Dear History Alumni,

Greetings from Furman. This year is one of change. It is my first as department chair, and it has been busy! We are thrilled to welcome Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky, a specialist in Middle Eastern and Islamic history, to the department. Getting to know new colleagues is always enjoyable, but it is much harder to say farewell. David Spear, one of our longest-serving historians, will retire at the end of the academic year. In honor of David’s 38 years in the department, we have dubbed this the Year of Spear! Like many of you, I have thoroughly enjoyed learning from David over the years. His generosity, wisdom, and steadfast belief in the mission of the liberal arts has made an impact on all of us. He will be greatly missed, but we hope retirement will be as agreeable for him as it is for Diane Vecchio, who is thoroughly enjoying her first year of retirement and working diligently on several scholarly projects.

Our faculty continue to accomplish great things. At the end of spring, the Board of Trustees promoted Savita Nair to full professor. Never one to rest on her laurels, Nair joined a new collaborative project on Critical Infrastructure Studies as well as presented a paper entitled “Political Arithmetics: Indians in Ireland and the Infrastructure of Immigration” at the American Conference of Irish Studies. The Board of Trustees also promoted Courtney Tollison to Distinguished University Public Historian and Scholar, a long overdue recognition of Tollison’s public history work in the Upstate and beyond.

This summer, Steve O’Neill completed an impressive cross-country bike trek from Greenville to Fort Stevens, Oregon, following the Lewis and Clark trail. He is now planning the inaugural Joseph Vaughn Day celebration. Vaughn was the first African-American student admitted to Furman in 1965, and O’Neill is currently working with students Asha Marie and Lily Russell on an oral history of Joe Vaughn’s experiences at Furman.

Marian Strobel returned to full time activity in the department after a distinguished term as chair of the faculty. In May she led a study away program entitled War and Remembrance: World War I on the Western Front that visited numerous sites in England and France. This fall, Strobel received the honor of being invited to join the Board of Directors of Greenville Chautauqua, and she continues to serve on the Faculty Status Committee. Lloyd Benson also led a MayX this year, on the slow food movement in Italy, and traveled to Louisville for the Southern Historical Association conference in October.

Faculty travel has been the norm. David Spear led the popular Brussels study away program in spring. John Barrington presented a paper entitled “What is an Atrocity? Defining the Ethics of War during the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution” at the meeting of the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in Scotland. Barrington also published Baptists in Early North America, Vol. V: Welsh Neck, South Carolina with the assistance of former history major Jasmine The History Department, Fall 2019
JASON HANSEN: Welcome to the Upstate, Vladimir! You come to us having lived in a lot of cosmopolitan places: Europe, Stanford, New York City. How has your transition been to life in Greenville? What’s been the most surprising thing for you about living here?

VLADIMIR HAMED-TROYANSKY: My transition to life in Greenville is going very well. The Furman community has been wonderfully friendly and welcoming. The landscapes in the Upstate are incredible. Growing up on the coast of a cold European sea, I always romanticized lush green mountains. It is a joy and a privilege to be so close to the Blue Ridge Mountains and several state parks. I also very much appreciate the southern climate. Again, I am a northern European who chose to study the Middle East — warm weather makes me happy. Last year, I lived in a 280-square-foot studio in Manhattan, and, in true New York fashion, my only window faced an actual brick wall. In contrast, my spacious Greenville apartment looks out to Paris Mountain! I feel very bourgeois in South Carolina. The most surprising thing about living here? I have been to more drag shows in the Upstate in these three months than in the past seven years in California.

JH: You were also fortunate to live in Syria (2008) and Egypt (2009) right before massive changes began to unfold prompted by political events. What was that like? Did you have any inclination that such massive change was about to take place?

