Michael Shapiro: Retracing the Arc of a Half-Century of Scholarship and Teaching in the Humanities

A chronological aperçu of the past fifty years (1965-2017) in the life of a working scholar with a lasting record of achievement that touches on many details and covers not only strictly academic points but landmarks in an intellectual evolution involving several humanistic disciplines. The outlines of a professorial career provide a rare insight into the sociology of knowledge and are fleshed out by a real-life love story that is haunted by peripeteia, illness, and the death of one’s beloved.

RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS OF MICHAEL SHAPIRO

SALIENT POINTS ON THE TRAJECTORY

1965 • The Stress of Derived Substantives in Contemporary Standard Russian.
   Ph. D. Thesis. Harvard University; advisor: Roman Jakobson
   (completed in 1964; unpublished, but mined for articles)
   Research Fellow in Slavic Langs & Lits, Harvard

1965-6 National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in Linguistics, Tokyo Univ
1966 appointed Assistant Professor of Slavic Langs, UCLA
   first conference paper (“On Russian Phonostylistics,” Annual Meeting of the
   Philological Association of the Pacific Coast, Univ of Calif, Berkeley)
   • first scholarly publication (“The Derivational Morphology of Russian
     Patriots, I-II, Lingua, 16:14-26, 113-129)

1967 marriage to Marianne Goldner (1940-2003), the most versatile and
   accomplished American Italianist of the 20th century

1968 birth of our magical daughter Abigail (አብведитеיה 'my father's joy')
   Marianne appointed Assistant Professor of Italian, UCLA

1969 • first description of automorphisms in language (Aspects of Russian Morphology: A Semiotic Investigation. Pp. 62. Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica [“Patterns ... where one morphophonemic alternation mirrors another so that they together form what may be called an automorphic structure in the paradigm, were first described explicitly by Shapiro, who gives several examples of existing or emerging patterns of this kind from contemporary Russian.” (Henning Andersen, “Morphological Change: Towards a Typology,” Recent Developments in Historical Morphology, ed. J. Fisiak, 1-50 [The Hague: Mouton, 1980], p. 34]

1970 Marianne’s contract terminated (on spurious grounds); initiation of federal and state lawsuits against chairman of Italian Dept and Univ of California (settled out of court, 1975)
first invited public lecture (“Ideas toward a Coherent Conceptualization of Literary Theory,” UCLA)

1971-2 Marianne in NY, teaching Italian at Sarah Lawrence College
1972-8 commuting between Connecticut and Los Angeles upon Marianne’s appointment as Assistant Professor of Italian at Yale

1972 • first major article on markedness (“Explorations into Markedness,” Language, 48: 343-364)


1976 • markedness-theoretic reinterpretation of poetic structure (Asymmetry: An Inquiry into the Linguistic Structure of Poetry)


1979 first NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers, “Semiotic Perspectives on Language and Verbal Art,” UCLA (“I am especially indebted to Michael Shapiro, whose teaching and research were a source of regeneration and inspiration.” (James Jakób Liszka, A General Introduction to the Semiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce [Indiana UP, 1996], p. xi)

1980 Marianne appointed Associate Professor of Italian (without tenure), NYU; family moves to Manhattan
• new theory of style (“Toward a Global Theory of Style [A Peircean Exposé],” Ars Semeiotica, 3: 141-147)
1980  
• first markedness-theoretic reinterpretation of Russian conjugation  

1982  

1982-6  
Visiting Lecturer with the Rank of Professor in Slavic Langs & Lits, Princeton Univ, 1983-5; Lecturer in Slavic Langs & Lits, Princeton, 1985-6

1982-8  
Visiting Scholar, Dept of Anthropology, Columbia Univ

1983  
Marianne denied tenure at NYU (again on spurious grounds)  
resignation from position as Professor of Russian Linguistics and Poetics at UCLA in order to keep family intact

• first volume of Sense triptych, The Sense of Grammar ("In conceiving and developing a model of expressive meaning, I have been profoundly influenced by the work of the Peircean linguist and literary theorist Michael Shapiro of Brown University. Shapiro’s groundbreaking work on asymmetry in poetry [1976] was my introduction to the theory of markedness, and The Sense of Grammar [1983] was my inspiration for grounding markedness in a Peircean semiotic." Robert S. Hatten, Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation [Indiana UP, 1994], p. xiv)


1984  
founder, first chairman, and permanent member, Charles S. Peirce Sesquicentennial International Congress Organizing Committee (Congress sponsored jointly by Harvard and Texas Tech Universities, September 1989, Cambridge, Mass.)

second NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers, Princeton ("Most of all I am deeply thankful to Michael Shapiro, who brought me to Peirce. He changed my approach to literature and linguistics; he changed my approach to my students of literature and linguistics—by showing me, in his own example, how one can become a great teacher by exhibiting the openness and curiosity of a serious student." Michael Cabot Haley, The Semeiosis of Poetic Metaphor [Indiana UP, 1988], p. xiv)

