



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

THE PRINCESS DASHKOVA RUSSIAN CENTRE

JANUARY 2017 NEWSLETTER

14 Buccleuch Place
EH8 9LN
Edinburgh

Tel: 0131 650 99 02

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January Events

Open Research

Seminar: Ilya Yablokov:
Russian Media and
Conspiracy Theories

Time: Wednesday 25th
January, 17.10-18.00

Venue: Appleton Tower,
room 2.14

February Events

Lunchtime talk: Derek
Averre, University of
Birmingham

Time: Thursday 9th
February

Open Research

Seminar: Edwin Bacon,
Birkbeck, University of
London: The 2016
Russian Elections & the
Aftermath

Time: Friday 17th February,
13:00-13.50

Venue: Chrystal Macmillan
Building, Seminar Room 2



News

Happy New Year to our dear colleagues, followers and subscribers! 2017 began with changes of staff in the Dashkova Centre. After the departure of Vera Zvereva, Dr Gesine Argent has been appointed the Dashkova Centre Manager/Research Fellow. Gesine is a graduate of Edinburgh University in Russian Studies and English Literature. She has been awarded an MSc in Translation Studies from Manchester and a PhD in Russian language studies from Edinburgh. She is joining the Dashkova Centre after working at Bristol University as a researcher on the AHRC-funded project 'The History of the French Language in Russia' (PI: Professor Derek Offord). We would like to welcome Gesine and wish her a very productive and enjoyable time in this both challenging and exciting role. We are pleased to report that Lara Ryazanova-Clarke has received AHRC research funding to work on the project "'Global Russians': Transnational Russophone Networks in the UK' (2016-2020). In December, Mikhail Vodopyanov and Lara Ryazanova-Clarke were also successful in the Russian Pedagogical Academy project competition with a project proposal 'Schools of the Russian Diaspora in the UK' (2017). We will be very happy to report later about the progress of these projects and to invite you to the events organised as part of these projects.

Although not fully staffed this autumn, our academic and cultural programme was rich and diverse, featuring among its highlights the launch of the book 'A Very Private Affair' by Pam Wardell, a roundtable 'Poetic Strategies in the Time of Political Repression' and the event celebrating the 110th Anniversary of the birth of Dmitry Likhachev. In addition, we continued our 'Russian Word in Scotland' series and welcomed the award-winning writer and musician Nina Dashevskaya. The Dashkova Centre hosted a visit of a delegation from the People's Friendship University in Moscow, and participated in the visit of St Petersburg

City Administration delegation to the University. The Centre was a home for Gulnaz Sigbatullina, a visiting final year postgraduate student from Leiden University (Holland). Gulnaz worked on the question of the use of Russian as a means of Muslim communication in religious discourse in Tatarstan and gave an excellent, well attended paper at the Dashkova research seminar.

We further expanded our research network by establishing a partnership with a group of Russian sociolinguists at the Jyväskylä University in Finland. Lara Ryazanova-Clarke was invited to Jyväskylä in December to give a lecture on Sociolinguistics of Globalisation and Diasporisation of Russian.

Upcoming Events

January 2017



Open Dashkova Research Seminar Ilya Yablokov: Russian Media and Conspiracy Theories

Time: Wednesday, 25 January 2017, 17:10-18.00

Venue: Appleton Tower, Room 2.14

Registration: <https://yablokov.eventbrite.co.uk>

Whilst nowadays conspiracy theories are becoming mainstream the world over – the noise surrounding the victory of Donald Trump and Brexit are cases in point – contemporary Russia is a curious example. From the mid-2000s the Russian government has spent years and millions of roubles on spreading fears of Western conspiracy among the population and thus guaranteeing the stability of popular support for Putin. Russian media have played a key role in this process, constantly spreading falsified evidence of the subversive activities of the Russian opposition with the alleged support of the West. Moreover, from the end of the 2000s, the Kremlin reshaped the international television channel RT into a source of various conspiracy theories, thus turning a media outlet into a sophisticated public diplomacy tool.

