Petersburg), ed. O. Leikind, D. Severiukhin, L. Khmel'nitskaia. St. Petersburg, Russia: Evropeiskii dom, 2013. In addition, she contributed to the published roundtable discussion on Nabokov's *The Original of Laura*, which appeared in *Shades of Laura, Vladimir Nabokov's Last Novel, The Original of Laura*, ed. Yuri Leving. Montreal: McGill UP, 2013; published an article in the *New York Magazine* (December 2, 2013) "A Tale of Two Lolitas: Mrs. Parker and The Butterfly Effect"; and an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* (December 20, 2013) "Four Christmas Parties: A Drawing by Beatrice Campbell." Finally, in October she gave the Annual Oulanoff Lecture at Ohio State University entitled "Masters and Servants: Upstairs and Downstairs in Vladimir Nabokov's Russian and English Writings," and a talk in November, "Embracing My Inner Shtetl," at the JewDub Talks Series sponsored by UW Stroum Center for Jewish Studies.

STUDENT NEWS

Congratulations to **Nicole Page**, who returned for a final quarter to complete her MA requirements, and who has already been out in the work world since January 2013. Congratulations to **Anatoliy Klots**, who also completed his MA in Autumn 2013 but who has opted to continue for a PhD in the department.

After spending the summer in Slovenia, studying the language and culture of the country and making contacts, graduate student **Veronica Muskheli** is continuing her study of Slovenian using an academic FLAS. In addition, she won the 2013 Rado L. Lenček Graduate Prize, awarded each year by the Society for Slovene Studies for the year's best research paper authored by a currently enrolled graduate student on a topic in Slovene studies. Veronica's winning paper is titled "The Alternation of Past and Present Tenses in Slovenian and Russian Wonder Tales and Its Structural Pattern-Forming Role in the Narrative." As part of the award, Veronica's paper will be published in 2014 in *Slovene Studies*, the society's journal.

MORE STUDENT NEWS

Here in the Slavic Department **Lena Doubivko** marked the occasion of Halloween with the successful defense of her dissertation, "Reclaiming the Rusalka: Towards Multiplicities of Gender in Russian Literary and Visual Culture." An abstract appears below:

Despite her kinship with European mermaids, the *rusalka* is unique to East Slavic folklore, where she appears (even more so than the powerful Baba Yaga) as its most ambivalent and multifaceted female figure. Long an object of fascination haunting the creative imagination of Russian writers, artists, composers and filmmakers, the *rusalka* is traditionally depicted as the soul or spirit of a beautiful maiden who died an untimely, unnatural death, has become an "unclean force" and poses a lethal supernatural threat – mostly to men. Traditionally imagined by male artists as a creature with enhanced feminine qualities – a beautiful (often nude) physique; long green or blond hair; and large breasts – the *rusalka* casts into relief the complex relationship between myth and gender in Russia, from ancient times to the present day. In male discourse, the *rusalka*'s demonic side typically preponderates; she is reduced to a vengeful magical creature, denied any potential for resistance and agency. But can we define the *rusalka*'s femininity differently?

My dissertation sets two central goals. First, I hope to recuperate a pluralism intrinsic to the ancient *rusalka* trope beyond the popular binary understanding of her ambivalent image. Second, I use the metaphors of the *rusalka* to locate creative and productive models of gender necessary to reconceptualize Woman within the context of phallogocentric Russian culture, and to unbind possibilities for thinking of gender as heterogeneous and polysemic. My project thus reflects the ongoing need for gender consciousness-raising in contemporary Russia, with a very particular (re)vision of the feminine. In the 20th- and 21st-century treatments of the *rusalka* which I examine, to what extent is the ancient trope tapped for subversive ends, to symbolically attack the dominant sex/gender order, so as to effect a radical transformation of feminine identity?

The dissertation does not aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the *rusalka* in literature, film and performing arts. It will rather focus on several revisionist depictions of the *rusalka* as an alternative, more productive vehicle for the representation of gender in Russian visual and literary culture. Key themes surfacing throughout the project form the basis of my alternative vision of Otherness: divinity, animism, gender, voice, and body. Selected "unorthodox" representations of the *rusalka* for this project come from the Modernist, the Soviet and the Post-Soviet periods. They have been creatively imagined by writers Zinaida Gippius, Anton Chekhov, Alexander Belyaev, and filmmaker Anna Melikyan. These diverse artists reclaim and redefine the *rusalka*, an age-old figure of Russian femininity long devalued and homogenized by a notoriously male-centered culture.



A Recent Conversation with Angel Angelov, Visiting Fulbright Lecturer – Megan Styles

For two quarters this academic year, the department is hosting Dr. Angel Angelov, a Fulbright scholar from Bulgaria. In Autumn 2013, Dr. Angelov is teaching introductory Bulgarian language and a course on Bulgarian folklore. In Winter 2014, he will also be teaching language and a special topics course on modern, postmodern, and popular culture in Bulgaria. Dr. Angelov was kind enough to sit down with Program Coordinator Megan Styles for a short interview to introduce him to our newsletter readers.

MS: Welcome to the University of Washington, Dr. Angelov! We're excited and grateful that you chose to join us here in Seattle as a Fulbright Lecturer. Why did you choose to come to the University of Washington this academic year?

AA: In Sofia, I have applied for Fulbright awards many times, but everything really depends on whether there are institutions in the United States that can host you and the contacts that you may have at these universities. Your contacts are stronger if they know you from conferences, and there are not many U.S. universities that have Slavic linguistics as a specialty. I have worked closely with the Fulbright office in Sofia for many years. I teach a summer Bulgarian language course for American Fulbright students when they come to Bulgaria. I waited for someone here in the U.S. to need my particular skills! In Seattle there is a strong Bulgarian community with an interest in both Bulgarian language and my research. The

Bulgarian Fulbright office received a letter requesting a language instructor at UW, and I applied. It was a competitive process, and I was very happy to be chosen.

MS: Is this your first time conducting research and teaching in the U.S.?

AA: I was a visiting scholar at UCLA seventeen years ago. This is my second Fulbright, which is very rare. At UCLA, I was also teaching language and researching. I have more teaching responsibilities here with both the language course, which meets every day, and the folklore course. Teaching here is really a pleasure for me, and I am very satisfied with it! I have more than twenty-five years of experience teaching Bulgarian language, and I also teach social linguistics courses at my home institution.

MS: How is teaching Bulgarian language here at UW different from teaching it in Bulgaria?

AA: I also teach mainly foreigners in Bulgaria, but many of my students are from the Balkans, especially Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. The Balkans are kind of one cultural unit. We say that we speak different languages, but we have the same mentality, the same reality. They know the history and the geography. We share the same peninsula, and it's easier to understand the habits, customs, and traditions behind the language. There are two theories about overlap between languages – contacts and typologies. In America



we have typological overlaps, but no direct contact. For example, we are all people. We kiss each other when we are in love. We cry when we are sad. This is a typological overlap. In the Balkans, we have direct contact with one another, and I can work with this overlap when I am teaching Bulgarian language.

Here at UW I draw on my experiences teaching American students and colleagues in Bulgaria. The students in my class all have different levels of background with the language and different motivations for studying Bulgarian. It's hard to put them all in the same box and use the same teaching methods. Some are innocent of any grammatical knowledge. They speak as they walk. They do it easily, without thinking about why they do it this way. You have to give them some meta-linguistic knowledge first. If they know another foreign language, they make analogies, and it's easier. I'm very traditional in my approach, because there is no way to avoid the grammar, which is not so pleasant. [laughs] Learning a language is like a sport. You need training and practice; practice to train your tongue and

your thinking to make the answers automatic. This is a difficult process, and adults need the grammar to learn this, not like children. But later, of course, we will watch Bulgarian movies. I'm also a musician, and I will teach them songs. This will be like dessert! Before this, we have to do the hard work.

MS: Will you also be working on a research project during your time here?