VHT: I spent my junior year in college (University of St Andrews, Scotland) studying in Damascus and Cairo. This is where I fell in love with the Middle East and its history. I lived with a host family in the Old City of Damascus, a few steps away from the main Shi’a shrine in Syria. Our street was filled with Iranian tourists, and local bread merchants were often short on Syrian money because they conducted business in Iranian currency. While in Syria, I was fortunate to have ample time for travel. I took short trips across the country: to Aleppo and the “forgotten cities” [abandoned by the 7th century] in Syria’s north, to Syria’s heartland cities of Hama and Homs, to the coastal mountains of the Alawi region, to Druze towns in the south, to desert-lying Palmyra, and to the lush Euphrates valley near Deir al-Zor. I used public buses, hitchhiked with friendly Syrian families, spent nights in hostels, monasteries, and once on a roof of a hotel overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. It was a great time to be alive and to be carefree. I also recognize my privilege: my gender, race, and nationality allowed me to experience all of this. My time in Egypt was as exciting. When studying at the American University in Cairo, I made friends with the Egyptology faculty and joined them on marvelous trips to various pyramids and tombs that were off the beaten tourist path.

I did not have an inclination that a change on such a scale would happen in Syria and Egypt. No one did. At least, we, historians, are not in the business of predictions. Social scientists are, and most “area specialists” missed it. The Asads’ Syria and Mubarak’s Egypt were authoritarian police states, where internal dissent was quashed. Grievances against the regime were rarely displayed publicly. What was more visible was the spillover of the carnage of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. I was in Syria when U.S. forces carried an aerial raid, targeting...
a small Syrian village near Abu Kamal, the first known U.S. attack inside Syrian territory, and I remember massive anti-U.S. demonstrations in Damascus that followed. Sectarian violence also started spreading to a country that, until then, was noteworthy for its religious diversity and relative coexistence. In September 2008, a terrorist car bomb attack took place near the only other Shi’a mosque in Damascus, which left everyone in my neighborhood nervous. It was the post–2003 destruction of Iraq’s economy and society, leading to a sectarian civil war in Iraq, that had shaken Syria’s foundations prior to the outbreak of the first protests against Bashar al-Asad’s regime.

**JH:** Being a Europeanist, when I think of the Middle East and refugees, I naturally think about present-day Syria. But your project shows this phenomenon going on long before contemporary events. Tells us a bit more about your research.

**VHT:** I am a historian of migration in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. My research focuses on the resettlement of Muslim refugees from Russia in the Ottoman Empire, specifically in territories of modern-day Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and Bulgaria. Between 1860 and 1914, over a million Muslim refugees arrived from the North Caucasus region, fleeing an ethnic cleansing, perpetrated by the tsarist army, and Russian occupation. These refugees belonged to Circassian, Chechen, Abkhazian, and other communities, and spoke various languages, none of which would be familiar to their new neighbors in the Middle East and the Balkans. I work with quantitative data, such as land deeds, tax records, and population registers, to investigate the political economy of refugee resettlement. I am interested in how well refugee villages were doing. I also explore refugees’ petitions and government correspondence, written in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, examining how Muslim refugees understood their displacement and how the Ottoman government constructed a massive resettlement system.

I found that Muslim refugees transformed many parts of the empire. In the Levant, for example, Circassian refugees founded three of the four largest cities in Jordan, including the capital city of Amman. Today, Amman is a four-million-people megapolis, but, in 1914, it was a Circassian refugee village of 5,000 people. Early Circassian residents of Amman took advantage of Ottoman pro-immigration legislation, which accorded them free land, and the new Hejaz Railway, which connected Damascus and Medina and went through their village. Circassian refugees became skillful entrepreneurs, who registered and resold real estate and marketed the region’s grain to Ottoman urban markets, therefore attracting outsiders to their village by the rail tracks. In many ways, the phenomenon that I study is the first wave of “modern” refugee migrations to the Levant. Amman is a quintessential example of a refugee city. It was founded by Circassians and then built up by Armenian survivors of the 1915 genocide, post-1948 Palestinian refugees, post-2003 Iraqi refugees, and post-2011 Syrian refugees.

**JH:** Living in “the West,” we have a tendency to think of “refugees” as people who are forced to leave their homes, “migrants” as people who choose to leave. In your experience, does this distinction hold true? What assumptions do we hold about other societies’ approaches to refugees that perhaps we should reconsider?

