



**THE PRINCESS DASHKOVA
RUSSIAN CENTRE
APRIL 2014 NEWSLETTER**



March Events

Postgraduate Seminar



On 6th March, Edinburgh's postgraduate student Aaron Tregellis Hodgson gave a seminar on a literary theme: 'From the margins to the mainstream: Joseph Brodsky's canonical status in Russia in the post-Soviet period'.

This presentation explored some of the factors behind the changing status of the poet Joseph Brodsky in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia following his emigration to the USA and his death in 1996. Hodgson demonstrated a particular methodology he has developed in order to assess assimilation into the literary canon, using it to show that Brodsky's position within the Russian literary canon has been steadily consolidated since his

CONTENTS

March Events

Thursday, 6th of March
Aaron Hodgson: 'From the margins to the mainstream: Joseph Brodsky's canonical status in Russia in the post-Soviet period'

Wednesday, 12th March
Ksana Blank: 'Dostoyevsky's Dialectics and the problem of Sin'

Friday, 14th March
Roundtable on 'The Ukrainian Crisis'

Thursday, 20th March
Aleksandr Sherstobitov: 'The role of social Networks in political mobilisation and Protests in Russia'

Wednesday, 26th March
Aleksander Sherstobitov: 'Coordination of Parties' voting in the State Duma: case of Electoral legislation change'

Thursday, 27th March
Arto Mustajoki: 'Causes of miscommunication'

Friday, 28th March
Film Screening
Ekaterina Eremenko: 'Colors of math'

April Events

Thursday-Friday, 3-4 April
International Workshop
'The Edge of Words: Linguistic Violence'

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death. He also touched on the political and cultural factors that could have influenced this process, referring to what he called a ‘pendulum effect’ whereby, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a period of political reaction meant that writers who had been in favour became marginalised, and vice versa (for instance, Andrey Voznesensky, an officially canonized Soviet author, followed the opposite trajectory from Brodsky since the early 1990s). The discussion afterwards touched on various ways in which a writer can become – or be made into – a cult figure.

Dr Ksana Blank – ‘Dostoevsky’s Dialectics and the problem of sin’

The 12th March saw a book presentation at the Dashkova Centre by Dr Ksana Blank, Senior Lecturer, at Princeton University. Dr Blank is an eminent specialist in both language and literature and has published extensively on 19th and 20th century Russian authors. The publication of this book – which is of interest not only to students of Russian Literature but to students of Divinity and Theology - is part of an interdisciplinary project sponsored by the Mellon Foundation. It focuses on how the notions of sin and salvation are explored in Dostoevsky’s work and particularly *The Brothers Karamazov*.



Dr Ksana Blank

Blank’s central premise, as the presentation showed, is that Dostoevsky’s view of sin is deeply dialogic. His fictional treatment of sin and salvation can be compared to the Buddhist concept of yin and yang – two interconnected and complementary forces. In Dostoyevsky’s view, sin may be, or may turn into, a path to salvation as much as to destruction, just as righteousness may lead to iniquity. Dostoevsky planned a sequel to *The Brothers Karamazov* which was never written, in which the righteous hero, Alyosha Karamazov, would become a revolutionary. Blank’s book also argues that the relationship of revolutionary activity to sin and virtue is, in itself a highly complex question for Dostoevsky.

Roundtable on Ukrainian Crisis

On 14th March, a Roundtable on the Ukrainian crisis was held in Seminar Room 2 of the Chrystal MacMillan Building. The roundtable was arranged at short notice by colleagues in the departments of Politics and International relations and History, presented an opportunity for anybody concerned about the crisis to air their views in politically neutral environment. Three presentations, by Nataliya Kibita (History), Luke March (PIR) and John Peterson (PIR), described the different forces at play in the crisis. These were followed by lengthy question and answer session in which a wide variety of perspectives were aired. The interest and concern that the crisis has evoked was reflected in the large turnout for this event.

Politics Research Seminars



Dr Aleksandr Sherstobitov

Dr Aleksandr Shertsobitov, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Governance of Saint Petersburg State University, and a Visiting Fellow in the Princess Dashkova centre this month, gave two research seminars, organised in collaboration with PIR.

The first of these, ‘The role of social networks in political mobilization and protests in Russia’, took place on 20th March at the Dashkova Centre.

The seminar was based on research carried out into the activity of political groups in the Russian section of the Internet. The research looked at the emergence of two distinct networks on the Russian social network ‘VKontakte’, which were designed to mobilise political participation during the electoral period of 2011-12: ‘pro-elite’ networks (in favour of the present government) and ‘protest’ networks (those against the present government). Both groups demonstrated sophisticated use of online propaganda resources, such

as ‘demotivators’. It went on to explore how these networks had evolved over a period of 18 months, and how on-line debate and discussion had fed in to off-line activities. The research found that over this period, the ‘protest’ segment had continued to develop dynamically, showing a significant shift towards civic engagement. A year and a half after the elections, network protest groups had become institutionalised either into NGOs or at the least, into civil initiatives engaged in work in various areas, such as election observation, anti-corruption activity and local issues. The same could not be said of the ‘pro-elite’ networks, which had tended to dwindle following the election.

The second seminar, ‘Coordination of parties’ voting in the State Duma: Case of electoral legislation change’, discussed party politics and coordination in Russia’s State Duma, took place on 26th March. It was particularly well attended, in particular by students from Politics and International Relations (PIR).

