

Gennady A. Barabtarlo (1949–2019)

Gennady Alexandrovich (“Gene”) Barabtarlo, Professor Emeritus of Russian at the University of Missouri, passed away on Sunday February 24, 2019 after a nearly two-year struggle with cancer. His wide-ranging erudition, sharp eye for detail, firm convictions, and deeply caring spirit drew students, colleagues, and readers to him over the course of a tremendously productive career. Born in Moscow, he graduated with a degree in Russian Literature from Moscow State University in 1972. He served as a senior research fellow at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow before leaving the USSR with his family in 1979. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois in 1985 and taught at the University of Missouri from 1984 until his retirement in 2016.

Gene was best known among scholars of Russian literature for his superb body of research on Vladimir Nabokov, a writer perfectly suited to Gene’s impressive array of scholarly gifts. Nabokov famously demanded attention to detail and abhorred easy generalization; Gene, an excellent player of chess and scrabble, relentless solver of puzzles, erudite punster, and sensitive photographer, had just the eye and the mind to find what Nabokov hid in his works. Gene wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on *Pnin* and then turned it into a highly valuable guidebook for readers of that novel. Several books and many dozens of articles followed, during the course of which he elaborated his singularly comprehensive understanding of Nabokov’s art.

Gene’s distinctive contribution was to adopt and even extend the detail-focus of Nabokov studies, while at the same time identifying and interpreting the patterns formed by those details, and the significance to be read into the patterns. He delved into specifics and found untold stories, important chronological facts, and significant marginalia—and then showed how they bear on the major themes of Nabokov’s work. In his engaging but never pandering tone, his meticulous attention to detail, his wide and polyglot range of reference, and his sensitive exploration of the deeper themes, Gene’s work set a standard for the modern philologist.

One way to get a taste for what Gene could find in a text is to consider the strange phrase sung in Nabokov’s *Invitation to a Beheading*: “mali è trano t’amesti.” Not content to take it for strangely mangled Italian (as had been done by earlier readers), Gene poked at it until he noticed that it is a perfect anagram for the phrase “death is sweet, this is a mystery,” spoken in Russian but transliterated into Latin characters. This is the sort of inter-lingual play that Nabokov loved, and it is the epitome of Gene’s work: precise and at the same time alert to the thematic reverberations of his findings. That phrase turns out to be an interpretive motif for the entire novel—and, indeed, for Nabokov’s oeuvre.

When Nabokov’s unfinished novel, *The Original of Laura*, was published some ten years ago, the honor of translating it into Russian was given to Gene. He had already proven himself as a translator of Nabokov’s English works into Russian, and his work on this last project abundantly justified the trust placed in him. Gene’s Russian translation, published by Azbuka press, proved a huge success, topping literary sales charts and earning Gene a nomination for “Masters of Contemporary Translation.”

Gene was not only a formidable scholar and translator, but at least as importantly an active participant in a scholarly community whose growth and development he helped to foster. He was a faithful, acute, generous, and exacting reader of colleagues’ work. To ask Gene to read a draft was to submit every aspect of its argument, evidence, and expression to rigorous, caring attention. He was a member of the Vladimir Nabokov Literary Foundation, and the International Vladimir Nabokov

Society has named its prize for the best academic article or book chapter the Gennady Barabtarlo Prize. He also made important contributions to the study of Aleksandr Pushkin, Fedor Tiutchev, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. He was a superb prose stylist in both English and Russian, and a gifted poet in the latter language.

As accomplished a scholar as he was, Gene was also deeply, personally committed to the success and well-being of generations of students whom he taught at the University of Missouri. He was the driving force behind the creation of an MA program in Russian and Slavonic Studies there, and he served the university in a variety of capacities, including the chairmanship of the Department of German and Russian Studies. He taught courses in language (not only Russian but also Old Church Slavonic), Russian cultural and intellectual history, and Russian literature. Whatever the subject, his message to his students was that the material they were about to take up was demanding but rewarding, and he made sure it (and he) repaid the considerable effort he demanded of them.

I will close with a few personal remarks. I got to know Gene first as a job candidate and then as his junior colleague, and my primary impression during those early years was of his fine human consideration and his avid interest in intellectual matters. Naturally, I knew of his importance as a scholar, but he wore his accomplishments very lightly. He has advised me on matters from teaching to publication, from my earliest years through a department chairmanship and beyond, with penetrating insight and an extraordinary degree of tact. In his demeanor as well as his teaching and his formidable scholarship, he modeled the qualities of humility, care, openness, and intellectual respect that I think should animate the shared project of the humanities.

TIM LANGEN

University of Missouri-Columbia

Paul Hollander (1932–2019)

Paul Hollander, a distinguished scholar of American and Soviet societies, died on April 11, 2019 in his home in Northampton, MA. Paul was born in Hungary in 1932. As a Jew, he lived through the antisemitic and ultimately murderous policies of the Hungarian state. In 1951, as a member of a fairly prosperous family, he was deported from Budapest to a distant village. After the liberalization followed by the death of Stalin in 1953, the family was allowed to leave the village, but even at this time Paul was forced to serve in a labor battalion of the Hungarian army, as a “class alien.” When the opportunity arose after the defeated Hungarian Revolution of 1956, he did not long hesitate to leave the country of his birth. Since he had studied English on his own, he was able to accept a scholarship at the London School of Economics, where he studied Political Science. From there he went to the University of Illinois where he received an MA in Sociology and to Princeton, where in 1963 he received his PhD in Sociology. From 1963 to 1968, he taught in the Department of Social Relations at Harvard and from 1968 to his retirement in 2000, he taught sociology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Living under two different and repellent totalitarian dictatorships deeply influenced his thinking and scholarship. As a political scientist and a sociologist he was interested in making comparisons of different societies and thereby enlarging our understanding of totalitarianism. He was particularly fascinated by intellectuals who had allowed themselves to be seduced by propaganda and became unknowing agents

of different totalitarian states. He was an untiring researcher of various pronouncements by intellectuals who should have known better. His research was remarkable in its breadth. His work on intellectuals writing about various communist and fascist states is grimly amusing in demonstrating the folly to which even educated people may be prone. They provide us with a warning: we must resist the seductive promise of utopia that instead gives repression and murder. His major work, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928–1978*, published in 1981 by Oxford University Press is still a very good read and widely regarded as an important study.

Hollander was a diligent, tireless scholar who remained engaged in numerous intellectual projects until his last days. He published more than ten books and edited volumes. For his work, he received numerous signs of recognition: he was a Guggenheim fellow; received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation that allowed him to work in Bellagio, Italy; had grants from IREX, the Hoover Institution, and the Bradley Foundation.

Paul had a fascination with nature and was an indefatigable hiker and kayaker. He had a remarkable talent for friendship. He remained loyal to his friends going back to his high school days in Budapest. He is mourned by his many friends and his family, his wife Mina Harrison, his daughter, Sarah, and his step daughter, Laura Marie Duncan.

PETER KENEZ
University of California, Santa Cruz