Many thanks to the 2008 Olympiada panel of judges for their generous contribution of time and sharing their love of Russian with students from around New York State. Some of the judges; (left to right) Olga Tamchin, Zakhar Berkovich, Alesia Seluzhitski, Dorota Paszkowska, Yuliya Yakimchuk, Liya Mikhailova, Beth Kane, and Kaitlin Costello.

Irina Vasilyeva, volunteer judge and current UAlbany student, reviewing Russian reading topics with Olympiada participant

The Slavic and Eurasian Studies Program once again hosted the regional competition of the Olympiada of Spoken Russian on April 9. This competition has been sponsored by the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) annually since the 1960’s and 2008 marks year number 13 that LLC welcomed more than 100 students from around New York State to take part in the event. Students spend months of preparation to assist them in demonstrating their skills in the Russian language. They are scored by judges in three commissions (categories for discussion): Spoken Russian, Culture (area studies) and Reading (prose and poetry). Subcategories include such things as; my family, nature, art, Russian composers, Russian history, poetry of A. Akhmtova, A. Blok, A. Pushkin, and various prose texts on such subjects as ice cream, concerts and Russian folk tales.

Each year the top regional winners are invited to take part in a summer study program in Vladimir, Russia where they focus on language training, history, literature and culture. The top three winners this year, Erik Andersen (Staten Island Technical School), Andrew Farrell (Albany Shaker High School) and Moisey Khanimov (a heritage speaker from Staten Island Technical School) were all awarded summer trips to Russia. Every third or fourth year, the finalists from the regional contests who have gone on to win top honors in the national contests for their respective countries are invited to compete in an International Olympiada in Moscow, Russia.

The Olympiada experience here on UAlbany’s campus is a positive one for these students and helps boost their enthusiasm for learning more about the Russian language and culture. Many of them will go on to study Russian in college and use their skills and knowledge in the workforce.
The breadth of issues addressed at the conference is indicated by the themes listed in the call for papers: migration, Diaspora, identity, exile, cultural contact, minority literatures, colonialism, post-colonialism, francophone cinema and literature as a reflection of history and globalization. Once again, Albany graduate students – Anoumou Ame куджи, Elise Bouhet, Danielle Jouët-Pastré, George Olongo, Louis Stelling – presented papers on panels alongside others from other institutions: Boston University, Queen’s University (Canada), Université de Montreal, L’université de Lomé (Togo), University of Western Ontario. The conference, which has now become an annual event, was organized by Anoumou Ame куджи and Danielle Jouët-Pastré, with Professor Eloise Brière lending support as needed.

LLC continues its dedication to giving its graduate students the professional background needed to succeed in academics, teaching and research. Having them participate actively in such events as the Spanish and French conferences is one indication of the Department’s commitment in this area. Also this spring we held two additional professional development conferences for graduate students. On March 14, Professors Lotfi Sayahi and David Wills discussed the how-to’s of scholarly publication, while on April 11 Professors Brett Bowles and Ilka Kressner focused on conference presentations and obtaining funding. Both events were well attended and well-received and we anticipate that similar meetings will be held in the coming year.

The Department has always been very active in cooperating with language teachers in high schools and supporting their pedagogical efforts. March 17 was Francophone Day, organized by LLC jointly with the University in the High School Program. French secondary school teachers and students were welcomed to campus and engaged in activities revolving around the French-speaking world. These included a campus tour in French, workshops focusing on Ivory Coast traditions and Quebeçois music and dance (including square, circle and contra dancing with live music), French conversation, and information from a French study abroad panel. Francophone House presented a French-Canadian play, Jean Barbeau’s Manon Lastcall. Judging by the feedback, Francophone Day, put together by Danielle Jouët-Pastré, Veronique Martin and Lou Stelling, with significant contributions by, once again, Professor Eloise Brière and Professor Cynthia Fox, was a signal success, and will be repeated again next year.

Supporting language learners in the high schools was also the purpose of the regional competition Olympiada of Spoken Russian, hosted by the Slavic and Eurasian Studies Program on April 9. There is a long tradition of this event, sponsored by the American Council of Teachers of Russian, at Albany: as in past years, more than a hundred students from public and private high schools came to campus to show off their competence in spoken Russian, reading and area studies. Once again, Professor Charles Rougle and LLC Secretary Amber Stephens (a graduate of the Russian MA program) organized and ran the Olympiada, while advanced Albany undergraduate and graduate students in Russian, as well as visitors to campus from Russia, participated as judges.