AA: Yes, I'm working on a project about globalization and the future of the Bulgarian language. What is the influence of English as a global language on the Balkan languages? What are Bulgarian attitudes about English and about their own linguistic competence? Linguistic competence is a concept from Chomsky. This is the entire system of linguistic knowledge that someone has in their native language(s) plus the knowledge of some universal linguistic rules. It's different from language performance. I'm interested in communicative competence (drawing on the work of Dell Hymes) in the Balkans, where people speak their native language(s), national language(s), language(s) from surrounding Balkan countries, and some other major European and global languages like English. My fieldwork will be conducted in Bulgaria, but I will be using the library here. The UW library system is well organized, access is free. I will be developing the theoretical and comparative context for my work. I need to know more about patterns of language and globalization in different countries. I want to see how my model fits other examples in a global context. Seattle is also a megalopolis with many cultural contacts and

multicultural situations, which are also multilingual situations. Seattle is similar to the Balkans in terms of all the many communities living together in a concentrated geographic area, but in Seattle there are no boundaries that separate the people. It's a good place to do this kind of research and thinking.

MS: What is your current academic position at home, and how is teaching in Bulgaria different from teaching here at UW?

AA: I am an Associate Professor at Sofia University Saint Kliment Ohridski. The universities in Bulgaria are organized differently than American universities. We have a "faculty," which is bigger than three of your departments, and then we have what we call "chairs," which are groups of twenty to thirty faculty members that work together like your department faculty. I am a professor in the Bulgarian Language Chair in the Faculty of Slavic Studies.

In Bulgaria we call the students colleagues, but the rules of academic life are really the same. Teachers, who are more experienced, provide the knowledge, methods, and skills to the students. Students are volunteers, but they want to be professionals in their discipline. This is a great step in their lives, and teachers have a moral responsibility for the spiritual development of the student. We are like fathers and mothers without being fathers and mothers. They are already mature and wise people, but they want to become knowledgeable in a field. The responsibility, feeling, morality, psychology, and spirit of teaching are the same in Sofia and in Seattle, but some of the academic traditions are not exactly the same.

An interesting difference between Sofia University and the University of Washington is that we have oral exams at the close of every quarter. This has been the same for one hundred years. Students are given a list of thirty to forty questions to prepare. When they come for the exam, they are presented with two questions from the list, and each student has to present the answers orally and defend them in a face-to-face discussion with the teacher.

MS: Are you planning to do any traveling while you're in the United States?

AA: Yes, I have a colleague at the University of Arizona, Tucson who has invited me to give a talk on eco-linguistics, one of my research areas. I am here with my family, so traveling may be a bit difficult. When I was at UCLA, I was alone, and I saw New York City, Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon, all of these places. [laughs] This time is different. My sister is coming to visit from Austria, and when she comes, we may do some traveling together.

MS: Is your family enjoying their time in Seattle?

Yes, yes. My oldest daughter remained in Sofia for her studies, but two of my children and my wife are here with me. My ten-year-old son is enrolled in school near the university. In Sofia, he has spent four years studying violin. This is a great experience for him. He'll learn English and see the American educational system. His school here is very good. He really feels free and accepted, and he is continuing with his violin studies. My daughter is only three years old,

and she is home with my wife, who is also a scholar of linguistics at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. We plan to enroll her in preschool. My wife is also excited to make connections in the community here.

MS: Many of our alumni and community members are interested in popular books, movies, and plays by Bulgarian artists, but it can be difficult to follow the latest developments from afar. Can you recommend any recent Bulgarian books, movies or plays that you found enjoyable?

AA: Bulgarian literature (poetry and prose) is in a crisis at the moment in my view. We're not a big market for books, and Bulgarian writers want to publish in a bigger market. Some of them may write in German, and some in English, for example, or they expect to be quickly translated. Two authors that are very popular are Alec Popov and Georgi Gospodinov. Their works are very popular. Two recent films that I recommend are *The World is Big and Salvation Lurks around the Corner* (2010) and *Tilt* (2011), which is about pinball. The legendary Bulgarian rock group *The Foundation* was also in Seattle recently. They played at the Bulgarian Cultural Heritage Center. They are like Lenny Kravitz in Bulgaria, and Bulgarians know all of their songs. Check them out on YouTube! The music is very nice.

SLOVENSKA MIZA

Slovenian society Slovenska miza has had a busy fall. In September we started off the academic year with a friendly picnic sponsored by Dr. Michael Biggins and his lovely wife, Miriam Zweizig, where we exchanged stories and photos from summer travels to Slovenia. We are pleased that Slovenian language is being taught at UW again this year, and to our delight students are also becoming involved with our Slovenian Society. There has been an influx of several young Slovenians to the Seattle area, and many are joining our group.

In October we hosted our annual cooking class – a well-attended event – emphasizing the Mediterranean region of Slovenia with exquisite recipes and a wonderful presentation about this corner of the country. Our annual St. Martin's Day Celebration – an event that brings together our entire community – was held on November 10, 2013 at our now traditional venue in Redmond. We are glad that more families with young children are attending. This year we have also partnered with a group in Slovenia to organize an exchange of Christmas tree ornaments. Slovenian children living all over the world have made paper ornaments and sent them to Slovenia where they will be hung on Christmas trees. In exchange we have received paper ornaments from Slovenia that will be adorning our tree displayed at Suzzallo-Allen Library.



UW POLISH STUDIES

Looking Back

On November 6, 2013, Ms. Nicole Piasecki, Vice President and General Manager of the Propulsion Systems Division of Boeing Commercial Airplanes (BCA), inaugurated the AY 2013/14 Distinguished Speakers Series. In her presentation entitled *Polish Heritage, Aviation Career: Building Blocks for Life*, Ms. Piasecki shared heartwarming memories of growing up with Polish traditions and of her education, work, and career in the aviation business.



Looking Forward

On February 27, 2014 at 7:00 pm at the School of Music's Brechemin Auditorium, we will be celebrating the Witold Lutosławski Centenary. The program will be dedicated to the life and music of the Polish composer Witold Lutosławski, a pre-eminent artist of the 20th century. The evening will include a documentary exploring the composer's life and a performance of two of his compositions. Ivona Kaminska-Bowlby and Christopher Bowlby will perform "Variations on a Theme by Paganini" for two pianos composed in 1941, and students from the School of Music will play his "Partita for Violin and Piano" (1984).



Save the Date

On May 1, 2014, we will be hosting Agnieszka Taborska, art historian, writer and lecturer from the Rhode Island School of Design. More information to come on the Slavic Department and UW PSEC websites.

Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku! Happy New Year!
from UW PSEC Members

Update from Adam Kożuchowski: For a couple of months after my return to Poland I was busy with translating my book into English - "The Afterlife of Austria-Hungary." Trust me, English is not as easy as Americans tend to believe, and this wouldn't have been possible for me without my stay in Seattle. It was published by Pittsburgh University Press last month! Yes, it is high time for the Slavic Department to start advertising it! (You can find some enthusiastic reviews on the PUP sites.) Besides that, I've spent some time in the lovely city of Marburg in Germany, working on my new project concerning the parallels between the German and Polish historiography of the nineteenth-century. Hopefully, this should result with another book in, say, another year and a half. Finally, I spent my 2012 fall vacation in France, and 2013 in Italy. Language was again a problem, but my French and Italian appeared good enough to order a lot of excellent food, which I consider essential in international relations. Just now I'm undergoing my regular November-December crisis, escalated by the fact that I'm quickly approaching my 35th birthday: the moment Dante considered the last one to start working on the masterpiece of one's life. I only have two months to think of mine.

Finally, I have to confess I often see Seattle when I close my eyes, and I occasionally feel the taste of the food I tried there (particularly accompanied by Marta Golubiec's anthem: the French cuisine is the most famous in the world. And it is based on three things: butter, butter, and butter!). Being home is much less spectacular...

Fitting in by Being Unique: Bulgarian Cultural Preservation Efforts in the Seattle Area – Skyler Hutchison (a paper written for Prof. Laada Bilaniuk's ANTH 499)

As the Seattle rain drizzled down onto the pulsating throngs of people gathered at Seattle Center beneath the Space Needle for the 42nd Annual Northwest Folklife Festival, my wife and I entered the Exhibition Hall (International Dance Stage) to observe a group called The Radost Folk Ensemble. I judged by the name *Radost*, which means “joy” in Bulgarian and all the Slavic languages, that it would hopefully have ties to Bulgarian folk dancing or singing. Upon finding seats among the nearly full audience, I began to hear snippets of Bulgarian conversations float through the air. My wife excitedly encouraged me to speak up and join in on a conversation happening behind us. Not being a Bulgarian myself, however, and only knowing the language from having lived in Bulgaria for a few years; I became timid. Finally, after the performance I gained the courage to speak Bulgarian and decided to inquire where we could find Bulgarian food in Seattle. Immediately, I found myself receiving email addresses, invitations to Facebook groups, and even a newsletter to read. Unexpectedly, I discovered quite a pronounced Bulgarian community in the greater Seattle area. I decided to investigate this phenomenon: how this community had come together, and how it functioned.