**VHT:** In my work, I look at the age before contemporary designations of “refugee,” “immigrant,” and “migrant” came into place. The Ottomans had only one word to describe Muslim newcomers — muhajirs — a term that comes from early Islamic history. Those who followed Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in the year 622 were the first muhajirs. In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans made sense of Muslim displacement and migration through that religious vocabulary. Notably, the Ottoman immigration system and refugee resettlement regime largely overlapped. The Ottomans committed to resettling everyone who wanted to move to the Ottoman state and, effectively, provided citizenship and social welfare to all those who wanted them upon arrival. Stricter notions about citizenship started emerging in the late nineteenth century, but did not take full effect until World War I, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed and Ottoman Arab provinces were divided between European empires.

I find the contemporary notion of “migrant” to be a way to deflect the state’s responsibility to those in need. Refugee migration takes many forms and does not only stem from warfare. Economic crises, famine, climate change, and gang violence can all produce refugees, even if these people do not satisfy the criteria of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention or specific national legislation. I find it more useful to think of refugees not in terms of why people left their homes, but in terms of whether they would be safe if they (cont. on page 10)
David Spear joined the Department of History in 1982. His thirty-eight-year career at Furman has forever changed the department and the university. He spoke with John Barrington about his time at Furman.

JOHN BARRINGTON: David, I know you’ve had a long career at Furman. Let’s start at the beginning: what brought you here? How did a Midwesterner end up at this Southern college?

DAVID SPEAR: I have been here a long time; when I retire at the end of this year, I will have spent thirty-eight years at Furman. I actually came here on a one-year appointment back in 1982 to fill in for a member of the History Department who was on leave. It was a hectic beginning; my daughter Katie was born just as I was starting the job (no paternity leave in those days!) and so my wife Debbie and I had to cope with the move down here and with a new baby, while I was writing lectures for classes I hadn’t taught before. But despite all that, I really loved Furman. At the end of that first year, the person I was replacing decided not to return, and I was thrilled to be offered a full-time position. Furman was my first job out of graduate school, so I really have spent my entire teaching career here.

JB: What made Furman so attractive?

DS: I attended Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. Lawrence is a liberal arts institution, and I really value the liberal arts mission. Furman’s stress on good teaching, and its prioritization of teaching over research was exactly what I wanted. I also loved the old teaching calendar, where classes met five days a week and allowed the professor to create strong bonds with his students. I miss the five-day teaching schedule.  

JB: What have been the best memories of your Furman career?

DS: One teaching experience that stands out is participating in the old Humanities Sequence. As I’m sure you recall, that was a year-long course, under the old calendar, that combined History, Religion, Philosophy, and English, with three professors sharing the teaching. Although it was a large class, the students who signed up for it tended to be very motivated, and the year-long experience built up a strong camaraderie. I learned a lot from listening to my colleagues’ lectures and from their insights on the historical material we covered; it was a great course that helped me to expand my knowledge and to look at familiar topics in new ways. One of the things that students enjoyed about the course was witnessing their professors ask questions; it was a shared learning experience for everyone.

I’ve also enjoyed being part of Travel Study programs: I participated in the British Isles program in 2002, in the tour of “Byzantium” (ie. Italy, the Balkans, and Turkey) in 2008, in the European Union program in 2013, and, most recently, I directed the Brussels program this past spring. As with the Humanities Sequence, the students on those programs tend to be especially motivated, and I learned a lot from the other professors taking part. The close bonds you create with students on these programs last a lifetime; I still keep in contact with students I traveled with many years ago.

Generally, I think the level of collegiality among faculty at Furman has been one of the most satisfying aspects of my time here; shared teaching and many other chances to interact have made this place special. One great example of that interaction – one in which you participated – was the Latin Table with David Morgan.
Learning how to hold conversations in Latin was a unique experience, and having someone like David, with all his extraordinary knowledge of Latin as a spoken tongue, was something I’ll never forget; I think it captured perfectly what the Liberal Arts environment can offer.

