News from Uppsala

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Visiting Professor at Faculty of Languages 2018-2020

Vladimir Plungian has been appointed Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Languages for the period of 2018–2020 by the Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University. He is professor in linguistics at Moscow State University and full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Professor Plungian is an international authority within several areas of linguistics. His wide range of professional interests and scholarly achievements, testified to by a large number of publications and citation rates, makes it hard to sum up his research in brief. Two main tracks of his research can be distinguished, however: first, the typology of grammatical categories of language and second, the documentation of minor and endangered languages. These two fields of interest have taken him on linguistic expeditions to remote villages in Mali, Dagestan, Ural and Pamir. He is the author of several books and a large number of articles on various languages, such as the African language Dogon and Shughni language.

Another important field of Professor Plungian’s scholarship is corpus linguistics. He is involved in the development of the Russian National Corpus, one of the most complete, versatile and user-friendly corpora. Besides the Russian National Corpus, Professor Plungian is one of the main scholars working on the development of other national corpora, such as the East Armenian Corpus and of some endangered languages.
In the Spring Term 2018, Professor Plungian’s appointment was celebrated at his lecture “Perfect Cross-linguistically”, which was well-attended by faculty members, students, and prominent typology linguists. The event concluded with a social gathering at the Department of Modern Languages.

Professor Plungian and his wife, Professor Ekaterina Rakhilina, a distinguished linguist at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, form a powerful and prolific research team in semantic and lexical typology.

Two seminars at Uppsala University have thus far been dedicated to corpus linguistics: at the first one, Ekaterina Rakhilina presented The Gesture Corpus, which is part of the expanding Russian National Corpus – a unique corpus of gestures and their meaning. The second one was a master class entitled “The Russian National Corpus for Professional Use” and given by Professor Plungian. A concrete outcome is the internship of two undergraduate students, who during the Autumn Term 2018 are working on the development of the Swedish-Russian parallel corpus. Since one-to-one correspondence between all sentences in two parallel texts is not a given, sentence-alignment of automatically annotated texts is crucial. Our student interns are checking the machine-processed texts for accuracy in linking the sentence of the source text with the corresponding one of its translation in the target text.

Professor Plungian’s October 2018 sojourn in Uppsala was a highly intensive period filled by several seminars at various departments and universities. He was invited to Uppsala University’s Department of Linguistics and Philology, where he held two seminars at the section for Iranian languages; at one he served as a discussant on a theoretical chapter of a doctoral dissertation dealing with evidentiality, while another was on Shugnhi language spoken in the Badakhshan district – the area of V. Plungian’s linguistic expedition in Summer 2018. He also presented a study on evolution of “Biaspectual Verbs in Russian”. Professor Plungian held a talk at the Romance languages section at Stockholm University and a seminar on acquisitive modality at the English section at Lund University. New collaborations have been established among the faculty as well as with other Swedish universities within diverse research areas such as general linguistics, corpus linguistics, language documentation, Romance languages, Iranian and Uralic languages.

Professor Rakhilina gave a seminar on nineteenth-century Russian and also held talks at Stockholm University.

The Slavists at the Department of Modern Languages at Uppsala University feel honoured to have both Professor Vladimir Plungian and Professor Ekaterina Rakhilina as our colleagues for these three years. Their work has already made a strong contribution to the research environment at the Faculty of Languages.

*Karine Åkerman Sarkisian*
Transplanting Pushkin: A Symposium on Reading, Translating and Adapting Eugene Onegin

This symposium brought together literary scholars, translation studies specialists, translators, literary critics and readers to examine the reception and significance of translations and adaptations of Alexander Pushkin’s work. It was organized by Julie Hansen, Associate Professor of Slavic Languages at the Department of Modern Languages and took place at the Humanities Theatre, Uppsala University on 16 February 2018.

The keynote lecture, entitled “The Very Heart and Soul of Russian Literature: Pushkin’s Novel-in-Verse Eugene Onegin” was delivered by Douglas Hofstadter, College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Cognitive Science and Comparative Literature at Indiana University. Hofstadter spoke about how he first discovered Evgenij Onegin through the author Vikram Seth’s The Golden Gate (1986), a novel in Onegin stanzas, and later learned Russian in order to read Onegin in the original. Hofstadter’s English translation of it was published in 1999.

Other presentations were given by the translator and literary critic Lars Erik Blomqvist; Sibelan Forrester, who is Susan W. Lippincott Professor of Modern and Classical Language and Russian at Swarthmore College, USA; translator Ulrik Francke from the Swedish Institute of Computer Science; Eva-Britta Ståhl, Professor of Literature at Mid Sweden University; Yulia Tikhomirova, Associate Professor at the Department of Romance and Germanic Philology at Tomsk State University, Russia; Susanna Witt, Associate Professor of Slavic Literatures at Stockholm University; and the author Konstantin Zarubin. The symposium concluded with an evening of literary readings. This symposium was made possible by a grant from the Uppsala Forum on Democracy, Peace and Justice as well as support from the Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies.

Julie Hansen
Olena Jansson

**Historical Narrative in East Slavic Writing**

The aim of this workshop, held in Uppsala on 12–15 November 2018, was to bring together scholars from Sweden, Russia and Ukraine who are conducting research on East Slavic historical writing. The meeting was hosted by Uppsala University and organized by Ingrid Maier, Professor Emerita of Russian at the Department of Modern Languages, together with Dmitrij Bulanin, principal researcher at the Institute of Russian Literature (“Puškinskij Dom”) in St. Petersburg. It was made possible by a grant from the Royal Society of the Humanities (Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskaps-Samfundet i Uppsala). The premises were the Uppsala University Library (Carolina Rediviva) and the Department of Modern Languages. The opening session was held in the Book Hall of Carolina Rediviva, where Prof. Lars Burman, Director of Uppsala University Library, welcomed the participants.

About half of the participants were Swedish scholars: from Uppsala (Ulla Birgegård, Olena Jansson, Ingrid Maier and Karine Åkerman Sarkisian), Stockholm (Elisabeth Löfstrand), and Gothenburg (Antoaneta Granberg); the other half were Russian and Ukrainian scholars from St. Petersburg (Tat'jana Afanas'eva, Aleksandr Bobrov, Dmitrij Bulanin, Ol'ga Novikova, Fedor Veselov, Anton Vvedenskij) and Kiev (Tat'jana Vilkul).

The contributions were dedicated to both translations and original Russian texts, ranging from early writings, such as the Slavonic translations of Apophthegmata Patrum (“Sayings of the Fathers”) via the Alexander Romance and sixteenth-century texts, such as Ivan the Terrible’s First Letter to Andrej Kurbskij, to more recent historical writing “made in Sweden”, such as Kotošichin’s book *O Rossii v carstvovanie Alekseja Michajlovča* and its early translation from Russian into Swedish, the Uppsala Genealogical Tree and *Jadro Rossijskoj istorii* (“Kernel of Russian history”). The main focus was on chronicles and their Russian translations: the Chronicle of George Hamartolos and the Chronicle of George Syncellus (11th–12th century), as well as chronicle writing in Novgorod and Pskov (15th century). Apart from the scholarly program, the participants of the workshop visited Museum Gustavianum (Uppsala University’s museum) and Uppsala Cathedral.

*Olena Jansson, Ingrid Maier*