Having seen the performance at the Northwest Folklife Festival of The Radost Folk Ensemble, a group which “has presented on stage the dance, music and song of Eastern Europe throughout the Pacific Northwest since 1976 (Radost Folk Ensemble 2013),” I became intrigued with the notion of preserving culture, specifically the performance aspect of this preservation. This seems especially interesting in a place with such diversity as Seattle, where, according to the US Census, the total population in King County of the state of Washington, (which envelopes Seattle and the Greater Seattle area) was over 1.9 million as of 2011; 395,100 of which is foreign-born, and only 63% of the population identify themselves as white. The largest minority group classifies themselves as Asian, not Hispanic or Black as in other large cities around the U.S. (United States Census Bureau 2013).

When thinking of cultural preservation amidst this diversity, several questions came to mind, such as:

1. What does the process of assimilation for Bulgarians in Seattle to United States culture look like?
2. Are Bulgarian cultural preservation efforts being made in Seattle?
3. If so, what is the form of these efforts, and are they successful?
4. Is performance of tradition or culture an act of preservation?
5. How has the performance of tradition or culture affected the Bulgarian community in Seattle?
6. How does performance of one's traditions or culture relate to the commodification of such traditions or culture?
7. What value does performance of tradition or culture have, and to whom?

As I attended events, lectures, choir rehearsals, performances, and conducted a number of interviews, I began to investigate and understand some of the faces and functions of these preservation efforts.

To begin, we will examine a working definition for the terms “assimilation,” “cultural preservation,” and

“cultural commodification” for the purposes of continuity within this document. Thomas H. Eriksen defines assimilation as “gradually losing [one’s] markers of distinctiveness and merging into the majority population” (Eriksen 1994, 36). He then further explains “cultural preservation” as “today’s generation [doing] everything in its power to revive the customs and traditions that their grandparents followed without knowing it” (Eriksen 1994, 156). Thus we see that while many of the parents of “today’s generation” may have previously attempted to assimilate, or shed the cultural distinctiveness of their ancestry, their children may be seeking to reclaim it. Assimilation and cultural preservation are intrinsically connected within the framework of emigration.

“Cultural commodification” is somewhat more difficult to define concisely. To explain the notion of commodification of culture I will refer to Bruce Grant. In his book *In the Soviet House of Culture* (1995), speaking of the Nivkh people in Russia during the Soviet enculturation, Grant explains that after first being encouraged to develop their “backward” culture, and then being forced into “reformation” by the Soviet state with everything from literacy units to Culture Bases, the Nivkh people came to regard their culture as an object. “This came through often when Nivkhi talked of having ‘traded in’ their culture for a pan-Soviet one. Like an automobile, culture appeared as a thing that could be repaired, upgraded, and, if necessary, exchanged. The idea of culture as a thing, subject to willful transformation, reminds us of what anthropologists Virginia Dominguez and Richard Handler have both referred to as ‘cultural objectification’” (Grant 1995, 16). Once one’s culture is regarded as an object to be “repaired” and “upgraded,” then it becomes easier to commodify it as such. Regarding this idea of cultural objectification, one may conclude that if you do not have something which satisfactorily represents your culture in an object-like form, then you do not have culture at all. As one Tswana elder asks “if we have nothing of ourselves to sell, does it mean that we *have* no culture?” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 10) The elder follows up with the simple question of “[i]f this is so, then what are we?” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 10). In taking this concept and reversing it, the same principle may apply, “if we have something of ourselves to sell, does it mean this is our culture?” and “if this is so, then what are we?” Therefore ‘cultural commodification’ is defined as interpreting a culture through an object or presentation of the represented culture that can be sold, traded, or displayed.

Now that we have a common definition of the terminology, we can begin the exploration of the initial investigation of Bulgarian culture, and the possibility of preservation efforts being taken by members of the Bulgarian community in the Seattle region.

Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle

When asking the director of the Radost singers how to get into the ‘network’ of the Bulgarian community in Seattle, the first person that I was directed to was Mary Sherhart, not a Bulgarian herself, but current director of Bulgarian Voices Women’s Choir of Seattle, an all-women’s choir. Sherhart introduced me to the Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle (BCHCS), its website, Facebook page, and to Elka Rouskov, President of the Board of Directors of BCHCS for 2013. The BCHCS was recently founded in June of 2011, and though the idea of establishing a cultural organization representing Bulgarian culture in Seattle had been present for some years, the final step toward its formation was in the creation of the Bulgarian Cultural Focus at the 2011 Northwest Folklife Festival (The Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle 2013).

The motto of the Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center is clearly declared on the top banner of its website: “Supporting Bulgarian Culture in Seattle” (The Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle 2013). That ideal is further expounded upon in the BCHCS Mission Statement: “The mission of BCHCS is to establish, organize, support, and promote events related to traditional and contemporary Bulgarian culture, to preserve Bulgarian heritage in the greater Seattle area; to engage, educate and outreach to the Bulgarian and the Greater Seattle community; and collaborate with other organizations to promote Bulgarian culture and heritage” (The Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle 2013). The BCHCS establishes, organizes, supports, and

promotes events including concerts, lectures, film screenings, choir performances, rehearsals, and picnics among many other types of gatherings. The Northwest Folklife Festival held annually in Seattle Center is among the main events that the BCHCS prepares for, but other, smaller events are held frequently.

Shared Memory

One of these events was entitled “Bulgaria: Humanitarian Spirit of the Past and Future at the Renaissance Hotel in Seattle,” which featured the Consulate General of Bulgaria, Marin Dimitrov. This was a celebration of the 70th anniversary of when Bulgarians prevented 50,000 Jews from being deported to Nazi concentrations camps during World War II. Mr. Marin Dimitrov introduced the documentary film *Beyond Hitler’s Grasp* (Aviram 2000), which featured several interviews of Bulgarian Jews that were living in Bulgaria at the time of the Nazi expansion through Europe. The Bulgarian rescue of the Jews is an event that stands as a proud landmark in Bulgarian history, and according to Nadya (a pseudonym), a Bulgarian woman living in Seattle, it is “one of the things that I am really most proud of in my culture, that it’s very tolerant racially” (Nadya 2013). This moment in history when Bulgaria refused to send off the Jews is a shared memory in the minds and hearts of Bulgarians that acts as a unifying force in determining attitudes toward other races and peoples. Although this event happened seventy years ago, it is regarded as a contemporary position of diversity, and one that is remembered with pride within the Bulgarian community in Seattle.

This concept of uniting as a community with a shared memory while not in the homeland seems to be a way of deflecting assimilation to a foreign culture. “[C]ollective memories have always been recognized as a vital element in the construction of the nation and the self-understanding of its nationalism” (Smith 1996, 453). Shared memory is often not congruent with the history found in textbooks, but it serves as a commonality that can unite a specific ethnic group under one event or moment in time (Eriksen 1994, 21).

Allow me to use an analogy: imagine a group of Americans living abroad; they might feel a ‘brotherhood’ in celebrating the Fourth of July, or unite together in their attitude of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, or even discourse on the pride built from belonging to the “land of the free and the home of the brave.” No living American was part of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, has ever felt oppressed by the British Monarchy, and very few are still living that demonstrated in Washington with Martin Luther King, Jr. However, there is a present attitude of rebellion toward English customs, or a sense of progression from the shared memory of the civil rights movement.