This seminar discussed the ‘Cartel party theory’ developed by Katz and Mair, which indicates that parties cooperate between themselves to define areas of interest and limit political competition, and emphasizes the role of the state in party development. Generally the cartel theory has only been used to explain party strategies in consolidated democracies. Shertsobitov attempted to apply the same theory to study the processes at work in Russian party system, given that the Russian state could be described as a non-consolidated democracy. Research involved an analysis of voting in the Duma regarding electoral and party legislation change in an attempt to establish the key factors that shape parties’ strategies. Quantitative analysis of party voting was unsuccessful, so the second stage of the research included qualitative factors, looking, for instance at the voting habits of deputies; analysis of the presidential State of the Nation addresses; and information about which deputies initiated certain laws. So far, Shertsobitov said that research was still in the early stages, and



The audience of Dr Sherstobitov’s seminar

it was too early to draw any conclusions, though there were indications that the vertical power axis was influential in implementing party coordination.

Research Seminar – ‘The Causes of Miscommunication’

On Thursday, 27th of March from 5:20pm-6:30pm there was a Research Seminar on ‘The causes of miscommunication’ by Prof. Arto Mustajoki (University of Helsinki) at the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place.

Drawing on a functional model of linguistics, Arto Mustajoki talked about various causes of miscommunication in everyday speech, and in particular the ‘common ground fallacy’, whereby a speaker imagines that the recipient of a message shares the same mental world as the speaker. He concluded that the mental worlds of speaker and recipient are never identical, but that problems of communication can be overcome by careful ‘recipient design’. Mapping the various causes of miscommunication could prove a useful aid to effective communication in many areas of everyday life.



Prof. Arto Mustajoki

Documentary film screening - ‘Colors of Math’ by Ekaterina Eremenko

The month’s programme was rounded off by an event organised in collaboration with the School of Mathematics. The film ‘Colors of Math’ by the Berlin-based film director Ekaterina Eremenko was shown in Lecture Theatre 4 of the Appleton Tower on Friday 28th March. This fascinating film attempts to use art to explain one of the most beautiful and difficult mathematical solutions - the Reimann Roch theorem - by referring to the human senses. The screening was followed by a lively question and answer session with the director Ekaterina Eremenko.

April Events

International Workshop – ‘The Edge of Words: Linguistic Violence’

Date: Thursday 3 and Friday 4 April 2014

Venue: IASH, Hope Park Square, Edinburgh EH8 9NW

The Edge of Words: Linguistic Violence workshop organised by The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre is a part of The Edge of Words Project and is supported financially by the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures.



The purpose of the workshop is to produce a framework for a multidisciplinary international network to study new aspects in the relations between language and power. The papers concentrate on a complex of problems, contexts, and situations that bear upon linguistic expression in relation to administrative regulation, law, ethics, aesthetics, and politics.

All are welcome however registration for coffee and lunch is required. Please register by writing to Lara.Ryazanova-Clarke@ed.ac.uk

Workshop Programme

Thursday 3 April



9:00–9:30 Registration

9:30–10:30 **Keynote lecture:** John Joseph (Edinburgh U.). Silencing

10:30–11:00 coffee

11:00–12:30 **Rhetorical Violence, Censorship, and Ideology** (Chair: I. Kalinin)

Irina Sandomirskaja (Sodertorn U). Aesopian Language: The Politics and Poetics of Naming the Unnamable

Laura Bradley (Edinburgh U). Shooting Down *Sputnik*: Censorship and Creative Protest in the German Democratic Republic

Per-Arne Bodin (Stockholm U). The Russian Language Textbook and Violence

12:30–1:30 lunch

1:30–3:00 **(Counter)Revolution, Culture, and Communication** (Chair: S. Witt)

Ilia Kalinin (St Petersburg U). Antirevolutionary Exorcism. The Rhetoric of Repression and Anti-Protest Reaction

Vera Zvereva (Edinburgh U). Discursive Struggle on the Runet during the Ukrainian Crisis

Michael Gorham (Florida U). Scumbags, Boors, and the Battle for Civil(ised) Discourse on the Russian-language Internet

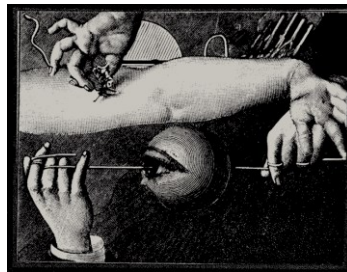
3:00–3:20 coffee

3:20–4:20 **New Approaches to Linguistic Violence** (Chair: V. Zvereva)

Lara Ryazanova-Clarke (Edinburgh U). Linguistic Mnemonics as Violence

Rowan Mackay (Edinburgh U). Violence on / Violence by: Language as Victim and Perpetrator

Friday 4 April



9:30–11:00 **Linguistic Violence and Translation** (Chair: M. Gorham)

Sanna Witt (Uppsala U). Aesopian translation II: The Intertextual Edge

Lisa Möckli (Edinburgh U). To report or not to report? Goebbels and the Manchester Guardian

Sam Sherry (Oxford U). Violence of Translation: Censoring Foreign Literature in the Stalin Period

11:00–11:15 coffee

11:15–1:15 **Linguistic Violence and Law** (Chair: I. Sandomirskaja)

Dmitry Dubrovsky (St Petersburg U). Expertise in legal counter-extremism processes: Russian schools of linguistic expertise

Galina Arapova (Voronezh). Recent restrictions in freedom of speech in Russia concerning traditional media and Internet

Bill Bowring (Birkbeck College, University of London). Casualties of the Revolution? The future of the 2012 “Law on Principles of National Language Policy” and of the Russian and Crimean Tatar languages in Ukraine.

1:15– 1:30 **Concluding roundtable remarks**



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