**JB:** You’re known as an especially dedicated teacher. I’m sure that one of the highlights of your time at Furman must have been winning the Meritorious Teaching Award.

**DS:** Yes, I was very honored to receive that, back in 1995. I really like the students here; I find them patient and forgiving. I’ve enjoyed their engagement in the lectures and discussions, and the conversations we have outside of class. I’ve appreciated many of the book recommendations that I’ve been given by my students.

**JB:** Greenville must have changed a great deal since you arrived thirty-eight years ago.

**DS:** You bet! When Debbie and I arrived, there were virtually no restaurants in Greenville, certainly none open on Sundays, there were obviously no brew pubs, and downtown was dead and decaying. The changes that have taken place over the last three decades have been extraordinary. Today’s Greenville is transformed.

**JB:** I know you’ve worked hard to establish links between Furman and the local community, particularly through the French Group that you founded. Was that inspired by the fact that Michelin is headquartered here?

**DS:** No, in fact I brought the idea down from my previous home in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. There, academics and members of the community used to get together one evening a month to practice French conversation and to share French food and wine. The meetings worked well both as social gatherings and as a way of keeping language skills alive. I decided to start up something similar when I came down here, and discovered there was a lot of interest among faculty and students and from people outside the university. Of course, since Furman was a Baptist institution back then, we couldn’t serve wine at our meetings – we served red and white French tea, instead! Fortunately, that is no longer the case. Many people learn French in school, and then just lose it; that seems a shame. I didn’t advertise the Group outside Furman, but knowledge about it spread by word of mouth. Some Michelin folk have participated, but it was just a coincidence that Michelin happened to be here.

**JB:** What plans do you have for retirement?

**DS:** I want to continue my research into the Norman clergy of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; one area I’d like to examine is the impact of William the Conqueror on ecclesiastical structures. A very different area I’m interested in is the Landmark Book series on major historical individuals and events; as you know, I’ve collected those for years. I think I’d like to delve into the New York publishing world of the 1950s, which produced the Landmark Series; I think it would be an interesting study for many reasons. Generally, I just want to have plenty of time to read. I’ve been amassing books on many subjects for years, and now I’ll have the chance to sit down and open them! I’m also going to continue learning the piano. I’ve been taking lessons again for a few years now – my teacher is a Furman alum, Ellie Corbett Hammond, class of 1995 (Music and Psychology). I’ll enjoy having more time to practice.

**JB:** We’re all going to miss having you here in the History Department. Do you think you’ll miss teaching?

**DS:** I’m sure I will. I’ve enjoyed working with Furman students, and I’ve enjoyed many aspects of my career. Furman has let me pursue my teaching interests and has provided a stimulating, collegial environment. I have enjoyed my thirty-eight years: no regrets!
Alumni Memories of David Spear

These are just a few of the comments we received from dozens of alumni who shared their stories about Dr. Spear.

Dr. Spear was the most amazing teacher I had at Furman! I will never forget my senior seminar on the Crusades, where we would meet at his house or Coffee Underground once a week. He always went above and beyond for his students and wanted to see them succeed. Congratulations to him for all his years of inspiring and educating!

Margaret Slaughter ’11

My favorite memory of Dr. Spear came from the senior seminar I took with him in the spring of 2005. I don’t want to minimize his proper academic prowess, or his teaching ability (certain professors are just made for a teaching school like Furman), but the most memorable thing for me was Dr. Spear’s intense and expressed hatred of the movie Forrest Gump. That might sound silly or not really related to anything academic, but at the time, I’d never heard a single person say they disliked that movie. His specific reasons don’t even matter, because the larger lessons were that thinking for yourself and questioning conventional wisdom are important parts of adulthood, and of course, of further academic life, should that be the path chosen after undergrad. It was a little thing, which was mostly surprising and amusing at the time, that in retrospect has been really valuable and meaningful in my life.

Michael Orr ’05

What I remember most about Dr. Spear was an 8 am class during Winter Term, in the old days when we had trimesters. For the eight weeks of the course, he provided coffee everyday! This gesture, along with his sense of humor and delivery, made it worth getting up so early. He is definitely one of the main reasons I became a History/Social Studies teacher.

