

Festschrift

To Andrei Rogatchevski

Introduction

**“Talent is always conscious of its own abundance,
and does not object to sharing.”**

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn (1973). “The First Circle”

The present volume honors the outstanding contributions of Andrei Rogatchevski to the fields of Slavic studies and literary and cultural studies more broadly, while also celebrating Andrei as a colleague, collaborator, mentor, and person. In this short introduction, our primary aim is to outline Andrei’s significance within the field and to offer an overall portrait of the person he is—something that, at least in part, helps explain the remarkable breadth, depth, and originality of the scholarly achievements represented in his work.

A comprehensive and seemingly never-ending list of Andrei’s projects, books, articles, reviews, organized panels and conferences is readily available online (see e.g. <https://en.uit.no/ansatte/andrei.rogatchevski>). Among the publications he has (co-) authored or (co-)edited are:

- *Bribery and Blat in Russia: Negotiating Reciprocity from the Middle Ages to the 1990s* (2000);
- *A Biographical and Critical Study of the Russian Writer Eduard Limonov* (2003);
- *Filming the Unfilmable: Casper Wrede’s “One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich”* (2010; 2nd ed. 2014);
- *Punishment as a Crime? Perspectives on Prison Experience in Russian Culture* (2014);
- the special issues of *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* (nos. 2–4, 1999) entitled *East and Central European Émigré Literatures: Past, Present—and Future?*;
- the special issue of *Science Fiction Film and Television* (no. 2, 2015) entitled *Filming the Strugatskiis*;
- the special issue of *Nordlit* (no. 39, 2017) entitled *Russian Space: Concepts, Practices, Representations*;
- *Madness and Literature* (thematic section), *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, vol. 80, 2017, pp. 7–116 (with Maija Könönen);
- *A War of Songs: Popular Music and Recent Russia–Ukraine Relations* (with Arve Hansen, Yngvar Steinholt, and David-Emil Wickström; foreword by Artemy Troitsky), Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2019, 247 pp.;
- *The Russian Revolutions of 1917: The Northern Impact and Beyond* (with Kari Aga Myklebost and Jens Petter Nielsen), Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2020, 211 pp.;

- *Svalbard Studies: On the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Svalbard Treaty* (special issue of *Nordlit*, no. 45, 2020, pp. 1–191; with Leonid S. Chekin).

What is less easy to find, however, is a carefully curated narrative of the various stages of Andrei's academic career. This absence is itself telling and points to a defining feature of his personality: constructing an exhaustive online résumé might have been less important to him than advancing ideas, moving projects forward, and building meaningful scholarly collaborations. Below, we therefore outline just a few key highlights of his career in order to convey the academic breadth and geographical scope of his expertise.

Andrei is a graduate of Moscow State University (1988, MA equivalent in Russian Language and Literature) and the University of Glasgow (1998, PhD in Slavonic Languages and Literatures). He also studied at Charles University in Prague (the Poděbrady campus) and at the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň. Over the course of his career, he has taught at the University of Glasgow, the University of Strathclyde, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the University of Helsinki, Masaryk University in Brno, the University of Ostrava, the Technical University of Liberec, the University of Mainz/Germersheim, the University of Ghent, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has held a research position at Uppsala University and is currently Professor of Russian Literature and Culture at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway.

Andrei joined UiT in January 2014, arriving from Glasgow with his trademark enthusiasm, an exceptionally wide range of research interests, and an extensive international academic network. To his new colleagues, it quickly became clear that UiT had gained a resourceful, generous, and deeply committed team player. He soon left a visible mark on both the curriculum and the research profile of the unit. Perhaps the most prominent example of this was the establishment of the research group RSCPR (Russian Space: Concepts, Practices, Representations) in the autumn of 2014. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the group was reorganized and renamed PSiF (Pax Slavica in Flux). Through this work, Andrei has not only contributed decisively to expanding the unit's research focus to include Belarus and Ukraine, but has also reinforced its Arctic dimension by launching Svalbard Studies as a distinct research field within the PSiF framework. His long-standing passion for film has also found institutional expression in the two MA-level courses he established shortly after his arrival at UiT.

There are perhaps three major things that immediately stand out about Andrei, and this perception was shared by both colleagues and students when we asked around.

