



THE PRINCESS DASHKOVA RUSSIAN CENTRE MAY 2014 NEWSLETTER



April Events

The Dashkova Centre's programme for the last month was dominated by an international workshop 'The Edge of Words: Linguistic Violence'. This two-day workshop organised by the Centre was part of the 'Edge of Words Project, a series of events funded by the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, and took place on 3rd and 4th of April in the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) at Edinburgh University.



The Conference Audience

The aim of holding the workshop was to create a framework for a multidisciplinary international network exploring various aspects of the relationship between language,

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'Russia as a Value Centre: Contemporary Russian Identity and Soft Power'

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violence and power. There was a strong Russian focus to the programme, with several contributions on the Russian media and Russian legislation and literary censorship, but there were also contributions from the fields of German studies and linguistics. Among the topics covered were rhetorical violence and ideology, censorship in literature and journalism, and linguistic violence in translation and legislation. The various strands of discussion were interlinked by an overarching theme which revealed intriguing parallels between past and present, classical mythology, modern (Soviet) history and the present day.

The programme began with the keynote lecture by Edinburgh's John Joseph, 'Silencing' a fascinating analysis of cyberbullying. Discussing the recent celebrated case in which the historian Mary Beard was harassed on Twitter, Joseph described how Beard herself has linked this experience to a general historical tendency to silence women in the arena of authoritative discourse ('mythos' as it was known in Homer's day), traditionally regarded as an exclusively male domain. The paper also touched on the topic of linguistic expertise in legislation, a topic which was to be further discussed on day two of the workshop. Joseph argued that recent linguistic research into discourse in social media and to the phenomenon of what is now widely understood as 'trolling', could, potentially, be used to excuse such violent verbal intimidation by defining it as frivolous behaviour designed only to provoke.



John Joseph

such violent verbal intimidation by defining it as frivolous behaviour designed only to provoke.



Irina Sandomirskaja

The address was followed by a fascinating panel on Rhetorical Violence, Censorship, and Ideology. The first speaker, Irina Sandomirskaja of Södertörn University spoke about Korney Chukovsky's proposition (made in the Stalinist years) that 19th century liberal poets used Aesopian language in order to evade the Tsarist censorship. This example was used to argue that the concept of Aesopian Language is a highly problematic and slippery one. In Sandomirskaja's view, 'cryptography' (or *tainopis*) cannot really be said to challenge the dominant ideology, given that it must bury the 'real meaning' so deeply among a mass of 'apparent' meaning. She was followed by Laura Bradley of Edinburgh University, who described some incisive and witty examples of creative protest in music and poetry in the GDR, motivated by the closure of the liberal magazine *Sputnik* in 1988. Lastly, Per-Arne Bodin of Stockholm University looked at the striking results of including linguistic violence in Russian language textbooks - a genre in which a great deal of tacit censorship is normally exerted in order to create an idealised

'normative', discourse.

Next, came a highly topical panel on the subject of (Counter) Revolution, Culture, and Communication. It began with a presentation by Ilia Kalinin of St Petersburg University on the

reaction of the Russian government to the civil protests of 2011-12. Kalinin used the Freudian concept of repression to interrogate this reaction, stressing, in particular, the present political elite's 'trauma of origin'. The political elite, highly anxious to distance itself from the instabilities of the Perestroika era from which it sprang, now uses a highly emotive 'rhetoric of exorcism' to condemn all revolutionary activity. Vera Zvereva of Edinburgh University followed, with an account of discursive flux and struggle on the Russian-speaking internet in response to the current crisis in the Ukraine as seen in the postings of a number of prominent Russian bloggers.

Lastly, Michael Gorham of Florida University looked at the internet phenomenon of phonetically written Russian known as the 'Language of Scumbags' (*Podonki*). According to Gorham, this 'language of the illiterate' has been interpreted by the Russian authorities as an alarming sign of the degradation of Russian language, and hence culture and morals. Thus it is used to justify increased government control of internet activity.



Michael Gorham

The third panel, New Approaches to Linguistic Violence, featured two contributions from the University of Edinburgh. First Lara Ryazanova-Clarke spoke on the subject of linguistic mnemonics. Following Bakhtin's assertion that there are 'no neutral words or forms', she talked of how meaning was never owned, but continually appropriated, negotiated, mobilised or 'ventriloquized'. The cold war tropes now being revived in current Russian discourse, she argued, can act as potent linguistic weapon, awakening national and political allegiances buried deep in the collective memory. Next was Rowan Mackay who gave a stimulating presentation 'Language as Victim and Perpetrator', with particular reference to the protest performance by Pussy Riot in Moscow.