The Department was no less active within the University community. Thanks to faculty and student volunteers, regular language tables (conversation groups) for many of the languages being taught under LLC auspices are now being held: these allow all those interested, whether enrolled in a course or not, to have the opportunity to not only sharpen their speaking and listening skills, but also exchange ideas about other cultures. New perspectives on other cultures, provided through the medium of film, have been offered by several international film series. Many thanks to those who have volunteered their time to coordinate, select and host the films, including faculty members Darius Jonathan, Karin Hamm-Ehsani, and Hilde Hoogenboom and graduate students Alice Krause and Elise Bouhet.

Although “traditional” teaching methods continue to prevail in the Department, we are exploring – and implementing – new possibilities offered by the use of technology in the classroom. The Center for Languages and International Communication (CLIC), coordinated by Robert Summers, is at the heart of these endeavors. It is not feasible to list all that has been done by CLIC and is planned for the near-term, so I will only mention the ongoing telecollaborative venture with the University of Haute-Alsace in France, which has students at both institutions bolster their language skills through real-time web interactions. This initiative, which attracted the attention of local media, can be extended to other languages, and I very much hope that this will be accomplished next year.

In the past, several LLC faculty have been recognized for their achievements in the classroom; this spring, it is the turn of Alice Krause, a graduate student in Spanish. She has received the 2008 Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Teaching Assistant, and my colleagues and I couldn’t be more delighted. Alice – please accept my congratulations on behalf of the entire Department!

A final note. My semester as LLC Chair, succeeding Professor Brett Bowles, is at the heart of these endeavors. It is not feasible to list all that has been done by CLIC and is planned for the near-term, so I will only mention the ongoing telecollaborative venture with the University of Haute-Alsace in France, which has students at both institutions bolster their language skills through real-time web interactions. This initiative, which attracted the attention of local media, can be extended to other languages, and I very much hope that this will be accomplished next year.

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Best wishes for a pleasant summer – see you all in the fall!
Happenings in LLC

Karín Hamm-Ehsani was born and raised in Germany and received her Master of Arts degree in German and English Studies, and Educational Philosophy, from the University of Cologne, Germany. She graduated with a PhD in Germanic Languages from the University of California, Los Angeles, and has been teaching German Studies (language, literature, film) at the college level since 1987, first at Union College in Schenectady, and now at UAlbany. Her publications include articles on Thomas Mann, Ludwig Tieck, exile literature, and German and German-Turkish film. Karín has introduced UAlbany’s German Club, instituted a German Film Festival throughout the year and was recently appointed to additional responsibilities with the University in High Schools Program where she serves as the German Liaison to all high schools offering UAlbany German college credits. Congratulations Karín and thanks for all your hard work!

Ruth Scipione, formerly a TA in LLC and now an Instructional Consultant with UAlbany’s Institute for Teaching Learning and Academic Leadership, is currently completing her MA in Spanish Linguistics. Ruth recently returned from Mexico where she was collecting data for her dissertation which focuses on language change in Triqui, an Otomanguean language. Her trip started in Miguel Aleman, a small settlement in western Mexico, where she worked with children to make picture flashcards to help her assess changes in the language and also obtained recordings of the spoken language in Triqui, Spanish, and a combination of the two. She also worked with a Triqui doctor to make recordings designed to help a missionary improve Triqui basic health practices. From there she went to a conference in Oaxaca City where she presented her findings and made excellent contacts for future work in her field. Ruth says she now has “a much better understanding of how language variation is playing out in Triqui” and is busy reviewing the recordings, compiling a database and codifying data to complete her dissertation.