History is not the only aspect of shared memory, but also political attitudes and ideals, such as racial tolerance, and national separation. To illustrate this point, I will glean from an American fiction author, John Steinbeck. In his novel *Travels with Charley*, an autobiographical account of his travels with his dog Charley to “discover America,” Steinbeck speaks to a man about the need for people to come together under one common idea. The man humorously talks about how people unite in blaming their problems on the World Series, President Roosevelt, and even the Russians. He says “[h]ardly a day goes by somebody doesn’t take a belt at the Russians.” The man continues “those Russian got quite a load to carry. Man has a fight with his wife, he belts the Russians.” Steinbeck, in reply, wittingly suggests “[m]aybe everybody needs Russians. I’ll bet even in Russia they need Russians. Maybe they call it Americans” (Steinbeck 1962, 143-144). The Bulgarians in Seattle seem to set themselves apart from other cultures by expressing pride in the shared memory of saving the Jews, and the potential social characteristics and qualities that may be presumed to lie therein.

Language

We cannot continue much further without addressing language as another unifying factor along with shared memory, which can simultaneously link and partition communities within a larger community, especially in such an internationally heterogeneous metropolis, such as Seattle. For example, when one goes to a community

event, there is no border around those who may be speaking Japanese, but there is a very real boundary for those who do not speak Japanese and are thus excluded from this particular community. In her book *Contested Tongues*, Laada Bilaniuk states that “[t]he division of language into labeled units appears to be even more deeply naturalized than the division of people into nations,” she adds further insight by pointing out that “[n]ations may be “imagined communities,” but few see languages as ‘imagined’ entities” (Bilaniuk 2005, 25). Speaking different languages within the same community may often be a source of tension and exclusion (Bilaniuk 2005, 69).

Returning to a description of the events coordinated by the BCHCS, language is a decisive factor in determining whether events that are meant to draw in others from outside the Bulgarian community perpetuate this division or not. At each event I personally attended, those who were presenting on stage spoke English to the audience. However, the dominant language heard during mingling was Bulgarian. Therefore, although these events may have been intended to share culture or inform others of culture, there was often an exclusionary atmosphere for those who did not speak Bulgarian. This practice of speaking Bulgarian, however, further unites the community and rebuffs what would otherwise be an easy way of assimilation.

Language and language ideology can serve as a platform both “for bonding and for becoming alienated in interpersonal relationships” (Bilaniuk 2005, 55). As we will see, those outside of the Bulgarian community cannot participate in activities requiring knowledge of the Bulgarian language, however, song and dance seem to be an exception and can be a method of inclusion.

Music and Dance

After the screening of *Beyond Hitler’s Grasp*, the Bulgarian Voices performed some *stary gradsky* (old urban) songs, which resulted in the choir and many members of the audience joining in a traditional Bulgarian dance, which consisted of at least forty people holding hands swaying and stepping around the perimeter of the hall, no language required. This all-women’s choir, directed by non-Bulgarian Mary Sherhart, grabbed my attention, and I was invited to join them at two of their rehearsals. Sherhart studied Bulgarian and Balkan folk music in Bulgaria with the professional folk choir Varna from 1983-84 and has been teaching and performing Bulgarian and Balkan folk songs ever since (Sherhart 2013).

In an interview with Sherhart, she explained that she was asked to sit on the Board of Directors for the Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle. After a year and a half on the Board, she “jumped off” to sit on what is called an advisory council, which is her position within the organization currently. When pondering ways to contribute to the Bulgarian community, she suggested that she start a choir as something to offer other than her non-profit expertise. Not met with particular enthusiasm, the “PR was sent out” that anyone could join this choir, and that all skill levels were welcome. During its first year the choir consisted of twenty members, and as of today, its third year in existence, it consists of thirty-three (Sherhart 2013).

The members of the choir are all women, and have all been born in Bulgaria. Sherhart clarified that the choir did not start with the intention of only Bulgarian born members, but upon formation of the choir and each year following she has asked the choir if they would like to include non-Bulgarians, and each year the choir has voted to keep the membership qualifications limited to only Bulgarians. When asked about these qualifications, Sherhart explained to me that in her opinion she initiated this when at the first rehearsal and the first rehearsal of each year since “I tell the choir that this is half about singing and getting better as a choir, and half about bonding and leaving your day-to-day troubles behind, just being together as women, being together as Bulgarians. You can speak Bulgarian, you don’t have your husbands, you don’t have your kids, you don’t have anything, you can just relax.” Unlike other choirs, Sherhart explained to me that the function or goal of this choir is not to become a “hot” choir, or necessarily to continually get “better” as a singing entity. Her goal with

this group is to “touch their souls, and to create meaningful experiences for them.” Sherhart, who directs the choir without compensation, attempts to achieve her goal for this choir by having regular weekly rehearsals, scheduled performances, and even later this year entering into the recording studio (Sherhart 2013).

Family Histories

Another way of reaching this goal to touch the souls of the members in the choir is through a project started by Sherhart called “Songs of Our Families,” which encourages each member of the choir to recall family songs and any memories connected to them. Each song will be taught to the choir, and then the songs of the members’ families will be performed in concert next year (The Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle 2013). Eriksen tells us that “history and social identity are constructed socially,” so as the members of the choir research their own family histories they are in a way constructing their own social identity in their new and current home, the United States (Eriksen 1994). Sherhart’s goal with this project is to “inspire interesting conversations in their families and . . . to get them reminiscing,” and create more meaningful moments by doing research in their own families (Sherhart 2013).

One of the main components of the Songs of Our Families project is for the members to compile a digital scrapbook, which is a place where they may add photos, stories, videos, audio recordings, and other mementos to share with the local community. Sincere consideration has been made for the future generations of Bulgarians living in the United States, and the BCHCS website points out that “these scrapbooks will not only be precious keepsakes for the families, but also provide inspiration and knowledge for children of Bulgarian families being raised in the West” (The Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle 2013).

The purpose of the choir and its projects are only part of the cultural preservation happening within the choir. The rehearsals and other performance preparations themselves are rich with preservation efforts in a variety of aspects.

Building Community and Networking

Bulgarian Voices meets nearly every Wednesday evening at a public mall in Bellevue, near Seattle, in a community room they rent by the hour for a minimal fee. At these rehearsals there is, of course, singing, but there are also intervals and breaks in which the women are given time to socialize with each other. Apart from rehearsing their numbers, the women also plan parties and discuss the nature of their performances. Krasimira (a pseudonym) informed me that once every so often, they will have what is called a “Culture Corner,” wherein one of the members of the choir will bring a story or piece of folklore to share with the group (Krasimira 2013). Taking from Joane Nagel’s shopping cart analogy, culture may be constructed as a shopping cart is filled at the grocery store. Where one may put in music, another may put in stories from folklore. After art, shared memories, customs, norms, folklore, myths, histories and other similar cultural significant ‘items’ are *selected* from the past and the present to be placed in the cart, a selective culture is constructed (Nagel 1994, 162).

Along with learning old folk songs and stories from folklore, the rehearsals also offer a place where a support network can develop. Ivana (a pseudonym) expressed that one of the other women in the group having expertise in the field of physical health, served as a consultant during her pregnancy and was in attendance at the birth of her child (Ivana 2013). Nadya shared that her son comes to rehearsals with her often and enjoys singing along and being cared for by over thirty women who all speak to him in Bulgarian. She commented that it is free child care, and she is delighted to be able to have a safe place to bring her child and not have to worry about him while she rehearses with the choir (Nadya 2013).

Not only do these rehearsals serve as a support network for these women, but they also become a place where community is built. The cultural preservation occurring is not simply a performance every so often in a manner

of showcasing, but is more so a group of Bulgarians gathering together weekly. Boundary maintenance of an ethnic group is one important criterion of identity construction. When members of a certain ethnic group interact with members of the same group there is a shared assumption that “the two are ‘playing the same game’, and this means that there is between them a potential for diversification and expansion of their social relationship” (Barth 1969, 10-19).

Reintegration of Lost Cultural Practices in Homes

Some of the preservation efforts originating from the choir permeate the homes of these women. Tihomira, her sister, and her mother know a number of old traditional Bulgarian songs as a result of their participation in this choir, and occasionally when having dinner together as a family they will all break out into song. “It’s wonderful to know the words, and my dad will shake his head and say ‘Ah, those songs!’ It’s just great to be able to do that now, to be able to have those songs” (Tihomira 2013). Ivana reflected that she catches herself turning off the radio and singing the songs she learned in rehearsal that week (Ivana 2013). Another young mother writes in a blog on the BCHCS website that sometimes at night she will sing parts of the songs she has learned to her son before he goes to sleep (The Bulgarian Cultural and Heritage Center of Seattle 2013). Keeping these traditions and songs “alive” is no longer a passive action that simply happens in daily life. As we live in what some consider ‘post-traditional societies’, in order for traditions to be kept from extinction one must include them proactively. Pressure to dismiss such traditions forces those who wish to keep them to defend them, requiring it to be a conscious choice to do so or not (Eriksen 1994, 184). These women did not incorporate these songs into their routine because the songs were a part of their Bulgarian identity, but because of their efforts to preserve and showcase that identity. They are reincorporating them into customary action intentionally.