Sanna Witt

The second day opened with a panel on Linguistic Violence and Translation. The first speaker, Sanna Witt from Uppsala University, in a paper called 'Aesopian translation II: The Intertextual Edge', provided a fascinating analysis of two Soviet translations of Byron's *Don Juan*, the first of which, by Shengeli, had been subsequently criticised for literalism and 'formalism', while the other – by Gnedich – had become canonical. On examination, it could be seen that Gnedich domesticated or adapted Byron to a greater extent than Shengeli, by glossing over or adapting 'unpatriotic' passages describing the Russian army, or passages satirising values particularly central to Soviet ideology, such

as man's supremacy over nature. This presentation was followed by Lisa Möckli of Edinburgh University, who revealed some surprising facts about the factors that influenced the reporting on Goebbels and the Nazi propaganda machine in the British press in the 1930s. The final speaker was Sam Sherry of Oxford University, who gave a compelling account of censorship of foreign literature in the Stalin period. This paper described the role played by editors, publishers and translators in the construction of a Soviet canon of translated literature. It also showed how the

omission and alteration of politically sensitive material in translation could damage the integrity of literary works.



Galina Arapova

The final panel was devoted to the legal aspects of the question of linguistic violence. It opened with two compelling presentations on Russian legislation, by Dmitry Dubrovsky of St Petersburg University and Galina Arapova from the Mass Media Defence Centre in Voronezh. Dubrovsky spoke of the linguistic expertise used in counter-extremism trials in Russia. He spoke of how, as a result of a new article in Russian legislation on hate crime, linguistic experts are being called in to trials in Russia establish intention in cases of alleged ‘incitement to hatred, enmity of abasement of dignity’ of a ‘person or group of persons’. Dubrovsky argued that this

is a very difficult area in which to establish anything with certainty, and described the linguistic expertise currently in operation in Russia as inadequate. Arapova described recent restrictions in freedom of speech in Russia, both in traditional media and on the Internet. She described the work of her organisation, the Mass Media Defence Centre, which offers legal defence for journalists who have been legally harassed – and even falsely imprisoned – for speaking out on controversial issues under the new hate-speech law.

Arapova, too spoke of the dubious use of linguistic ‘expertise’ in trials, and of how extreme flexibility in the implementation of hate-speech legislation made it possible to prosecute the political opposition on flimsy pretexts. Meanwhile, vitriolic, aggressive rhetoric directed at the opposition goes unpunished every day on state television channels. The final paper in this series was devoted to the 2012 ‘Law on Principles of National Language Policy’ and how its implementation affected and affects the status of various languages in Ukraine. Bill Bowring of Birkbeck College, University of London, gave an expert and balanced view of the legislation, tracing its long and winding road from its inception in 1999 to the present day. The political upheaval in Ukraine obviously impacted on the implementation of the law, but Bowring’s view of the new cross-party commission was optimistic.

All in all, the workshop was highly stimulating and informative, with contributions of a uniformly high quality. At the brief discussion afterwards it was generally agreed that the topic of linguistic violence was particularly opportune and offered considerable for further development and cooperative projects, potentially leading to publications of broad academic interest.

May Events

Book Launch

Events in May begin with a book launch for the poetry collection 'After Lermontov: Poems for the bicentenary', ed. by Peter France and Robyn Marsak, published by Carcanet Books. The launch will take place in the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, on Friday, 2nd May 2014.

The publication 'After Lermontov' is connected with a number of events to mark the bi-centenary of the birth of Mikhail Lermontov. To mark this occasion, and to commemorate Lermontov's cultural links with Scotland, the Scottish Poetry Library has issued a collection of Lermontov poems in translation into both English and Scots. A number of prominent Scottish poets and literary translators have taken part in the project, which aims to bring the work of Russia's leading romantic poet to a wider audience.



Research Seminar



On Thursday, 8th May 2014 at 5.10pm, a research seminar will be given by Gasan Guseinov on 'Developments in Russian Political Language'. Gasan Guseinov is Professor at the National Research University – Higher School of Economics (Moscow), visiting professor at the University of Basel and contributing author at RFI (Radio France Internationale).

Postgraduate Seminars

Later in the month, the Dashkova Centre will hold two postgraduate seminars.