Rod Taylor, Sr. ’89

In my senior year at Furman, I had yet to take a class with Dr. Spear. So, despite already having a full term of history classes (including my Senior Seminar and an internship), I HAD to add Dr. Spear’s Medieval History class because there was no way I was graduating from Furman without taking one of his classes. He has always been legendary, and I am so glad I took his class because I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Ashley Hazelwood Farrington ’08

Dr. Spear was a huge inspiration to me. Medieval European History was one of my very favorite classes at Furman. I recall doing extensive research for a paper in his class, and when the paper came back, Dr. Spear had written “PhD level research” or something similar in his comments. It made me seriously consider making medieval history my career by getting a PhD and becoming a scholar and teacher. I ultimately didn’t follow that path, but Dr. Spear’s encouragement, mentorship, and enthusiasm for the subject made me believe that I had a knack for research and writing. It led me to a career in law and then writing for television, which involves more research than you might think. I enthusiastically endorse the “Year of Spear” and want to add my voice to the many expressing the great influence Dr. Spear had on the lives of countless students.

Laura Putney ’92

Dr. Spear had a profound impact on me. Since I got my doctorate and became a college professor myself, I’ve often thought, “WWSD?” In other words, what would Spear do? Even though my inherent personality is neither as kind nor as gentle as David Spear, I hope I’m as open and approachable and giving as a professor as he was to me. I am so grateful I got to have several experiences with him as a professor, and I am even more grateful to know him as a person. Furman has been lucky to have him for so long, and his retirement will leave a gaping and difficult-to-fill hole in both the history department and the Furman community. While I have no doubt the department and the university will rise to the challenge of finding a medievalist as talented as David, it’s a big ask for find someone to be as great a human being.

Megan Remmel ’08
For the Spring 2019 term, Jason Hansen was awarded a US Scholar Grant by the Fulbright Commission. The grant enabled him to live in Zagreb, Croatia, for six months conducting research, teaching a class at the local university, and serving as an American cultural ambassador.

At the University of Zagreb Hansen taught a course on history and memory that examined the region’s history of conflict. The course raised awareness of the powerful ways in which perceptions of the past are used to shape contemporary attitudes and values. While the students found the course content useful, they particularly enjoyed experiencing a liberal arts teaching style. It may sound strange to us, but none of their professors had ever asked them about their opinions and interpretations.

Hansen’s experience with the students helped inform his research into local versus national memory of the Homeland War of the 1990s. Hansen’s research examined how Croatians have tried to balance the need for remembrance with the necessity of reconciliation, finding ways to live alongside neighbors again while also honoring the tremendous sacrifices of the war. As a testament to just how difficult this process of remembrance can be, it should be noted that even the terms one uses to describe the war can be enormously controversial. In Croatia, this past is remembered primarily as a separate war for national independence, waged against a breakaway group of Croatian Serbs and their Serbian allies in Belgrade. Yet the transnational nature of the conflict makes it impossible to divorce the war in Croatia from the other conflicts fought at the same time - for example, in Bosnia. How the different regions of Croatia remember the war, and how those differing experiences fit together to form a national composite formed a main theme of Hansen’s research, as did the role of external actors like the EU and international NGOs in determining patterns of remembrance. All of this is set against how Croatia’s rising status as a tourist destination has affected its memory landscape.

Hansen noted the significant differences between his own experiences visiting a country as a tourist (he has taken several MayX groups to the region) and residing there. While he enjoyed acting as a cultural ambassador and meeting with people at all levels of Croatian society – the highlight was a five-hour lunch with the mayor of an important memory site in Skabrnja – living abroad is challenging. Even if you speak the language, there are significant legal and cultural barriers to overcome. The experience gave him a newfound respect for those who immigrate to the U.S. and who are going through a comparable process of assimilation.