Half of the women interviewed also explicitly stated that now they listen to traditional Bulgarian folk songs, whereas before joining the choir, they did not (Maria 2013)(Tihomira 2013)(Krasimira 2013). This “dual existence” of being a Bulgarian in America tends to “encourage a stricter practice of traditional ... culture in the US than would be normally practiced”(Kaya 2009). Maria (a pseudonym) articulated that before, when she lived in Bulgaria, she was fascinated by Western culture, and she wanted to listen to The Beatles and watch American movies as those things were considered to be the “forbidden fruit.” Now she listens to traditional songs partly because she misses her family and her roots, but also because she wants to find out more about her Bulgarian identity (Maria 2013). “[E]thnic survival seems to imply that in order to save ‘a culture’, one must first lose it!” (Eriksen 1994, 156)

Observance of Cultural Rituals

During my investigation into the Bulgarian community in Seattle, I was able to not only observe rehearsals of the Bulgarian Voices Women’s Choir, but I was also invited to join the *Koledari*, an all men’s choir that will perform *Koleda* (Christmas) songs at an annual Christmas concert. The differences between these two groups are vast and manifested themselves in a variety of ways.

The women’s choir functions as a place to share culture, build community, find support, learn traditional music, and reincorporate lost traditional practices. In contrast, the men’s group, *Koledari* are not as focused on community building or learning about the history and culture of the songs. The group -- consisting of anywhere between five and ten men which meet on Saturdays for about an hour and a half -- is mainly focused on preparing to perform a specific cultural ritual: singing for the Christmas concert. A notable difference between the two groups apart from being men’s and women’s choirs is that the *Koledari* group is not an ongoing affair. They started meeting in November in preparation for the Christmas concert, and once the concert concludes, they will likely not meet again until the following November.

Most of the time in the *Koledari* rehearsals is spent learning the songs and dance moves associated with the

performance. Not much history of the songs are given, more time is spent on how to pronounce the old style words and how to sing the melodies. Another difference is that there are two non-Bulgarians in the *Koledari* group, myself included. Although we do not feel as if we are excluded, there is definitely a boundary between those who are Bulgarians and those who are non-Bulgarians, even though we are all there participating in the same cultural tradition. “If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion” (Barth 1969, 10-19).

Although the focus is not that of community building and necessarily learning the background and history of the songs, it happens by default through the importance placed upon keeping the custom itself, which is to have a group of men (*koledari*) sing *koledari* songs at Christmas time. Some of the men bring their children and/or spouses who sit and observe quietly. Sometimes girlfriends are brought along and even other Bulgarian men who do not necessarily want to join the choir, but are interested in observing the rehearsals.

Cultural preservation is in opposition to assimilation, and so by performing these traditional songs and dances, and by putting culture and tradition on display we enter into an intriguing dynamic of culture sharing. What impact does the performance of culture have on the individuals performing it? Who are the target audience for such performances? Does showcasing or commodifying culture translate into cultural preservation?

Performance

In the early 1990s Dawid Kruiper, leader of the Khomani San (Bushmen), stated his opinion of performing his culture when he exclaimed, “I want the tourists to see me and to know who I am. The only way our tradition and way of life can survive is to live in the memory of the people who see us” (White 1995, 17). After the performances stop, however, the actors on the stage return to their normal way of life not necessarily wearing the clothes they did on stage, but regardless, were seen as a people with a distinct and a unique lifestyle, “and reciprocally were able to see themselves, as a named *people* with a ‘tradition and a way of life.’ In other words a culture” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 11).

In November 2013 the Bulgarian Voices Women’s Choir performed at the mall they rehearse in, on a public stage. The stage is set in the middle of the food court with a large open seating area. Before the choir performed there was a performance by a man who played the Native American flute and told stories, and following the choir there was a group who performed Croatian music. During the Bulgarian Voices’ performance, all the members of the choir were dressed in traditional Bulgarian dresses situated in a half circle around the microphones. Sometimes, an older woman would solo, but most often the group sang together. Preceding each number, one of the members of the choir, a different one each time, stood in front of the group and explain the next song that would be performed. She explained the song’s history, when it was written, which region it comes from within Bulgaria, and translate some of the words or the basic idea of the song’s narrative. It seemed that approximately half of the audience members were Bulgarians. During the last song of the performance the members of the choir exited the stage whilst singing, and started dancing a traditional Bulgarian dance called the *horo*, which consists of each person holding hands and doing a few simple steps back and forth slowly moving the line to the right. Several people from the audience joined in, some familiar with the dance, and others apparently less familiar, but seeking inclusion.

Commodification

Although this event in particular was free, there are some events that are not, or at least a suggested donation is requested. When attending “Bulgaria: Humanitarian Spirit of the Past and Future at the Renaissance Hotel in Seattle,” each person was greeted at the front doors of the lobby and asked to give a suggested donation. At the women’s choir performance at the mall, even though no admission fee was required, the businesses in the mall stood to benefit from potential customers being drawn to the performance, and thus drawn to their place of business. By commodifying and showcasing culture, someone always stands to reap the benefits whether or not

they are directly associated with the culture being showcased or commodified. A more extreme example of when one party has profited from the culture of another can be found in the controversy involving the San people of the Kalahari desert and their *Hoodia gordonii* cactus, which the San call *xhoba*. The *xhoba* plant of the San has been used throughout the ages to stave off hunger while tracking game across the desert. When pharmaceutical companies learned of this naturally occurring phenomenon, they rushed to patent the technology, sell it, and profit from a diet scheme involving the plant that contains the ability to suppress human hunger (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 86-88). Though this profiteering does result from the showcasing of culture, as demonstrated in this particular instance of singing at a mall, not everyone is consciously involved in this process. "Not everyone need 'join the club' or want to see 'the community [as] a company'" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 116). However, showcasing the culture despite the resultant commodification serves to promote cultural preservation efforts as we have discussed previously.

Dress

An important aspect of performing with Bulgarian Voices is the dress itself. All of them are different, but made in the same basic style with bright colors, and white sleeves. Two of the women I interviewed brought special attention to the dress and likened the acquisition of a dress of their own as being a rite of passage into realizing their Bulgarian identity. Eriksen comments on how the use of ethnic symbols such as traditional dress are used to "stimulate reflection on one's own cultural distinctiveness and thereby create a feeling of nationhood" (Eriksen 1994, 124). Krasimira told of when she was in high school in Seattle; once a year the school held a talent show, and at the beginning of each talent show they had a fashion show where those from immigrant families wore traditional clothes from their homelands. Krasimira always had to borrow a dress from one of the folk ensembles in the area. In relating how she felt after obtaining her own traditional dress, she said "being able to wear my own personal Bulgarian dress was special for me, specifically being able to share it with everybody else." She continued that when she goes to perform at the Northwest Folklife Festival or other venues, she intentionally does not bring with her a change of clothes, because she wants to be seen in her dress and wants people to ask her about it (Krasimira 2013). This desire to own a traditional dress manifested itself in two other individuals, one of whom ended up making her own (Maria 2013). Tihomira also considered the acquisition of a dress as a rite of passage, of realizing and expressing her Bulgarian cultural identity and being able to share her culture with those for whom she performs. She related, "I always kind of wanted one, but I guess people in Bulgaria don't really own those kinds of things either, the traditional *nosia* [dress]. For the choir I had to acquire one, and I was super excited, because a lot of my friends have their traditional Indian sari, or a Japanese kimono and there'd be an event or something and they'd have their traditional clothes. I wanted to do that too, to share my culture as well, or have people wonder and think 'I haven't seen this one before, what's this one? Tell me about it.' Which is usually the case, because people often don't know what or where Bulgaria is" (Tihomira 2013).

