I was in Moscow, en route to Saint Petersburg, when I received the very welcome news that InULA had awarded me an RIF grant to present a paper at the 5th International Gelological Congress on “Laughter and Communication”. The Congress took place from May 29 through June 1 at the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia in Saint Petersburg, Russia. “Gelological” refers to the study of humor, and that’s what the 65 attendees present were all engaged in.

I was one of two Americans at the conference. The rest included scholars from Belarus, Estonia, France, Germany, Poland, Spain, and Sweden, in addition to an overwhelming number from Russia. Herzen University has a strong program for interpreters, and students from the program provided simultaneous translation for the conference in English and Russian (and once in Polish). Speaking not a word of Russian, I was very grateful for them.

My paper, “Laughter and Unlaughter: Towards an Analytic Theory of the Humor Audience,” was selected as the opening keynote address of the conference. One of the things I learned is that Indiana University, USA is “Университет Индианы, США” in Russian. This session was in what the Heraldic Hall, which, as the name would lead one to expect, was graced by several rather large coats of arms.

On the final day, I also chaired a panel of papers on the theme of “Semiotic and Hermeneutic Methods in Gelology.” There the final paper was from a Russian scholar who analyzed the comic techniques of Mark Twain. It seemed a good way to wind up, but then there was the closing banquet, with one vodka toast after another in Russian. American conference organizers should take note: vodka is extremely effective in building comradery among people who have only recently met.
The conference organizers have invited me to return to Saint Petersburg to lecture in spring or summer of 2020, and to attend a humor conference in Kiev (Ukraine) in May. We will see whether time permits me to accept. In the interim, my 2002 article "The flying phallus and the laughing Inquisitor: Penis theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*" has been translated into Russian.

I made several new acquaintances with humor scholars during these four days in Saint Petersburg, few of whom are able to make it to conferences in the United States. I am enormously grateful to InULA for making this trip possible, and with it, the opportunities for future collaborations with humor scholars (or gelologists) in Russia.