

In Memoriam

Vladimir Gitin
(January 23, 1942 – June 8, 2019)

Vladimir Evseevich Gitin died in Ashdod, Israel in June, 2019, at the age of 77. Volodya, as he was known by all who worked with him, worked at Harvard as a teacher of language and literature for more than 25 years.

Born in Astrakhan, Volodya was educated at the Herzen Institute in Leningrad, from which he received his Candidate's degree in 1967. He emigrated to the United States in 1976.

An alumnus of the Slavic Department's PhD program, Volodya defended his doctoral dissertation "Innokentii Annenskii and the Russian Poetry of the 19th Century: Tiutchev and Baratynskii," in 1989, having written it under the direction of Jurij Striedter and John Malmstad. He went on to prepare for publication several volumes by Annenskii, a noted classicist as well as Silver Age Russian poet. Those publications included Annenskii's *Istoriia antichnoi dramy* (2003), his *Teatr Evripida* (2007), and his long poem *Magdalina* (1997). Volodya participated with others in assembling a bibliography Annenskii's writings that appeared in Ivanovo in 2005. He published a number of articles on the poet, nearly all in Russian, as well as scholarly articles on Shevchenko, Baratynskii, Gogol, Pasternak, and Pushkin.

Volodya brought a deep knowledge of language and of the poetic tradition to all of his teaching. He became a preceptor in the Department before he completed his PhD, and was named Senior Preceptor in 1990, a position he held until his retirement in 2012. His courses on Readings in Russian Poetry, Stylistics, Academic Russian, Advanced Vocabulary and Grammar Review, and Advanced Russian: Reading Literary Texts, were taken by generations of graduate students as well as advanced undergraduates.

Although he was mostly known for this teaching at advanced levels and for the sophisticated knowledge of the language and culture he brought to those courses, Volodya participated every year in the teaching of beginning and intermediate Russian as well. For several years, he headed Harvard's summer Russian language program offered in St. Petersburg at the Nevskii Institute in the 2000s. He was a popular teacher with undergraduates as well as a constant resource for faculty and students, always ready to answer questions about literary style, poetic tradition, and how to translate some challenging word. He was a true Slavist, with a reading knowledge of Polish as well as native Ukrainian alongside his native Russian. He often taught Ukrainian, at all levels, in the academic year as well as in Harvard Summer School.

From 1977-1984, he was a Resident Tutor in Eliot House, and advised undergraduate concentrators living in Eliot.

He held grants and fellowships from ACTR and IREX to support his pedagogical work as well as his research on Annenskii. That pedagogical work included a study of Russian verbs which he continued to work on in retirement.

Volodya was a warmly regarded colleague and friend far beyond the Harvard community. Notices of his death appeared on the website COLTA, <https://www.colta.ru/news/21479-umer-vladimir-gitin> as well as in the Israeli press, <http://www.newsru.co.il/israel/08jun2019/gitin.html> . As both of those notices mention, he was also a practicing photographer, and for many years the annual pictures of graduate students and of the faculty taken at the spring reception were his work. As his photographs of individuals often showed, he had an eye for beauty, and for catching an image of a person that was expressive, often gentle and calm. These were attributes of his own presence, too, as was a sparkle in his eye when he saw or heard something he liked. He has been missed in the Harvard Slavic Department since his retirement, and is now missed all the more so.