First, Andrei is marked by an exceptionally broad cultural curiosity. While literature remains central to his work, he is equally deeply engaged with film and with Arctic-related questions. Professionally, whatever topic one raises, Andrei invariably seems to know exactly whom to contact: specialists spread across the globe, from New Zealand and South Korea to North America and Europe. A telling anecdote dates back to his interview trip to Tromsø, when, having just a few hours in the city, he decided to take the cable car to Fjellheisen and unexpectedly encountered Turid Austin Wæhler, a former student of his from Glasgow. Turid later became his PhD candidate and defended her dissertation in 2024, entitled "*What characterizes successful collaboration in health*

care, and how can culture be a facilitator or barrier to collaboration?”, a project that also reflects Andrei’s sustained engagement with “Svalbard studies”, a field he himself established at UiT.

When UiT adopted institutional guidelines emphasizing a strategic focus on the Arctic, Andrei immediately grasped the potential and approached it from an original and unexpected angle. Rather than reiterating familiar narratives, he turned to largely unexplored material, such as Polish presence on Svalbard and Polish cinematic representations of the archipelago, virtually unknown in Norway and beyond. His work on the Polish Polar Station Hornsund, a year-round research facility established in 1957 and operated by the Institute of Geophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences, exemplifies his ability to identify neglected topics and bring them to scholarly visibility. Where others see an absence of research, Andrei uncovers sources, patiently works through archives, and only then proceeds to analysis. He possesses an extraordinary capacity to sustain and follow through on such long-term projects. At the same time, he is consistently available, always interested in collaboration and eager to involve others in new initiatives—qualities that make him an exceptionally valued colleague.

Second, Andrei is widely known for his remarkable memory. It comes as little surprise to those who work with him that he can be described as a “walking encyclopedia” (Rus. “человек-энциклопедия”). He recalls precisely what was published where and when, and in discussions with PhD students he can effortlessly generate an entire reference list on the spot. Where others may need time to search and verify, Andrei immediately retrieves what is needed. This ability is complemented by his extraordinary linguistic aptitude. Within just a few years, he learned Norwegian well enough to handle official documentation, participate fully in formal meetings conducted in Norwegian, and eventually even serve as a program coordinator. At various points in his career, he has also acquired Czech, Swedish, Polish, Ukrainian, and Belarusian.

Third, Andrei is distinguished by a highly original personal scholarly style. His writing is information-rich yet vivid, engaging, and often humorous. He is unafraid of controversial topics and unhesitant about challenging established disciplinary traditions—an especially important quality within Slavic studies. Where many scholars continue along familiar paths, Andrei actively seeks new angles and responds directly to contemporary developments. This is evident, for example, in his work on contemporary East-Slavonic popular music, a field to which he made groundbreaking contributions. His colleagues at UiT and elsewhere, regularly benefit from Andrei’s overview and generous advice. Andrei has a keen sense for timely themes. His presently ongoing project on the Russian cult of death was inspired, amongst other things, by the inclusion of Leonid Andreev’s *The Red Laugh* (*Красный смех*) on the RUS-2110 course curriculum back in 2014. Today, in the light of recent and unfolding events, this Russian willingness to sacrifice oneself for meaningless causes appears strikingly prescient and painfully relevant.

Yet, Andrei is far more than a “walking encyclopedia” or an indefatigable scholar. Not everyone may know that he is also a devoted father and grandfather. Despite the sheer number of projects he is involved in, he remains deeply engaged in the lives of his sons and grandchildren and takes great interest in their pursuits.

Andrei is a dear colleague and friend to many. This volume brings together contributions from those who wished to congratulate him, to share personal stories, and

to express their appreciation for his work and his presence. Here, we offer a selection of these greetings, reflections, and memories, along with a list of contributors, as a collective tribute to Andrei Rogatchevski and to the enduring impact he has had on our field and on all of us who have had the privilege of working with him.

Yngvar Steinholt
Svetlana Sokolova
Tore Nasset

Greetings

Yngvar Steinholt:

Andrei and I first met briefly at a conference in the UK, where he stood out by knowing what I was talking about, and for providing encouragement and substantial advice for my project. We since got to know each other better and from 2014 became close colleagues. His academic curiosity, approachability and enthusiasm is a true gift for his work colleagues and students alike. He takes chances and embraces opportunities not everybody would be aware of.

In 2016 we learned about an interesting conference in Nimes. Should we go? Why not! A sporty decision, and perhaps a risky one. We did turn out to be the only delegates presenting in English, which meant our panel got a rather exclusive audience of five. Nonetheless, we gained a lot from attending a French academic event, and our papers became the first steps towards a full-grown book project *A War of Songs*, published in 2019 with two other colleagues.