LLC was one of the first universities in the area to respond to growing interest in the Arabic language by offering beginning Arabic in 2005, jointly spearheaded by an astute new professor of Spanish Linguistics, Lotfi Sayahi, who was familiar with Arabic from his native Tunisia and two of our French professors, Eloïse Brière and Jean-François Brière. The team engaged in ongoing advocacy for Arabic at UAlbany, from convincing administration and finding instructors, to participating in finding and writing grants for Arabic instruction. Our most recent instructor, the gregarious and fun-loving Darius Jonathan (pictured above left), originally from Sudan, has captured the imaginations and hearts of UAlbany’s Arabic students. He has a wide ranging international background to draw from with degrees in social anthropology, Arabic, Islamic thought and culture, and linguistics. Darius launched the Arabic Film Festival this year, hosting 12 films from a wide array of Arabic countries and cultures in order to broaden the horizons of his students, the campus and the community. Serving as springboards for discussion both in class and around campus, the films helped explore how multiracial, multinational, multilingual and multicultural Arabic speakers are. Student demand for Arabic instruction is increasing and if enrollments merit it, LLC will be offering the next level of Arabic this fall.

Congratulations to the winners of the Ninth Annual ACTR National Post Secondary Russian Essay Contest. In this year’s contest, there were 723 essays submitted from 50 universities and colleges across the nation. Participants were asked to write on a topic: “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,” Anna Karenina, Lev Tolstoy. Each essay was ranked by three judges in Russia. Over 100 students from 37 institutions won gold, silver, bronze, or honorable mention certificates. Three students of our program took part in the contest.

Gabriel Guadalupe, Russian major, got an Honorable Mention certificate in the category Non-Heritage Learners, Level 4 and Alesia Selyuzhitski, Russian minor, won the First Place in the category Heritage Learners, Level 2.

Stay tuned for the next issue of Happenings in LLC!
LLC Welcomes Fulbright Scholar

Each year, there are two to three Fulbright Scholars who are invited to UAlbany's campus to expand research in areas of interest that are crucial to their chosen field. This year LLC welcomes Lyubov Bugaeva who is visiting from St. Petersburg State University, Russia, where she graduated and got her PhD in 1995. At present she is Associate Professor in the Philology department. She is the author of over sixty articles (in Russian and English) on Vladimir Nabokov, Russian and comparative literature, and philosophy as well as anthropology of culture. Lyubov is actually a specialist in Vladimir Nabokov, but accidentally found interest in Russian writer Maxim Gorky when she learned that he had written his critically acclaimed founding novel of socialist realist literature, Mother, while staying in Keene, NY during the summer of 1906, when he tried to raise money for the Russian revolution. Her research focuses on the interaction and mutual influence of Gorky and American philosopher John Dewey as well as other American intellectuals, including philosophers, sociologists, and Fabian socialists, whom Gorky met in New York. This project is significant on many levels as it will contribute a missing piece of history to Gorky studies in Russia. It will also provide American scholars with detailed knowledge of John Dewey’s connection with Russian activity during the summer of 1906, i.e. long before his trip to the Soviet Union and his participation in the investigation of the Leon Trotsky case, adding a few extra pages to the history of New York. Furthermore, St. Petersburg State University is the home of a central library that bears the name of Gorky. As a result of this project, Lyubov will create seminars and publish articles and a monograph to share her research findings.

From the Diary of LLC Grad Students:

Trabajo voluntario en Guatemala

by Charles Bour

Guatemala, a nation rich in indigenous culture and a haven for today’s modern cultural and adventure tourism, has more than half its population living below the poverty level. Over half of the country’s labor force makes a living from agriculture, a business historically developed and ravaged by big business and exploited for Guatemala’s cheap labor and lack of basic social rights. Although every Guatemalan has the right to free medical care, there are long waits and usually a small possibility of receiving care. For this reason, many volunteer organizations have made and continue to participate in medical missions to the country, one such organization being Children of the Americas. With an entirely volunteer staff they make an annual trip to Guatemala, providing free medical service on a first come first serve basis. This year, the destination was Pueblo Nuevo Tiquisate in Escuintla, approximately four hours south of Guatemala City.

Buses full of volunteer gringos arrive in Tiquisate—a group of about 150 volunteers made up of doctors, nurses, dentists, specialists in prosthetics, surgeons, interpreters and many others. Leafy ash slowly and constantly falls from the sky as the burning of sugar cane fields surrounding the town send up smoke signals as far as the eye can see. The cane is first burned, then must be harvested and processed within 24 hours or precious sugars will be ruined. We take over almost the entire hospital. Working 12 hours a day or more, we begin carrying loads of medical supplies brought by the volunteers into the hospital. I spend the day heaving and pulling crates and boxes while stopping to translate whenever needed. The hospital appears bare and lonely.