For those interested in travelling to the region, Hansen will be leading a Furman Alumni Trip to Croatia and Slovenia in summer 2021. Contact the Alumni office for more details.
Faculty Book Recommendations

Marian Strobel recommends Unexampled Courage: The Blinding of Sgt. Isaac Woodard and the Awakening of President Harry S. Truman and Judge J. Waties Waring by Richard Gergel (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2019). On February 12, 1946, Sgt. Isaac Woodard, a uniformed African-American World War II veteran, was beaten and blinded by police chief Lynwood Shull of Batesburg, SC. Federal charges were brought against Shull, but an all-white jury cleared him of charges. So outraged was Justice Waring, who oversaw the case, that he bucked the mores of the conservative Charleston society of which he was a part. Gergel provides a carefully researched account of Waring’s transformation into a firm advocate of equal rights as guaranteed in the 14th Amendment and the tremendous ostracism that Waring and his wife endured. Harry Truman, energized by the injustice meted out to Woodard, moved actively to unravel the vestiges of Jim Crow. Gergel tells his story with passion and balance; he makes “crusty” judicial history come alive.

Erik Ching recommends Eileen Markey’s A Radical Faith: The Assassination of Sister Maura (NY: Nation Books, 2016). Maura Clarke was one of four U.S. churchwomen murdered by a right-wing death squad in El Salvador in December 1980, on the cusp of that country’s twelve-year civil war. But this is really a story about a life, of a girl born in the Bronx in the 1940s who found in the Maryknoll order a sense of adventure and freedom from gendered expectations, and eventually a social purpose, as the Catholic Church went through an internal debate about its role in the twentieth-century world. It is written elegantly by journalist Eileen Markey, who gained access for the first time to the Clarke family papers.

Alumni Updates

Ashley Hazelwood Farrington ’08 received a Master’s in History from Pittsburg State University in 2018 and is teaching integrated humanities classes and dual enrollment U.S. History classes at a classical Christian school in Knoxville. She has two children.

R. C. Webber ’82 published A Balm in Gilead: Eulogies of Comfort, an anthology of African American funeral sermons that examines the relationship of the Dubose/Gaillard and Walker families of Winnsboro, SC after slavery ended.

Paul Johnstono ’05 earned his Ph.D. in history at Duke in 2012 and was a professor of history at The Citadel and Air Command & Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base. He and his wife are expecting their third child in March 2020. His book on the army of Ptolemaic Egypt will be published in 2020.

Kristi Wright ’04 is a self-employed book and paper conservator working on collections for institutions and individuals.

Robert Moore ’08 has worked as a strategic communications advisor at FedEx headquarters in Memphis since 2017, where he lives with his wife and two children. He previously worked as a staff member in the US Senate, handling national security and foreign relations issues and is a public policy advisor for the Defense Priorities Foundation, a national security think-tank.

Jayda Justus ’98 blogs at www.thehistorymom.com reviewing historical sites and experiences for families. She is also working on her first historical novel.

Payton Isner ’18 is currently at Cornell University working toward a Masters in Health Administration.

Martha Royal Shafer ’81 ran for the North Carolina General Assembly in 2018 and lost to a four-term incumbent. She is now serving on the Board of Lillian’s List, an organization that works to elect women to local legislature.

John Wilsey ’92 is an associate professor of history at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.
At the start of the year, **Tim Fehler and Abigail Hartman** (History ’17) published *Signs and Wonders in Britain’s Age of Revolution*. The book grew out of Hartman’s insights during during a summer 2015 collaborative research project with Fehler that was funded by the South Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities. They were inspired to take a fresh look at the era of the English Civil War by investigating pamphlets and news accounts that are typically left out of standard histories of the period, or, if mentioned, are marginalized as delusions, superstition, or gross sensationalism. Over the next two years they carefully analyzed and contextualized reports of dramatic phenomena which were sometimes called “warning pieces” by contemporary pamphleteers, appropriating the militaristic image of a signal gun fired to announce impending danger. More commonly they were known as “prodigies” or “signs and wonders,” terms which encompassed any number of unusual events and departures from the natural order.