Personal Benefit

When asked about how *performing* cultural practices and traditional songs had impacted their lives, all of the women interviewed responded positively. They conclusively affirmed that performing enabled them to display their ethnic identity and assert their sense of belonging. This outward expression of 'having a culture' is vitally important to the individual as "it proves that one is faithful to one's ancestors and to the past" (Eriksen 1994, 81). Nadya said she enjoys performing, especially because of all the colors and patterns of the dresses. She feels like others find it educational and entertaining simultaneously. She also explained that it touches peoples' hearts, not like a Broadway play, which is simply entertainment, but that this is about culture. She related to me that it moves her when she sees people cry after a performance, especially when the older Bulgarians are touched by the feelings of nostalgia the performances bring. Overall, she said "the word I'm looking for is pride. It makes me feel very proud, and makes me feel like I belong" (Nadya 2013). When asked about performing, Ivana responded that she feels "immensely proud, and I am happy to do it and I do it with my

whole heart and even though I am not the best singer, when you do something with your heart, you do it well” (Ivana 2013). Krasimira expressed that “it makes me very proud to be able to demonstrate my culture. I think it’s pretty unique, and I think that most people don’t know about it, and so having the opportunity to present that has been enjoyable” (Krasimira 2013). Maria added, “It’s been personally enriching for me” (Maria 2013). These expressions of pride and personal enrichment are examples of the intrinsic benefits inherent in belonging to a community within an ethnic group, solidifying Eriksen’s statement that “ethnic identity offers a sense of continuity with the past and personal dignity” (Eriksen 1994, 39).

Cultural Preservation as Assimilation

Tied to the performance aspect, this idea of being able to ‘fit in’ within a community that is internationally diverse like Seattle by being different came as somewhat of a revelation to me. During the assimilation process, many immigrants are “considered outsiders by traits they cannot cast off” (Dicker 1994, 35). Oftentimes these “traits” or markers are accents, clothing, religious beliefs, or the perception of life in general; however, the attitude that seemed to trend throughout the women I interviewed was one of embracing these traits rather than allowing them to become a negative personal boundary. None of the women interviewed were able to give an example of a time they felt discriminated against during their years in the United States. “Overall, recent immigrants from Eastern Europe have integrated into the American middle class well, aided by their white skin, legal status, high levels of education, and occupational skills” (Nesteruk and Marks 2011).

Most of the Bulgarians that are visible within the community in the Seattle area are employed by large companies such as Amazon or Microsoft, and expressed that many of their colleagues and coworkers are from other countries as well (Tihomira 2013) (Krasimira 2013). Tihomira pointed out that on Bulgarian holidays she deliberately will wear white, green and red -- the colors of the Bulgarian national flag -- to work so that her coworkers know it is a Bulgarian holiday.

Identity Formation

By asserting their own uniqueness they simultaneously blend into or “fit in” to the diverse atmosphere that is present in the city of Seattle and their workplace (Tihomira 2013) (Krasimira 2013). This very reason circles back to why some of the women decided to join the choir in the first place, as expressed by Maria in saying “part of it is being away from your family and away from the culture. You start to miss it, but also part of it is trying to find your identity. That’s the thing about when people emigrate to the United States, even though it’s such a diverse culture you’re still trying to kind of fit in and blend in so you’re more accepted for many reasons; finding a job, finding friends. You know, reasons people try to get more integrated and more Americanized. But when you’ve been here for a while you start looking for your own identity that is not part of this new society, but what makes me unique.” Eriksen comments on this aspect of multiculturalism by stating, “[a] common criticism of multicultural ideology is that it virtually forces people to take on an ethnic identity” (Eriksen 1994, 77). Maria further elaborated that because of this phenomenon of being able to “fit in” to the diverse population of the Seattle area’s general make up by displaying your own uniqueness, the Bulgarian community “is starting to become more of a community” over the past couple years (Maria 2013).

Conclusion

The journey that began with a timid conversation to a few strangers has ended far from where I expected. I did not know if I would find cultural preservation within the Bulgarian community in Seattle, but I thought I might find a tight-knit community of Bulgarians interacting as friends and colleagues with shared values and histories would. I discovered a far richer connection than I anticipated, and began to understand that events that might be considered obvious cultural preservation, or the performances of cultural events such as the film and the choir concerts, are merely byproducts of the elements that constitute cultural preservation. This preservation is

happening in rehearsals, in committee meetings, and in the homes of those that participate in preparation for such events. I also discovered that the underlying motivation behind the participation in many of these activities is the desire to fit into a multicultural community. These individuals are assimilating to life in Seattle by way of cultural preservation; and conversely, by showcasing their culture for the purpose of assimilation, they are deepening their sense of cultural identity and belonging within their own ethnic community. Thus assimilation and cultural preservation exist in a symbiotic relationship within this tight-knit community of Bulgarians, within a greater community of Seattle, full of tight-knit international communities from all around the globe.

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REFLECTIONS

This report may seem a bit odd to some who read it, but then again, it may make some who do not end up with an academic career after their graduation from the UW in Slavic studies feel a bit easier about that. Just some reflections on this my 67th birthday:

When I grew up and left my parents' home in the heavily populated Detroit area, I had a strong sense of where and how I wished to live. Southern Michigan's economic prosperity during most of the 20th century allowed even blue collar young people like myself to get a good education, and I pursued that right through a Ph.D. in one of my fields of interest, Macedonian literature, at the UW. But, in order to live the life I wished to have there were going to be trade offs. I would have to accept that I could not have access to the wealth and status of city dwellers and still have daily access to the wild nature that so delights me. So I made my choice many years ago to be a modest country dweller, and I have never regretted it.

I have had the pleasure of many years of life with my dear wife here on this lovely green island, with the pleasures of community, yet dwelling in a somewhat secluded part of the great northern forest that covers much of the land here. Our home is a modest cabin accessible only by foot trail, the nearest road and neighbors are almost half a mile away. We are not surrounded by the usual power lines, artificial lights at night or traffic sounds. There is the presence of the moon and the stars at night, and the sounds of frogs, owls and the occasional call of the coyotes. In daytime we are engulfed in a sea of green, and serenaded by endless bird song and the rustling breeze in the treetops.

Each day I need to spend some time tending to the simple technologies that make our lives possible here, such as the solar array and battery bank that provide our modest electrical needs. I spend some time in the garden, tending much of the food that sustains us. This has also included the keeping of some livestock. We still keep chickens for eggs, but for many years we had a dairy goat and a donkey to carry loads for us. I also spend time preparing the wood supply that will keep us warm through the winter. A spring in a hillside on our property has supplied most of our water needs. None of our chores demands more than a few hours a day, including the hours when I use my education and my laptop computer to earn money.

"Live simply so that others may simply live." And I include all of the plant and animal world in that category of others. To live mindfully by that maxim has always struck me as a worthy goal. And a corollary truth that "there is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed." I eventually found my philosophical home in some version of the eccentric life of such philosophers as Henry David Thoreau and Leo Tolstoy, in voluntary simplicity, and in close communion with the natural world, and in community here on Whidbey Island. We may live nearly a half mile from the nearest neighbor, but we have never divorced ourselves from the human community around us. We have had our lives enriched by participation in such varied groups as an organic farming and gardening organization, environmental groups, and a Friend's Meeting (Quakers). I am also pleased to have found a modest part-time niche in the academic work world as the Examiner Responsible for Macedonian Literature for the International Baccalaureate Organization. I have tried to be guided in my choices by love, above all else, with a firm commitment to peace and justice. No matter how odd or eccentric I might appear to the outside world, this is the path in life that suits me perfectly well.

Michael Seraphinoff, Ph.D. 1993

NEWS FROM YOU

"I am partially retired as an attorney, working as a Public Defender for Battle Ground Municipal Court and occasionally taking a case at Long Beach Municipal Court," writes **Janet Anderson** (BA 1969). "My oldest granddaughter, Courtney Seto, is a freshman at UW, majoring in Engineering. She speaks some Cantonese, from growing up with it, and unfortunately has no desire to learn Russian. I have three other grandchildren and hope that one of them will become interested in learning Russian or Czech."