Following the approach suggested by Mark Fenster (2008), Dr Yablokov investigates the phenomenon of conspiracy theories as a populist tool of power relations which helps relocate legitimacy and power among different political actors.

Dr Yablokov received his PhD from the University of Manchester (2014). His research interests include conspiracy theories, nation building and politics in post-Soviet Russia, the history of post-Soviet journalism and international broadcasting. His book *Building Fortress Russia: Conspiracy Theories in the Post-Soviet World* (Cambridge: Polity Press) is due to be published in 2018. He currently teaches Russian politics, history and media at the University of Leeds.

February 2017

Derek Averre, University of Birmingham: Lunchtime talk

Time: Thursday, 9th February, time and venue TBC

Derek Averre, Reader in Russian Foreign and Security Policy at the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies at the University of Birmingham, will give a lunchtime talk. Details will follow!

Edwin Bacon, Birkbeck, University of London: The 2016 Russian Elections & the Aftermath (in collaboration with Transatlantic Seminar series)

Time: Friday, 17th February, 13:00-13:50

Venue: Chrystal Macmillan Building, Seminar Room 2

2016 saw Russia elect a new parliament. 2018 will see Russia elect a president. For the first time in 20 years these elections are separated by more than a few months. Whilst the rules and timings of Russia's elections change, the identity of those in power does not. Since Russia adopted a democratic system, it has not seen a single change of regime. Why then bother with elections? What is in it for the regime and for the opposition? What do the results of the 2016 parliamentary election tell us, and how is the 2018 presidential election shaping up? The answers lie in a mix of legitimacy, electoral manipulation, national patriotism, statism, popular mood, and a polity that is too complex to be reduced to Putin alone.

March 2017

Save the date

14 March, 18:00 the Dashkova Centre will host the Sonnet Exchange project:

Russian poets recital with a discussion of poetry and its translation (in collaboration with British Council and Scottish Poetry Library)

Reporting on our events:

Book Launch: Pam Wardell

A Very Private Affair – a Soviet Dissident's “English Wife”

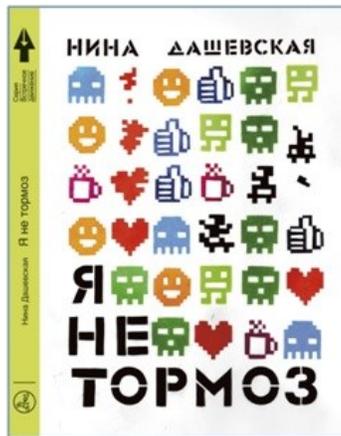
On 30th September, Pam Wardell presented “A Very Private Affair...”, the memoir of **Speranza Howard** (1903 – 95) who was born and brought up in pre-revolutionary Russia and escaped with her family to London in 1920. But it is also a story of the Russian writer **Boris Pilniak**, who visited Britain just once, but who claimed to have lost his heart for ever to a half-English girl he met in 1923 – Speranza, Pam's aunt.



Pam Wardell tells two stories in parallel: one about the secret life of her enigmatic intellectual Aunt, Speranza Howard (1903 – 1995); the other about her personal journey to uncover the impact of the Russian Revolution on her family’s history. Through a unique collaboration with the graphic designer **Janey Boyd** (Mamook Graphics), Pam has produced a stunningly illustrated account of one woman’s love for the Soviet dissident writer Boris Pilniak. She presented the book to a large and enthusiastic audience.



The Russian Word in Scotland Series: An Evening with Nina Dashevskaya



Nina Dashevskaya, a writer and violinist in Moscow’s Natalia Sats Musical Theatre, visited the Dashkova Centre on 17th October. Nina is an established name in Russian children’s literature and a multiple winner of the *Kniguru* award. At the event, she read from her new book "Я не тормоз" ("I am not a slow wit", 2016) and played her violin to the delight of a full house of children and adults.