Continued on page 7

LLC Alumni

Amber Stephens (BA in Russian, University of Vermont 1982 and MA in Russian Literature, Albany, 1991) came to Albany in 1982 to pursue her MA in Russian Literature. In 1984, while continuing work on the MA, she accepted the secretary position for the then named Slavic Languages and Literatures Department. She has studied abroad in the former Soviet Union at the Pushkin Institute ACTR program (1981) and with the UAlbany graduate program at Moscow State University (Fall 1986). From SLL to LLC, Amber is a significant part of UAlbany’s language department history. She currently resides in Cohoes with her husband Jim.

One of LLC’s first success stories in Arabic is Dina Mikdali (Biology 2006, with advanced independent study in Arabic) who is now an MA student in Public Administration in Health Policy and Management at NYU. Using her competence in Arabic, she’s just completed an internship as a research associate at the UN Global Action on Aging researching and writing on critical aging issues and the potential of older people within the global economy. Congratulations Dina! Just like you have done, we hope all our students will continue find new and creative opportunities to use their language skills learned in LLC.

Eileen Colucci (BA in French and English, 1975) graduated from UAlbany in the days when each foreign language had its own department. She is currently a French/English translator in Morocco where she’s been living for the past twenty-eight years. Eileen feels that “…my SUNYA education has served me well!” Her multicultural novel, The Strings of the Lute was recently published and with recent talks hinting at a "clash of civilizations," her book takes a look at "the little picture," of ordinary people from totally different backgrounds, cultures, and religions who deal with extraordinary issues of our time. If she can contribute in even the smallest way to peace and understanding among people of different cultures, then she feels she will have reached her goal.

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LLC Language Table Family

Tavola Italiana | Café Français | Deutsche Kaffeestunde | Conversations in Russian | La Mesa Española

LLC's Language Table family has grown rapidly over the past few years. We welcome back Conversations in Russian and La Mesa Española, which both returned in fall after a number of years. Eat, relax and visit while discussing current events from around the world. Tables usually meet once, every week on campus, while classes are in session. All are welcome to join in the fun. Visit www.albany.edu/llc for up-to-date information about ongoing and upcoming events.

Hispanic Studies Conference

On April 6 and 9, LLC’s Hispanic graduate student organization had the honor of welcoming Víctor Gaviria, a passionate and talented Columbian filmmaker in Latin American culture. After the showing of "Rodrigo D. No futuro" and "Sumas y Restas," two of Gaviria’s best known films, he invited viewers to a Q&A session where he answered questions about the filmmaking process. He also discussed the living situation of underprivileged inhabitants of Medellin, Columbia during the last two decades. His insights made visible and understandable a world that is often forgotten or misinterpreted by many.

Amanda Fanoun presenting at UAlbany’s Honors College Conference, April 2008

Awards for Excellence in the Languages

Each year LLC presents awards for excellence in the languages. We heartily congratulate this year’s winners: Amanda Fanoun for the Frank Carrino Memorial Scholarship (outstanding academic performance in LLC), Ariel Zach for the Anthony M. Gisolfi Fund Award (academically outstanding in Italian or Spanish), and Nicole Nelson for The Guy A. Enfante Memorial Award for Excellence (academic excellence in French). LLC gratefully acknowledges the many generous individuals who helped establish these awards and the donors who continue to add to them.

International Film Series

Sponsored by LLC

Whether you’re into romantic comedy or real life drama, the international film series offered by LLC in affiliation with our language programs offer a wide genre of films that appeal to varying tastes in cinema.