Two years after Nimes, in a blisteringly hot downtown Tokyo, we strolled past a narrow alley sporting a curious little door in an enormous, windowless concrete wall. A small sign by the door suggested somewhat unconvincingly that this was a form of drinking venue. After dark, we passed by again and the door was open. Negative thinking is rarely an option with Andrei, so in we went. We descended down narrow stairs into a tiny, sparsely lit venue, where jazz classics streamed from hidden speakers. The room consisted of a bar with five rickety stools, and –as it turned out– a private collection of whisky bottles, collected from all over the world. The bottles' owner and friendly host, who swiftly put out his cigarette and followed us in, chose the drinks, music and conversation topics for his guests exclusively himself. He turned out to be extremely knowledgeable on every aspect of Japanese culture, from ancient local history to kabuki theatre. Our conversations with him enriched our short stay in the Japanese capital immensely. Andrei is perpetually looking for opportunities to learn something. It is always well worth joining him in such quests. Congratulations on your anniversary, Andrei. And many happy returns!

Josie von Zitzewitz:

Dear Andrei,

поздравляю с прошедшем юбилеем! I want to take this opportunity to thank you publically for being not only a friend, but a stalwart supporter and role model throughout my academic career. One occasion in particular stayed with me: we were hanging out having a beer, but by the end of the evening you had somehow pushed me into

formulating an entirely new line of inquiry into contemporary online poetry. I still have the notes I took. A few years later, the project that grew from this conversation brought me to Tromsø, where I was able to realise several exciting collaborations in spite of the pandemic. And there are other examples - I remember asking you, many years ago now, why you spend so much time researching writers whose work expresses nationalist or otherwise unsavoury views and you replying simply "somebody needs to do it so the world knows what's going on". How right you were... Or when my old friend Vadim Stroykin died following relentless persecution by the Russian authorities: although he'd not been widely known as a writer, you encouraged me to commemorate him with an entry in the Literary Encyclopaedia. I can't possibly list all the moments of inspiration, and I remember indignantly calling you a workaholic more than once, but I want you to know that your curiosity, integrity and humanity make Russophone academia a better place. All the very best for the next years!

Pierre Kornev:

Dear Andrei Borisovich,

Please accept my warmest congratulations. Studying under your guidance was truly a joy and a privilege. You are an exceptional professor—deeply knowledgeable, thoughtful, and endlessly generous with your time and attention. Your genuine love for teaching and for your students is felt in everything you do.

You care deeply about your work, and every former student of yours I have ever spoken with remembers you with admiration and gratitude. Your lectures were never just lectures—they felt like real conversations, where everyone was invited to think, question, and discover together. It was in those moments that real understanding was born.

I look back on your lectures with great fondness and nostalgia.

Thank you for everything, Andrei Borisovich.

Best regards,

Pierre Kornev (Former MA student in Russian Studies at UiT)

Leonid S. Chekin:

С Андреем Рогачевским мы подружились на Южном острове Новой Зеландии. Это было так давно, в июне 1998-го года, что мы даже успели обменяться по почте рукописными «документами на бумажных носителях», подобными тем, о которых речь идёт в моей статье в этом сборнике. С тех пор не перестаю восхищаться его эрудицией, безупречным вкусом и острым, свободным умом!

Ken Wilson:

Dear Andrei, you've been a valued friend, colleague, mentor, exemplar and inspiration for 30 years now. Congratulations on the festschrift (much deserved) and here's to the next 30 years!

Eva Binder:

Dear Andrej, without your initiative, we would not have an Erasmus agreement between our universities (Tromsø and Innsbruck), and without your warm invitation to Tromsø

at just the right moment, I would not have travelled to the far north for a week of Erasmus exchange in January 2026. What's more, I don't know anyone else in the wide world of academia who responds to emails so quickly, at any time of the day or night. I hope you remain just as communicative, energetic and dynamic in the decades still ahead – even if we all become slower and more sluggish with age. All the best!

Atle Grønn:

Takk til 60-åringen for inspirerende utveksling om 100-åringen "Шахматная горячка" (1925)!

Brita Lotsberg Bryn:

Tusen takk for fine leseopplevelser og alt godt samarbeid!

Andrei Krasniashchikh:

Дорогой Андрей, спасибо за возможность побывать в Тромсё! Желаю Вам удачи в любом деле, интересных научных находок, сил и ярких впечатлений! Буду рад продолжить наше сотрудничество и общение.
С уважением, Андрей Краснящих.

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