Nina Boe (BA 2010) has been in Brazil for 10 months now, "living and working in the city of Sao Paulo (some 20 million people). I've had the opportunity to travel to various parts of the country (Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasilia) -- and learn Portuguese. Though it's a far cry from my days of anything Slavic, after a few months off and on of working on Portuguese before I arrived, and ten months-plus straight of using it every day, my Portuguese is likely to the same level that my BCS was after a few years at UW -- crazy to think about how much of an impact immersion can have!

"Despite thinking I would likely do just one year in Brazil, then move on to other things, it's appearing like I will come back to the Seattle area for a couple of months in January, then head back to Brazil for a second year -- split between the city of Rio de Janeiro, and a few sites in the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul. I don't mind office work, but I am much more excited about getting out of a building more and working with people in the community, and it appears that this is possible for my second year. I hadn't expected Latin America to crop up on my radar at all, really, and yet the more I stay in Brazil, the more drawn I am to it. I've been accepted to New York University for a master's program in Global Affairs, but I have already deferred for a year, for 2015. I'm not sure if my plans will change and I'll hold off further on graduate school for now --

we'll see where this next adventure takes me! I'm still very interested in India & Pakistan issues, especially looking at areas of conflict, refugees & displaced communities, and conflict reconciliation. Then again, as I learned in May after a side trip to Colombia, there are plenty of areas in Latin America that have gone through and are going through similar situations...so we'll see what happens next!"

"Since climbing Kilimanjaro is always used as an example of what is new, I (**Robert Box**, BA REECAS 1996) can finally answer, yes! This year I successfully climbed Kilimanjaro (Lemosho Route). Otherwise, I have been living in the Czech Republic for close to 18 years, near Prague with my wife, 4 children and 5 cats. I am still a Partner in a Swedish consulting company and traveling around the world."

From **Marina (Mikhailchenko) Dunaravich** (BA 2009): "Až and I are preparing to welcome our first child into this world late February. Her name will be Ieva (that's a upper case "i", not "L")."

"I'm continuing to work at Amazon as a marketing manager and Až as a Software Developer at a local Seattle firm."

Robert Ewen (PhD 1979) describes his life and times thus: "In May 2013 I retired from my career in IT Project Management. What did that have to do with Slavic Linguistics, you may ask? In truth, not much. Although over the years I did have the odd Russian or Bulgarian working for me. In those cases I am sure our business relationships were improved by my being able to speak their language."

"Since retirement, I have been searching for the "next act," somewhat sporadically. Things keep getting in the way; first the garden, and now a two month stay in SE Asia. Lily, my wife, has a large family in Malaysia. It requires quite some time to visit

them all. Based in Kuala Lumpur, we are perfectly situated to jump to numerous other SE Asian countries. As our friends, Mary Callahan (Jackson School, Burmese Studies) and Jim Powers, are living for a in Yangon, Myanmar, we visited and travelled with them for 10 days. Myanmar at the cusp. Oh yes, I ran into a Bulgarian lady while floating down the Irrawaddy from Mandalay.

"Heading home to Seattle soon to spend the holidays with family there, particularly our two grandchildren, Amanda and Sam. Perhaps be the following edition I will be able to report on what that "next act" turns out to be; that is if life does not get in the way."

Serge Gregory (PhD 1977) spent five weeks in Moscow in June and July conducting research in three archives for "Antosha and Levitasha," his book on the friendship between Anton Chekhov and Isaac Levitan. His blog can be found at <http://chekhov-levitan.com>.

Smilja Janković (MA 2006) describes her life as "crazy lately!!! I'm doing OK - currently in Turkey, and in the process of finding a PhD program - I'm going into Peace&Conflict work in the end. I got into a great institute in New Zealand, but I didn't get a scholarship, so I'm now trying to figure out where to find some money. Money, money...other than that, I'm teaching lovely high school girls and loving it. Teaching has always been my favorite thing. Istanbul is an amazing city and I'm doing some fun writing as well. An article of mine got published on a local expat website. Anyways, just this and that in life."

After spending 20 years practicing law in Stevenson, Washington, **Jan Kielpinski** (BA 1965) finally had the opportunity to go to the Republic of Georgia and use his Russian language skills. "I was there for six years, then went to Iraq for three and a half years, then to Afghanistan for a year and a half. My wife and I are now living in

Stevenson and Portland, Oregon. In Stevenson I am fulfilling my long-time dream of working as a forester on our tree farm.

“I have fond memories of the Russian House and the Slavic and Far Eastern Department.”

Mary Kruger (BA 1970) traveled to Tajikistan as an OSCE international election observer in November. “The mission took me way off the beaten path, to remote villages in the southern part of the country, and informed me about life in a part of the world I never expected to visit. Russian was useful in talking with older people on the street, but the younger generation uses it less. Official communications were, of course, in Tajik with translation. All in all, it was an eye-opening trip.”

Don Livingston (PhD 1998) continues to coordinate first- and second-year Russian at Arizona State University in Tempe, AZ. Over summer 2013 he was resident director of the ASU Melikian Center's Critical Language Institute Russian-language program in Kazan, Russia. On the way there Don enjoyed a three-day stay in Edinburgh, where he gorged himself on haggis, black pudding, white pudding, herring and ostrich. On Thanksgiving Day he received an unexpectedly lovely pair of holiday socks from the good people of St. Luke's Hospital in exchange for his appendix...

Stephen Lupinski spent the summer of 1974 on the CIEE program in Leningrad, graduated with a BA from the department in May of 1975, and spent the summer of 1977, “during a period of semi-serious graduate study,” in Krakow on a program organized by the Kosciuszko Foundation.

“When I finally left the academic environment I knocked around for a few years until I settled with my future wife in San Antonio, Texas. After holding a number of varied and sometimes interesting jobs (junior editor of a mechanical engineering journal and bookmobile driver for the San Antonio Public Library among them) I took a job as a technical writer for a computer

company in 1982. Interestingly, the guy who hired me did so on the basis of my knowledge of foreign languages. His rationale was that to learn another language you had to have a good knowledge of your native language, and he considered it easier to teach technology to someone who knew how to write than to teach proper English to an engineer.

“Since then I've worked for a number of companies in the computer industry as a technical writer. Presently I work for a British company that designs processors. I am in charge of a group within the department and have writers in California and India who report to me.

“Over the years I've retained an interest in Slavic languages and am a member of the Austin Area Translators and Interpreters Association. I have never pursued a career as a translator, but I still take an occasional job as a way to maintain some fluency with Polish or Russian. Presently I'm taking an evening course in Austin to improve my Polish.”

“Not much new happening now down here in Quito, Ecuador,” writes **Neil Makin** (MA 1972). “In 4 days I will have been here 7 years - how time flies. Still teaching English at the Fulbright Commission, the only one that teaches the language in the world - we also have a scholarship section of course. Other than that, not much news. Enjoying the different culture and still fighting with the language at times!”

“I don't have much to report this time, writes **Devin (Connolly) Mitchell** (BA 2006). I just finished my first semester of my masters program at the University of Stirling and I haven't fully recovered my energy. Most of the masters programs here in the UK are only one year long, but it feels like three years of work compressed into one! I'm sorry I haven't sent you any stories. MIR is launching a new blog soon and I am a

big contributor, so they own all of my best stories at the moment. I did recently share my recollections of the endangered 'platzkart' class of Russian train travel on Russia Beyond the Headlines:

http://rbth.co.uk/society/2013/12/09/platzkart_stories_32439.html.

“I (**David Miles**, BA 1974) continue to work at the UW and enjoy it, now in Spanish and Portuguese Studies and French and Italian Studies, to which I moved from the Slavic Department in 2001. In November I was captain of the "Padelford Pedalers" team in the UW's "Ride in the Rain." I've been riding in this month-long event to encourage bicycling to campus since I helped organize the first one in 2004. This year really paid off. At the luncheon celebrating riders who had done more than 20 trips, I won the grand prize drawing for a new and nice bicycle. It's being fitted to my wife, Hope, who hasn't had a new bike in decades, while I just had mine redone with new wheels and new hub generator lights. In the Slavic area, in October I attended a Ukrainian folk-singing workshop by Nadia Tarnawsky that was announced on the Slavic-alums email. It was fun and helpful musically. I continue to enjoy doing dishes while listening to "Ещё не вечер" on Alternative Talk 1150 KKNW. (Their schedule calls the program "It's Not An Evening Yet.") And on the fringes of the Slavic area, I've been playing accordion with the UW Klezmer Band.”