Hartman is now pursuing her Ph.D. in Medieval History from the University of St. Andrews. Her article “And the Violent Take it by Force: Poetry and the Cause of Simon de Montfort after the Battle of Evesham,” which grew in part from her Master’s dissertation, won *The Medieval Journal* 2019 prize.

**Anna Zhang** (History and Religion ’20) worked with Dr. Fehler to take this collaborative research project into its next phase. Their project, “Prodigies and Prognostication: Credulity and Credibility in Early Modern Europe,” shifted its focus to look more intensely into the weekly newspapers that emerged in the 1640s as censorship broke down during the English Civil War. By analyzing such reports of the supernatural in their particular weekly news contexts and investigating references in personal diaries and correspondence, Zhang and Fehler have been studying popular understanding of theological concepts such as Providence and comparing their use in sermons. Their project is tracing the variety of rhetorical claims and evidence that people used to establish the credibility of their reports in this period of crisis and anxiety as rival newspapers often accused each other of providing “fake news.”

**Yunhui “Tom” Yang** (History and Japanese Studies ’19) completed a 2018 Furman Advantage Summer Research project with **Lane Harris** entitled “A Translation and Annotation of Huang Fu’s A Journal of a Voyage on a Mission to Annam.” This obscure, early fifteenth-century text concerned Huang Fu’s travels to join the Ming armies during the conquest of Annam (Vietnam). In fall 2018, Yang extended this work by carefully researching Huang Fu’s career as the civil administrator and highest-ranking official of this new Ming colony. Yang’s research not only uncovered a host of unstudied writings by Huang Fu, but he was able to use those writings to argue that Huang Fu and others like him in the early Ming were engaged in creating a colonial empire, but one whose colonial activities had been obscured by the dynasty’s turn away from expansion in the middle of the fifteenth century. Tom’s work was published in the Furman Humanities Review. He is currently pursuing his master’s degree at Harvard University.
Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky Interview Continued

returned home. If “migrants” face violence or ruin in their countries of origin, they are refugees.

JH: There is a well-known Chinese proverb “May you live in interesting times.” This is certainly an interesting time to be an historian who deals with Turkish and Syrian history. What are some sources alumni might turn to, to become better informed about current events in the region?

VHT: Jadaliyya provides insightful analysis on current events by academics. It focuses on the Arab world, Turkey, and Iran, and has topical sections on refugees and migrants, Middle Eastern culture, pedagogy, etc. Another great resource is the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), which features academic op-eds on current events in the region. Finally, if you like podcasts, I highly recommend Ottoman History Podcast. Although it is not about current events, this podcast features lively conversations about cutting-edge scholarship in Middle Eastern history.

JH: Final question. As you know, Furman has recently started offering alumni travel trips led by professors. Let’s say you have an unlimited budget to lead such a trip. Where do you take them? What would you most want them to see or experience?

VHT: In an ideal world, where there is no war and budgets are unlimited, I would love to take alumni on a grand Ottoman tour. We would go to the Ottoman Empire’s greatest cities: Istanbul (Turkey), Thessaloniki (Greece), Sofia (Bulgaria), Belgrade (Serbia), Damascus and Aleppo (Syria), Jerusalem (Israel & Palestine), Beirut (Lebanon), Baghdad (Iraq), and Cairo (Egypt). We would visit some of the world’s most splendid mosques, synagogues, and churches, while investigating what contemporary nation-states chose to preserve from their Ottoman past into their “national” present and what they had written out of history. I guarantee that we would also dine very well.

May I pitch another trip? It would probably only appeal to me. I propose a tour of the great Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea port cities that flourished in the nineteenth century and are in decline today. That’s the theme! “Ports that have seen better days.” Isn’t this the best thing? We would go to Odessa (Ukraine), Varna (Bulgaria), İçkenderun (Turkey), Jaffa (Israel), and Alexandria (Egypt). Prior to World War I, these were vibrant, cosmopolitan cities, responsible for a significant percentage of global trade, with the latest Parisian fashions and extravagant fairs; places where socialists, monarchists, anarchists, and exiles from every empire dreamed of their revolutions, while drinking themselves blind in port taverns. These cities are not on your cruise liners’ itineraries today, and I would tell you exactly what happened to them, their people, and the revolutionary dreams in the twentieth century. Are you ready to join me on this trip?

