



# THE PRINCESS DASHKOVA RUSSIAN CENTRE NOVEMBER 2014 NEWSLETTER



## October Events Review

### Dashkova Open Seminar

On 16<sup>th</sup> October, **Professor Denis Akhapkin**, presented a research seminar entitled: 'Ambiguity as a Rhetorical Device in Literary and Political Discourse'. Denis Akhapkin is Associate Professor and Deputy Dean at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Saint Petersburg State University, and the Dashkova Centre Calvert-Smolny Research Fellow.



Prof. Denis Akhapkin

## CONTENTS

### October Events

Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> October  
Denis Akhapkin, 'Ambiguity as a rhetorical device in literary and political discourse'

Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> October  
Robert Saunders, 'Laughable Nations: Parodying the Post-Soviet Republics'

### November Events

Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> November  
Varia Christie, '«Тэнгэр хуйсрах»: on the legislative attempts to control the use of obscenities in works of literature'

Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> November  
Svetlana Adonieva, 'Remembering Rituals and Social Cohesion: Russian Traditions 20-21st centuries'

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At this open seminar, Denis presented some of the latest projects of the Smolny Laboratory of Cognitive Sciences, including the new eye-tracking technology, which highlights the concept of ambiguity in so-called bi-stable texts, and the amount of cognitive effort required to decode such texts. Denis gave a comprehensive review of various approaches to ambiguity, ranging from the work of Roman Jakobson, who shed the light on the concept in the 1960s, to the recent international bestseller by Daniel Kahneman, 'Thinking Fast and Slow', which was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in 2011.



The Audience of Denis Akhapkin's seminar

Denis emphasised the relation between the concept of ambiguity and the rich 'Aesopian' tradition in Russian literary discourse. He also discussed how politicians can exploit the ambiguity created by certain rhetorical devices to achieve specific results in the course of political campaigns.

## Dashkova Forthcoming October Event

### Dashkova Open Seminar

#### Robert Saunders, 'Laughable Nations: Parodying the Post-Soviet Republics'

Date: Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 5:10pm

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre



Prof. Robert A. Saunders

This seminar will explore how popular-geopolitical representations of post-socialist countries in post-Soviet Eurasia reify and reinforce attitudes about the region. The analysis will focus on the dynamics of pop-culture power as these manifest in international relations and the emerging neoliberal system, and how humorous, satiric, and parodic geographies are received, interpreted, and contested by consumers in the 'West' and residents of these states.

Robert A. Saunders is a Professor in the Department of History and Political Science at State University of New York-Farmingdale. The author of three books, his current project, Nation Branding and Popular Geopolitics in the Post-Soviet Realm, explores the tension

between Western pop-culture representations of the former Soviet republics and their own attempts at 'nation branding'.

## October News

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October we celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Dashkova Centre at the University of Edinburgh.

## Dashkova Fellows Scheme

The Dashkova Fellows Scheme continues. Our Calvert-Smolny Research Fellow, Professor Denis Akhupkin, continues his stay in Edinburgh. Currently Denis is working on problems of cognitive poetics, and in particular, ambiguity and the comprehension of bi-stable texts and metaphors as a source of ambiguity.

## Postgraduate News

Violetta Galitskaya, our visiting Postgraduate student from The University of Tomsk also continues her stay in Edinburgh. Violetta is currently working on a research project entitled: '«Third Places Materials»: The Development of New Public Space in the Cities of Tomsk and Edinburgh'.

## November Events

### Dashkova Open Seminar

**Varia Christie, '«Тэнгэр хүйсрах»: on the legislative attempts to control the use of obscenities in works of literature'**

**Date: Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 5:10pm**

**Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre**

The seminar aims to open up discussion regarding the points of difficulty in applying legislative measures controlling the use of obscenities to works of literature. It focuses on the most recent set of amendments to the Law on State Language. Based on a tentative analysis of the use of obscenities in the most recent book by Tatiana Tolstaia 'Legkie Miry' (2014), it brings to fore the issue of functionality of obscenities when used in works of literature.

Varia Christie was awarded doctoral degree from Edinburgh University in 2013. Her research interests revolve round the issues of language policy on non-standard language varieties, identity construction in literature and cinema, and translation of



**Dr Varia Christie**

non-standard language. She has taken part in organisation of a number of conferences held at the University of Edinburgh and has co-edited a journal issue in 'New Voices in Translation Studies' (2013).

### **Dashkova Open Seminar**

#### **Svetlana Adonieva, 'Remembering Rituals and Social Cohesion: Russian Traditions 20-21st centuries'**

**Date: Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 5:10pm**

**Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre**



**Prof. Svetlana Adonieva**

This open seminar will focus at the act of remembering the dead as one of the main rituals that creates social cohesion in the rural community. The modern practice of remembering will be discussed as a duty of the living to perform for their deceased relatives, and the memorial communication with the ancestors as one of the ways that living people express their relatedness to each other.

Svetlana Adonieva is a Folklorist and Anthropologist, Professor at the Department of the History of Russian Literature of Saint Petersburg State University and a Visiting Fellow in the Russian Section (DELC) in the University of Edinburgh.



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