David Nemerever (BA 1976) reports, “I translated a diary kept during the Leningrad siege into English in preparation for a hoped-for career as a Russian-to-English translator. The family that owns the diary may decide to try to publish the translation someday.”

Monica Nunan self-deprecatingly writes, “I recently changed jobs and now I work for Skype as Executive Assistant to the Corporate Vice President. In the search for captivating news to report, that's probably right up there with walking my dog, but in case

you need SOMETHING, that's what I've got.

Teyloure Ring (BA 2013) started graduate school at the University of Washington a week after completing her undergraduate degree and is a first-year MA student in the REECAS program. "This summer I completed intensive elementary Turkish and began working for the Ellison Center for Russian, East Europe and Central Asian Studies and as a Husky Host for the Tye Club, the primary fundraising arm of Husky Athletics. This fall I became an officer in the UW chapter of the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management. I am currently applying to the Master of Science in Information Management program here at the UW as well. I am interested in cybersecurity in the REECA region. I will keep you posted on my progress!"

Anthony Schlumpf (BA 2011) reporting from Moscow. I'm still teaching English, but now all my clients are individuals at corporations. It's been great being able to teach these individuals for the past 18 months and develop personal friendships with them as well. Besides that, I'm coaching baseball for the same team as last year, which won the 2012 national championship for Russia. That's been quite an exciting ride; it was my dream to coach here and help the baseball community develop further. I've even got a beautiful blue-eyed, blond-haired Russian girlfriend who plays on the Russian softball team. I never thought such a girl would exist in this world, so we'll see how that ends up working out. However, it's not all peaches and cream here. The cold winters are starting to really get to me. I've spent nearly three full years in Moscow and am feeling like I want to move back home soon. It's just such a different culture, and I miss America...though I really love my job, and my friends have been wonderful. It's almost like having the life of a minor famous person here as everyone wants to befriend you just because you're an American who speaks decent Russian and can communicate on any topic. This all took time to acquire though; the fulfillment of many pleasant things in the Moscow lifestyle doesn't come easily or

overnight. Recently, I was on national television for a program called "Good Morning" (Доброе Утро) on the First channel (Первый канал). The theme of the show was called "Foreigners searching for a wife." It was quite entertaining and amusing at the same time.

Earlier this month I was flown to Sochi to participate in preparing pharmacists get accustomed to treating non-Russian speaking foreigners from all over the world. I'd have to say that I've been pretty lucky to acquire some pretty amazing connections in the media here, which I'm very grateful for!

I hope to attend a Russian Table just after the New Year to tell more about the Moscow job circuit and lifestyle. See you all soon!

Cheryl Spasojević (BA 1967) writes, "I've been sticking pretty close to home these past months, as my almost 94 year old mother who lives with me has not been up to getting around very much. I do still go in to work at the Fremont PCC from time to time.

"I am the financial secretary at St. Sava Serbian Church, and I sing with the church choir, so I am out there almost every Sunday. I am also singing with a small group of Balkan music enthusiasts once a week. I still work with the Center for Social Work in Kragujevac, Serbia as liason and translator for projects there thru the WorldWideOrphans foundation, something I have been doing for the past 10 years. And I have also done a bit of other translating. Because I spent 5-7 months every summer in Serbia for 10 years, the yard at my house here in Edmonds ran wild, so I spent a LOT of time this summer trying to get it back in to shape - a chore that is still in progress. My orchard was very productive this summer so I made lots of jams and jellies and canned fruit. The most exciting thing coming up is that my younger son, Marko, will be getting married this coming spring to his long-time girlfriend. At this stage they

have a bit of a long- distance relationship as he is doing a post-doc at Washington University in St. Louis and she is doing one at the university in Missoula. But love conquers all! My older son, Rade (who lives next door with his family) is working very hard to only speak Serbian to his sons, little Mirko and Aleksandar. Keeping the tradition going."

Bill Strange (BA 1980) lives in Yakima where he has worked as a judge for the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals for the last 22 years. "I am married to Kelley (UW 1980), who is a speech therapist in the public schools. My older son (UW 2009) lives in Guadalajara MX, where he works in marketing and DJs in electronica clubs (check out Kinexus on Soundcloud); my younger son is a firefighter/EMT in Yakima. I continue to maintain my knowledge of Russian primarily through reading and listening to podcasts. Recent books include Krasnoe Koleso and anything by Akunin. I don't have occasion to speak Russian very often, so my active vocabulary has shrunk considerably. I speak Spanish on a nearly daily basis. I taught myself Portuguese and had the good fortune this last year to get regular conversation practice with some Brazilians who were helping out at the jiu-jitsu school I attend. My wife and I hike, bike, ski, practice yoga, and have taken up salsa dancing."

In November of 2013 **Cody Swartz** (BA 2010) left a career in the medical field to pursue his dream of creating a real estate business. "Many of my friends are confused when they find out that I studied foreign languages at the University of Washington, worked in the medical field after graduating, and then pursued a career in real estate. However, studying foreign languages taught me an invaluable skill that I utilize daily: listening.

"Learning a new language meant I had to focus on what people were

saying and then decipher the meaning. In the medical field, I used that skill to access patients' needs, and in real estate, I use it to find the right house that satisfies my clients. As a result, I'm rewarded daily with happiness from those I work with. In addition, knowledge of foreign languages and world history has earned me respect from people of many cultures, including a special woman originally from Vietnam.

"Foreign languages enrich our lives, and I was lucky to have studied in the Slavic Department at UW."

"Although I (**Jared West**, MA 2003) haven't fallen in love with Korean dramas, I have been very occupied with drama. I've been doing a ton of theatre lately. I just closed the show Ragtime (played Younger Brother) and am currently in rehearsals for the Nutcracker (my first ballet) and Fiddler on the Roof (go Russian Jews!) playing Perchik. It's

been a big time commitment along with my full-time job and planning for my June 2014 wedding, but it's been a lot of fun!"



Toby (CURD) Wolf here – BA '64.

Whether or not there were years since that had such energy as ours, I have no idea....but I loved my time in the old FAR EASTERN and SLAVIC LANGUAGES DEPT. and all the time spent in THOMSON.

Those were the days of Ivar Spector, George Taylor, Frank Williston, Willis Konick – who shaped my life forever – Donald Treadgold, Dr.

Jackson (Soviet Economic Geography - a stunning class) and many more riveting professors whose views of the world, in so many ways, were spot on and often courageously contrarian.

Although I bypassed the CIA - I met a man in Istanbul from Portland, OR and married instead - I have used so much of what was on offer at that time to shape my ongoing world view - not far off the reality mark. (I would have been a great analyst.)

I have traveled much of the world, lived abroad, owned international businesses - the most chaotic and economically painful in the former Yugoslavia.

I am slammed right now wishing my wonderful customers a HAPPY HOLIDAY.

CREATIVE DIASPORA: ÉMIGRÉ COMPOSERS FROM THE FORMER USSR

Soundbridge Seattle Symphony Music Discovery Center at Benaroya Hall

March 22-23, 2014

To complement the U.S. premiere performances of Alexander Raskatov's *Night Butterflies* piano concerto, the Seattle Symphony (the co-commissioner of the piece) will hold a conference on music of the Russian diaspora, co-hosted by the University of Washington's School of Music and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

A "Russian invasion" has left palpable traces in the world musical landscape throughout the XXth century. The latest wave of music emigration from the former USSR is comparable in numbers to the early 20th-century's wave and includes such important names as Alfred Schnittke and Sofia Gubaidulina. The conference, "Creative Diaspora: Émigré Composers from the Former USSR," aims to further the discussion of the music created within the diaspora, by promoting music by important but unfairly forgotten or not yet well-established Russian émigré composers and advocating for the inclusion of issues related to Russian émigré music into the general studies of border crossing, emigration and diaspora.

Featured speakers include musicologists Richard Taruskin, Laurel Fay, Claudia R. Jensen, Peter Schmelz, Marina Ritzarev, Natalie Zelensky and Elena Dubinets.

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