Round Table: Poetic Strategies in the Time of Political Repression

On 24th October, the Dashkova Centre invited audience to the international workshop ‘Poetic Strategies in the Times of Political Repression’. The event was organised in association with the University’s Department of European Language and Cultures ‘Language and Violence’ research strand and in partnership with the Russian Rudomino State Library of Foreign Literature and The Institute of Translation (Moscow). The workshop was dedicated to the 125th anniversary of the birth of the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam who died in Stalin’s GULAG. The roundtable included four presentations. **Peter France**, Professor Emeritus and Honorary Fellow of the University of Edinburgh, spoke on ‘Another Absolutism: Louis XIV and his Poets’. **Maxim Amelin**, poet, essayist,

translator, scholar of poetry and publisher, gave a talk on ‘Poets at the Court of Catherine the Great’. Andrew Reynolds, Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, gave a talk entitled “‘Willing executioner?’: Death as the Last Creative Act in Mandelstam’s Later Poetry’. Finally, **Oleg Lekmanov**, Professor of Philology at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, concluded the roundtable with his paper on ‘A Dialogue between the Poet and the Executioner: Mandelstam’s Poem “You must dominate me”’.

Round Table: Commemorating the 110th anniversary of the birth of Dmitry Likhachev



Dmitrii Likhachev (1906-1999) was an eminent scholar of Medieval Russian Literature and Culture and a Russian Cultural Philosopher. His interests spanned from the Russian medieval icons to the language of criminals and prisoners. His books include: ‘The Man in Russian Medieval Literature’ (1958), ‘Laughing World in Old Rus’ (1976), ‘Reflections of Russian Soul – a Memoir’ (1981), ‘Russian Art from Antiquity to Avant-garde’ (1992), and ‘About the Intelligentsia’ (1997). Likhachev was also a vigilant witness for the epoch in which he lived. He was a prisoner of Stalin’s Gulag (1928-32), survived the Siege of Leningrad (1941-42), was awarded the highest State prize of the Soviet Union

(1969), was elected a member of the Russian Academy (1970), and initiated the Congress of St Petersburg Intelligentsia (1999). In 1971, Likhachev was awarded an Honorary Degree from the University of Edinburgh. The Round Table speakers were Dr Mike Falchikov, a retired Senior Lecturer in Russian at Edinburgh, Likhachev’s granddaughter and Professor at Manchester University Vera Tolz, and Professor Vladislav Zubok from London School of Economics. Vladislav Zubok’s book *The Idea of Russia: The Life and Work of Dmitry Likhachev* was published by I. B. Tauris in November 2016.

Gulnaz Sigbatullina: The Russian language as a medium of religious communication: a case of Russian Muslims

Gulnaz Sigbatullina, a final-year postgraduate student from Leiden University, visited the Dashkova Centre from 1-30 November. On 1st November, she gave a talk about ‘The Russian language as a medium of religious communication: a case of Russian Muslims’.

News

Refurbishment of the Dashkova Centre

The Dashkova Centre is undergoing renovations at the moment and it is envisaged that our temporary premises will be at 19 Buccleuch Place. Venues for our events this semester might vary - please take care to look at those in our circulars.

We aim to send out newsletters twice per semester during the academic year.

PhD Scholarship in Russian

The School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures at the University of Edinburgh is delighted to invite applications for a fees-only PhD scholarship in the area of Russian studies.

The successful candidate will join an AHRC funded Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) research project led by Dr Lara Ryazanova-Clarke and titled **'Diasporic and Transnational Russophone Networks in the UK: in Search for Global Russians'**. The project feeds into a large multidisciplinary and multi-institutional research consortium "Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community" (CLDRC) headed by Professor Steven Hutchings of the University of Manchester and funded by a £4m grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. For more information visit: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/graduate-school/fees-and-funding/funding/phd-students/russian-phd-scholarship>

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The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre

The University of Edinburgh

14 Buccleuch Place, EH8 9LN, Edinburgh, Tel: 0131 650 99 02, Email: Dashkova.Centre@ed.ac.uk.