On Thursday, 15th May 2014, 5:10 pm. Cathy Ratcliff will speak on 'Freedom as Development - Seeing Africa in Soviet Times, through *Pravda*'. Cathy Ratcliff is a PhD student in Russian Language Studies with an MSc in Social and Public Policy from The University of Edinburgh and a degree in Russian and French studies from the University of Aberdeen.

On Thursday, 22nd May 2014, at 5:10 pm, Yulia Lukyanova will present a talk entitled 'Problematizing 'being political' in Russia - evidence from talk-in-interaction'.

Yulia Lukyanova is a PhD student in the Department of Psychology whose research interests are identity studies, discursive psychology/conversation analysis and social theories of collective action.

Conference 'Russia as a Value Centre: Contemporary Russian Identity and Soft Power'

Towards the end of the month there will be an international conference co-organised by the Dashkova Centre and the University's Centre for Cultural Relations, 'Russia as a Value Centre: Contemporary Russian Identity and Soft Power'. The conference will take place on Friday, 23rd May 2014 at the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre.



This conference will highlight different aspects of Russia as a value centre: for example what values contemporary Russia claims as its own; how these are propagated through domestic and foreign media and cultural realms; how they are reflected in official doctrine and debates. In particular, the conference will focus on the following themes: 1) Russian national identity as expressed in foreign policy, nationalism and the media; 2) Soft power as an element of foreign policy in doctrine, foreign policy practice and diplomacy; 3) Soft power as an element of domestic politics, media and sport.

Confirmed speakers include:

Lara Ryazanova-Clarke (Edinburgh): *Russian language as soft power: models of influence*

Stephen Hutchings (Manchester): *#SochiProblems and soft power: A multi-media, comparative analysis of RT and BBC World TV coverage of the 2014 Winter Olympics*

Luke March (Edinburgh): *Our countries, right or wrong? Russian and US nationalism compared*

Valentina Feklyunina (Newcastle): *Imagining Russkiy Mir*

Victoria Hudson (Aston): *Soft power projection for state identity*

Gulnaz Sharafutdinova (King's College, London): *The world we live in: Emotions, cognition, and the new politics of the East-West divide*

Ilya Yablokov (Manchester): *Broadcasting anti-Americanism: The narratives of conspiracy in the news agenda of Russia Today (RT)*

Yulia Kiseleva (King's College London): *Civil society and Russian soft power*

Hanna Smith (Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki): *Russian Great Power identity and soft power*

Derek Averre (Birmingham): *Russia as norm maker*

Natasha Kuhrt (King's College, London) *Russia, national identity and the language of international law*

The conference is organised by Edinburgh University's Princess Dashkova Russian Centre <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/literatures-languages-cultures/dashkova> and Centre for Cultural Relations <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/humanities-soc-sci/centre-for-cultural-relations/ccr-home> and will be hosted at the Dashkova Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place.

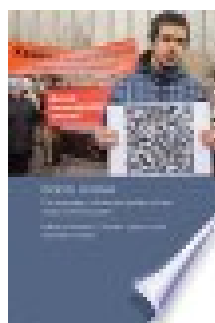
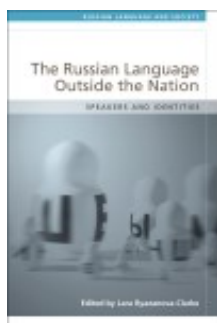
All are welcome.

Attendance is free but please register by contacting Vera Zvereva <Vera.Zvereva@ed.ac.uk>.

New Publications from the Dashkova Centre

We are pleased to announce the new book and book contributions produced by the Centre's members of staff.

Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, Lara (ed.) *The Russian Language Outside the Nation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.



Zvereva, Vera (with T. Roesen) Social network sites on the Runet: exploring social communication, in M. Gorham, I. Lunde and M. Paulsen (eds) *Digital Russia: The Language, culture and Politics of New Media Communication*. London: Routledge, pp. 72-88.

Zvereva, Vera (with M. Paulsen) Testing and contesting Russian Twitter, in M. Gorham, I. Lunde and M. Paulsen (eds) Digital Russia: The Language, culture and Politics of New Media Communication. London: Routledge, pp. 88-104.

Zvereva, Vera (with A. Berdicevskis) Slangs go online, or the rise and fall of the Albanian language, in M. Gorham, I. Lunde and M. Paulsen (eds) Digital Russia: The Language, culture and Politics of New Media Communication. London: Routledge, pp. 123-141.



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