City Scope, the international film festival for spring 2008, showcased films that explored city life from an international perspective. The main focus was on films that personified the physical entity of city life and transformed this physicality into characteristics identifiable through people. Film series in Arabic, German-Turkish and Russian were also featured. All films had English subtitles, so everyone could enjoy them! LLC would like to give a special thanks to the series coordinators who take time out of their busy academic lives to bring additional diversity and culture to our campus and community.
Full Circle - Meet Lou Stelling

Lou Stelling, who started learning French at age 9 through an after-school program and continued his studies in middle school and high school, has been a member of the LLC family since the fall of 1997. As a new UAlbany freshman, Lou already had first-hand knowledge of the quality education he was to receive by way of his participation in UAlbany’s University in the High School (UHS) Program. Lou quickly and strategically placed himself in LLC as a work study student while developing and nourishing a passion for Franco-American studies. It wasn’t long before he found and took advantage of the many opportunities for cultural immersion, choosing two summer sessions at Laval University in Quebec in 1999 and 2001 and then, after graduating summa cum laude in 2000 with a BA in French and a minor in Linguistics, he went on to spend a year abroad in Grenoble France, teaching elementary to advanced levels of English grammar, research methods and conversation to French students. In 2003 Lou received his MA from UAlbany in French with a concentration in Linguistics. During his graduate studies Lou worked closely with French Studies Professor Cynthia Fox assisting her with research on the Franco-American Project, one of only 2 sites nationally that received an NSF grant for this project. Ultimately the project interviewed nearly 300 French speakers ages 6 to 98 in an attempt to understand how the French language in New England changed over time and the impact of the surrounding primarily English-speaking culture upon it. The experience piqued his interest and not surprisingly, Lou’s PhD thesis and dissertation grew to explore the effects on spoken French in French-English bilinguals in two communities in the Northeast. His primary research interests now include language shift, bilingualism and applied linguistics, particularly related to French in North America. Now with a dozen academic presentations, 3 articles and experience teaching at several institutions under his belt, Lou has come full circle to act as a French Liaison to the UHS program that pointed him to LLC. Lou is presently completing final revisions to his dissertation and hopes to defend this summer.

La Maison Francophone

On the day of casting, it was clear that there were potential future actors amongst those who auditioned for a role in Manon Lastcall, a play presented by UAlbany’s Francophone House Living Learning Community. The hardest challenge for students was pronunciation. The linguistic challenge was biggest for Natalia Nosovets (Manon) who speaks “Joual,” a dialect of Quebec that is not well known. After two months of weekly rehearsals, everything came together performance night and students performed to a full house in the Humanities B-39 theater. A special LLC thank you to French Studies grad students Kristin Bini and Elise Bouhet for transforming freshmen and sophomores who barely spoke French into the funny and eloquent characters of the play.

“...it was an amazing piece of alchemy from my perspective… and really served to create a strong ‘esprit de corps’ among the students of Francophone House.” -Professor Eloise Brière-

From the Diary of LLC Grad Students:

La vida como un TA en LLC

Alice Krause

As I step off the campus bus, the brisk, late March wind gives me a chill, and I wish I were still on spring break in Costa Rica. The hot weather and the perfect view of the Arenal Volcano that I experienced in La Fortuna make me want to escape the last few days of cold weather and return to the rain forest. While I was there I even got to spend time with Amanda Rossi (MA in Latin American Literature, 2006), who is now the assistant director of a language school and animal rescue shelter outside of La Fortuna. However, I can’t escape just yet. I arrive on campus early and decide to head straight to the office so that I can review my lesson plan for the day. I teach my class, then it’s back to the office for the next class meeting and grade papers. By the time I’m done, it’s lunch time, and I join my fellow Spanish TAs for a quick lunch in the Campus Center. After lunch, it’s back to LLC for office hours. I help students with compositions, oral presentations, or review complicated grammar points. My interactions with my students really allow me to see the symmetry between practice and research. I specialize in second language acquisition, and I get to casually observe what I’m studying on a daily basis. This helps me to get focused for my research in developing the methodology for my dissertation.

Aside from teaching and research, my colleagues and I put together themed semester length film series that reflect the cultural diversity found in LLC. We collaborate with faculty, research and preview many films in order to get the right fit. Spending so much time together, the grad students in LLC have become sort of like a family; celebrating birthdays and accomplishments, having dinner parties, taking trips overseas…it’s a busy life, but I wouldn’t change a thing. Somehow, I manage to balance my time, and I actually find that I get more done when I have more to do. Before I know it, my day is over and I head home, to prepare tonight’s meal. It’s my turn to cook dinner…
Faculty News