1986  
Visiting Professor of Semeiotic of Poetic Metaphor, UC Berkeley (fall term)  
• markedness-theoretic reinterpretation of Russian stress ("The Russian System of Stress," Russian Linguistics, 10:183-204)

1987 ACLS/USSR Academy of Sciences Senior Scholar Exchange, Institute of Slavic and Balkan Studies, Moscow

1989 appointed Professor of Slavic Langs, Brown Univ

• first markedness-theoretical analysis of meter (“The Meaning of Meter,” *Russian Verse Theory*. UCLA Slavic Studies, 18, ed. B. Scherr and D. S. Worth, 331-349. Columbus, Ohio: Slavica)

1990 **graduation of Abigail from Harvard (A. B. in East Asian Langs & Civs)**
third (and last) NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers, Brown ("You need to know that not a day passes by where I [don't] rely on, call upon, and use the information I gleaned from your seminar. I will be forever grateful." – William P. Dougherty, Ellis and Nelle Levitt Professor of Music Theory and Composition, Drake Univ; e-mail message to MS, January 17, 2013)
elected vice president, Charles S. Peirce Society; president, 1991; fellow [living past president], 1992-

1991 • second volume of *Sense* triptych, *The Sense of Change* (“In this regard [i.e., establishment of a semiotic linguistics], the work of Michael Shapiro, a first-rate Peirce scholar as well as theoretical linguist, is unsurpassed by anyone else in his field” (Vincent Colapietro, “Robust Realism and Real Externality: The Complex Commitments of a Convinced Pragmaticist,” *Semiotica*, 130 [2000], 322)

1992 elected president, Semiotic Society of America

1995 **marriage of Abigail**

1997 co-organizer and chairman, International Colloquium on Language and Peircean Sign Theory, Duke Univ

1998 • entirely new analysis of Shakespeare’s poetic technique; (“Sound and Meaning in Shakespeare’s Sonnets,” *Language*, 74:81-103; rpt. in *The Sense of Form in Literature and Language*); MS’s most-downloaded article

• third volume of *Sense* triptych, *The Sense of Form in Literature and Language* (“Michael Shapiro’s book demonstrates the enormous scope of scholarly activities to which a Peircean [sic] approach can give rise. It is also a testament to the author’s prodigious learning and expertise. To write essays on subjects ranging from 'Wimp English' to 'Dostoevsky's Modes of Signifying' is a feat in itself and one that will stretch the limits of most readers, this reviewer included.” – Andrew Barratt, *Slavic Review*, 59 [2000], 932)
2000 removed by Brown provost from Dept of Slavic Langs; title changed to Professor of Slavic and Semiotic Studies; given unique privilege of teaching *ad libitum* under University Courses designation, with own budget and full-time administrative assistant (reporting only to Dean of the Faculty)

2001 appointed to Board of Advisors, Peirce Edition Project (served for 9 years)

**Marianne diagnosed with incurable cancer**

2003 **death of Marianne**

2004 on leave from Brown; move back to Los Angeles

- preparation and posthumous publication of Marianne’s campus novel
  establishment of website, [http://www.higherlearninganovel.com](http://www.higherlearninganovel.com)

2005 retirement from Brown; appointed Professor Emeritus of Slavic and Semiotic Studies

- preparation and publication of volume of Marianne’s articles, incl. previously unpublished ones (*From the Critic’s Workbench: Essays in Literature and Semiotics*. Pp. xii, 522. New York: Peter Lang)

2006 **only work of fiction** (*My Wife the Metaphysician, or Lady Murasaki’s Revenge*. Pp. [x], 362. Charleston, S. C.: BookSurge ["To create a literary monument to one’s beloved is work that justifies one’s whole life and is something rare in history." – Savely Senderovich, Professor Emeritus of Russian Literature and Medieval Studies, Cornell Univ]; Guest Book, [http://www.marianneandmichaelshapiro.com](http://www.marianneandmichaelshapiro.com), June 21, 2009)

2008 establishment of unique language blog ([http://www.languagelore.net](http://www.languagelore.net))

2009 **first edition of Marianne Shapiro: A Catalogue Raisonné of Her Publications**

- “The photograph of Marianne is a gem: it captures both her beauty and her poignant earnestness as a survivor of a personal history that was marked by repeated injustices which tested her morale but did not overcome her will to find and express the highest meanings that poetry can attain. . . . She was like a virtuoso musician who has mastered her instrument as a medium of artistic interpretation. . . . Marianne left us a wonderful legacy of poetic truth for which we can all be grateful.” – Eugene Vance, Emeritus Professor of French, Comparative Literature and Comparative Religion, Univ of Washington; Readers’ Responses, [www.marianneandmichaelshapiro.com](http://www.marianneandmichaelshapiro.com)

2010 move back to East Coast (Vermont, New York)

- **second edition of Marianne Shapiro: A Catalogue Raisonné of Her Publications** (includes two tributes)

2011 Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, Green Mountain College, Poultney, Vt. (spring term); taught course on Philosophy of the Russian Novel

2011- joined Society of Senior Scholars, Heyman Center for the Humanities, Columbia; appointed Adjunct Professor, to teach Literature Humanities courses in Core Curriculum (inter alia)

2017  • publication of Second Edition of The Speaking Self: Language Lore and English Usage

life continues as J rōnin (浪人) [= samurai with no lord or master during the feudal period (1185–1868) in Japan; in modern Japanese usage also designates a salaryman who is between jobs.]