A Royal Excursion

History major Katie Wooten ‘20 joined Carolyn Day in London for the Georgian Papers Symposium on November 5, 2019. Wooten, who is currently on study away in Edinburgh, is conducting research related to King George III, his recovery from mental illness, and his continued commitment to the duties of the crown throughout his illness.

Day secured a rare invitation for an undergraduate student to take part in the symposium, where they attended a panel discussion on Mental Health and The Georgian World, mingled with top scholars in the field, as well as Sherlock co-creator and producer Mark Gatiss.

The next day, with Day’s planning and assistance, Wooten was granted access to the Royal Archives at Windsor, where she was allowed to work with King George’s original correspondence.

“It was a surreal moment to transcribe personal correspondence from the king and actually touch the same letters that he wrote.”
Thank You to Our Donors

We in the History Department extend our deep gratitude to the supporters of the History Department Alumni Fund and the John Block Research Fund. The Alumni Fund allows us to support student-oriented initiatives and afford departmental needs, and the Block Fund helps offset the costs of faculty research. Donations can now be made online at alumni.furman.edu/donate. In the designation box select “other,” and in the description box be sure to specify “History Alumni Fund” or “John Block Research Fund” to prevent the money from going into the general budget.
Huang ’14. Carolyn Day led the spring Edinburgh study away program and gave invited talks at the Anatomy Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum while in the UK. This fall, she presented at the European Rural History Conference in Paris and attended the Georgian Papers Symposium in London. Jason Hansen spent his spring and summer in Croatia as a Fulbright Scholar and presented at the 20th triennial Nebenzahl Lecture Series on the history of cartography at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Nadia Kanagawa capped off her summer by defending her dissertation, “Making the Realm, Configuring the People: Foreign Subjects in Eighth-Century Japan,” at the University of Southern California. Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky presented on “Islam and Humanitarianism” at George Mason University and organized a panel entitled “Legal Regimes of Refugee Settlement in the Middle East” at the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association in New Orleans. Hamed-Troyansky notably received an award for the Best Dissertation Prize from the World History Association and honorable mention for the 2019 Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award by the Middle East Studies Association.

Tim Fehler published “Die Emder Gotteskammern und ihre Bewohnerinnen zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in Klaas-Dieter Voß (ed.), Freie Friesen Töchter: Tradition und gelebte Wirklichkeit. This fall he presented the paper “Especially unto those of the household of faith”: Menso Alting, Discipline, and Community in Emden’s Social Welfare” at the Sixteenth Century Society Conference in St. Louis. Erik Ching is continuing in his second year as Director of Undergraduate Research, a role that keeps him exceptionally busy in addition to teaching.

Finally, we’ve made a number of noteworthy improvements to our suite. In honor of Diane Vecchio’s 23 years at Furman and her scholarship on immigration history, we dedicated an piece entitled “Tempest-Tost: An Italian Immigrant” that hangs in the reception area with a plaque acknowledging Vecchio’s work. The artwork was unveiled at a retirement celebration held for Vecchio in August. During the celebration we were happy to add Diane’s photo to the History Department Wall of Honor; she is the first woman to join the wall! If you look closely, you can see her picture in the department photo on the front page, right between David Spear and Savita Nair and directly below an irreverent reference to the Great Fire of 1666. Historian humor is the best.

We also commemorated Carolyn Sims’ outstanding 53 years of service to Furman with a beautiful photo that hangs near her former desk. Now everyone who visits campus hoping to see her can do so! Carolyn still lives in Greenville, is doing well, and keeps in touch occasionally.

As you can see, and as you already know, the Department of History at Furman continues to be one of the best, and busiest, on campus. We’d love to hear what’s been keeping you busy over the last year. Please drop us a line sometime this year; we always appreciate hearing from our alumni.

—Lane Harris