- Timothy Sergay attended a lecture by the prominent literary critic James Wood sponsored by the SUNY New York State Writers Institute on February 28 at the Campus Center. Wood's lecture on the culture of contemporary fiction criticism was followed by a Q&A session in which the critic exchanged observations with Timothy on Stanislavsky, Wilde, and "the capture of aesthetic credence." Afterward the two discussed translation criticism in relation to Wood's recent essay in the New Yorker on a new translation of Tolstoy's War and Peace by Pevear and Volokhonsky. On April 12, 2008, Timothy presented a paper at a scholarly conference in Moscow, "Gasparovskie chitienia -- 2008" (Gasparov Readings 2008) held at the Russian State University for the Humanities, April 10-12. This was in honor of the prominent Russian classicist, literary scholar and translator Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov (1935-2005). Timothy spoke on problems of interpreting and translating into English a particularly "difficult" lyric poem by Boris Pasternak, "Ty tak igrala eto rol'" ("The way you played that role!").

- This spring Jean-Francoise Brière has been on sabbatical leave and conducted research on French and Haitian relations after 1848 in Paris at the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Library. He also researched the life, careers and writings of Gaspard-Theodore Mollien (1176-1872), a famous French explorer and diplomat.

- Ilka Kressner will give a presentation on a novel by Argentinean author Tununa Mercado titled, "Transcendental Homelessness in Motion: Tununa Mercado’s Yo nunca te prometi la eternidad" on April 24-27 at the American Comparative Literature Association’s annual meeting: Arrivals and Departures in Long Beach, CA. Also, Ilka’s article, "Hibridaciones corpóreas: los “ejemplares raros” de ‘Botánica del caos’ de Ana María Shua" has been accepted for publication in the journal Confluencia.

- Hilde Hoogenboom is preparing a collection of fifteen articles on women in Russian culture, Mapping the Feminine: Russian Women and Cultural Difference, which has been accepted for publication at Slavica Publishers and will appear in November 2008. Her entry on the Russian revolutionary, memoirist, and activist for political prisoners, Vera Figner, was just published in Women in World History (Oxford University Press, 2007). Recently she participated in a language teaching seminar of the Rassias Institute (Dartmouth College) taught by Rassias himself. John A. Rassias, the William R. Kenan Professor and Chair of the Department of French and Italian of Dartmouth College, is the developer of the innovative and effective approach to teaching languages, known as the Rassias Method® or the Dartmouth Intensive Language Model. The Rassias Method uses dramatic techniques that are rapid paced, theatrical, highly creative, imaginative, and necessitate great quantities of enthusiasm to eliminate inhibitions and create an atmosphere of free expression, with an emphasis on spoken language and familiarity with the culture of the country whose language is being studied.

- Joana Sabaddel-Nieto presented her paper titled “Deudas alimentarias: la reconstrucción del cuerpo a cuerpo y la poesía sustancial” at the I Conference on Spanish and Spanish-American Poetry in November 2007 at the University of Virginia. On April 2, 2008, Joana traveled to Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia where she was invited to give a lecture on “Historic Memory, Fascist Heroes and Feminist Criticism.” In May 2008, she will present “Feminisms and Nation” at the University of Saint Louis, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid in Madrid, Spain.


- Jacinto Fombona read a paper, “La dulce pradera y el oscuro abismo: lecturas del criollismo” in the VII Congreso Internacional de Literatura Hispánica, held in Cusco, Perú March 3-6, 2008.

- Mary Beth Winn was Visiting Professor at the Ecole Nationale des Chartes in February 2008. Since its founding in 1821 as one of the “grandes écoles,” the Ecole des Chartes, now housed at the Sorbonne, has been the foremost institution for training library and museum curators in archival sciences and paleography. She delivered a public lecture at the Sorbonne on Patronage of the Early Printed Book, ca. 1500 and taught at the Sainte-Geneviève Library using its collection of rare 15th and 16th-century books. She also lectured at the American School of Paris on Louise de Savoie, mother of François Ier and an important female patron of the early Renaissance. Mary Beth’s research on an edition of Tristan by the Parisian publisher Anthoine Vérard has been published on the website of the Royal Library in Copenhagen, Denmark as well as in the catalogue of an exhibition on “Paris, capitale des livres,” held at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. Two of her articles appeared in 2007 in Patrons et mécènes en France à la Renaissance and in Livres et Lectures de Femmes en Europe entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance.
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