APPENDIX A: JOURNALS IN WHICH MICHAEL SHAPIRO’S ARTICLES HAVE APPEARED

Acta Linguistica Hafniensia: International Journal of Linguistics
The American Journal of Semiotics: The Journal of the Semiotic Society of America
American Speech: A Quarterly of Linguistic Usage
Ars Semeiotica: International Journal of American Semiotic
Diachronica: International Journal for Historical Linguistics
Elementa: The Journal of Slavic Studies and Comparative Cultural Semiotics
General Linguistics
International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics
Journal of Indo-European Studies
Journal of Linguistics: Journal of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain
Journal of Literary Semantics
Language: Journal of the Linguistic Society of America
Linguistics
Lingua: An International Review of General Linguistics
Papers in Japanese Linguistics
Poétique
Russian Language Journal: A Journal of the American Council of Teachers of Russian
Russian Linguistics
Russian Literature
Scando-Slavica
Semiotica: Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies
Slavica Hierosolymitana: Slavic Studies of the Hebrew University
Slavic and East European Journal
The Slavonic and East European Review
Stanford Literature Review
Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society
University of Toronto Quarterly
Word: The Journal of the International Linguistic Association

APPENDIX B: COURSES TAUGHT BY MICHAEL SHAPIRO

Elementary Russian (1st year - UCLA and Princeton)
Intermediate Russian (2nd year - Harvard, UCLA, and Princeton)
Russian Composition and Stylistics (4th year - UCLA and Princeton)
Advanced Russian Grammar and Reading (4th year - UCLA; 3rd year -Princeton)
Introduction to Comparative Slavic Linguistics (graduate - UCLA)
Russian Phonology (grad & undergrad - UCLA)
Russian Morphology (grad & undergrad - UCLA)
Historical Commentary to Modern Russian (undergrad - UCLA)
Russian Dialectology (grad - UCLA)
Studies in Russian Literature: Pushkin (undergrad, in English - UCLA)
Russian Poetry (undergrad, in Russian – UCLA)
Introduction to the Analysis of Poetic Texts (undergrad, in Russian - UCLA):
    From Mid-18th Century through Precursors of Symbolism
    From Late 19th Century through Contemporary Soviet Verse
Russian Folk Literature (undergrad, in Russian - UCLA; in English - Princeton)
Seminar in Structural Analysis [Linguistics] (grad - UCLA)
Seminar in Russian Poetry (grad - UCLA)
Seminar in Literary Analysis (grad - UCLA)
Pushkin (undergrad, in Russian - UCLA; grad - Brown)
Russian Poetics (grad - UCLA)
Semiotic Perspectives on Language and Verbal Art (postdoctoral seminar – UCLA, Princeton, Brown)
Seminar in Russian Literature: Lermontov (grad - UCLA)
Russian for the Olympics (1st year - UCLA)
Seminar in Russian Literature: Poetic Theory (grad - UCLA)
Semiotic Perspectives on Language and Literature (grad - Princeton)
Contemporary Literary Theory: Its Russian Roots (grad & undergrad - Princeton)
Russian Symbolism (grad & undergrad - Princeton & Brown)
Eighteenth-Century Russian Literature (grad - UC Berkeley)
Dostoevsky (undergrad - Brown)
Seminar on Semiotic Structuralism (grad - Brown)
Slavic Contributions to Literary Theory (undergrad & grad - Brown)
Tolstoy (undergrad - Brown)
Russian Literature in English Translation (undergrad - Brown)
Gogol (undergrad & grad - Brown)
Seminar on Prosody and Versification (grad, in Russian - Brown)
Linguistic Theory and Models of Language (grad - Brown)
Introduction to Russian Poetry (undergrad - Brown)
Seminar in Russian Literature: Pasternak [grad, in Russian - Brown]
Seminar on Poetic Structure (grad – Brown)
The Russian Novel (Brown - undergrad and grad)
Seminar in Russian Literature: Pushkin's Eugene Onegin (grad, in Russian – Brown)
The Russian Lexicon (undergrad, in Russian – Brown)
Russian and East European Folklore (undergrad – Brown)
Seminar in Russian Literature: Gogol's Dead Souls (grad –Brown)
Introduction to the Historical Study of Language (undergrad – Brown)
Interpretation, Theory and Practice (Peircean Semiotics) (undergrad – Brown; grad – Columbia)
Russian Poetry and Poetics (undergrad – Brown)
Philosophy of the Russian Novel (undergrad - Green Mountain College)
Masterpieces of European Literature [Literature Humanities] (undergrad – Columbia)